

# Framing 9/11

*Comfort from Trauma*

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# 1 Introduction

For many, the images of the fireballs exploding out from the World Trade Center (WTC) skyscrapers on Tuesday morning, September 11, 2001 (9/11) have probably burned into our memories, either from being witnesses or the continuously repeating news footage of the terrorist events. It might be safe to say that the images will not soon be forgotten – even for those of us who had no direct connection to the sites or the victims involved. When I first heard the news, my class and I were returning to school from a two-day biology class excursion. A boy had been listening to the radio, and heard the news. No one believed him at first, but eventually it sank in, and getting off the school bus, I doubt that I was the only one who rushed home to watch the news on television. For hours, it seems, and it might have been that, I watched the news, hoping for updates. The images of the collapsing WTC is particularly prominent when thinking of that day – to the point of nearly overshadowing the plane crash in Pennsylvania and the smaller plane crashing into the Pentagon. New York City, a symbol of the United States (U.S.), being attacked by large passenger planes crashing into the WTC buildings was particularly unexpected and shocking to people. Another shock to people was that the WTC was a civilian target with so many civilian casualties. If an American city could fall prey to an act of terrorism on such a massive and methodical scale, then it could happen anywhere it seemed – even Norway.

For the most part, historical events and personal experiences do not usually occur simultaneously, but when these two do intersect, more often than not you will remember where you were and what you were doing when shocked by an event. “Great surprises”<sup>1</sup> and dates that “will live in infamy,”<sup>2</sup> often inspire vast exploration of the topic. Later generations will learn about the historic day in school and history books, but also in more easily accessible movies and documentaries. The terrorist attack on 9/11 has had such an impact on Americans and people globally, which is why I believe it is important to look at what the public learn from visual media. How has visual media framed 9/11, and why did media frame it the way it did?

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<sup>1</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience* (Joanna Jackson Goldman Memorial Lecture on American Civilization) (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004) 1

<sup>2</sup> Quote by Franklin Delano Roosevelt, in Gaddis. *Surprise*, 35.

The subject of 9/11 matters, because the teaching of history matters. The knowledge of history affects how people think, how they feel. Everyday people make decisions based on knowledge of the past, personal or public history, whether it is a few minutes in the past or months, years. History is a part of us. Therefore, how that past, how that history, is taught is important, and 9/11 has been a hot topic for the news media, scholars, and filmmakers. The news media was first on scene to inform the public of 9/11 as a historical event. Eventually scholars and filmmakers also joined the fold of teaching the public of the history and memory of 9/11. Scholars have various perspectives in terms of 9/11. Some scholars discuss psychological aspects of dealing the trauma, while other scholars focus on private or public memorialization of 9/11.

## 1.1 Historiography

The primary sources for my thesis will mainly be examined on the bases of Marita Sturken's theory of how Americans handle trauma in the aftermath. However, I will include supplementary articles and essays, to either complement or, in some cases, to provide alternatives to Sturken's theory. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 have been a hot topic among scholars, which means that there is no shortage of articles and essays to choose to write about. I have divided the historiography into sections of articles and essays that examine films about 9/11 and those that do not write about films. Many articles focus on politics, trauma, and history. The distinction between history and memory is not necessarily easy to distinguish between, and has been subject to several discussions. History is the chronological study of past events that relate to a specific person, place, or organization. Memory is something learned and remembered. However, it is more complicated than that.

### 1.1.1 Non-Films

Not surprisingly, more people watched 9/11 unfold on television than directly witnessing it. Almost half of the American population suffered from posttraumatic stress in the following days. John A. Updegraff, Roxane Cohen Silver, and E. Alison Holman's article "Searching for and Finding Meaning in Collective Trauma: Results from a National Longitudinal Study of the 9/11 Terrorist Attacks" studies the variations

of recovery time from PTSD, and the possible reasons for these variations. Both among New Yorkers – who were among those who got the brunt of the terrorist attacks – and among television news channel witnesses, some PTSD sufferers/victims recovered faster than other. The scholars of this article wondered why the recovery time varied from person to person. In addition to finding the answer to their question, they discovered something surprising – that directly experiencing a traumatic event is not necessary to develop PTSD. The level of stress was an indicator of developing PTSD. The stress of searching for and not finding meaning for a traumatic event caused a longer-term case of PTSD, than if finding meaning for a traumatic event soon after.<sup>3</sup>

The chances of experiencing a huge disaster is so low and not an everyday occurrence that people are far from adequately equipped to interpret traumatic tragedies where the consequences might be out of the individual's control. Patric R. Spence, Kenneth A Lachlan, and David Westerman write about how people respond to horrible news. The psychological strain of the event leads to a search for understanding of why a terrible event happened, reassurances that it will not happen again, and the opportunity for life to go back to normal.<sup>4</sup> However, research has discovered that “sadness reactions to entertainment have been consistently and positively related to enjoyment.”<sup>5</sup> Spence, Lachlan, and Westerman argue that people enjoy watching tragedy, not because they necessarily enjoy feeling sad, but because tragedies are supposed to make the audience sad, and by achieving that goal, the right social norm has been achieved.<sup>6</sup>

A nation born in conflict needs continuous conflict to reaffirm its right to exist, argues Mark Cronlund Anderson. Anderson writes about trauma and history repeating itself. According to “psychohistorical research,” “a nation born to war may become hard wired to repeat the behavior.”<sup>7</sup> Much like a victim of trauma might reenact said trauma in order to get past it. Anderson's examples are the creation of the U.S., and how authorities have framed previous conflicts and wars. Almost every year, since the

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<sup>3</sup> John A. Updegraff, Roxane Cohen Silver, and E. Alison Holman, “Searching for and Finding Meaning in Collective Trauma: Results from a National Longitudinal Study of the 9/11 Terrorist Attacks,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 95:3 (September 2008) 709-722

<sup>4</sup> Patric R. Spence, Kenneth A Lachlan, and David Westerman, “Presence, Sex, and Bad News: Exploring the Responses of Men and Women to Tragic News Stories in Varying Media,” *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 37:3 (July 13, 2009), 239-256

<sup>5</sup> Spence, “Presence, Sex, and Bad News,” 242

<sup>6</sup> Spence, “Presence, Sex, and Bad News,” 242-243

<sup>7</sup> Mark Cronlund Anderson, “The U.S. Frontier Myth, American Identity and 9/11,” *Journal of Psychohistory*, 38:4 (Spring 2011) 314

