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(RE)MAKING SACRED GROUND: AMERICAN NATIONAL MEMORY AND THE MEMORIALIZATION OF 9/11

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Anthony James Kolenic III

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David W. Stowe

Major Professor's Signature

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By

Anthony James Kolenic III

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ABSTRACT

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By

Anthony James Kolenic III

In the wake of any tragedy those affected by it attempt to recreate their various disrupted identities. The same process is at work on a communal level; a group of affected individuals connects to a larger social identity through the perceived sharing of a particular quality, attribute, moment or tragedy in their past. This reclamation of communal identity is especially true for many religious groups and can extend to an entire nation; both believers and patriots use a past that is perceived as shared, creating community through a common memory. In the months and years following the attacks September 11th, 2001, a number of Americans attempted to reclaim values and a community that they largely perceived as having been attacked. To do so, a number of material responses were employed both officially and informally, as was a pull to both localize and nationalize the events as large in scale and particularly American.

This thesis uses three lenses to examine the material responses that have reshaped the American national memory of the event: spontaneous shrines, official memorials, as well as consumer relics and commercial rituals. Using these three analytical sets in conjunction with some close reading of images, material culture and popular religious analyses, this thesis aims to study the ways in which those material responses are used as a means of recreating a community that represents those characteristics that are used to define the American nation in a post-9/11 world.

To Giselle, for her unending support

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PREFACE

While formulating this study I received some extremely important advice: no matter what, let the research inform your conclusions, not the other way around. In one sense, it is necessary to work into a framework with some decisions made; what can one find out if she has no direction or interest? But in any field, particularly one as interdisciplinary as American Studies, one must follow this advice despite the attraction of doing otherwise. I was fortunate enough to have great people guiding me along the way, but the mixture of methodologies employed also guided me.

Analyzing the way that post-9/11 American nationalism borrows a sense of sanctity from religious expressions that have weaved their way into American popular culture through memorialization processes is not a cut and dry task. The conjunction of material culture studies in Religious Studies and American Studies is a wonderful site for using close reading techniques to explain the acts of mourning and celebration that have cropped up in recent decades in the form of spontaneous shrines.

While researching the literature on material culture as well as the literature regarding American national memory it became clear that there was another interesting intersection; much of the academic work on material culture is concerned with the cultural expressions present in everyday life, and much of the work done on national memory, by the very nature of the scholarship, is concerned with the cultural patterns and trends that weave through time and attempt to explain cultural trajectories and phenomena. I believe I found in this space – incorporating pieces of American popular culture, American popular religion, disaster studies, and other fields – a way to use both the artifacts as everyday expressions and as parts of larger cultural patterns at work.

Framed by both a religious and civic millennialism, which – interestingly – inform each other, and historical and contemporary geo-politics and transnational conceptions, 9/11 is an academic site that is particularly challenging to work with because in some senses it is still happening. Its public history is a peculiar one, with the political history of the event becoming increasingly classified instead of becoming more accessible to scholars and the populace in general. What I present here is a material history of what we are left with as it happens, and hopefully a partial explanation of why.

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INTRODUCTION

Making Memory and Sanctifying Community

In the wake of any tragedy those affected by it attempt to recreate their various disrupted identities. This reclamation of ideals, values, and various other markers associated with the self is a largely idiosyncratic process of deciding what that individual does and does not value. The same process is at work on a communal level; a group of affected individuals connects to a larger social identity through the perceived sharing of a particular quality, attribute, moment or tragedy in their past. This imagined community[1] is built out of the reclaimed values, associations, relationships, ideals and identities at the same moment that individuals begin reclaiming their own identities. And whether or not these ideals or characteristics are true of the imagined community is far from important; it is the idea of a shared commonality that makes this potentially vast group of people a community.

This reclamation of communal identity is especially true for many religious groups and can extend to an entire nation; both believers and patriots use a past that is perceived as shared, creating community through a common memory. The question becomes, "Which past"? Often it is a past that never really existed; in many cases it is a "golden age," or a nostalgic conception of a time, space, or place that is much more an imaginative creation than a reality.[2] Defining this shared past, however imagined it may actually be, is negotiated through a number of expressions. In the wake of 9/11, however,

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[1] Anderson, Benedict (1991). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, New Edition.* London and New York: Verso.

[2] Both Thomas Tweed in his study of Diasporic religion and Frederic Jameson among many other theorists of postmodernity navigate the role of the recreation of space and temporality in both individual and communal memory, creating a nostalgic past that shapes and influences the present.

it was contested largely through memorialization, including individual physical testimonies of perceived pasts that build a communal memory. The material representations of these communities become artifacts of changing individual and communal identities, and of norms and practices that define those identities. The process of memorialization shows the tension between ritualization and change over time, as standardizing through ritual is in direct contention with differences in expression – even within the same "in" community – and changing communal responses to new environments or events. If the creation of a collective memory is the same thing as the creation of a basis for a collective identity, than it is possible to map corresponding changes in that identity through events and practices in a perceived shared history that determines perceptions of communal memory.

In the months and years following the attacks on the Pentagon, the World Trade Center and the unknown destination of Flight 93 on September 11th, 2001, a number of Americans attempted to reclaim values and a community that they largely perceived as having been attacked that day. To do so, a number of material responses were employed both officially and informally, as was a pull to both localize and nationalize the events as large in scale and particularly American. Following a number of decades that brought with them extreme technological innovation as well as a series of disasters (contextualized by both religious and civil anxiety over the looming end of the millennium both in the U.S. and across the globe), 9/11 was marketed as the beginning of the new world when in fact it bore many similarities to the old perception of disaster. Countless public officials from the U.S. government and various other institutions also discursively shaped it as the event that was to define a generation of Americans, much

like World War II. And yet the tribute websites, the spontaneous shrines, and various other civil responses both formal and informal are being dismantled, taken down, painted over, and left to rot. There appears to be a bookend on some of the meanings placed on this event and individuals' memory of it, with ripples still moving through political, religious, and popular culture.

The events of 9/11 were inherently global and yet – compared to other national and international tragedies – arguably small in scale: of the roughly 3,000 individuals who died, roughly 25% of the victims were not U.S. citizens, and the victims of the attacks represented 115 nations. Compared to other recent disasters like the tsunami in Indonesia/Sri Lanka/Myanmar that killed 286,000, and the 2001 earthquake in Gujarat, India that claimed 30,000 lives, 9/11 is not a particularly large-scale disaster. Interestingly, however, this relatively small-scale set of attacks aimed at a perceived way of life shared by many western nations that occurred on American soil has been framed as a large-scale American tragedy by those who hold stakes in the nationalist construction of the memory of 9/11.

What is gained through creating 9/11 as an American disaster is an inroad for the reclamation of faith in American ideals, mission, and institutions; the degree of control this permits allows citizens to cope, institutionally, and regain faith in, reaffirm, and defend that which the imagined community perceived as having been attacked. And in the case of the memory of 9/11, shaped as a national event, the beginnings of some imaginary communal boundaries of who would be "in" and who would be "out" was (re)created.

"American ideals" are virtually impossible to define, and any attempt to do so

would largely be an exercise in futility. But what is certain is that it can be determined what some people believe them to be. To continue this process of recuperation and reaffirmation of technology, consumerism, and democracy – among many other characteristics that are used to define Americans at the institutional level, yet do not account for the continually changing face of the American landscape – the "in" members of this community of mourners further defined the boundaries of the community that stemmed from this collective memory, this shared past, by imagining the bonds of their community with a sacred imagination.[3]

The purpose of all memorialization is to create a usable past in hopes of creating a meaningful present and after 9/11 it also serves to give this imagined community moral agency – the expression of which is arguably lacking in American secular life. This process has been at work in other facets of American popular culture: David Chidester writes, "Like a church, Major League Baseball institutionalizes a sacred memory of the past that informs the present."[4] To see the process at work, one must look no further than at the relationship between the ideologies that this post-9/11 imagined community supposedly represented previous to that day and the material artifacts that represent those alleged shared ideals in its wake.

This thesis uses three lenses to examine the material responses that have reshaped the American national memory of the event: spontaneous shrines, official memorials, and consumer relics and commercial rituals. Using these three analytical sets in conjunction

[3] This sacred imagination is much like a religious imagination or a civil religion, but it is not institutionalized. Rather, it is a sacred reinvestment in and reaffirmation of those institutions. Because it is transitional and pre-institutional it is also temporary.

[4] Chidester, David. "The Church of Baseball, the Fetish of Coca-Cola, and the Potlach of Rock 'n' Roll: Theoretical Models for the Study of Religion in American Popular Culture." Journal of the American Academy of Religion, Vol.64, No. 4, (Winter, 1996). Pg.745.

with some close reading of memorials as well as material culture and popular religious analyses, this thesis aims to study the ways in which material responses are used as a means of recreating a community that represents those various, contested, inconsistent – though often institutionalized – characteristics that are used to define the American nation in a post-9/11 world.

The first of the three lenses through which this process of using sacred expression gives secular functions and institutions more meaning is concerned with the construction of informal and spontaneous shrines. Spontaneous shrines can be accumulations made by the many, or individual shrines made by a few or even a single person. And these informal, highly personalized memorials in response to 9/11 are texts that act as testimonials of what individuals value and of that with which they identify in response to this highly nationalized tragedy. The builder is merging her own testimony, often the identity of the fallen individual to whom the shrine is a tribute in many cases, and the nationalistic meanings associated with the builder's identity. Through these various informal material responses to 9/11 a sense of sanctity is afforded the builder, the shrine, the site of the shrine, and the values represented through the memory that is constructed to further define this "American" community. And in that sense the building of a spontaneous shrine is also a performance of "Americanness," often a prescriptive display of grief and nationalistic meanings with a generally reverent context.

These shrines are responses not only to the events of 9/11, but are also implicit rejections of formal methods of commemoration, of the traditional, commercial funerary rites or governmentally sanctioned forms of commemoration that have, in the last few decades, come under attack as inauthentic. This relatively new search for completeness of

human expression of grief and authenticity in the mourning process is an attempt to reclaim individual agency in tragic remembrance from the various institutions and standardized processes of mourning that have been so prevalent through the modern period in American history. Ironically, this process, it will be argued, is itself a means of standardization that norms the diverse material responses to 9/11, and in some cases these informal shrines are even reclaimed or reinvented by formal, governmental or institutional commemorations.

The second lens through which this thesis analyzes the use of civil sanctification for the reification of communal boundaries and simultaneous creation and reclamation of "American values" is through the formalized, collective commemorations that occurred in honor of 9/11. Formal commemoration ceremonies and memorials are the official, permanent responses with a clear set of ideals that is purposefully impersonal and often employs imagery that is both obvious yet vague. This chapter is committed to the relationship between place, collective memory, and the formalized commemorative choices that reflect, recreate and inform that relationship. This thesis argues that the institutionalization of public mourning space for formal commemoration usually entails an attempt at impersonalization and a permanence of values and community that is not usually attempted in the informal shrines. Looking at the purposeful contest of ideas of what to build at the World Trade Center site, for example, this study is invested in the relationship between the means through which the institutional reclamation and definition of values took place – like competition as democratic practice and a sanctification of it as a means of giving these practices more meaning – and the ends that they create.

Lastly, the consumer goods that sprung out of 9/11 are also material attempts to recreate a community with boundaries defined by particular, institutionalized "American values" infused with sacred context. The market plays a large role in determining and tracking what Americans value. Consumer markets that have sprung up in response to 9/11 are comprised of goods that – in most cases – lack subtlety, and therefore lend themselves to be used for fairly clear purposes by those who purchase them. Operating much like religious relics or other material expressions in American and world religions, goods that can be purchased in honor of 9/11 are also a means through which participating community members can elect to count themselves among those that have – if in a small, commodified way – participated in the event, and therefore can use it as a means of identification for themselves, as well as participate in redefining what it means to have experienced that event or identity.

All of these material expressions, it will be argued, are sites where "American values and practices," understood as those official characteristics recognized in so many political speeches – like "freedom," "justice," "sacrifice," "capitalism," "democratic process," "individualism," and the ever elusive "liberty" – borrow the context of sanctity to give that American, nostalgic collective memory of 9/11 more meaning, which serves to inscribe that same sanctity into the institutions that were threatened by the attacks of 9/11. This is a means of deciding who is "in" and who is "out" of the American national community, which further closes the scope of the community itself while simultaneously reifying and privileging particular responses and groups over others.

The iconography and rituals of mourning have created a culture of maintaining sacred space and time surrounding 9/11, including a directed space for expression of

national morality. When the City of New York has its annual commemoration and literally connects heaven and earth with ghostly beams of light in the twin towers' stead, it is using a sense of sanctity borrowed from religious imagery to elicit a solemn nationalist response in which there is an expectation of actions, thoughts and behaviors. The many other memorials to the event at large also negotiate identity and contest meanings of the event in personal – religious, psychological, gendered, racial – and nationalist terms. Some see 9/11 as an instant in an eternal battle of good and evil, coming off of a memory of the Cold War and a sense of American mission. To some it is a political crisis, to others a religious war, and still to others it is a negligible event that, all told, personally affected very few people compared to other national tragedies around the globe in the last century. Yet, memorials and shrines remain ways of setting standards, norming, ritualizing, processing, and mourning that take on religious significance because – in the case of post-9/11 nationalism – they borrow the sense of sanctity and structure of expression from religious practices to make otherwise profane space sacred.[5]

This thesis is an attempt to prove that beyond simple patriotism, even through a reinvention of the personal or individual in hopes of representing or searching for a new authenticity – represented here through the material responses to 9/11 – citizens and consumers are participating in the standardization and institutional reclamation of that which this massive, varied, national imagined community perceives itself as representing. And the creation of that national memory, whether it be by an individual or through a large-scale formal commemoration, is necessarily doing service to the institutionalized

[5] Eiade, Mircea (1959). *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion.* New York: A Harvest Book, Harcourt, Brace and World Inc.

collective identity, inscribing sanctity into otherwise profane places, imbuing secular functions and institutions with sacred meaning, and using the context of popular images of sanctity to define the boundaries of this national "in" community.