American War of Independence, the United States has been in conflict with other nations or American indigenous peoples. The near constant warring corresponds with the American belief that also on an individual level, conflict, and competition is healthy, because adversity breeds excellence. Similar to how 9/11 was overwhelmingly framed as an innocent nation attacked by an outside threat, or by an “Enemy Other,” without provocation – in the classic “Us versus Them” scenario. Other conflicts have also been framed in a similar manner.<sup>8</sup> The repeated behavior of conflict and warring might be regarded as barely concealed imperialism. However, the conflicts are portrayed as anything but imperialistic because the American War of Independence was a war against British imperialism. The relationship between United States and United Kingdom can be compared to an abusive relationship between a parent and a child. The abused sometimes becomes the abuser, and the cycle continues. A nation that fought for its independence against an imperialistic nation, has itself become imperialistic, and in need of constant reaffirmation of “a right to life” – a rebirth through violence.<sup>9</sup>

When the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, happened, “‘history’ was being made before [people’s] eyes.”<sup>10</sup> People stopped what they were doing at the time and just watched the footage repeatedly in horrified fascination. Many people watched the news footage live, as it was happening in real time, and this synchronicity brought a sense of “collective experience,”<sup>11</sup> as Dudziak described it. The collective experience of the terrorist attacks were, however, on different levels. So many people focusing their attention on the news footage live, made the viewer feel like they were part of the real experience, while people who witnessed the terrorist attacks with their own eyes had trouble believing what was happening. The people inside the WTC buildings, in the staircase, were oddly calm and collected. The lack of panic might be because they did not know what had happened, just that there was an explosion and the alarms were going off. The news channel viewers sometimes felt that they were more aware of what was happening at the time than the crowds trying to escape the falling towers and the billowing dust in the immediate aftermath – and they were not wrong. People who did witness 9/11 through news channels did have a more complete or overall picture of what was currently happening. What is interesting, however, is that many people on the

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<sup>8</sup> Anderson, “The U.S. Frontier Myth,” 314-317

<sup>9</sup> Anderson, “The U.S. Frontier Myth,” 315-316, 318

<sup>10</sup> Mary L. Dudziak, “How 9/11 Made ‘History,’” *OAH Magazine of History* 25:3 (July 2011) 55

<sup>11</sup> Dudziak, “How 9/11 Made ‘History,’” 5

ground, close to Ground Zero, could not bring themselves to believe that the terrorist attacks were real, until they later watched it on television. The lived experience of the attacks felt less real than watching the events unfold on television.<sup>12</sup>

Not everyone fell for the Bush administration's and media's American innocence, Good versus Evil propaganda. Ralph Young writes about the connection from past to present, the background and "blowback" to present events. Young claims that post-9/11 his students no longer questioned why history was relevant for them, while before, he had to explain that history is the best way to understand society and themselves. Young posits that the Iraq War might have had a hand in the increased interest in the teach-ins he had started in previous university semesters. The students seemed to develop a need to understand how the political world works. Students seemed to want to understand how American foreign policy in the last century had influenced the Middle East. Young began class discussions and voluntary teach-in debates on campus. One of the debates stand out because it focused specifically on how the United States was eager to invade Iraq because of the supposed belief of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), while ignoring North Korea which definitely has WMD.<sup>13</sup>

### 1.1.2 Film Articles & Essays

Alison Landsberg argues that memory is not just lived experience, but also mass-mediated memories – "prosthetic memories" – shape memories, and possibly identities and political opinions. Prosthetic memories blur the lines between memory and history, and individual and collective memory. Technological advances in mass media have changed how memories are retained and spread. Landsberg argues that "the cinema and other mass cultural technologies have the capacity to create shared social frameworks for people who inhabit, literally and figuratively, different social spaces, practices, and beliefs."<sup>14</sup> What Landsberg says here is that mass media has the power to create a shared perspective for people with different backgrounds, different social settings, different cultures and religions. Landsberg believes that "memory always implies a

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<sup>12</sup> Dudziak, "How 9/11 Made 'History'," 5

<sup>13</sup> Ralph Young, "A Decade of Teachable Moments: 9/11 and the Temple University Teach-In," *OAH Magazine of History* 25:3 (July 2011) 53-54

<sup>14</sup> Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, (Washington: NY: Columbia University Press, 2004) 8

subjective, affective relationship to the past, while history strives to maintain a sense of distance from the past.”<sup>15</sup> History is world events beyond a person’s life experience, and therefore does not affect a person in the same capacity as personal or “prosthetic memories” might influence someone. Visual media therefore has great power and the potential for better social and political justice.<sup>16</sup>

Melodrama is a style of storytelling through melodramatic tricks, trying to sway or move the audience’s perception and emotions, distinguishes clearly between “good and evil through clear designations of victimization, heroism, and villainy.”<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth Anker writes about how Americans developed their collective identity of 9/11 through a melodramatic mass media frame. Anker argues that the danger of a melodramatic national identity is that the government accumulates too much power when its subjects, whose power diminishes, become acquiescent and stop questioning the state’s use of power.<sup>18</sup> A majority of Americans “witnessed” the horror of 9/11 through television, and therefore got their impressions and understanding from visual media that framed the U.S. as a “morally powerful victim”<sup>19</sup> that had to reclaim its state of victimhood into a state of heroism. Anker postulates that 9/11 is a good example of how the media has framed the U.S. as the righteous victim struggling against evil forces.<sup>20</sup>

The government, mass media, and popular culture kept the public in a fine balance between being fearful of terrorism and keeping them from outright panicking. David L. Altheide writes about the use of fear tactics and propaganda to control the public. Altheide argues that government, established news media, and TV networks strove to keep the public adequately fearful – not so much as to panic – and condition people to willingly give up civil freedoms and rights to keep the public safe from terrorism, and thusly to justify the war on terror. During the Cold War, the duck and cover strategy was designed to give the illusion of safety. The strategy was to prevent a nation-wide panic from a potential future nuclear attack. During the Cold War, the public was lulled into a false sense of security – by creating and practicing routines for what to do if a nuclear strike were to occur. This tactic created the illusion that people could do

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<sup>15</sup> Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory* (2004) 19

<sup>16</sup> Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory* (2004) 1-48, 143, 154-155

<sup>17</sup> Elisabeth Anker, “Villains, Victims and Heroes: Melodrama, Media, and September 11,” *Journal of Communication*, 55:1 (March 2005), 23

<sup>18</sup> Anker, “Villains, Victims and Heroes,” 22-23, 36

<sup>19</sup> Anker, “Villains, Victims and Heroes,” 23

<sup>20</sup> Anker, “Villains, Victims and Heroes,” March 2005), 22-37

something to stay alive – that they had a chance – preventing panic. People became used to authorities’ increased invasion into their privacy – be it surveillance, or hands-on screenings in airports – because this gave people the illusion of safety, and questioning the tactics against terrorism became synonymous with assumed guilt. The fear tactics by the Government and established news media were also in order to justify a war on terror, and the invasion of a country innocent of 9/11. According to Altheide, the media made the war on terror possible. “Mass media information provides a context of meanings and images that prepare audiences for political decisions about specific actions, including war.”<sup>21</sup> Information is important when making decisions, and news media provide an easily available source of information to the public. The media appeals to its audience’s desire to be extraordinary, while simultaneously spreading fear of threatening outsiders, or “Others.” At the same time the media and the Bush administration suppressed, or left out contextual information on the Middle East.<sup>22</sup> Knowledge is power, and those with the knowledge used it in such a way as to scare the public, while supposed safety measures were taken to better protect the public – prevent panic, and make the public more sympathetic or receptive to the Bush administration’s foreign policies and war on terror, and the media wants more viewers or readers.