CHAPTER ONE

Informal Shrines, the Agency of Grief, and the Civil Sanctity of 9/11

"These things do not mark the death of the nation or patriotism; on the contrary they mark a tremendous effort to reconstitute the nation and the citizen's faith in it."[6]

The days, weeks and months following the attacks of 9/11 brought with them a number of material forms of mourning. This chapter focuses on the processes behind the creation of informal, often highly individualized spontaneous shrines and collections of personal items placed at various sites. These things – symbolic, simple items belonging to grievers, sympathizers, victims, and loved ones – range from photographs to religious symbols, to stuffed animals to flowers, to ad hoc representations of the Twin Towers themselves and everything in between. These informal, spontaneous shrines were constructed on every continent on the planet in response to 9/11, both in honor of the event and of the individuals from around the globe who were killed in the attacks.[7]

The various reasons each item was placed is not something that can be known, as it would require knowing every identity of those who placed items and the identities of those they mourn, as well as the inner workings of those countless relationships. But it is, nonetheless, possible and necessary to put forth what those intentions may have been, given the recent literature concerning spontaneous shrines and memory.[8] It is likely that these informal commemorations, these spontaneous shrines, are material testimonies of grief for an individual or the event at large, a way of remembering, honoring or recreating

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[6] Hass, Kristin Ann (1998). *Carried to the Wall: American Memory and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.* Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.

[7] About 25% of the nearly 3,000 victims of 9/11 were not American citizens.

[8] Kristin Hass, Ed Linenthal, and Colleen McDannell and others have recently laid the frameworks for potential intents behind the construction of spontaneous shrines.

the identity of an individual and the mourner's relationship with the victim through the giving of a "gift," or perhaps even to put forth an image of what grieving is supposed to look like as a performance for others outside of the commemorated relationship or identity. The intent differs with the nature of the spontaneous shrines; some shrines are built as personal testimonies entirely constructed by an individual for another individual or in relation to a larger event, whereas others are accumulations of memorial goods or items that are placed within a space by numerous individuals, each item representing the relationship between, or memory of, an individual or many individuals. These various forms of spontaneous shrines and the processes at work in their erection will be examined here in the context of 9/11.

The building of spontaneous shrines bring with them a number of dynamics that reshape the construction of memory but two main themes appear that define the role of the builder, namely: a self-sanctioned sense of sacred time, and the ability to make secular space into sacred space. Both of these dynamics present in the identities of the builders of spontaneous shrines are made possible through the "agency of grief," particularly in terms of a tragedy like 9/11, which the mourner/builder is afforded.[9] Further, these informal shrines are representative of a search for authenticity on the part of the builder/mourner, taking mourning out of the hands of institutions or anything resembling a sanitized, purposefully impersonal attempt at commemoration, but it will be argued here that this search for authenticity as well as the content of the shrines themselves serve the very sources of that perceived inauthenticity. A recent study suggests that:

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[9] Clark, Jennifer and Majella Franzmann (2006). "Authority from Grief, Presence and Place in the Making of Roadside Memorials." Death Studies, 30: 579-599. Taylor and Francis Group, LLC. Metapress.

> The modern construction of roadside memorials may be a specific expression, perhaps, of a bigger phenomenon, a current groundswell of disregarding institutional forms that once sufficed for the crisis moments in life. More than ever, people are beginning to take religion and meaning-making out of the hands of the government or established religious. While memorials and shrines may have existed by the roadside during periods of higher religiosity in the past, the renewed interest and attraction in their construction currently cannot be argued to have the same context. Those who construct memorials now often speak of not finding meaning in the rituals of conventional religion and see their memorials either as an alternative or even in outright opposition to conventional religion.[10]

Indeed, even the American media and other institutions – the very things that allegedly norm and standardize – have commented on the impersonal nature of formal commemoration, the most recent example being the news media's simultaneous scrutiny of, and participation in, the general pageantry of the ceremonies following the passing of former U.S. president Gerald R. Ford.[11] The search for authenticity – evidenced here through the spontaneous shrines as a form of grief, commemoration or mourning in response to 9/11 – is arguably a rejection of the institutionalized formal modes of commemoration, in favor of forms that give the griever more direct control.

The ways in which American understandings of commemoration, mourning and memory are formed are the result of a number of influences; the Cold War, the Vietnam War, American religious and general millennialism, civil religion and many other factors shaped the history leading to 9/11. But, again, the very institutions and mass-cultural icons, indeed components of the worldview they represent and the histories and identities created by the history of the latter half of the 20th century themselves are being rejected through this informal mode of commemoration or mourning, and are also actually being

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[10] Ibid., Pg. 581.
[11] Gerald Ford Remembered; Firestorm Erupts Over Saddam Execution. CNN: Newsroom. 02 January 2007. 3:00pm. March 22, 2007.

recovered and reified through the rejection of them and the building of the informal, spontaneous shrines. Despite the attempt to reject the worlds of meaning created, standardized, and sanitized of personal, diverse responses that is implicit in the creation of a formal shrine, the informal and personal nature of the spontaneous shrine is often betrayed by its content, and serves only to reify that which it rejects, often displaying signs of allegiance to nation, religion, capitalism, democratic practice, and other tenants of institutionalized American culture.

The relationship between memory and placement of 9/11 spontaneous shrines is also of interest. In the case of roadside shrines or even the Oklahoma City bombing, spontaneous shrines were constructed at the place of disaster or tragedy.[12] In the case of a roadside shrine, the memorial to the crash victim gains sacred authority because it is often placed very near, if not on top of, the site of death or tragedy and is most often built by a griever or group of grievers. This proximity is what gives the otherwise public, secular space a new sense of sacred authority, at least to the griever. In the case of one mourner, the relationship between the memorial she built and place is particularly transcendent: "'the memorial is very bittersweet for me,' said Kendra's mother. 'It's where my daughter's life here on earth ended and her life in heaven started.'"[13] But the informal shrines to the events and victims of 9/11 were constructed across Manhattan, let alone the globe, which calls into question the relationship between commemoration and place.

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[12] For more on memory and the Oklahoma bombing, see Ed Linenthal's *The Unfinished Bombing: Oklahoma City in American Memory*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

[13] Clark, Jennifer and Majella Franzmann (2006). "Authority from Grief, Presence and Place in the Making of Roadside Memorials." Death Studies, 30: 579-599. Taylor and Francis Group, LLC. Metapress. Pg. 585.

And lastly, the informal, commemorative act of building a shrine, in light of the nationalistic context of 9/11, takes on a tone of sacred expression. The secular working of American society has a history of being treated with a certain sanctity, stemming largely from the sense of mission that has been so central to the formation of American nationalism since the nation's inception. This civil religious use of sacred expression will be examined as an attempt at the simultaneous construction of a community to reaffirm a particular identity as well as a reclamation of those values considered "mainstream American" – even through intentionally non-institutional means – when those values represented by institutions, whatever they may be, are perceived as challenged, as is the case in the wake of the 9/11 attacks.

Part One: The Agency of Grief and Informality

The use and view of time to the builder of a spontaneous shrine is much different than that of the viewer or builder of a formal commemoration. The agency grief is afforded comes, perhaps, from the sympathy one is expected to feel for the mourner, but more likely it is a feeling of experiential ownership of a tragic event; it is a set of rights the mourner feels he or she owns simply because he or she is in the process of mourning, and the mourner lays claim to an experiential proximity to the tragic event. It includes a claim to sacred time when it comes to the process of mourning, though this is not without its limits.[14] According to the agency afforded the grieving party building the spontaneous shrine, that individual constructing the spontaneous, informal shrine is the only one who is capable of knowing when the shrine can be taken down or when the grieving has passed. It can take years, and in some cases it never happens; accordingly, the informal

[14] Ibid., Pg.587.

shrine is usually maintained, honored, and claimed as sacred by the builder over a potentially vast amount of time. In most cases, however, the grieving individual or party works within a self-regulated period of time.[15]

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries American religious culture saw a certain denominational structure reshaping the practices of other religious traditions, and come to define American understandings of religious practice and what constitutes "religion" in the American context. This tension is played out over and over as traditional religious practices meet liberal society in America, as can be evidenced through the various waves of Jewish immigrants in the nineteenth centuries as well as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth.[16] The role of time and grieving that was previously prescribed by religious tradition has, arguably, been denominationalized in the American context. In other words, the individual agency that accompanies America's generally decentralized packaging of religion may inform this freedom of time afforded by the agency of grief by putting the ability to make choices of sacred time into the hands of individuals instead of keeping the prescribed roles as defined by religious traditions.

Another feature of this unique sense of temporality afforded by grief is that the informal shrine is expected to change over time. This stands in stark contrast to a formal commemoration or memorial, which is – by definition – meant to lock a standard or norm into a state of timelessness; the formal, impersonal memorial is meant to represent a long-standing set of truths that are supposed to define a people or group over time. Contrary to this is the informal shrine, which is, instead, an artifact of mourning, of a relationship

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Flake, Kathleen (2004). *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.

between the griever and for whom the mourner grieves, as well as the griever's memory of that individual/set of individuals or relationship to the tragic event.

The personal is intrinsically tied with the ephemeral essence of the informal shrine, as the spontaneous shrine is not meant to preserve ideology through time in a permanent way, unlike formal commemorative acts; it is meant to change, and when the time is right, to be dismantled. The question of when the time is right, however, is one that differs depending on who decides to answer, as well as on the frequency of public use of the newly sacred space in its shared, secular context. Indeed, some shrines are built in public places that are used regularly, or in places that pose dangers to the public, thus causing passersby, agencies, or public authorities to dismantle them and end the material artifact of grief prematurely, at least in terms of the temporal authority afforded the griever.

This sense of sacred time – sanctioned through the act of grieving – is inseparable from the sense of sacred space when it comes to informal, spontaneous shrines. The agency afforded grief makes public – and often, private – or secular space open to mourners, who feel they have a natural or human right to transform that space, because of the relationship between memory, grieving and place, into sacred ground. One study of this suggests that, "mourners assume the authority to construct a memorial for private purposes in a public place for as long as they need it there. They are willing to take grief out of the confines of the cemetery and beyond the emotional and spiritual boundaries of the church, to construct for themselves a new sacred place fully recognizing that this process is open-ended and only those who grieve know when it is time to stop."[17]

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[17] Clark, Jennifer and Majella Franzmann (2006). "Authority from Grief, Presence and Place in the Making of Roadside Memorials." Death Studies, 30: 579-599. Taylor and Francis Group, LLC. Metapress. Pg. 583.

Indeed, this grief-sanctioned claim to sacred time and space for the building, assembling or accumulating of a spontaneous, informal shrine was put to the test over and over in the wake of 9/11. One particular case illustrates this dynamic quite well. *The New York Times* printed a story on November 8th, 2002, about the systematic dismantling of a collective spontaneous shrine that had accumulated on the fence of St. Paul's Chapel, near the World Trade Center site in the months following the reopening of downtown Manhattan. The cluttered shrine was comprised of t-shirts, ballcaps, jerseys, flowers, and various other personalized materials; each item purposefully placed there, each representing an identity or relationship.

The New York Times article states: "The job is delicate, both physically and symbolically. Two men in windbreakers worked in silence yesterday, peeling worn T-shirts like skin from the iron bars, passing a knife back and forth for the tough knots."[18] These men were employees who worked for St. Paul's, and their slow dismantling of the spontaneous shrine had a mixed reception from community members, but no report was gathered from those who contributed to the site of mourning: "One day a week, workers will clear away memorial tributes on 10 feet of the fence, five feet on each of two sections."[19] Reactions from residents of the neighborhood ranged from shock at the pace that it was being dismantled to relief because of the "eyesore" the memorial accumulation had become.

These reactions reported in *The New York Times* are representative of different attitudes toward the sacred time and space to which these mourners lay claim. The article states that some neighbors were concerned with what would happen to the materials. Like

[18] Wilson, Michael. "St. Paul's Chapel Near Ground Zero Slowly Dismantles 9/11 Memorial." New York Times. 08 November 2002, nat. ed., sec. b: 6.
[19] Ibid.

many dismantled spontaneous shrines to 9/11 or other fairly recent tragedies, the materials that comprised the shrine were carefully removed so they could be saved for a museum display or archives. There is a relationship between the informal and the formal here, which, ultimately, betrays the sacred temporality afforded by the authority of grief, ironically for the sake of preserving the authenticity represented by the informal, personal spontaneous accumulation or shrine. Even if moved a hundred yards, the informality, personal sanctity, and authenticity of the structure or items is forever lost, and the archivist then plays the role of recreating the meaning of the content, the informal shrine, within the context of formality. This is a peculiar process: is the shrine itself what is to be saved, or the articles that comprise it? And what of the relationship between place and memory in these circumstances?

In the wake of the Oklahoma City bombing, the formal commemoration committee had a unique answer for this question: the spontaneous shrine that had accumulated on a fence, as well the fence itself surrounding the disaster site, was actually incorporated into the formal commemorative structure. Included was also a section of the fence that mourners/visitors/grievers could continue to attach items to that would be cleared, saved, stored, and displayed at a later date. This created an almost living memorial, but it also has a dramatic effect on the informality and personal intent of the spontaneous shrine. Though it encourages the necessarily impersonal display to be personalized, this, arguably, still disrupts the sanctity of the time afforded the griever and particularly the role of informality that is supposed to be expressed through the spontaneous shrine. The incorporation of the process of informal shrine making itself into the formal structure also suggests an institutional reclamation of the mourning

community's newly sanctioned authenticity, making the placement of an item on the fence at the formal structure – in the end – a relatively hollow act.