In a complex, anxiety-filled world, people are fascinated by increasingly larger scenarios of destruction. Destruction, though horrifying, fascinates people because of its enormous power and possible change, and this holds a dark, aesthetic appeal to us. Mathias Nilges writes about the spectacle of destruction in today’s American movie and television culture. The dark beauty of the spectacle of destruction and mayhem is too simple an explanation, and Nilges argues that the aesthetics of destruction is not really beauty itself, but what destruction can lead to – change to a troubled present world. However, if we are so miserable with our present and hungry for change, you would think that people could themselves change how the world functions. Cultural critic and philosopher Slavoj Žižek wonders at the inability to picture smaller changes to improve American society, rather than destruction of a global or larger scale. *The Day After Tomorrow* is one of Nilges’s examples for how destruction has the potential to change the world for the better. A sudden ice age devastates the northern hemisphere, and

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<sup>21</sup> David L. Altheide, “Fear, Terrorism, and Popular Culture,” in *Reframing 9/11: Film, Popular Culture and the “War on Terror,”* ed. Jeff Birkenstein, Anna Froula, and Karen Randell (New York: Continuum, 2010), Kindle version, Location 226-414

<sup>22</sup> Altheide, “Fear, Terrorism, and Popular Culture,” Kindle ed., Loc. 226-414

brings about a positive radical change in political, ecological, and capitalist thinking. The ice age solves seemingly unsolvable global problems, after the fact. Nilges posits that depictions of destruction is a way to try to explain the relationship between American culture and the rest of the world. Nilges suggests that destruction presents a simple solution to the overwhelming complexities and anxieties of life. Depictions of great disasters are, however, not just a solution to contemporary problems. Past problems seem less problematic than present problems. Therefore, the present has negative associations while we feel nostalgic about and romanticize the past. We tend to remember the past as more ordered and stable than it might have been.<sup>23</sup>

Few post-9/11 films or documentaries dare to directly criticize the war on terror, much less take a closer look at military fetishism in American culture. According to Justine Toh, Christopher Nolan's *Batman Begins* (2005) franchise allegorizes President Bush's "War on Terror," and suggests that the vigilante Batman's militaristic fight against crime does not eradicate crime, but instead develops new breeds of criminals. Toh writes about popular culture's militarization and imperialism, and *Batman Begins* (2005) dresses up tools of war as toys, and the frequent use of hard power. Military tools of war get dressed up as toys to make them more desirable to the consumer. Military tools of war get dressed up as toys to make them more desirable to the consumer. Toh argues that "exporting democracy abroad at the point of a gun"<sup>24</sup> and this way forcing a "better" way of life onto other cultures has a negative effect on the recipient. Batman's advanced tools and unilateral forceful justice, starts a never-ending cycle of criminals trying to match him. Military tools like the Batmobile and the hummer, are both defensive vehicles, and for the person driving such a vehicle, it offers protection and preventative measures, but for the people on the outside these vehicles are an offensive vehicle and a threat to their safety. Batman's armaments threaten Gotham City's criminals, so they try to match Batman – making newer and worse breeds of criminals. From a consumerist perspective, *Batman Begins* (2005) sells the need to bulk up security, or rather plan for the worst – it sells fear. At the same time the film also tells us that forcing change on someone at gunpoint has negative repercussions. The film

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<sup>23</sup> Mathias Nilges, "The Aesthetics of Destruction: Contemporary US Cinema and TV Culture," in *Reframing 9/11: Film, Popular Culture and the "War on Terror,"* ed. Jeff Birkenstein, Anna Froula, and Karen Randell (New York: Continuum, 2010), Kindle version, Location 426-592

<sup>24</sup> Justine Toh, "The Tools and Toys of (the) War (on Terror): Consumer Desire, Military Fetish, and Regime Change in *Batman Begins*," in *Reframing 9/11: Film, Popular Culture and the "War on Terror,"* ed. Jeff Birkenstein, Anna Froula, and Karen Randell (New York: Continuum, 2010), Kindle version, Location 2026-2211



criticizes American foreign policy in the Middle East – not only in forcing change on another culture. It also shows the audience that the line between “good” and “evil” is not as clear-cut as has been presented in the media. Wayne trains in the League of Shadows terrorist camp, under the extremist Ra’s Al Ghul – blurring the line between the “civilized” West and the “evil” East, and ends up defending Gotham City from his own trainers. Wayne’s training is a parallel to how the CIA both trained and armed Osama bin Laden, who ultimately turned on his own trainers. Wayne Industries has made a weapon that the terrorists eventually use against Gotham City, with the help of the city’s transport system, much like the planes flying into the WTC. If the weapon had not been manufactured, and the transportation system was not so readily available – the terrorists would not have had such an effective weapon against the city. The city and its inhabitants provided the terrorists with a means of their own destruction. The vigilante Batman works outside the law, not that different from how the criminals work outside the law.<sup>25</sup>

In the aftermath of World War II (WWII), Hollywood reflected the government’s American Exceptionalism view, but a change occurred in post-9/11 Hollywood. In “Teaching American Politics and Global Hollywood in the Age of 9/11” (July 2011), Lary May writes about film as a teaching tool for the public. After WWII, the government and the media spun the idea that America’s freedoms came from the heroism and sacrifices made against Axis powers’ ideologies – a “victory culture” as May calls it. May argues that due to increased globalization, many Hollywood films have become more critical of American foreign policy. After 9/11, the Bush administration expected the film industry to follow precedence. The administration had failed to see the gradual cultural change beginning during the 1980s when the American film industry started collaborating with foreign film industries and artists. The American film industry has gradually changed its political views because of an increasing global audience critical of American foreign policy. It was in the film industry’s best interest to cater to global public opinion, therefore/thereby go where the money is. *The Bourne Identity* (2002), *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004), *Syriana* (2005), *Brokeback Mountain* (2005), *The Good Shepherd* (2006), *Babel* (2006), *Letters from Iwo Jima* (2006), *Flags of Our Fathers*

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<sup>25</sup> Toh, “Consumer Desire, Military Fetish, and Regime Change in *Batman Begins*,” Kindle ed., Loc. 2026-3780

(2008) criticize American “victory culture,” economic imperialism and its need to control the oil market.<sup>26</sup>

Thomas Riegler agrees that visual media is an excellent teaching tool, but he seems to disagree with May’s conclusion in his article “9/11 on the Screen: Giving Memory and Meaning to All That ‘Howling Space’ at Ground Zero.” Riegler argues that, with few exceptions, most visual media productions usually avoid political context for 9/11 and symbolically return 9/11 to the victims of that day. Hollywood movies and television were the best cultural tools for dealing with and healing from 9/11. In the process of transforming current events into “history,” visual media as a historical teaching tool is often dismissed, but it simplifies history for the public.<sup>27</sup>

## 1.2 Marita Sturken & Comfort from Trauma

Marita Sturken does not cover film beyond a brief mention. I think not using film is a mistake, which is why I want to test Sturken’s theory against films made about 9/11. Sturken examines how Americans deal with and recover from trauma. How Americans react to trauma is very specific. In trying to recover from trauma, Americans take part in cultural memorial practices that reveal an idea of innocence and comfort in American culture. Sturken explores “cultural memory, tourism, consumerism, paranoia, security, and kitsch”<sup>28</sup> and how these habits connect to a perpetual belief in American innocence as a form of comfort. In other words, Sturken studies American habits and behaviors in connection with historical traumatic events. These habits reveal that, despite American involvement in world politics and world affairs, many Americans do not understand that this presence might have consequences<sup>29</sup>

Most theories of memory involve trauma. Comfort culture is complicated, and driven by fear. Fear causes consumption of “security and comfort,” which have unintended political effects. The purpose of comfort culture is to deal with trauma, fear, and death, and to reject politics, but some of this comfort culture is linked to patriotism.

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<sup>26</sup> Lary May, “Teaching American Politics and Global Hollywood in the Age of 9/11,” *OAH Magazine of History* 25:3 (July 2011) 45-49

<sup>27</sup> Thomas Riegler, “9/11 on the Screen: Giving Memory and Meaning to All That ‘Howling Space’ at Ground Zero,” *Radical History Review* 111 (Fall 2011) 155-165

<sup>28</sup> Marita Sturken, *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007) 4

<sup>29</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 4

Patriotism is comforting because it makes you feel like part of a group, part of something bigger than yourself. Therefore, part of comfort culture is political, unintended or not. In a way, consumerism runs parallel to national identity, which means consumerism plays a part in politics when appealing to “consumer-citizens.”<sup>30</sup> The comfort and security of patriotic consumer products thus enables the government’s interventionist and imperialistic tendencies abroad.<sup>31</sup>

### (1) Innocence

American national identity has been heavily influenced by the idea of innocence, which helps to retain the American exceptionalist belief that the U.S. is a morally and ethically upstanding nation never to blame for attacks against the nation. According to David Noble, the U.S. is supposed to be an ideal place in a world of corrupt nation states, although Noble also says that this idea of innocence first originated in Europe. In recent history, surprise attacks on the nation have been opportunities to boost the image of the U.S. as a noble nation. The surprise attacks were defined as “the moment when American innocence was lost.”<sup>32</sup> World War II was framed as one of the last noble wars of the last century against evil, and the terrorist attack of 9/11 was compared to Pearl Harbor to reestablish the nation as blameless and innocent. The Cold War was also framed as a war of innocence against evil communists. The need to reestablish innocence hides American imperialist foreign policies and domestically that need is also a disavowal of violence in society.<sup>33</sup>

Even attacks that come from within are subject to declarations of innocence. Gun violence in the U.S. is a real problem, but this fact is denied in favor of reframing events such as the Oklahoma City bombing and the Columbine shootings from a place of innocence. The events were framed as shocking to keep “the myth that American society is not violent”<sup>34</sup> going – to deny how violent American history has been at times. Sturken’s examples of violence that have been glossed over is the long history of slavery and later Civil Rights struggles; the predominant gun violence; and wars in

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<sup>30</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 6

<sup>31</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 5-6

<sup>32</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 16

<sup>33</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 15-16

<sup>34</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 16

“Southeast Asia, Central America, and the Middle East.”<sup>35</sup> Attacks from within that intentionally attack innocents, disturb the myth of a non-violent society. Therefore, the Columbine frame blamed pop culture for turning innocent teenagers into killers of innocents, and the Oklahoma City bombing’s Timothy McVeigh was deemed evil in order to prevent people from looking too closely for underlying reasons for the bombing. 9/11 was also presented as a surprise attack from out of nowhere – to smooth over how American intervention in global conflicts and wars, have unintentionally nurtured terrorism. The rejection of the U.S. as an imperial power allows for the belief that interfering in global conflicts are acts of benevolence – not imperialism.<sup>36</sup> The belief in innocence is a comfort in times of trauma because it is easier to believe in one’s innocence, or the innocence of one’s nation, than it is to believe that one’s own society or nation might have indirectly been responsible for what happened.

## (2) Consumerism

Quick healing through retail therapy – consumerism – has become another coping mechanism from trauma. Consumerism goes hand in hand with memorialization culture and quick healing. In American culture, the belief is that you should try to recover quickly from trauma, put a traumatic event in the past where it belongs, and not linger in trauma or grief. According to Judith Butler, to stretch out the emotional pain of trauma is believed to be passive, and makes one vulnerable. Consumerism is supposed to help speed up the healing process, to proactively move on from trauma and grief. Retail therapy for a speedy healing, and memorials are supposed to help give closure to the trauma.<sup>37</sup>

The consumerism trend is not new. Historian T. J. Jackson Lears argues that the Protestant scrimping and saving for a reward in the afterlife was replaced by a consumer culture of providing reward and satisfaction in earthly life. The desire for instant or quick reward replaced religion’s advertisement for delayed reward. As the new Americans cut ties with the past and reinvented themselves, consumer culture became

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<sup>35</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 16

<sup>36</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 15-18

<sup>37</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 14, 30

the new religion, in a way, which became a way to reach “social ideals” – social status, which again became a political tool meant to appear non-political.<sup>38</sup>