The reverence with which the St. Paul's employees dismantled the spontaneous shrine to 9/11 that had accumulated on their property in Lower Manhattan in 2002 is not universal when it comes to reactions to and treatment of spontaneous shrines that are built by others, despite the fact that they were taking down other people's sacred expressions of mourning or commemoration. There are numerous accounts of roadside shrines that have been dismantled by road commissions because they are technically a safety hazard, or simply replaced by safer, standardized structures. Cases also exist of a replacement of informal, spontaneous roadside shrines with formalized, official memorials, which is an institutional response to the fairly recent trend of informal shrine building and recognition of individual tragedy:

> Official memorials are uniform in style, size and purpose, and secular in orientation. They are regulated, static and intentionally lacking of any form of individuality. They are rational, organized, theorized responses to road trauma, an attempt to regulate and regiment, perhaps even to capitalize on the memorial impulse to serve a public end by promoting road safety and regaining control over the roadside. That such markers are not the same as personal memorials erected by family and friends is borne out in South Dakota, for example, where some official death markers were subsequently decorated with flowers and had crosses planted at their bases as a sign of ownership, or indeed an assumption of control from the state... Government authorities generally see the roadside as an open public domain, not one to be assumed as a mourning space and argue that roadside memorials create a safety hazard.... In Maryland, Virginia and Washington, for example, memorials are illegal but are generally not disturbed. In Thousand Oaks, California, memorials are permitted for only 30 days, after which they are removed. In Atlantic City, markers on the expressway are there for ten days only and families must have permission and a police escort for their erection. In some cases, however, government authorities are very sensitive to memorial makers. In Victoria, Australia the state transport authority, VicRoads, tried to contact all memorial makers along a 50 kilometer stretch of road before undertaking major repair works. 'We are keen to talk with families who placed these

> memorials,' said Kevin Fox of VicRoads, 'to make arrangements for their storage, protection or relocation in accordance with family wishes.[20]

And much in the same way that the replacement or defacement of these spontaneous, informal shrines undoes the sanctity afforded by the agency of grief, the disassociation of place and spontaneous shrine is of interest in the case of 9/11. This is a rather strange development, as the reason that the authority is granted to grief and thus the sacred transformation of secular space on the part of the grieving builder is tolerated is because of the relationship between memory and the actual place at which the event took place. But in the case of 9/11 not only were informal shrines built all over Manhattan, they stretched across all of New York, the nation, and even across the globe. Given the nature of these roadside shrines, the focus on the fence after Oklahoma City, the religious roots – leaving articles of faith at holy locations or religious shrines – of spontaneous shrine practices, or even the individualism celebrated, mourned, and reified by the placing of items at formal commemorative memorials, like the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial, this disassociation of place and shrine is, indeed, unique. What happens when the site of informal commemoration – the spontaneous shrine – is disassociated from the place it is commemorating?

Figure 1 is a spontaneous shrine built on September 11, 2001 in Venice, California. The regular items are present; flowers, pictures, an American flag, and other personal goods. Also adorning the edifice, serving as a backdrop, are the words "America" and "Believe." Further, a mantle appears as a part of the structure. The mantle, a classic symbol of "home," may be claiming ownership of the identity of the victim who is commemorated here. In the absence of the traditional relationship between

[20] Clark, Jennifer and Majella Franzmann (2006). "Authority from Grief, Presence and Place in the Making of Roadside Memorials." Death Studies, 30: 579-599. Taylor and Francis Group, LLC. Metapress. Pg. 582.

place and memory – placing or erecting the shrine or object at the site of death or tragedy – this shrine represents a different kind of bond between memory and place, emphasizing the relationship between this fallen individual and this specific location, whether it be the building or Venice, California, in general. This is also true of a number of other shrines across the globe; shrines erected in Germany are often mourning a German individual, for example, as next to the United States, Germany lost the most citizens in 9/11.

This can be seen in Figure 2 for an individual who, ostensibly, had a relationship to Holland; the left shoe actually has the words "New York" and "Holland" written on it, advice on the right shoe; "Be Strong... Live Free," and – finally – the name of the individual on the inside of the shoes. The placement of the name on the inside of the shoes is greatly important; that is where the body of the individual, his or her feet, symbolically stood, which connects the viewer to this individual in a very personal way, and clearly attaches this individual to a Hollander identity. This focus on the individual location and connection to place in these cases is not connected to the homeland, the native location of that individual's identity, not simply citing the space of commemoration in terms of the tragedy.

Part Two: Sacred Expression and Defining the National Community

The personal, informal shrines built in commemoration of individuals were indeed built to create an authentic means of mourning that could be highly individualized, and non-sanitized or standardized, as those who build informal, spontaneous shrines implicitly view formal commemoration at least to a degree. This perceived authenticity and individuality gives the viewer a sense of a claim to the sanctity – and a communal

participation in – of the event that the shrine represents. If viewed this way, the shrine is a doorway or an invitation for the viewer to participate in the authentic, sacred community potentially created out of these memorials; the individual that is being commemorated is transformed from a victim into a national martyr, into a communal idea of belonging into which the viewer/audience can enter. The shrine gives the victim's death a meaning, and the viewer decides, given the content of the shrine and the extent of the use of the victim's perceived identity, what that meaning is. This creates a sense of participation in a community of interpretation but it also creates a distance between the intent of the builder, as well as the builder's representation of the victims' actual identity and the meanings placed upon the shrine by the various viewers.

A community can be created out of the shared activity, the shared sanctification of otherwise secular space, and though the viewer is not building the shrine, the viewer is implicitly part of that community of participation, and consequently the interpretation of ideals and identities represented by the shrine. Further, this community is quite possibly the same one represented by the institutions and values of which this search for authenticity through spontaneous shrines is an implicit rejection. In this way, the standardization of the meanings of these shrines – through the interpretive community's act of viewing and placing value – is natural, and reifies the values represented by American institutions. The very same values that were perceived as attacked are recouped through these material, sanctifying, public representations of grief.

A clear example of this would be the process of creating an accumulation-based spontaneous shrine. In the case of 9/11, this can be witnessed through the afore mentioned shrine outside of St. Paul's Chapel, at the World Trade Center site itself, at the

site in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, or at the Pentagon. The relationship between the object and memory is easily identified: "This capacity of the object to act as a perpetual source of recollection is particularly the case when the memory triggered is of a friend or family member who has died... Objects are also left on the city streets at the site of crimes or on roads where accidents have occurred. They serve not only to remember the dead but to jolt the viewer into recognizing the reality of violence and danger."[21] In this sense, the builder intends the shrine to be a performance of grief to send a message, to communicate. This means many things, but one of them is for the shrine to be a reminder of the real violence that took place, and in the case of 9/11 this move is an attempt to create a community of people who have experienced the event (and the viewer of the shrine experiences it simply through viewing/participating in the shrine). This creates a sacred community, and also reclaims some of the American values that have been perceived as challenged.

Figure 3 is a spontaneous shrine that has accumulated in Union Square Park, New York. This park has a history of social and political activism, and is controlled by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation as well as by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority. A number of candles have been placed, presumably, by a number of different individuals, as have a myriad of flowers, flags, images of the World Trade Center, and various other personal and religious items. Like objects have been placed near each other in groupings, which is no small detail. The predominance of such like objects means that there is a common or accepted mode of grieving taking place in which a standardized idea of what grief is supposed to look like is acknowledged.

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[21] McDannell, Colleen (1995). *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press. Pg. 39.

Further, the group of individuals who constructed, and – as of the date of the photograph – continued to construct, this spontaneous shrine has created a community of mourners as well as a collectively recognized, and carefully chosen, sacred space.

The anonymity associated with this personal act is a particularly complicating element in the process of spontaneous shrine building and general accumulation. Accumulations, particularly, are largely anonymous acts that really hinge upon providing a viewer access to an interpretation of the identity of an otherwise silent and unknown victim, and yet this is a personal act – by the shrine builder – that aims to send a message, to connect themselves, the person the shrine is to (and in the case of 9/11, the event) to the imagined community of which they consider themselves a part.

There is also a less communally reinforcing side to the performative aspects of spontaneous shrine building. To the builder, the meaning of the spontaneous shrine is intrinsically wrapped up with the individuality of, identity and relationship with the victim, but to the viewer – despite the sacred community that is potentially defined like in the example above – the meaning of the shrine built by an individual or group of individuals to a victim is potentially far less personal, and far less sanctified. The viewer sees the idea of the individual at work – not necessarily the individual him or herself – and as such the personal becomes impersonal. In other words, the private act of individual grieving or mourning is consequently made a public act by erecting a spontaneous shrine or contributing to the accumulation of items at a particular public location. As a result, there is a clear distance available to the non-participant in which this public act is an impersonal performative gesture, meant to be seen, meant to be judged, valued or discarded, and as such the authority potentially gained is lost. The intent

implies a message; a connection the builder intends to send through the shrine and identity of the victim, to the larger community. But just as it can sanctify, it can also profane and be seen as dangerous, annoying, disrespectful, self-serving, unnecessary, or one of many other interpretations.

The shrine pictured in Figure 4 is meant to provide a frame of accessibility into the identity of the individual commemorated here. The shrine-builder is making it known to the viewer through religious, nationalistic and personal items that this individual – or perhaps the shrine builder – is ostensibly tied to Mexico and Catholicism in some way shape or form. It is less clear, however, if the American flag that appears is – as has been evidenced through other shrines – a standardized gesture because of the victim's relationship to the events of 9/11, thus painting this shrine as both to the individual and to the event at large, or if this individual had some connection to the flag or to the United States in general. The flowers – a common theme throughout virtually all spontaneous shrines – are also an inaccessible, if not standardized, gesture.

The physical memorial is often adorned with or comprised of personal belongings, perhaps pictures or a religious symbol or set of religious symbols, as well as other articles to define that person as a fallen individual. These are all things that personally distinguish that individual, but to the viewer participating in the mourning ritual who does not know these individuals a structural pattern of eerie similarity between all of the shrines can be detected that, in effect, makes them anonymous and causes a visual and interpretive amnesia of the individuality that is supposed to be expressed through these shrines and memorials.

The necessarily public act of spontaneous shrine building also creates a standardized idea of what a shrine is to look like and of individualized commemorative practice in general. These spontaneous shrines, highly individualized to the builder, can easily be described as comprised of virtually identical materials like stuffed animals, perhaps religious symbols, flowers, photographs, notes/poems, clothing or other personal goods that often belonged to the victim or to the builder. Idiosyncratic goods representing a personal level of experience are inaccessible outside of the individuals aware of it, and even then these items are contextualized by the many other recognizable symbols of nation, religion, and family. The authenticity that the mourner/shrine builder strives for is mediated through a number of, frankly, traditional or institutional symbols; the process that is arguably a rejection of sanitized, corporate means of mourning is itself claimed by institutions, representing norms or standards themselves. This personal and informal pull is made impersonal, standardized, and almost formal again through this.

Figures 5-7 are three spontaneous shrines erected at the World Trade Center site in memory if individuals who were killed in the 9/11 attacks. All three have the various images, structures and items that are meant to personalize them, and commemorate them as individuals. But, the pattern does indeed emerge: nationalistic, religious, and standardized personal items are displayed. Further, the anti-institutionalism that is implicit in the existence and erection of the personal, changing, temporary spontaneous shrine is betrayed by its contents. These images, selected from a myriad of shrines to individuals, are displays of American ideals and institutions; the police badge, the work gloves, the leisure activity of golfing, the American flag theme that is prevalent in all three of these images, the religious symbols, and even the inclusion of artwork from

children are telling reifications and reclamations of institutionalized American values, performed through an attempted anti-institutional means of mourning. And though the builder is attaching the identity of the victim to what he or she considers "good" or "valuable" in society, whether it be family, nation, work, or religion, the builder is also attaching the above individuals – through this shrine – to socially prescribed ideas of what is "good" or "valuable," which galvanizes these particular values as sacred and important in American society.

The same claim can be made for rhetorical shrines, like that pictured in Figure 8; every statement in this spontaneous shrine is a quote, catchphrase, or prayer. The distinction between informality and formality is blurred through the language and images present in these shrines, and the individual represented is all but lost, only remaining as an anonymous face for the meanings the builders – and consequently the viewers – attach to them. The "Our Father" connects this individual to a larger community through a religious institution, but also maintains a standard of faith, values, and generally accepted forms of mourning.

In these various informal spontaneous shrines, whether they are spontaneous accumulations or a targeted shrine in commemoration of an individual, the agency of grief is clearly in play. The builder or individual who placed an item in commemoration is transforming public, secular space into sacred ground, and through this gesture, is putting forth a public claim to the victim's identity, which has a number of ramifications laid out here. Though the builder may intend it to be an expression of mourning in commemoration of a specific victim, or is simply laying an item with many others as a sign of reverence for the 9/11 attacks in general, it is a performative act that, in the end,

presents both an inroad to participate in a community that sanctifies these spaces and communicates ideology through the identities of the victims, as well as a reification of institutional "American" values – nation, family, religion, commerce – that were perceived as threatened by the attacks of 9/11.

CHAPTER TWO

Formal Commemoration, American Identity, and Sanctifying Place

"Like many informal memorials, [we found that] narratives of the formal memorials for the 9/11 events suggested that there was something *sacred* or holy about the site of the tragic events."[22]

With the increasing classification of the political documents that would inform the public history of 9/11 one is left with a number of other types of responses that comprise the public record, among which lie the already described informal shrines. The authority of grief displayed in the previous chapter and the search for authentic means of mourning that is also an implicit rejection of institutional mourning has a counterpart in official commemorations. The governmental and official response reaches far, encompassing a large set of reactions that have manifested themselves in the forms of political rhetoric, debates and applications of new public policies (both domestic and international), martial action in Afghanistan as well as in Iraq, endorsement of the air travel business by the executive branch, and a number of sacred/civic commemorative ceremonies. These are just a few responses among the many sanctioned by local, state, and national levels of the U.S. government.

Of the many implications of these various official commemorations and responses is the goal of simultaneously defending and defining all things officially "American," and the choices of what is commemorated – and how – standardizes and formally defines this post-9/11 American identity. As noted in the previous chapter, formal commemoration

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[22] Damphousse, Kelly R., Kristin S. Hefley and Brent L. Smith. "Creating Memories: Exploring how Narratives Help Define the Memorialization of Tragedy." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Atlanta Hilton Hotel, Atlanta, GA, Aug 16, 2003. 05 October 2006. <http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p107083_index.html> Pg. 22.

has a distinct sense of time, one that attempts to represent an unchanging, unwavering identity. As such, to officially commemorate anything is inherently also an act of standardization, and it will always contain a necessarily inaccurate representation of the event and/or the community responding to it because – despite the attempt to boil a monument down to a few key ingredients that countless individuals can relate to – the unchanging nature of the identity represented through the specific sense of permanence exhibited in official memorials limits their ability to truly represent the plurality of identities that define the American landscape. This emphasis on permanence in formal memorials does, however, lend as sense of sanctity to the set of values, assumptions, experiences and expectations that is held as "the" American identity. This sense of sanctity is employed as a means of garnering a connection between a specific, formally sanctioned national identity – in some innate and meaningful way – and a maximum amount of individuals, comprising this national "in" community.