According to Sturken, “government authorities speak to Americans in the language of consumerism more than the language of citizenship.”<sup>39</sup> Comfort culture, to deal with loss and trauma, is supposed to be apolitical. Sturken argues that being patriotic is comforting because it makes individuals feel like part of something bigger than themselves, “consumer culture exists on a continuum with national identity,”<sup>40</sup> and has become a tool for politics. Authorities, both political and media, tend to speak to the American public as “citizen-consumers.”<sup>41</sup> Citizenship has become synonymous with consumerism, and consumerism has become the path/way to “freedom, democracy, and equality”<sup>42</sup> – through consumerism, citizens can fully help the nation without sacrifice. Although, New York City’s Mayor Rudolph Giuliani urged people to spend their money – to boost the economy – “even if they put themselves and their savings at risk.”<sup>43</sup> Mayor Giuliani was right, however, because a healthy U.S. economy is contingent on “citizen-consumers” spending a lot of money. Comfort, in the U.S., links to patriotism and nationalism because this provides a feeling of belonging and solidarity. Not to mention, a lot of consumers turned to consumerism to show not only patriotism, but a defiance – to show that the terrorists had not broken Americans. Consumer culture intersects with national identity, which is highly important and therefore used as a tool of persuasion. This cycle of comfort, patriotism and consumerism leads to inactively submitting to the government’s foreign affairs. This docility in consuming kitsch also applies to tourism. Part of New York City’s economy is dependent on the tourist industry, and after 9/11 there were concerns that tourism in the city would not pick back up soon enough.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 14-15

<sup>39</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 15

<sup>40</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 6

<sup>41</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 15

<sup>42</sup> For more detailed explanation, see Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 59:

“All the elements of Lizabeth Cohen’s consumer republic are at work here: the equation of citizenship and consumerism and the selling of consumerism as the avenue to freedom, democracy, and equality. ... One of the key features of the notion that consumerism, rather than civic engagement, is the primary means to achieve social equality is the idea that one does not and should not have to experience sacrifice in order to participate fully in the nation.”

<sup>43</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 57

<sup>44</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 6, 15, 54, 57-59

## (a) Tourism

Sturken argues that “American culture’s relationship to memory and mourning can be defined as a tourism of history.”<sup>45</sup> The reason for this “tourism of history” is because of an increased consumer culture; because of both public and private media use; because of Americans looking for authentic experiences, but naïvely accepting inauthentic experiences; and the belief that U.S. history stands apart from world history. Because of this, Americans believe themselves to be innocent observers, not part of the action, but still having experienced it, which is part of the illusion of authenticity. Taking pictures is a big part of traditional tourism, and through media, the American tourist vicariously experiences history. Tourists also tend to buy mementos, such as teddy bears, to extend the connection to, and evoke memories of, the place and its history. Sturken’s example of the teddy bear, however, innocent it may seem, is limited. The teddy bear is supposed to comfort, but not to understand the context behind the tragedy, which is why the teddy bear is not necessarily as innocent as it portrays itself to be. Tourism of history and consumerism steers the consuming public’s reaction in certain directions while steering them away from alternative interpretations of the nation’s politics and foreign affairs.<sup>46</sup>

Tourists seek authenticity, but settle for inauthentic experiences. Tourism is a relatively modern development alongside the modernization and industrialization of society. In some ways, everyday modern society seems inauthentic, thus tourists travel to places thought to be more authentic. However, the process of tourism, of sightseeing, is regarded as inauthentic because tourists are often satisfied with a shallow experience. Sturken’s examples of sites of collective trauma are Ground Zero and Oklahoma City National Memorial. Tourists want to feel connected to what happened in these places, and through this, feel as if they had an authentic experience. Sturken compares this search for authenticity to a religious pilgrimage. Pilgrims, whether on a religious or tourism pilgrimage, try to achieve a “personal transformation.”<sup>47</sup> When it comes to sites such as Ground Zero and Oklahoma City National Memorial, the pilgrimage to honor and mourn the dead – adding things to memorials – mix together with tourist actions of taking pictures and buying or taking souvenirs from the site. Taking pictures and taking or buying something from tourist sites are ways to extend the connection to the place.

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<sup>45</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 12

<sup>46</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 11-13

<sup>47</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 11

This connection is an illusion, because even when visiting tourist attractions, the tourist believes him- or herself apart from the site and its events, and does not seek a deeper understanding of events.<sup>48</sup>

Sturken compares the American perspective of history to tourism. Americans have become used to seeing themselves “through consumerism, media images, souvenirs, popular culture, and museum and architectural reenactments.” Americans are used to seeing their history and historical figures as the focus of historic attention through media representations. The purpose of experiencing history this way is supposed to be emotionally cleansing for a person. Tourists travel to historical sites where they take in the information given at face value, imagining themselves as innocent observers of historical reenactments, and do not realize that the business of tourism affects the local population in order to accommodate tourists visiting. Disneyland is one of the most famous of tourist industry examples, but Sturken is more interested in historical sites where reenactments are an everyday occurrence for the viewing tourist public’s pleasure. Sturken describes tourists as “distant,” “innocent,” and “observers whose actions are believed to have no effect on what they see”<sup>49</sup> – descriptions she also seems to ascribe Americans in connection with world history. According to Sturken, in a world where the motives for conflicts are varied and complicated, Americans tend to see all conflicts as good versus evil. Sturken demonstrates American consumers buying military security products and souvenirs from terrorist sites. To buy a Hummer to feel safe from possible terrorist attacks connects are to the Iraq War. When tourists buy souvenirs from terrorist sites, it is to show sympathy for what happened, but ultimately it is not to learn why the attack happened. Not trying to understand why something like 9/11, happened, demonstrates the belief that American history and political affairs stand apart from the rest of world affairs, and thus American presence in the world has no consequences, according to Sturken.<sup>50</sup>

## (b) Kitsch

“Tourism of history” and kitsch seem to go hand in hand. Kitsch gives the impression that everyone who obtains this kitsch object agrees with the message – whether that is

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<sup>48</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 10-12

<sup>49</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 10

<sup>50</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 9-11

true or not. Kitsch objects are cheap, mass produced molds, and thus does not vary very much.<sup>51</sup> The purpose of kitsch items and the repetition of for example snow globes are to provide feelings of comfort until a trauma is no longer traumatic for a person. A snow globe offers a sense of illusion of control over a small, insulated environment. Sturken describes it as looking into a small world from a “godlike position,”<sup>52</sup> where when you shake the snow globe, the world settles down again. Another supposedly innocent kitsch item is the teddy bear, which gives empty promises of comfort. When leaving a terrorist site turned into a tourist attraction with a teddy bear, that item is not meant to make things better, but to make us feel better about how the tragedy brought out the best in people. Kitsch is not supposed to spark a deeper search for historical context, but rather political docility. In other words, the public should feel sympathetic of the victims and lives lost, but not question why the victims lost their lives, thereby encouraging the public to support its government in its actions. Essentially, the reason why a traumatic event happened is being smoothed over by the kitsch item. Kitsch restricts expressions of emotions – not to say that people should not be comforted, however, when that comfort comes with predetermined political strings attached, Sturken cautions people to be careful. A person buying and using a kitsch item might not buy it to show any political opinions, neither to reflect on a historical event. However, that is the message implied. Therefore, when using 9/11 Ground Zero kitsch items, the message implied to the public was of support to U.S. domestic and foreign affairs policies in the Bush administration’s war on terror.<sup>53</sup>

### (3) Spectacles

The official intent of the spectacle of executions is to act as a deterrent against crime, reaffirm the state’s power, and give comfort or revenge to victims’ families. Michael Foucault wrote that people had to watch public executions “because they must be made to be afraid; ...and because they must to a certain extent take part in it.”<sup>54</sup> One could suggest that the intentions behind 9/11 and the death penalty are the same. Both are, and were, meant to be spectator events, and both might be considered a form of capital punishment, meant as deterrence. If we look at America’s presence in the Middle East

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<sup>51</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 19

<sup>52</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 2

<sup>53</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 1-3, 7, 21-23, 26, 217

<sup>54</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 152



from the terrorists' perspective, one could see 9/11 as deterrence – trying to punish America and deter Americans from staying in the Middle East. Sturken argues that executions, such as Timothy McVeigh's, share similar criteria/aspects with tourism of history. Spectacles create the image of a greater loss, and overshadow the lesser, but no less significant, individual losses. No one can forget the fireballs shooting out of the twin towers at the point of each airplane crash, yet the collapse of those solid WTC towers left a more lasting impression. The WTC towers collapsed as if it was a planned demolition. The 9/11 terrorists' aim in flying the planes into the WTC was to create a spectacular but defeating image more than death, to overshadow the individual deaths of the attacks, to create fear, and probably as a punishment for American involvement in the Middle East. Unplanned shrines containing photographs with descriptions of, and messages to, the missing and the victims worked against the spectacle erasing the individuality of the missing and dead victims. According to Sturken, innocent people in photographs are unaware of the future, and pictures taken in one context is used differently to what it was meant for – in context with terrorism – and the viewer of the photographs knows what the people in the photographs at the moment the photo was taken do not know. Photographs of innocent people, not knowing their futures, are also “counter-images to the iconic images that came to define 9/11, not only the images of spectacle but also the haunting images of people falling and jumping to their deaths.”<sup>55</sup> The intent of the photographs with descriptions of the missing and dead, serves to individualize the victims of the WTC spectacle – to make them stand out among the thousands dead and missing, and to make them less ordinary and more special. The spectacle of the twin towers in many ways erases the other terrorist attacks, and erases the individual victims of the attacks. The memorials containing pictures of the individuals counteract this erasure.<sup>56</sup> Another form of erasure, one could argue, is reenactment – repeating a trauma until the trauma is no longer traumatic, or one becomes bored with the repetitious acts.

#### (a) Reenactment

Obsessive repetition is a reaction to trauma. Freud theorized that obsessive repetition was unhealed trauma – unable to archive a traumatic event as memory, as a past event,

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<sup>55</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 185

<sup>56</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 140-141, 150-152, 170-175, 183-185

to move on, and make the memory a part of you. In short, the trauma is stuck in a loop, without healing or closure. Sturken has found that “more recent analyses of trauma demonstrate that repetition can be a central part of the processing of a narrative of trauma.”<sup>57</sup> Philosopher Susan Brison argues that survivors of trauma repeatedly tell the story of the event – to try to “master the trauma.” The storytelling might not be under control, but by controlling how the story is told, how detailed, and to whom – the storyteller gains some momentum of control over the memories, and thusly integrating the memory, owning the memory. However, Sturken examines what it means to get past the memory of a trauma – if it means “an integration or a smoothing over, a forgetting or a reckoning, erasure or recuperation.”<sup>58</sup> Sturken analyses what a national and “cultural reenactment of trauma” indicates. Cultures reenact traumas to understand why the events took place. Repetition is part of kitsch and a determination to turn trauma into “popular culture”<sup>59</sup> stories – stories of sacrifice and heroism. Repetition is also proof of how cultures repeat traumatic moments that bring difficult or unpleasant change. After the Oklahoma City bombing and 9/11, stories of the terrorist attacks were reworked into something with which the public could take something positive. For example, artists transformed the picture of an Oklahoma City firefighter carrying a dead child into a firefighter saving a living, breathing child. Along with transforming traumatic events into redemption stories – where the people involved have a chance to redo what happened, during the previous decades, a “culture of survivor envy”<sup>60</sup> has developed. Especially WWII veterans and survivors gained particular authenticity and cultural or political authority in cultures that feel inauthentic. Experience is the ultimate and desired authenticity, but the majority of Americans have only experienced traumatic, historical events through media. The event was traumatizing also for people who experienced the trauma through media, and these might feel a need to visit the trauma site to feel a connection to the site, the victims, and history, and to acquire a sense of authenticity through association, by having visited a site of history, in some cases a site of sacredness.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 27

<sup>58</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 28

<sup>59</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 29

<sup>60</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 28

<sup>61</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 26-31, 218

#### (4) Sacredness

Early on, Ground Zero, the space where the twin towers used to stand before the planes crashed into them, transformed into a sacred site with the realization that most of the remains would not be found. Sturken argues that in American culture, sacredness comes from places where “blood has been spilled on it,”<sup>62</sup> but places of blood spilling are not a rarity. A sacred site, although not necessarily religious, is implicitly a place for worship and not a place for daily routines, which is problematic for Ground Zero where people live and work – leading daily lives. “Sacred” immediately implies religiousness, and the Ground Zero site was proclaimed Christian through religious memorial ceremonies, however, the sacredness did not spring from religion, but rather because of lives lost at that site. Then again, not all sites of violence and death transform into sacred sites. In places where violence is an everyday occurrence, people tend to move onwards and forwards instead of creating numerous memorial sites. Kevin Rosario argues that after the 1871 fire in Chicago and the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, people chose to mostly be positive and move on from the tragedy. After the battle of Gettysburg, President Lincoln deemed the battleground as sacred because Gettysburg was a pivotal point for the Union in the Civil War. In the U.S., a site usually has to fulfill “secular and national”<sup>63</sup> factors to become sacred – the combination of national and political meaning makes for a sacred site. Kenneth Foote’s recipe, for what makes a site sacred is that the space has to be cordoned off, preserved, repetitive memorial services have to take place, and draw other “memorials and monuments”<sup>64</sup> – in short, the site is amended and any evidence of the violence removed. Not just sites can become sacred, also objects or remains. Some of the evidence of the violence removed from Ground Zero also became sacred. Very little remained behind of the buildings, the planes, and the victims – most had turned to dust. The dust was made sacred by transferring it from trash drums to urns, turning the dust from trash to ashes. The dust was controversial – it was trash, yet normally when cremating the dead, all that is left is ashes poured into an urn. Therefore, the dust was not just dust, rather ashes in urns, which became a representation of the deceased loved ones, of something hallowed.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 199