This chapter analyzes this process of "civil sanctification" through these official, formally sanctioned memorials in response to 9/11, the goal of which is the reification of communal boundaries and simultaneous creation and reclamation of "American values." These sacred images and forms of expression, relatively familiar to the American populace, rely on contextual familiarity to recall a sort of institutional nostalgia; memorials call upon familiar images in the popular mind to symbolically resonate with holy or great meaning, and the use of sacred expression in the case of formalized 9/11 commemorations is no different; we recognize these images as meaningful, as important, and when that holy context is borrowed by the state to define the nation, only the content – not the sacred import thrust into the commemoration's meaning – changes.

What is being built at the site of the World Trade Center is a telling choice of how one concept of an American national "in" community has chosen to memorialize and formally represent American identity, as is the open field in Pennsylvania. The differences between these two memorial sites to the same event and the community they both allegedly represent are astounding. But both are drawing on religious expressions and a connection to place, whether it is connecting the heaven and the earth or leaving a field relatively open as a sacred space. And both are telling of the constructed identities that they are supposed to represent as well as the attempts to extend sacred space into national memory.

The governmental claim laid to these spaces – the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and the field in Somerset County, Pennsylvania – is an official attempt to make sacred what was previously secular, perhaps profane ground:[23] "In a society devoted to the creation of profit through the exploitation of private property, the permanent removal of property from the market – in order to become wilderness, national park or national monument – is a major way in which Americans create and identify with what for them is sacred. If the sacred is that which is not profane, then in the USA to ensure that a particular object or parcel of land may never be bought or sold both signifies and solidifies its exceptional and potentially sacred character."[24] This quote, as does this chapter, suggests that the official setting-aside of place is an act of taking what is otherwise profane and claiming it as sacred, even if the Pentagon and the World Trade Center still operate as governmental and commercial centers, respectively. To do so, the

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[23] Eiade, Mircea (1959). *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion.* New York: A Harvest Book, Harcourt, Brace and World Inc.

[24] Sellars, Richard West and Tony Walter. "From Custer to Kent State." *Pilgrimage in Popular Culture* (1993). Eds. Ian Reader and Tony Walter. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, and London: The Macmillan Press Ltd. Pg.183.

official, formal material and – to an extent – rhetorical expressions called upon to respond to 9/11, and the purposes for choosing those specific kinds of images, will be analyzed here. Primarily, it will be argued that these sacred expressions – like beams of light connecting heaven and earth in place of the World Trade Center, and the sacred open field of Somerset, PA – are representative of a very particular conception of America, meant to be representations of permanent "American values," and serve to define how these American ideals are to be perceived while simultaneously localizing the disaster as American, binding the imagined American national "in" community.

Part One: The Technology/Body Relationship and Official Responses to 9/11

One of these "American" values that were challenged through the attacks of 9/11 was a general belief in technology as "progress," which is a necessity when operating a worldview that requires growth as a means of sustenance. Coming off of an accumulation of late twentieth century failures of modernity and a transition into technological revitalization, 9/11 came as a blow to a technology-based mindset that saw the twenty-first century as a clean start, and a technologically new world.[25] The relationship between the human body – frail, imperfect, capable of irrationality, and temporary – and the permanence and raw calculability of technology creates much anxiety in the human psyche about the amount of harm that this unthinking technology can inflict, particularly in a system that – again – relies on a belief in that technology.[26] Whether through art,

[25] Larabee, Ann (1999). Decade of Disaster. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
[26] Ihde, Don (1999). *Technology and the Lifeworld: From Garden to Earth*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

literature or even consumer goods, this tension between technology and humanity has been – and will continue to be – played out over and over.

In its grandest scope, 9/11 is in many ways a product of asymmetries in worldviews: one which relies upon and spreads technology for the purposes of creating capital, and another – belonging to a specific subset of the Islamic faith – that denounces the ends that these technologies are built for. Further, the attacks themselves utilized these technologies; airplanes were used, as were interactive technologies as means of communication between these specific terrorists. In the months following 9/11, the construction of the planes was a site of technological anxiety, as the pilot bay was accessible from the cabin with few too barriers preventing the hijacking of an aircraft. The buildings that were struck were also subject to technological scrutiny in the wake of 9/11. News media coverage at the Pentagon, a fairly low-to-the-ground building, included in-depth reports of the thickness of the walls, the kind of impact that was made and its effects. The World Trade Center towers were also under the public eye; with many world citizens who were witnessing the events unfold on television, in person or over some other medium wishing that the buildings had been truly "terror-proofed." The buildings had been targeted before, surviving a 1993 blast that killed six and injured over one thousand. A granite memorial was erected that was destroyed on September 11, 2001, a fragment of which will serve as the centerpiece in the new memorial at the site.

And though there was much coverage of the faults in the technological aspects of the structures and planes, there were a number of ways in which these technological anxieties were alleviated by shifting blame to human error and faults in human judgment. By refocusing the problems as ones that have answers and as human errors, anxiety of

technology was gradually lifted, which allowed for a reinstitution of belief in technological expansion, a sort of lynchpin in the day-to-day operations within the steadily globalizing worldview.

The airline industry itself took a hard hit from which it continues to recover: "To be sure, President George W Bush sporadically called on Americans to volunteer in their communities. But his appeals seemed largely symbolic, not connected to vital wartime activities, even as Bush administration officials visibly puzzled over what to do with volunteers. President Bush did not launch any big new civic effort, such as mandatory national service for young Americans. Instead, for weeks after 9/11, his most prominent appeals were commercial rather than civic. The Travel Industry Association of American estimated that two-thirds of Americans saw the President starring in a television advertisement calling for people to express 'courage' by taking more trips. And the president repeatedly asked people to go shopping to stimulate the economy."[27] Indeed, in a worldview that steadily increases privatization of life – and often uses personal technology to do so, like cell phones, mp3 players, new home construction practices that separate place to be more private – the post-WWII American values that were stressed in that period do not seem to fit the lifeways that define much of the consumerist, and rather privatized modern American identity. Yet, these are the perhaps nostalgic images called upon and given sanctity, to give a commodity driven culture meaning.

The media coverage – itself the product of numerous technological marvels working in synch – of the attacks of 9/11, the tanks, aerial attacks, and other martial technologies that are broadcast into American living rooms are all reminders of the

[27] Skocpol, Theda. "Will 9/11 and the War on Terror Revitalize American Civic Democracy?" PS: Political Science and Politics, Vol.35, No. 3. (Sep., 2002). Pg. 538.

powers of modern technology, but are also a means of garnering and regaining national faith in airplanes, in the abilities of technology, as the proverbial "bad guy" is hunted. The media and the military, two of the major sources of technological use and promulgation, are also official, formal institutions in American culture, though the media has been democratized to a certain extent through blogging and other forms. To see these forces in coordination after an event like 9/11 that certainly caused much anxiety about the technology/body relationship is a means of making the role that they play in American culture inseparable from the technologies employed. The severe fear of flying and near death of the airline industry is itself testament to the unease with the power technology can be harnessed for, but the answer, in a worldview dominated by technocratic methods as a central characteristic of its operations, is – of course – a technological one. So, in the case of the World Trade Center, the answer is not only to have holes in the ground in memoriam, but to build a defiant tower that is nearly "terror-proof," to recalibrate airplanes to standardize a separation of cockpit from cabin, and to use technology as a means of putting the American viewer into the sights and sounds of the missions in Afghanistan and, subsequently, Iraq.

Part Two: The Sacred and Impersonal at the Pentagon Memorial

Official memorials, which take much longer to construct than informal shrines, undergo a number of identity transformations while attempting to maintain a core set of ideals or characteristics to maintain a unified sense of place and sanctity. Those in charge of the memorial at the Pentagon site, feeding off of the popularity of the "beams of light" that stood in the stead of the Twin Towers in Manhattan, initially chose to light up its five

corners as well. On the five year anniversary of 9/11, however, the Pentagon lit the skies with 184 beams of light, the same number as there were victims at the Pentagon site between both those on the plane and those in the Pentagon. This is a rather explicitly sacred symbol, literally using beams of light to connect the earth and the heavens. Further, including a beam for each individual is also a way of representing an upward ascension against the night sky. The Pentagon Memorial has since undergone a competitive design campaign to choose how to properly memorialize the site while simultaneously reifying both the role of competition in the American system as well as capitalist practice in general.

The Pentagon Memorial design (Figure 10) that was chosen through a memorial competition, which continues to seek donations to complete construction, was officially dedicated on June 15, 2006. According to the winners of the design competition, Kaseman Beckman Amsterdam Studio, the 1.93 acre design:

> Envisions a memorial that simultaneously affords intimate and collective contemplation through silence within a tactile field of sensuous experience. It sets out to permanently record and express the sheer magnitude of loss through an architectural experience of a place radically different than what we encounter in our daily lives. In this light, the space itself serves as the memorial at all scales of experience and engagement – from within, driving by and from above... Each unit is dedicated to an individual victim – its placement and place within the collective field a unique instance. This highly specific and qualitatively objective organizational strategy yields seemingly random results. The field is organized as a timeline of the victims' ages, spanning from Dana Falkenberg, 3 years old, to John D. Yamnicky, age 71. While each memorial unit locates itself on its respective age line, the units are then organized by birth date along the age line... Personal interpretation is further sparked by embedding layers of specificity into the orientation of each memorial unit within the expansive site. Fifty-nine memorial units face one direction, 125 face the other – thus distinguishing victims on board American Airlines Flight 77 from those who were inside the Pentagon. When visiting a memorial dedicated to a victim who was in the Pentagon, the visitor will see their engraved name and the Pentagon in the

> same view. Conversely, one would see the engraved name of a victim on Flight 77 with the sky. Though highly specific, this distinction is quite subtle when deployed consistently throughout the site. It adds a level of difference to the visual and spatial field, thus provoking visitors' curiosity, while simultaneously telling the story of those involved in the events that took place here that day. Elegant in its self-supporting form, the memorial unit is at once a glowing light pool, a cantilevered bench and a place for the permanent inscription of each victim's name. Using Computer Numerically Controlled (CNC) technology common to the aerospace industry, the cast duplex stainless steel memorial unit is easily mass-produced and incredibly articulate... As the memorial unit grows out of the ground, the stabilized gravel field is interrupted only by moments of glowing light and water, and the engraved names float above these moments... The western edge of the site is defined with the AGE WALL – a wall that "grows" in height one inch per year relative to the age lines that organize the site at large. As one moves deeper into the site the wall gets higher – it grows from 3 inches above the perimeter bench (at Dana's memorial age-line) to 71 inches above the bench (at John's)... Experientially, this wall communicates the organizational strategy to the drivers passing by on the freeway, while still allowing them to peer into the site from afar.[28]

A number of themes appear in the above description accompanying the design of the Pentagon Memorial. The idea of personalization itself is very present, and vividly described above and built into the design itself. The technological uses as well as a particular, permanent sense of time also accompany the design. The purposeful personalization of each unit is tempered by their identical construction and utter standardization; there is a degree of personal interpretation that is prescribed in the face of the highly qualitative – though seemingly random – design. Yet, the fact that the memorial units themselves are benches – that glow and are easy to mass-produce, no less – are not only symbols of impersonalization, mass consumerism and technological reification, but also of sanctity. Further, the multitude of ways to experience the memorial – driving by, aerially, by visiting it, sitting on the benches, or even over the

[28] Kaseman Beckman Amsterdam Studios (KBAS). Model of Pentagon Memorial. Pentagon Memorial Project, New York.

internet – is both a way of reifying technology as well as allowing visitors to experience the site's sanctity from various degrees of relation and proximity; direct contact is no longer necessary.

Technology is reified through a number of the design strategies: loose gravel fields are hardened and ensured as safe through a process that creates a uniform surface. The units are – all at the same time – light, water, bench, marker of – to an extent – identity, and easy to reproduce in mass quantities. The "Age Wall" is both symbolic marker, ranging from three inches – the age of the youngest victim on the plane – to seventy-one inches – the age of the oldest victim on Flight 77 – as well as a technological strategy which allows drivers to engage the memorial (as well as those exposed to an aerial view), while it serves as a barrier between the memorial itself and the delivery lane that encroaches on the northwestern edge. The fact that these technologically defined memorial units are quantitatively spread throughout the park but intended to look randomly placed "grow" out of the ground and are intentionally surrounded by foliage all indicates the attempt to make them, and the technology behind their construction and design, natural.

The design elements that make the Pentagon Memorial personal – including the sense of sanctity that the units and the site itself are imbued with – while keeping it somehow intentionally impersonal, are attempts to balance a record of the events with imagery that a viewer can experience, participate in, and identify with. The elements that purposefully personalize the site are comprised of units that commemorate each individual, including their age and their tragic orientation as either tied to the plane or to the Pentagon. These units are also benches, on which the visitor is intended to somehow

participate with the identity of the individual commemorated. The glowing "moment" on which the name and age inscription rests is also a sacred representation of divinity or a life-source, a memorial as much to the soul as the bench itself is to the body.[29] It is also a consistent theme of light equating sanctity from the prior identity of the formal commemorative site, echoing the individualized beams of light that stood at the five-year anniversary.

This narrative of the personal, however, is intentionally impersonalized by the facelessness and permanence that persists in this memorial. Much like the Oklahoma City Bombing Memorial contains the simultaneously personal and impersonal empty chairs, as if waiting to be filled by the absence they call upon for their sense of importance and sanctity, so too does the Pentagon Memorial sell the participant a sense of the personal, the narrative of an individual. The memorial unit includes a name, a designation of "plane" or "Pentagon," and an age, beyond which the identity of the victim is wide open for interpretation. It is unclear what meanings these individuals truly represent other than those thrust upon them by the sheer design – both uniform and personalized as it may be – and by the participant/viewers.