<sup>63</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 199

<sup>64</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 201

<sup>65</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 175-181, 199-203

Sturken argues that because of the sheer number of photographs and other visual media, private and public, images of 9/11's traumatic events, Ground Zero became a tourist site from the get go. Ground Zero's metamorphosis from a traumatic terrorist site to a popular tourist spot is not contradictory to the notion of its sacredness. People flock to both tourist sites and sacred sites – it is a sort of pilgrimage. Most of the people who went on pilgrimage to Ground Zero in the year after 9/11 behaved as if they were both mourners and tourists. The tourists acted shocked, and were crying, at the sight of the hole where the WTC towers previously used to stand, meanwhile they would also take photographs of Ground Zero which was essentially just empty space.<sup>66</sup>

### (a) Architecture

Architecture can also show the public's grief and feelings of sacredness in a sudden absence. Architecture critic Ada Louise Huxtable predicted right after 9/11 that local groups would make a design competition, the media would hype up the competition, and eventually a compromise would have to be reached for a choice that would be adequate to all parties. A year after 9/11, the rubble had been cleared, and it was time to plan what to do about the empty space in place of the missing WTC towers. "Hundreds of designs"<sup>67</sup> were suggested to fill that empty space – many of whom ran the gamut of either the "absence or presence"<sup>68</sup> of the twin towers, buildings probably impossible to construct, or highly artful designs. Famous architect from New York, Peter Eisenman, designed buildings that seemed to be in a frozen bubble of constant collapse, which would have served as a painful and insensitive reminder – this was an obsessive reenactment of the twin towers' collapse. Grief and loss over the twin towers were apparent in Eisenman's and others' architectural designs. The intention behind all these designs were to fill up the hauntingly empty space, but the public did not approve of the idea of renewing the Ground Zero into something pretentiously architectural. After a traumatic event, aesthetics is usually believed to oppose "the processes of grief"<sup>69</sup> – as well as the sacredness of Ground Zero. In the architectural debate of how to rebuild Ground Zero, the designs tended to repeatedly reenact 9/11 and almost continuously

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<sup>66</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 211-213, 213

<sup>67</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 233

<sup>68</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 239

<sup>69</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 234

refer to the WTC twin towers. Despite the fact that the twin towers were not the only buildings to collapse on 9/11 – the size and the “twin effect”<sup>70</sup> of those two identical skyscrapers against the NYC skyline made people more nostalgic about their loss. The twin towers stood out also because it was “not one plane but two, not one building collapsed but two, with the second moment of impact acting as an indicator of the uniqueness of the event.”<sup>71</sup> When the second plane hit, people realized that the first plane flying into the first building had not been an accident, but rather terrorism. Post-9/11, people emotionally remembered the WTC towers as if the buildings were missing human, twin brothers. Not until the destruction of the twin towers did they become beloved by people, because they represented a time where people innocently wanted to see how high up in the sky they could build. Sturken does not interpret this urge as arrogance, but rather innocent boredom. The focus on the towers acted as an erasure of all the other destruction on 9/11 in NYC; in Washington, D.C.; and in Pennsylvania, but also for all the lives lost because of the skyscrapers. Sturken speculates that architects might have felt somewhat guilty (by association, by being part of the architect community) for the buildings’ part in the high death toll. Most skyscrapers, no matter what their height, are not safe to occupy in an emergency. The twin towers were each a hundred and ten floors high, despite the fact that skyscrapers with more than eighty floors are financially unprofitable. The collapse of the buildings took out more people than the planes did, not to mention all the people trapped on the floors above the plane crashes, some of whom decided to jump. Like kitsch, many of the architectural designs tried to smooth over the tragedy of thousands of deaths because it might be easier to mourn the loss of buildings than the loss of all those people who occupied that space.<sup>72</sup>

## 1.3 Synopses of Primary Sources

### 1.3.1 Films: Documentaries

*9/11* (directors Jules and Gedeon Naudet, 2002) is the very first documentary made about 9/11. The original intent was to document a NYC firefighter trainee becoming a

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<sup>70</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 222

<sup>71</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 222

<sup>72</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 219-235, 239-240, 242-243

full-fledged firefighter. Through happenstance, one of the Naudet brothers was out on a call with a team of firefighters checking a gas leak and recording them as the first plane hit the WTC. This is a redemption story of firefighters – unprepared, but rising to the occasion.<sup>73</sup>

*Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004), by director Michael Moore is one of the few early documentaries that scathingly criticize the Bush administration, and the events leading up to the terrorist attacks and after.<sup>74</sup>

*Flight 93: The Flight That Fought Back* (2005), by director Bruce Goodison, focuses on the Pennsylvania flight, United Flight 93. Actor Kiefer Sutherland narrates the events. The FBI let the filmmakers review parts of the plane's black-box recordings.<sup>75</sup>

History Channel's *102 Minutes That Changed America* (2008) documentary is comprised of private photographs and videos, dispatch radio recordings, private voicemails, online messages, and surveillance camera footage that have all be compiled and edited together to form one documentary.<sup>76</sup>

Discovery Channel's *9/11 After the Towers Fell* (aired 2010, released on DVD 2011), by producer Jonathan Towers, is a documentary about both rescue workers as well as civilians who tried to find survivors in the rubble after the twin towers' collapse.<sup>77</sup>

Discovery Channel's *9/11 New York Firefighters* (aired 2002, but was released on DVD in 2011), by producer Peter Schnall, is a documentary about the bond between fire fighters.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> *9/11*, directed by James Hanlon, Gédéon Naudet, Jules Naudet, aired March 10, 2002 (Paramount Home Video, 2002), The Filmmakers' Commemorative DVD

<sup>74</sup> *Fahrenheit 9/11*, directed by Michael Moore, premiered June 25, 2004 (Columbia TriStar Home Entertainment, 2004), DVD

<sup>75</sup> *Flight 93: The Flight That Fought Back*, directed by Bruce Goodison, aired September 8, 2005 (Brook Lapping Productions & Discovery Channel, 2005) DVD

<sup>76</sup> *102 Minutes That Changed America*, directed by Nicole Rittenmeyer and Seth Skundrick, aired September 11, 2008 (History Channel Video, 2008), DVD

<sup>77</sup> *9/11 after the Towers Fell*, produced by Jonathan Towers, aired 2010 (Discovery Channel, 2011) DVD

<sup>78</sup> *9/11 New York Firefighters*, produced by Peter Schnall, aired 2002 (Discovery Channel, 2011), DVD