This facelessness, this impersonal, concrete, and permanent gesture boils individuality to something that can be perceived, but not realized. In other words, the idea of the individual, the personal, is felt, but is not there; the intentional lack of identity is a means through which the participant/viewer of the memorial can enter into a world of symbols, each of which carry a set of meanings tied more to the nation than to the

[29] This imagery of glowing or of light representing the sacred, the divine or the soul flows throughout popular culture, taking shape in many world religions, particularly Christianity. This familiarity with this imagery and symbolism lends the popular recognition of such an image as sacred. This has been also evidenced as a general sign of sanctity through the nineteenth century American painting style known as Luminism.

individual victims. Claimed as a sacred space distinguished from the profane, this holy ground is dominated by precision, by permanence, by a singular identity created through the appropriation of the identity of the many, a site that uses the impersonal even through the personalization of each virtually identical unit as a means to symbolize sanctity, technological faith, and the concept of individuality on a plot of land that is intrinsically tied to the governing body, extending a sense of reverence into the public sphere.

Part Three: The National Martyrs of Flight 93

The final target of the hijackers of flight 93 will forever be unknown, though many believe it would have been the White House or another federal building. Crashing into an open field in Somerset, Pennsylvania, however, was certainly not the plan. As has been documented on a number of occasions, a small number of the 40 crewmembers and passengers (not including the four hijackers) on the flight took it upon themselves to overpower the hijackers in hopes of saving the potentially many more lives that would be taken if they did not act.

The National Park Service and the Department of the Interior claimed the site at which the plane crashed as an official memorial site shortly after. The identity of the space, for the first five years, was that of a sort of formalized spontaneous shrine. Left as an open field to demarcate the sanctity of place, the site called upon a number of familiar images in American popular and religious culture. The role of nature as sacred is not unfamiliar to the American landscape by any stretch of the imagination.[30]

[30] This holds true for Native American identities, but also throughout the colonial period and American expansion. The role of nature in religious revelation in the Hebrew and Christian Bibles has been echoed throughout American religious traditions and popular culture as well as through non-western or monotheistic conceptions of the sacred.

The identity of this space as a formal, not-so-spontaneous shrine was made possible by the addition of forty feet of fencing to accommodate the materials that would accumulate, as well as through the archiving of many of the items (see Figure 11). The rhetoric surrounding the temporary shrine attests to the peacefulness of the place, the sanctity of it, and the difficulty one has to imagine that such a tragedy has taken place at that site. With 130,000 annual visitors, the temporary shrine will remain up as the formal, permanent shrine is constructed as long as it doesn't interfere with construction.

The formal shrine (Figure 12), another product of a design competition, seeks donations to come into fruition and is accompanied by a campaign slogan. Where the Pentagon Memorial funding campaign's slogan is "Remember. Reflect. Renew.," the Flight 93 Memorial Fund's slogan is "A Common Field One Day...A Field of Honor Forever."[31] A controversy surrounded the winning design causing it to be redesigned, though it still contains many of the characteristics that made it controversial. The design, which encompasses a vast area, contains a very large open "Bowl," an entrance called the "Tower of Voices," and a space called "Sacred Ground." The controversy surrounding the winning memorial design suggested that the Red maples surrounding the bowl, with an opening, directly resembled a Crescent, and the sacred ground, the star. The opening, if traced around the globe, points directly to Mecca, and the four hijackers were counted among the dead at the site.

Beyond this religio-political controversy, however, is a less obvious sanctity that is rather explicitly called upon in the images and symbols chosen at this site. First, the site mimics the natural landscape and the bowl itself is a sort of Kiva, or traditional,

[31] Capt. S. Ruda, L.A. Fire Department, describing the crash site. This became the Flight 93 National Memorial call to arms, so to speak.

round sacred meeting place used by Pueblo peoples for religious ceremonies. The "Sacred Ground" area is the final resting place of those who died on Flight 93. It is comprised of a black slate plaza with a number of niches and places to conduct ceremonies or place items. This is the most explicitly ritually religious design feature not encompassed in the controversy. The expectation is that visitors will use these spaces to identify with the sacrifice a few of these individuals made, connect with them materially, almost commune with them. This expectation is a way to use the concept of individual heroism as a sort of focal point, or mantra, for civil religious practice. The "Sacred Ground" area itself becomes a place for formally commemorating national martyrs, praying to the idea of their last acts and identifying them as faceless yet somehow embodied saints in American civil religion.

Finally, the "Tower of Voices" is the entrance and exit for the entire park. It is a rather ethereal space, with forty very large, hung wind chimes – one for each of the victims of flight 93 – that move with the wind, connecting the natural with the purposefully sacred. The tower will glow at night time, with glass mosaics and blue tinted areas, allowing – again – the sense of light, of obscured glowing, to communicate a sense of sanctity, giving the site more importance and claiming the space for sacred nationalism.

Part Four: Reflecting Absence and Reaching Heaven at the World Trade Center

The term "Ground Zero," like "9/11," is a signifier for a number of meanings, the original of which is lost, leaving an abstract cast of itself built out of the contested communal and national memories and meanings placed upon it. The site of the World

Trade Center becomes simultaneously a pilgrimage site for civil religion – to which many Americans and citizens of other nations travel – as well as a tourist destination. Hardly the site of mourning it once was, despite the formal commemoration: "these days [2002], visitors to the giant, gaping hole are no longer covered in any grimy coat of dust, and only a faint hint remains of the burning stench that once pervaded Lower Manhattan. Vendors selling rhinestone American flag pins are joined by vendors hawking 'designer' sunglasses. And for every cluster of tourists with disposable cameras or silver video cameras, there is one New Yorker clutching a plastic shopping bag bearing the red-lettered logo of Century 21, the discount department store across the street from the World Trade Center (Gootman, 2002)."[32]

As noted earlier, September 11, 2001, was not the first terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. The 1993 bombing, shortly before the Waco, Texas shootout with the Branch Davidians and two years before the Oklahoma City Bombing, was commemorated in granite, only to be destroyed in 2001. The initial chill of the images of the planes hitting the towers has since lost some cultural pull. But the outpouring of emotions in the moments, days, weeks, months, and even years after have – much like the rubble at the World Trade Center site itself – been slowly stripped away. At the base lies a concrete set of meanings that have found themselves materially manifested in the official commemorations at the site. The clean up of the site was not itself finished until April of 2006, but for those five and a half years the site served – and will continue to serve until 2009 – as a sort of formal not-so-spontaneous shrine. Accumulations and

[32] Damphousse, Kelly R., Kristin S. Hefley and Brent L. Smith. "Creating Memories: Exploring how Narratives Help Define the Memorialization of Tragedy." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Atlanta Hilton Hotel, Atlanta, GA, Aug 16, 2003. 05 October 2006. <http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p107083_index.html> Pg. 17.

informal shrines to individuals cropped up, again, being archived for later use at the museum that will accompany the formal memorial.

Along with this mass, unofficial set of accumulations at the site were a number of symbols that would appear during annual commemoration ceremonies as well as throughout the year. Primary among these are the beams of light (Figure 13) and the use of the American flag. The beams of light themselves, called "The Tribute in Light," as has been noted throughout this study, are a rather sacred representation. They stand in the stead of their fallen physical forms, holy spirits ascending, connecting this realm with the next. This symbolism is arguably largely Christian, but evokes a general sanctity that works to identify and define a national community more than a specifically religious one.

The set of images is meant to act as an extension of sacred space to influence the national memory of the event, and to draw individuals into a national "in" community.[33] It makes one forget that the buildings were sites of international commerce, replaced by the overwhelming tragedy and spectacle of the day, boiled down to a sanctity meant to bind people together at a formerly profane space. This sanctification is further institutionalized through the creation of the formal memorial.

The most publicized of the memorial design contests in response to 9/11 – which, again, serves to reify the "permanent" individuality and competitive values of institutional American life – decided what would be built in commemoration at Ground Zero. The winning design, created by architect Michael Arad and landscape architect Peter Walker, is called "Reflecting Absence," which began construction in 2006 and will be officially dedicated on September 11, 2009: the eight year anniversary. Reflecting

[33] Anderson, Benedict (1991). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, New Edition.* London and New York: Verso.

Absence, chosen from 5,200 entries, will be accompanied by the memorial's centerpiece, "Freedom Tower," designed by Daniel Libeskind, World Trade Center towers two, three, and four, a museum, a terminal, and retail space (Figure 14).

The design is described as follows by the *World Trade Center Memorial Foundation*:

> The Memorial will consist of two massive voids with waterfalls cascading down their sides, to serve as a powerful reminder of the Twin Towers and of the unprecedented loss of life from an attack on our soil. The names of the 2,979 who perished in the September 11th attacks in New York City, Washington, DC, Pennsylvania, and the February 1993 World Trade Center bombing will be inscribed around the edge of the Memorial waterfalls. An eight-acre landscaped Memorial Plaza filled with more than 300 oak trees will create a contemplative space separate from the sights and sounds of the surrounding city. The design is unique in its use of ecological considerations, which exceed sustainability standards. Complementing the Memorial, a state-of-the art museum will offer visitors an opportunity to deepen their experience at the site. Accessed through an entry pavilion designed by Snøhetta, the Memorial Museum will help facilitate an encounter with both the enormity of the loss and the triumph of the human spirit that are at the heart of 9/11. Dynamic, interactive exhibitions including artifacts and personal effects; a resource center, contemplative areas, and innovative educational programming will convey stories of the victims and recount the experiences of survivors, responders, area residents, and witnesses. As visitors descend below the Memorial voids, they will reach bedrock, where they can approach the slurry wall and other remaining structures at the foundation of the site where the tallest buildings in the world – a triumph of human ingenuity and aspiration – once stood.[34]

As the description above suggests, one of the memorial's purposes is to act as a reminder of the lives lost and of the twin towers. But it also serves to project a sense of sanctity, which is itself a means of defining the boundaries of a national "in" community, lending a sense of spiritual import and defiant permanence to the images and values that are contained in the memorial. The void's that define the design of reflecting absence are

[34] World Trade Center Memorial Foundation. 15 April 2007. <http://www.buildthememorial.org>

indicative of something missing, of lives and an American icon gone, with the rushing waterfalls acting as reminders of the downward movement of the buildings themselves. As has been seen before with the Pentagon memorial, names will be used to provide a sense of faceless individuality. Whereas the builder of an informal shrine sets forth messages through the identity of the person that the shrine commemorates, the simple name embossed on a concrete monument – to the viewer/participant – is informed only by the surrounding context and images. The setting aside of a contemplative space, like "Sacred Ground" at the Flight 93 Memorial, is a division of space meant to grant participant/viewers a place to use this idea of the individual and the symbols around them to experience sacred nationalism.

Further, descending below the voids and waterfalls to the bedrock – a gesture mirroring a call to go deep into one's own core, one's own depths, and a finality of really experiencing the place and its meanings – affords viewer/participants the chance to see what is called "The Slurry Wall." This wall is a remaining structure from the actual World Trade Center, a piece of the foundation. Acting much like contemporary American ruins, encountering this object, this place, is a way to participate in the community it represents and in the experience of its meanings. Participating in objects is a way of experiencing the meanings of places and a way of maintaining a relationship and memory. Pilgrimage – or in this case, perhaps even tourism – works much the same way.

As noted, among the structures accompanying the Reflecting Absence memorial itself is Libeskind's "Freedom Tower," which has, like its counterpart in Pennsylvania, been the source of much controversy and has undergone several redesigns (Figure 15). Filled with symbolism, the *Lower Manhattan Development Corporation* has the

following to say about the updated design:

> As with the original design, the Freedom Tower will soar to 1,776 feet in the sky and serve as an inspirational and enduring beacon in the New York City skyline. The Tower's design evokes classic New York skyscrapers in its elegance and symmetry while also referencing the torch of the Statue of Liberty... As the tower itself rises from its cubic base, its square edges are chamfered back, transforming the square into eight tall isosceles triangles in elevation. At its middle, the tower forms a perfect octagon in plan and then culminates in an observation deck and glass parapet (elevation 1,362 feet and 1,368 feet – the heights of the original Twin Towers) whose plan is a square, rotated 45 degrees from the base. A mast containing an antenna for the Metropolitan Television Alliance (MTVA), designed by a collaboration of architects, artists, lighting designers and engineers, and secured by a system of cables, rises from a circular support ring, similar to Liberty's torch, to a height of 1,776 feet. In keeping with the original design, the entire composition evokes the Statue of Liberty's torch and will emit light, becoming its own Beacon of Freedom. [Architect] David Childs said, "...While the memorial, carved out of the earth, speaks of the past and of remembrance, Freedom Tower speaks of optimism and the future as it rises into the sky in a faceted, crystalline form filled with and reflecting light." .... In order to achieve a world class model of energy efficiency and environmental sustainability, the Freedom Tower will include: state-of-the-art energy conservation technology to reduce energy demand; better interior "daylighting" and views of the outside for occupants due to ultra-clear glass technology that also saves energy; improved indoor air quality due to outside-air ventilation and use of building materials without toxic materials such as volatile organic compounds (VOCs); water conservation due to reuse of rainwater for building cooling and irrigation; reduction of vehicular traffic via proximity to public transportation and provision of facilities for bicycle commuters. Environmental quality will also extend to construction of the Freedom Tower... According to a report by the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, the rebuilding the World Trade Center will generate $15 billion in total economic output in New York City and an average of 8,000 jobs each year for thirteen years.[35]

This telling description can be broken down into two portions: one symbolic and celebratory, and the other technologically reassuring. The symbols present are the obvious reference to the nation's founding in the height of the building, the observance of

[35] Lower Manhattan Development Corporation. 2002. 15 April 2007. <http://www.renewnyc.com>

the original tower heights, the structural echo of the Statue of Liberty, and the design element causing the antenna to emit light. Where the towers that were felled on 9/11 may not have had an explicit identity outside of its commercial purposes previous to 1993 or perhaps even 2001, the Freedom Tower – still holding world class restaurants, retail space, parking, transit systems, and an unfathomable amount of office space – is clearly covered in symbolism beyond simple patriotism, entering the realm of sacred nationalism.

The lives lost that day are – again – used as a means through which to extend an institutional sanctity into the American national memory. The light imagery atop the tower not only ties it to the nation's founding, but echoes the Statue of liberty – localizing this as a New York monument as well as serving to try and make New York the American city – and acts as a "beacon of freedom" while providing a religious "light in the sky," so to speak. This glowing antenna is a marker of the transition for the 9/11 victims while symbolically guiding the world community toward American ideals, expectations and experiences. Further the sheer height of the tower, the choice to build something taller and, frankly, shinier, is a rather defiant move, meant to guard against the perceived erosion of American ideals.

The technological impulse both in the descriptions and construction of the Freedom Tower and Reflecting Absence reifies faith in technology and reaffirms technological innovation's placement as "progress" a legitimate, permanent, expected, and correct designation. The state-of-the-art museum – containing the artifacts from the shrines – promises to deepen, through technological means, the experiences visitors can have. Participation in the experience of the place is only made possible by participating in

these technologies, thus aligning technological innovation with meaningful experience, furthering its correctness and designation as progress.

The safety and environmental concerns expressed in the construction and operations of the Freedom Tower are also rather telling. The Twin Towers of the World Trade Center came under fire in the wake of both the 1993 and 2001 attacks, and public scrutiny looked to technological flaws that could have been fixed, changed, made perfect. The description of the Freedom Tower goes on to alleviate structural anxieties, as well as staying in keeping with contemporary concerns about the environmental impact of construction, particularly in an urban environment, all the while providing jobs for New York.

These three formal memorials are heavily invested in impersonalized, nationalistic meanings, borrowing much of their imagery and context from religious expressions. Though place varies greatly from densely urban Lower Manhattan to the federal urbanism of the Pentagon to the wide open rural field where flight 93 crashed in Somerset County, PA, the national memory that is constructed out of these places and the citizenry's experiences and relationship to them carries a highly impersonal set of meanings meant to imbue the values officially represented at these places with sanctity.

CHAPTER THREE

Sacred Consumerism and the Ritual Community Called Nation

"Trust and affection were, and are, cultivated through the making, buying, and giving of material expressions..."[36]

If viewed with a religious imagination,[37] as Ivan Strenski suggests, one can see certain ritual practices accompanying the ideological structure of post-9/11 American nationalism, as has been evidenced through the informal spontaneous shrines as well as the formal commemorations in the previous chapters. New York City produced large beams of light – a ghostly sacred expression – in the Twin Towers' stead, connecting heaven and earth in memoriam for the purposes of mourning as well as reifying values and practices that were perceived as "American" and as attacked by the events of 9/11. The Freedom Tower, "terror-proofing," and other official responses to 9/11 are ways of recouping faith in the ideals that were challenged through the attacks, including the technology/body relationship. And as has been shown, despite the dip in sales in the airline industry, it was not framed solely as a fear of technology,[38] but "faulty human intention," that ends up being culpable for 9/11, thus reaffirming the institutional ideal of "progress."

Much in the same way that these official restorations in an "American" worldview are ways of localizing 9/11 as a national tragedy for the purposes of creating a

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[36] McDannell, Colleen (1995). *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press. Pg. 50.

[37] Strenski, Ivan. "Material Culture and the Varieties of Religious Imagination." Religion and Material Culture: Spontaneous Shrines. University of California, Riverside. 2003. http://www.shrines.ucr.edu/sources.html.

[38] There was much subsequent analysis of the structural integrity of the World Trade Center towers as well as the reinforced doors to the pilot bay. So called "terror-proofing" has since been implemented, as have a number of other technological measures to ensure safety and confidence in technology.

community and reifying the values that that community supposedly represents, so too are the consumer goods that cropped up in response to 9/11 and this strange call to participate in the remaking of identity. Commemorative coins, bumpers stickers, snow-globes, commemorative plaques, pins, cufflinks and t-shirts are all ways of participating in a communal ritual of ideological reaffirmation and belonging. Drawing from the work of Ed Linenthal, Ivan Strenski, Colleen McDannell, Robert Bellah, and Kristin Hass, this chapter looks to what will be termed "sacred consumerism" as an inroad for analyzing the processes behind the commodified, purchasable responses to 9/11 that have cropped up in the years following 9/11, as well as the construction of memory they convey. It will be argued here that through sacred consumerism it becomes possible to be an "insider" to the event and to the creation of the communal response. If viewed with a religious imagination, one can draw the parallel that the foundations for a ritual community are at work in these varied, purchasable, mass-marketed mobile memorial statements with the purpose of maintaining a set of beliefs or ideas of sacred nationhood in response to 9/11.

The material artifacts of this sanctification come in the form of explicit symbols that were left in the rubble – like an intersection of the steel truss that was still standing and was recognized as a Cross, murals and memorials that have various other explicit world religious symbols, or even a bumper sticker that says "Lest We Forget," extending sacred time – as well as implicit ones that borrow the structure and sacred context of religious expression while the content remains nationalistic. These implicitly sacred expressions of nationalism are particularly interesting because though, again, they do not necessarily have any explicit tie to any one religious institution, it is from an "American" understanding of the sacred that American nationalism gains sanctity.

This happens because there is a perceived void in the American secular vocabulary of expression, failing to accommodate what its national practitioners consider to be authentic meaning. This is part of the explanation for why American civil religion exists. Americans, especially in the wake of 9/11, search for authenticity of identity, whether it be a personal one or a link to a greater community. And imbuing the secular functions of American life – especially ideals that the imagined community may have perceived as challenged, like consumerism – with a sense of sanctity is a response that elucidates and reifies that search. That is to say, embedded in the day-to-day expressions of American secular workings – like concepts of belief (which are not necessarily explicitly religious in nature), sacrifice, justice, meaning, "appropriate" forms of civic mourning or celebration – are structures that borrow a sense of sanctity to give secular aspects of American culture more perceived, and communally recognizable, meaning.

Sacred consumerism builds a participatory community – a community of believers – that has experienced, if just through the purchasable and commodified relationship to place/trauma, the events of 9/11. This sacred consumerism is potentially what pulls an individual to purchase an item – a memory rite – that allows them to see themselves as having participated in the community of those who have experienced the attacks. This operates much like the purchasing or possession of a religious relic has throughout the course of western history, creating a community – even if through a rather thin proxy of experience – of those who have in some way, shape or form, experienced an event: "Relics are objects of memory which speak to a community's notion of holiness.... Relics are meaningful for a whole community of people."[39]

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[39] McDannell, Colleen (1995). *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press. Pg. 41.

More concretely, sacred consumerism can be defined as an attempt to participate in an identity or experience through the purchasing of perceived authenticity and symbolic capital[40] of an item that connects an individual to a larger experiential community that is perceived as holy or somehow sacred. The nation certainly falls into this category, and more specifically, those who have had tragic experiences. In this case, a connection to either the victims or the greater event of 9/11 as a whole through shared nationhood suffices in the minds of the participatory community.

Sacred consumerism is also a ritual of communal participation that localizes the attacks as American. It reaffirms American consumerism, democratic practice, and the images of patriotism that have circulated across the nation at least since WWII. These items take on, in a nationalistic sense, the religious tone of a memory rite and define a community of individuals who count themselves as true believers (even if they are removed from 9/11 to the point that the only connection they have is through their sense of nationalism and a purchased commemorative), mixing individual agency with institutional agency.

In a societal structure that consumes myth, this search for authenticity of meaning that is being traded back and forth between institutions and individual agency is a function of nostalgia for a golden age, a period that exists only in the communal memory but itself may have never occurred. It is this perceived shared past that is mobilized for a meaningful present, and it is this perceived shared past – evidenced here in the cultural politics of informal shrines and sacred consumer goods – that is also being created to serve a nostalgic, yet arguably hollow, identity.

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[40] Bourdieu, Pierre (1984). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

But the purchaser connects him or herself to the identity of the fallen – who at this point, barring the occasional personal relationship with an actual victim, are national martyrs not individuals – and to the identity of the nation, purchasing a right to participate in the reification and standardization of post-9/11 American ideals. Again, it can be seen here as in the previous chapters that defining one's self as part of the community is simultaneously an act of defining what that community means, represents, and values. And in the case of sacred consumerism, this chapter argues, individuals literally purchase the "rite" to do so.

Part One: American Relics and Popular Culture

Beyond the historical use of necessarily religious relics that has persisted through much of human history, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries provide ample examples of the uses of material objects and popular imagery to define communities in America; much work has been done on Victorian religious material culture and the ways that religious objects were used in the home for fashion, symbolic capital, and the maintenance of communal identity. One of the leading scholars of American religious material culture, Colleen McDannell, identifies the link between objects and memory:

> Religious objects assembled on the top of a piano or tucked in the corner of a room not only serve as a bridge between the human and divine worlds, they can also be objects of memory. Recent writing on memory has emphasized its active, constructive nature. Rather than being a storehouse from which images and feelings can be retrieved at will, it is an imaginative reconstruction of pieces of the past. Through memory we try to recapture an authentic past. However, since the past is changed through remembering, we cannot truly remember it. Instead we look to spaces, gestures, images, and objects to embody memory.... Religious

> objects frequently serve as the materials reminders of significant events, people, moods, and activities by condensing and compressing memory.[41]

If nationalism can operate like religion, as civil religion suggests, and can be viewed with a religious imagination, than the above can hold true for nationalistic objects. As McDannell suggests above, the object holds condensed meanings, a set of values and reminders that are beyond the events themselves and are capable of evoking the meanings ascribed by its possessor. These items, not placed at spontaneous shrines, not part of a formal commemoration, belong in the home or on the body and are a connection between the individual who possesses them and the experience of the event: "Through its power to evoke memories, the souvenir begins to replace the event as the focus of attention... The religious souvenir participates in the power of the original experience."[42] So to is it in the case of civil religion.

The role of souvenir, situated above as religious, is a direct connection to place, of the meanings and unique personal experience of the beholder. And though the individual is connected to the event, and not consciously to a community of people who have also tied themselves to the event, they are, however, investing in the commodities as an act of symbolic capital, which requires acknowledgement by a greater audience. This can be authorized through the individual identifying with the object because he or she recognizes its symbols – indicative of its meanings – as values that are already established, thus relating to a community's interpretation, or for the presentation, the performance that accompanies the display of such an item even if it is in the private sphere defined as "home."

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[41] McDannell, Colleen (1995). *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. Pg. 39.
[42] Ibid., Pg. 40.

In the late nineteenth century American Protestantism that much of this work analyses, "Protestants elaborated a domestic ideology describing the sacred quality of home and family life. Manufacturers accommodated the Protestant desire simultaneously to sanctify and decorate their homes. They sold and marketed religious goods alongside secular images. Victorian Protestants did not find the commercial marketing of religious images distasteful or profane. Fashion and faith co-existed."[43] A parallel can be drawn through the temporarily fashionable, if kitschy, sacred consumer response to 9/11. Shortly after the attacks it seems as if the American flag was more prevalent than ever before, as if shirts, advertisements, foods, and everything else was beyond simply "in fashion." Indeed, it seemed as if, beyond nationalism, the institutionalized grieving process itself had become commodified, and people were literally buying it, making the profane act of capitalism itself a sacred process of identity recuperation.

McDannell goes on to state that, "Christians use religious goods to tell themselves and the world around them that they are Christians," and "...Religious objects also signal who is in the group and who is not. They teach people how to think and act like Christians. They are used to lure, encourage and shock non-Christians into considering the truth of Christianity.... Religious goods not only bind people to the sacred, they bind people to each other."[44] This communal, prescriptive understanding of the role of religious objects is rather telling in light of 9/11 and nationalism. The symbolic capital gained through the possession of these sacred consumer goods, the performance of experience and participation in the events of 9/11, and the sacred nationalism that followed, are the result of shrine building as a performative gesture, even

[43] Ibid., Pg. 57.
[44] Ibid., Pg. 45.

if the purchaser him or herself is the only audience. It reifies for that individual her identity and the values she ascribes to the sacred national object.

These identities and their relationships to symbols and images, however, do come from somewhere. An economy of images is present in twentieth-century popular culture, providing a sense of familiarity to a number of the symbols present in the 9/11 mass-consumer items. There is a history of American relics and familiar images that have informed the American mind of what honor, patriotism, and civil sanctity look like. Beyond the prevalence of the flag in American culture or other familiar symbols, there are other kinds of very popular reminders, galvanizing a standard of what patriotism is "supposed" to be.

Figures 16 and 17 are the Pulitzer-prize winning photograph of the Marine Corps called "Raising the flag on Iwo Jima," followed by the Marine Corps War Memorial, respectively. The process of first representing an actual event through film is itself a kind of replacement for memory and a creation of one for those not present, but the subsequent repackaging and recontextualization of that image is another iteration of distance from actuality, and somehow are rather famous reminders of the relationship between memory and place. What is more, aside from the controversy of reposing that surrounds this image, is that it is actually an image of the second flag to be raised atop Mount Suribachi, which is yet another separation away from the reality that is perceived as represented here. This image – used not only as a symbol of American identity and victory popularly, but also as a stamp and in various other federal reproductions – is extremely familiar in the popular memory and it is easy for a community of sacred consumers to use as an

informed reference of nationalism, of "American" values, of civil religion, and for the recreation of reality in a memorialized form in the following images.

National images in American popular culture have existed, and taken on sacred tones. Figures 18 and 19 are references to familiar images in the American popular landscape. Unlike the image of the famous "Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima" and its subsequent commemoration as an official memorial, the photograph's reproduction, entitled "Raising the Flag," an obvious reference back to "Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima," is actually a bronze plaque that can be purchased on the Internet and at a variety of stores. It is also a gesture to localize the disaster as American.

In the case of these images, the maker of the plaque is trying to sell a set of consumers the very idea of sacred nationalism itself, that this patriotism is to be heralded in a sacred light, and that to revisit the meanings encapsulated in the Iwo Jima photograph and Marine Corps War Memorial is a natural, patriotic act. A standard is set to which consumers must respond and already the condensed memories, as McDannell calls them, that are represented through the photograph are recontextualized as a commodity, linking the relationship of place and memory to the act of consumption, recovering consumerist values, perceived as attacked, as well as defining – and institutionalizing – the collective memory of the events of 9/11 and the actions of some individuals in its wake.

The company selling the plaques, on their tribute webpage, prefaces the display of memory rites with the following, and rather intriguing statements: "On September 11, 2001, the United States became more united than in recent memory, due to the coordinated attacks on American sovereignty, belief systems and very way of life. It was

a misled assault on all those worldwide who are committed to the precepts of freedom of choice, equity of differing beliefs, and justice for all peoples. While there had been precursory attacks, 9/11 is the seminal event of this generation."[45] This statement does well to localize the attacks as truly attacking an American way of life and American set of values, and then connects those same values to the larger community of free, democratic nations. In fact, the statement, unlike those of many other tribute sites, acknowledges the ties to other nations as well as the previous and subsequent attacks, but lands 9/11 as the disaster to define the generation. This is an important difference because this statement is simultaneously a sales pitch as well as a definition of what "American" ideals are, which are – after all – what are being sold. Difference, dissent, and diversity in general are claimed as the standard in America, and the generation is alleged as being defined by this event – experienced through this material good – just as WWII was the defining event for that generation, as evidenced through the photograph and subsequent memorial.

These instances of American popular culture that are reproduced and informed by earlier works are parallel to other nationalistic symbols, patterned after what the manufacturer or seller believe will conjure a particular set of values for the buyer/sacred national participant to identify with, like a flag, eagle, I Heart NY, and a variety of other nationalistic, potentially kitschy, purchasable symbols that operate as symbolic capital and as a means of defining an "in" and "out" community, further standardizing the institutionalized – and now, commodified – values that were perceived as challenged by the attacks of 9/11.

[45] Plaques&Letters.com 2003-2007. April 16, 2007. http://plaquesandletters.com/patriotic_tributes_I.htm

Part Two: Buying Memory Rites

If post 9/11 American nationalism is viewed as containing a religious imagination, it becomes clear that the buying and selling of 9/11 consumer goods can serve as a ritual that further defines the community. Members of this imagined community, potentially void of a cohesive identity, use implicit religious expression to give the national memory of 9/11, and consequently American national identity, a sense of sanctity. This happened through the creation of sacred national products – purchasable, mobile memorials of a sort – that were bought and sold accordingly, letting the market have a say in the sacred national identity, reaffirming and making sacred one of the major American ideals that becomes challenged when 9/11 is viewed as a national event: American consumerism. Through religious imagination it is also possible and useful to view the buying and selling of 9/11 consumer goods as ritual participations that, very similar to memorials, further define the imagined community.

But instead of the goods being necessarily tied to places – like memorial objects placed spontaneously at a shrine site – the shrine, or relic, is purchased in the form of a commodified good and the participant is, as Thomas Tweed suggests in his study of diasporic religion, "translocated" because of the strong bond between memory and place.[46] Translocation is, in Tweed's analysis, "the tendency among many first- and second-generation migrants to symbolically move between homeland and new land... These translocative and transtemporal impulses are expressed religiously in a variety of ways in Diasporic religion. In religious *narratives*, diasporas remember and compose tales that express attachment to the natal land, sacralize the new land, or form bridges

[46] Tweed, Thomas (1997). *Our Lady of the Exile: Diasporic Religion at a Cuban Catholic Shrine in Miami.* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.

between the two."[47] Though his study is framed by Cuban Catholic diaspora and the specific impulses that tie nationalism to religion and vice versa that accompany that migration, if viewed less concretely it becomes clear that a parallel can be drawn with the sacred consumer goods that appear in 9/11.

The role of memory in relation to place can be equated to the role of memory in relation to experience, and if this is done within the bounds of post-9/11 American sacred nationalism than the object can be seen as a means of moving "across" – trans – to the experience of the event, tying into the identity of the participant who has tapped into, and simultaneously created, the imagined communal identity. Speaking to this relationship between place, experience and memory, Ed Linenthal states, "The goal is to become transformed by the visit into someone who has 'experienced' the event."[48] And indeed, the possession of these goods allows practitioners of civil religion to participate – to experience – from varying degrees of relation.

In the case of 9/11 consumer goods, there are a number that contain an actual piece of something related to the World Trade Center or to the Pentagon or the site in Pennsylvania. In the specific case of the World Trade Center, as of the fifth anniversary, pieces of the rubble had been sent to various public parks and museums across the nation to invite citizens of each state to – in a very physical manner – participate in the sacred community that is created translocatively by the relationship of place, memory and participatory experience through an object.

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[47] Ibid., Pg.95.

[48] Damphousse, Kelly R., Kristin S. Hefley and Brent L. Smith. "Creating Memories: Exploring how Narratives Help Define the Memorialization of Tragedy." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Atlanta Hilton Hotel, Atlanta, GA, Aug 16, 2003. 05 October 2006. <http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p107083_index.html> Pg. 4.

Speaking to the role of purchasing as an act of Memorialization for Cuban Catholic exiles in Miami at the Our Lady of Charity Shrine, Thomas Tweed states:

> As at almost every pilgrimage site, varied reproductions of the central image are purchased at the shrine to be worn on pilgrims' bodies, displayed in their cars, or niched in their homes. In that way, they not only recall the journey but also embody, display, or privatize the national patroness's power to offer protection or inspire hope... Just inside the central portal the Sisters of Charity or lay women from the confraternity sell mass-produced souvenirs that are displayed on a simple formica-topped folding table. And most of those artifacts – including photographs, statues, prints, medals, shirts and prayer cards – are charged with nationalistic significance, whether or not they explicitly allude to natal place or collective history.[49]

The same implicit charge can be detected in consumer goods that have cropped up in response to 9/11, only instead of a religious artifact containing implicitly nationalistic symbols and meanings for sale on a formica table at the site itself, these mass produced goods are nationalistic artifacts with implicitly religious symbols and meanings and are being sold on television, the internet, in chain stores as well as at the World Trade Center site. The role of the religious souvenir, as described above, is to connect the individual to place because that individual has actually experienced that place and interpreted its varied meanings. But in the case of 9/11 consumer goods, the distance between the event and where the souvenirs of the events can be purchased suggests that the community of participants is rather liberal with their definition of "experience." This experience by proximity ethos suggests that the act of purchasing – made easier by the internet and various other technologies that replace face-to-face social interaction with convenience – diminishes the role of civil religious pilgrimage in relationship to 9/11,

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[49] Tweed, Thomas (1997). *Our Lady of the Exile: Diasporic Religion at a Cuban Catholic Shrine in Miami.* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press. Pg. 105.

though thousands of Americans and world citizens do continue to visit the sites nonetheless.

The buying and selling of these consumer goods is a commodified ritual in which those individuals who consider themselves part of the nationalistic American "in" community can participate, particularly in the common theme of ownership, thus further closing the range of the imagined community. This keeps the accountability of the recreation of the identity of the imagined community in the hands of its perceived members while simultaneously recreating and reclaiming a piece of that identity.

One particularly telling consumer good that represents this sacred consumerism is the five-year anniversary commemorative coin produced by *National Collectors Mint* (one of several 9/11 commemorative coins they produced), which is clearly imbued with implicitly sacred meaning to give the community of consumers of nationalism moral agency (Figure 20). The rhetorical accompaniment is no different:

> Today, history is being made! To mark the fifth anniversary of September 11th, National Collector's Mint is releasing a double-dated World Trade Center Commemorative Coin. This groundbreaking non-monetary issue will never be released for circulation...It's truly unique, created using two distinct struck pieces. First, the base is struck with gleaming buildings on a frosted background. Then the inset of the Twin Towers is magnificently engraved and fitted into the skyline on the face of the commemorative with jeweler precision, able to rise up into a breathtaking standing sculpture. The effect is dazzling - it is literally transformed into a standing sculpture of the Twin Towers! The World Trade Center skyline is lavishly clad in gleaming silver miraculously recovered from a bank vault found under tons of debris at Ground Zero. To mark the fifth anniversary, $5 of every *2001-2006 World Trade Center Commemorative* order is donated to official 9/11 family charities and memorials. The stunning design of this magnificent September 11th memorial is a 15 mg. of 24 KT gold and 15 mg. of .999 Pure silver clad tribute to all who were lost on that fateful day. On the obverse, the luminous New York City skyline featuring the magnificent Twin Towers gleams against a frosted background, much as they shimmered in the sunlight that fateful September morning. On the reverse, a powerful eagle, 5 stars to denote

> the fifth anniversary and the plea, "God Bless America." These commemoratives may well be among the most historically meaningful collectibles you will ever own.[50]

It is clear what is at work in the rhetoric and images selected for the promotion of this coin. By using a religious imagination to explain the sacred consumerism surrounding the events of 9/11 through goods like this coin, it becomes clear that the appeal to create and define an imagined community is at work. The notion that history is being made through this coin is not simply a turn of phrase; the purchaser is able to participate in the making of history, own a piece of the experience of 9/11 – literally represented by the silver that was mined from a vault below the World Trade Center – and reaffirm American institutions and practices through an automatic charitable contribution on the participant's behalf as well as through the act of consumption, an ideal that is rhetorically and officially reified here.

Further, the symbols of "American" values are present in the object itself; the self-described defiance of the raised towers, the eagle and the stars are all prescribed symbols that carry meaning for the purchaser, and include him or her in a community of insiders. The "fateful morning" has been sanctified, as has the skyline itself. It is also important to note that these commemoratives were dated for release on September 11, 2006: the five-year anniversary. This connection to time is even made sacred and falls into the practices of civil religion seamlessly.

The memory rite in the form of a commemorative coin is not alone. There are literally hundreds, thousands of goods that can be purchased; an extensive and overwhelming sacred consumer market was built in response to 9/11. Another telling

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[50] 9/11 Commemoratives. 15 April 2007. The National Collector's Mint. 16 Aril 2007. http://www.nationalcollectorsmint.com.

example of this is the set of cufflinks pictured in Figure 21. After 9/11, much like the silver mined from the vault beneath the World Trade Center rubble, purchasing a piece of the experience – an actual relic connected to the event – was possible, and surrounded a number of other identities into which the memory rite allows the purchaser to enter with sacred nationalistic recontextualization and symbolism.

What is unique about the coin and these cufflinks is that they represent a rather small fraction of the goods produced in response to 9/11; they actually contain pieces of the rubble or actual physical relics of the event that can, even if in a small way, connect a purchaser to the larger imagined community. But there are many, many more goods produced that have no such material connection, and rely solely on the standardized and communally recognizable symbolic, gestured meanings that are wrapped up in their representations. Not the least of these is a famous collage of the faces of the individual victims (Figure 22), called "The Sun," mimicking a nineteenth century American form of painting called luminism.[51] But instead of a bucolic, natural setting in which a divine and hopeful light appears, the faces are situated to represent the two towers, the sun shining between them, and the rays of the sun completing a Christian Cross.

Among the many images for sale in the constructions of symbols, faces, and ideals in Figure 22 is individuality. The purchaser of this sacred consumer good – "The Sun" – is, much like the viewer of an informal shrine, participating in a constructed memory of the individuality of the fallen victims. Through the contextualization above, the individuals presented are simultaneously individuals and national martyrs: ideas. The same can be said for the individual pull, the simultaneous commoditization and

[51] Luminism was a popular American form of painting in the mid nineteenth-century, featuring a central glowing image representing the divine as well as a general sense of progress, often tied to manifest destiny.

humanizing of individuals involved with which the purchaser can participate through the film *World Trade Center*. The explicit, and central, Christian religious symbol – borrowing an auxiliary sanctification from the luminist tradition – that is present in "The Sun" adds a sense of the divine to the image, of meaning beyond simple patriotism that is inextricably linked to nationalism nonetheless, sanctifying it along with the individuals who literally construct the object. The World Trade Center Towers as well as the skyline which they used to dominate are represented only through the human images that are, in this case, for sale. And much like the repackaging of the photograph "Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima" as the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial, or of the photograph "9-11 Patriotic Firemen" as a plaque that can be purchased, so too is the film, *World Trade Center* a way to re-represent the attacks and re-inscribe individuality with sacred nationalism while reclaiming American consumerism as well as reify the role of Hollywood, of celebrity and the culture industry, which is another mainstay in American culture that was perceived as challenged.

Two popular images – particularly mobile ones at that – are the magnetic yellow "support our troops" ribbon and the "I Heart NY" slogan found on t-shirts, mugs, bumper-stickers, in snow globes, on bags, buttons, and a myriad of other locations. Although the yellow ribbon does not directly respond to 9/11 its roots are there. These images serve the purpose of promulgating a set of ideals that individuals choose to identify themselves with and thus represent themselves by to others. This is usually a public display, and like the informal shrines it is a performative gesture, conveying a set of ideals that are reified, and are even expected to be acknowledged by the viewer, thus eliciting standardization through – though distant – participation. Building off of this is

the multitude of tattoos that were purchased; commissioned artwork that literally puts the purchaser in the position of embodying the experience, whether it be for the purposes of grief, mourning, or honoring individuals or the events as a whole.

And still, the vast majority of sacred consumer goods in response to 9/11 are not as personal or individualized as "The Sun," the tattoo pictured in figure 24, the cufflinks or even the "support our troops" ribbon. The vast majority of these items lack the connection to place of the commemorative coin in figure 20, the individuality sold in "The Sun," or the individual commitment of the tattoos. Most are kitsch made sacred by the very act of purchasing, of representing, of reinstitutionalizing because of the role that sanctifying nationalism plays in the consumer responses to 9/11.

Figures 25 through 34 are just a fraction of the many, many different kinds of items that are for sale in response to 9/11. Those who produce and sell those goods are participating in a process of controlled ritualization and shaping of national memory. Utilizing Linenthal's consumptive narrative, one author stated, "Shelley Walker says her gift shop, *A Time to Remember*, fills a need. People feel closer to the site if they can leave with a 'hearts of Steel Bracelet' or a let's Roll' T-Shirt, she says. 'I'm not trying to make money on this,' Walker says, moments after noting that people paid $3.50 for buttons she bought for 65 cents (Assad, 2002)."[52]

The purchaser potentially interprets these goods very differently than the critical viewer. To the purchaser these may be a way into a community of participants and an identity – symbolic capital – as well as a sanctification and bolstering of ideals that were

[52] Damphousse, Kelly R., Kristin S. Hefley and Brent L. Smith. "Creating Memories: Exploring how Narratives Help Define the Memorialization of Tragedy." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Atlanta Hilton Hotel, Atlanta, GA, Aug 16, 2003. 05 October 2006. <http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p107083_index.html> Pg. 17.

perceived as challenged by 9/11. To the viewer these memory rites may be no more than patriotic kitsch; items that hold their value in the sheer gaudiness of their construction, or in the case of the music that sprung from the attacks, like the Sonny Rollin's Jazz album pictured in figure 25, just temporary artistic markets that are open because of this self-imposed sense of obligation to publicly honor the victims and attacked values that were perceived as "American."

Even dissent has been repackaged, sanctifying self-criticism, claiming it for American institutionalism as an American strength. Self-criticism, evidenced here in figures 31 through 33, is even claimed by that which is criticizes, and is thus perceived as an American value and strength. The set of symbols in the "Coexist" bumper sticker is a particular telling consumer good, using world religious symbols to define its rather cosmopolitan message (Figure 32). This packaging of dissent for the consumption of an American audience is itself an act of consumerist ideological reclamation – made sacred through the new meanings placed on the act of purchasing these products – as well as a claiming of the act of self-criticism as an "American" trait, and as a means of guaranteeing authenticity, as to not appear too ideologically lopsided.

The reclamation of these consumerist ideals, the democratic impulse behind them, and even the commoditization of dissent in response to 9/11 are all ways of localizing the disaster as American and of packaging the ideals that were perceived as attacked as somehow sacred, represented through these items. Sacred consumerism can be seen here as a practice of recouping and fortifying "American values" and practices themselves. Rituals like consumer participation as a sacred national reaffirmation of an ideological imagined community, ritual shrine building, network coverage, citywide and national

commemorations are all expressions that form a usable past in hopes of creating a meaningful present and future.

CONCLUSION

America's Sacred Nationalism and Its Material Manifestations

"Absent organizational innovations and new public policies, therefore, the reinvigorated sense of the American 'we' that was born of the travails of 9/11 may well gradually dissipate, leaving only ripples on the managerial routines of contemporary U.S. civic life."[53]

In the immediate wake of 9/11 it was said to be the event that would define a generation of Americans, and in some ways that has held true; martial, political, social and religious responses continue to echo. But for the most part, it has failed to be the next World War II, where the American citizenry was called to act and a number of public policies were enacted to enable the American populace to do so. A discussion highlighting this states that, "The American 'public feels urge to act – but how?' asked an insightful article appearing in the *Christian Science Monitor* not long after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 (McLaughlin 2001). 'What Americans are being called upon to do – live normal lives – hardly seems heroic. Unlike during World War II, citizens aren't needed to roll bandages for GIs or collect scrap metal to make airplanes."[54]

To live a normal life at the beginning of the twenty-first century meant something rather different than it did in the World War II era; the public living, labor divided home, post-war optimism, and perhaps more easily identifiable American identities were traded for innovations in technology, increasingly private lifestyles, postmodernity, and a popular culture dominated by memories of the cold war, a string of global and national disasters, millennial apocalypticism, and the commodification of literally everything.

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[53] Skocpol, Theda. "Will 9/11 and the War on Terror Revitalize American Civic Democracy?" PS: Political Science and Politics, Vol.35, No. 3. (Sep., 2002). Pg. 540.
[54] Ibid., Pg. 540.

This non-heroic, normal twenty-first century American life, unlike in prior decades, also includes an increasing classification of the political history concerning 9/11.

Indeed, many of the websites, like so many informal spontaneous shrines and accumulations that stood in remembrance, are no longer operational: torn down. This, and the lessening media coverage are evidence that the event of 9/11 is no longer with us, and we have memories, both collective and individual, that created and continue to create its meaning, but are not themselves a real record of 9/11. Perhaps nothing can be.

According to Richard Sellars and Tony Walter, "Any spilling of blood for one's country, whether by soldier, assassinated politician or peace protester, has the potential for enshrinement. This is particularly so in the United States where symbols of commitment to the nation are so important, due perhaps to the persisting fragility of America's bold experiment in individual freedom. The more highly valued, the more vulnerable, are national ideals, the more may sacrifice for the nation be venerated – even if it is contentious that the sacrifice was in fact in pursuit of those ideals."[55] This quote, along with the distance between the actuality of the events of 9/11, the human ability to perceive it, the memories it both individual and collective, and the meanings presented in the memorials suggests that a process of trying to make meaning is at work where there is a human – or perhaps societal – inability to perceive it. Late capitalist discourse and theory suggests that there is an emptiness of action, a need to continually cycle out in the frenzy of growth and consumptive activity.

[55] Sellars, Richard West and Tony Walter. "From Custer to Kent State." *Pilgrimage in Popular Culture* (1993). Eds. Ian Reader and Tony Walter. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, and London: The Macmillan Press Ltd. Pg.185.

The American response to 9/11 was and is, in a sense – as it was argued here – an attempt to make meaning out of a somehow shared event in a society that divides belief from practice, myth from fact, and did so with a sacred imagination. This culture of tragic remembrance has spurred a new set of practices, assumptions, suspicions and commodities that were not present before; all in the name of extending sacred national memory and morality, all borrowing the framework of religious expression, all stemming from the creation of a nationalized community around 9/11.

FIGURES

Fig. 1: "Venice, California"

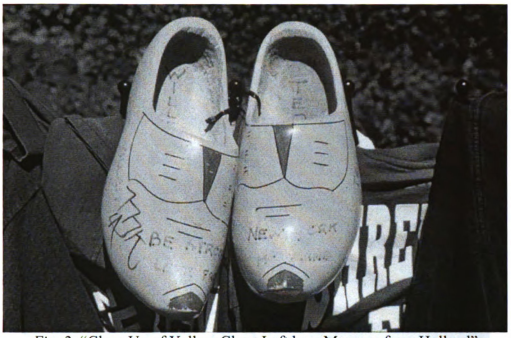

Fig. 2: "Close Up of Yellow Clogs Left by a Mourner from Holland"

Fig. 3: "Union Square"

Fig. 4: "IN MEMORY of the Deliver Boys Who Died"

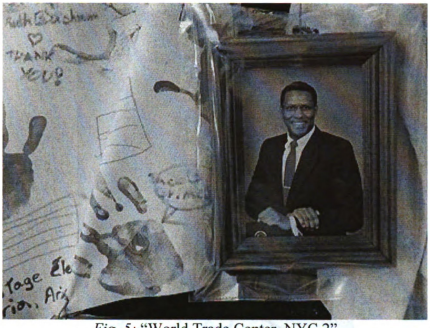

Fig. 5: "World Trade Center, NYC 2"

Fig 6: "World Trade Center, NYC 12"

Fig. 7: "Work Gloves, Candles, Cards and Flowers on a Shrine in Front of the Firehouse on West 31st Street"

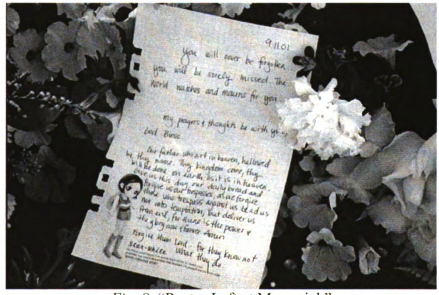

Fig. 8: "Poetry Left at Memorial."

Fig. 9: Untitled

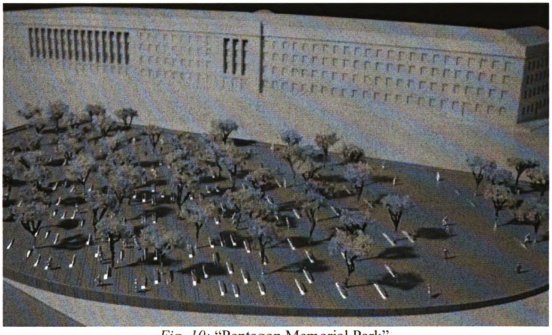

Fig. 10: "Pentagon Memorial Park"

Fig. 11: "Flight 93 Crash Site Memorial"

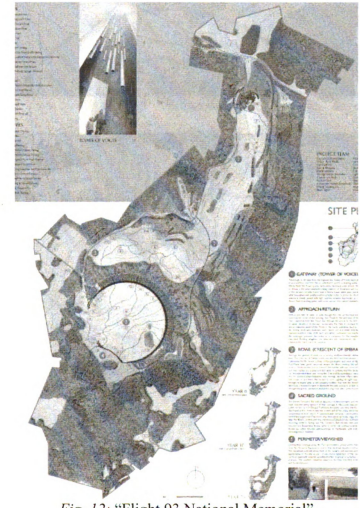

Fig. 12: "Flight 93 National Memorial"

Fig. 13: "Tribute in Light"

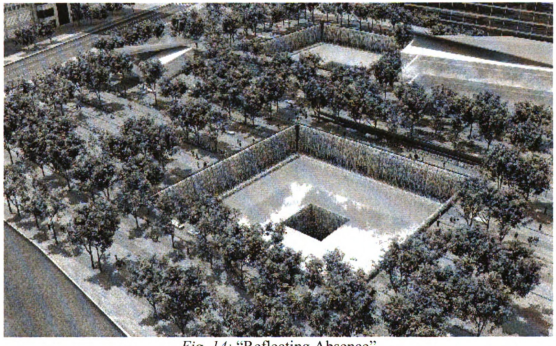

Fig. 14: "Reflecting Absence"

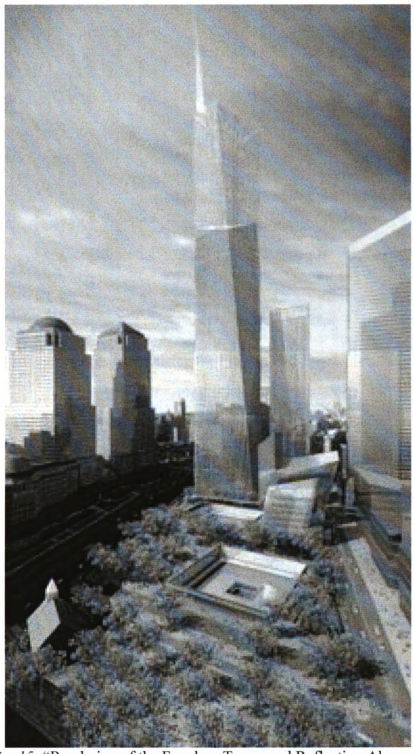

Fig. 15: "Rendering of the Freedom Tower and Reflecting Absence"

Fig. 16: "Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima"

Fig. 17: U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial"

Fig. 18: "Raising the Flag at Ground Zero" a.k.a. "Ground Zero Spirit"

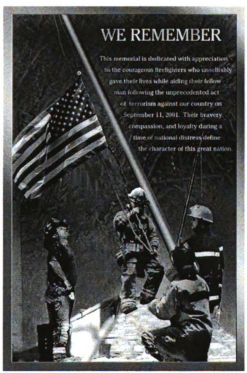

Fig. 19: "Raising the Flag"

Fig. 20: "5th Anniversary World Trade Center Commemorative"

Fig. 21: "Subway Token Gifts"

Fig. 22: "The Sun"

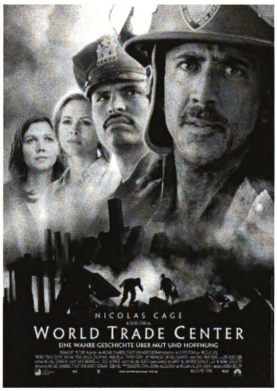

Fig. 23: "World Trade Center"

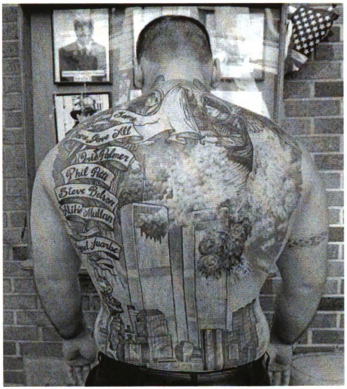

Fig. 24: "American Skin"

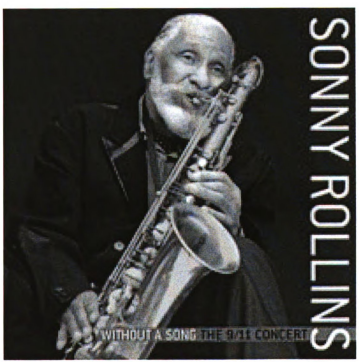

Fig. 25: Without a Song: The 9/11 Concert"

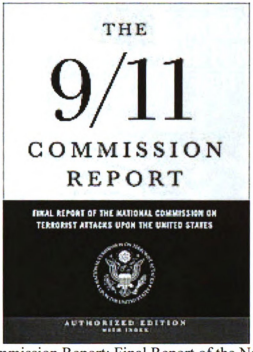

Fig. 26: "The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States."

Fig. 27: "World Trade Center Anniversary Sweatshirt"

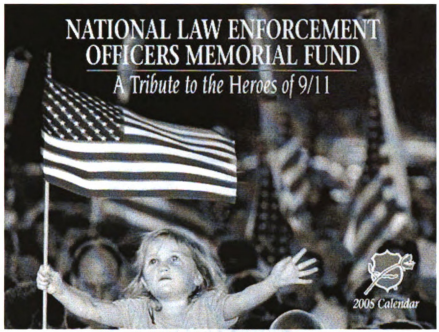

Fig. 28: "2005 9/11 Tribute Calendar."

Fig. 29: "9/11 FDNY and Flag Pins"

Fig. 30: "Snow Globes of New York City"

Fig. 31: "NYC Skyline Patriotic Snow Globes"

Fig. 32: "Coexist"

Fig. 33: "Fahrenheit 9/11"

Fig. 34: "9/11, 15 Saudis, 0 Iraqis, Foreign Oil Sponsors Global Terrorism"

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