### 1.3.2 Films: Movies

*Ladder 49* (director Jay Russell, 2004) is about a firefighter's journey from a newly trained firefighter – a “rookie” – to an experienced firefighter. The setting for the script was originally in New York City, but Russell did not want the film to have anything to do with the 9/11 terrorist attacks, so he moved the setting of the film to Baltimore. This is a redemption story – heroic firefighters, and a story of finding meaning after a tragedy.<sup>79</sup>

*World Trade Center* (director Oliver Stone, 2006) is a dramatization of how two Port Authority police officers who were buried alive during the WTC collapse. While the police officers lies buried underneath the rubble of the WTC, the families, the spouses worry about them at home while watching the news for any updates from Ground Zero.<sup>80</sup>

*United 93* (director Paul Greengrass, 2006) are both about the tragedy on board the Pennsylvania flight, United Airline 93, on 9/11. This is a redemption story, supposed to show the public that some victims of 9/11 fought back against the terrorists. The movie is based on the drama and tragedy that unfolded onboard UA93, and virtually identical to the documentaries made about the same hijacking.<sup>81</sup>

*Cloverfield* (director J. J. Abrams, 2008) will remind any viewer of seeing people flee from the events that took place on 9/11. The movie characters start out attending a farewell party for one of the main characters, Rob Hawkins, and then the first catastrophic events happen. The movie plays on an increasingly popular trend of realism – horror movies pretending to be based on real events. More and more people record and video blog their daily lives, and upload the footage onto social media sites – increasing the level of globalization. One of the movie characters, Hud, has been assigned to film the party. When New York City is attacked, Hud continues documenting the events. The friends try to get off the island, until Rob gets a phone call from his love interest, Beth McIntyre, who lies injured in her apartment from one of the

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<sup>79</sup> *Ladder 49*, directed by Jay Russell, premiered October 1, 2004 (Buena Vista Pictures, 2004), Blu-ray Disc

<sup>80</sup> *World Trade Center*, directed by Oliver Stone, premiered August 9, 2006 (Paramount Home Entertainment, 2006), Blu-ray Disc

<sup>81</sup> *United 93*, directed by Paul Greengrass, premiered April 28, 2006 (Universal Studios Home Entertainment, 2011), Blu-ray Disc

attacks by the creature. The group of friends trek back to Beth's apartment building to save her. This movie has dual timelines – an innocent and happy past timeline and the horrific present timeline where New Yorkers are fleeing from an alien monster.<sup>82</sup>

*Remember Me* (director Allen Coulter, 2010) is a film about loss of innocence, and of tragic loss. The main protagonist, Tyler Hawkins is a young student who stumbles through life after his brother, Michael's suicide. Tyler's only other sibling is his smart, precocious, and artistic little sister who almost seems more grown up than her older brother. Their parents are divorced and barely speaking to each other, except for on the anniversary of Michael's death, which was also Michael's birthday. Tyler's mother, Diane, has married another man, Les Hirsch. Tyler meets and eventually falls in love with Alyssa (Ally) Craig. When Ally was eleven years old, she witnessed her mother's murder, therefore she lives her life as if she were to die at any moment in time. Ally adheres to Sturken's "fear, preparedness, and security."<sup>83</sup> It is no coincidence that Tyler meets Ally. Ally's misanthropic father, Sergeant Neil Craig wrongfully arrests Tyler, while using excessive force. Aidan, Tyler's best friend, convinces Tyler to get even with Craig, through his daughter, Ally. Tyler and Ally meet, and fall in love. Eventually, Tyler has to come clean about his original agenda for dating Ally. Hurt by Tyler's betrayal, Ally leaves him. Tyler does not understand why she is so upset, but when his little sister is bullied in school, he finally understands Ally and Caroline's side.<sup>84</sup>

*Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (director Stephen Daldry, 2011) is a post-modern, multi-layered film about recovering from the tragedy of 9/11. Unlike many of the September 11 documentaries and film, this film focuses on the individuals and families left behind, and not on the spectacle surrounding the collapsing twin towers. This film centers on a young, precocious, and inquisitive boy, Oskar Schell, who lost his father in the World Trade Center. Oskar might have Asperger's Syndrome and difficulty communicating with people per societal rules. Thomas Schell was one of the few people who understood Oskar, and then he died during the collapse of one of the twin towers. This movie, like *Cloverfield* (2008), has dual timelines throughout the film

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<sup>82</sup> *Cloverfield*, directed by Matt Reeves, premiered January 18, 2008 (Paramount Home Entertainment, 2008), Blu-ray Disc

<sup>83</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 52

<sup>84</sup> *Remember Me*, directed by Allen Coulter, premiered March 12, 2010 (Summit Entertainment, 2010) Blu-ray Disc



– one in the past when Thomas Schell was alive and the Schell family was happy, and one in the present where the Schell family is broken and trying to piece together whatever is left of their life. As the main character, Oskar finds a hidden key among his father’s possessions. Oskar wants to find out what the key unlocks. This film is a visual journey of gathering pieces of a puzzle.<sup>85</sup>

## 1.4 Chapter Conclusion

This thesis is supposed to test Marita Sturken’s theory of American reactions to trauma and tragedy with 9/11 film theory. Sturken does not use films in her examination, but I am interested to see how films fare against her theory.

In chapter two, I examine whether Sturken’s theory of American innocence in relation to historical conflicts reflects in films made after and about 9/11. Innocence plays a big part in Sturken’s theory of the American search for comfort from trauma, and thus this chapter is longer than the succeeding chapters. I use the films, *Fahrenheit 9/11* (director Michael Moore, 2004), *World Trade Center* (Oliver Stone, 2006), *United 93* (Greengrass, 2006), *Remember Me* (Alan Coulter, 2010), and *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (Stephen Daldry, 2011) to examine against Sturken’s theory of American innocence.

The third chapter is divided into three parts; consumerism, “tourism of history,” and kitsch. I will use the films, *Ladder 49* (director Jay Russell, 2004), *Fahrenheit 9/11* (director Michael Moore, 2004), *United 93* (Greengrass, 2006), History Channel’s *102 Minutes That Changed America* (2008), *Cloverfield* (director J. J. Abrams, 2008), *Remember Me* (Alan Coulter, 2010), and *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (Stephen Daldry, 2011) to test against Sturken’s theory.

In chapter four, I examine how spectacles and reenactment in films correspond with Sturken’s theory on these matters. The films I use in this chapter are *9/11* (directors Jules and Gedeon Naudet, 2002), *Ladder 49* (director, 2004), *Flight 93* (2006), *United 93* (Greengrass, 2006), History Channel’s *102 Minutes That Changed America* (2008),

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<sup>85</sup> *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, directed by Stephen Daldry, premiered April 20, 2012 (Warner Bros. Pictures, 2011), Blu-ray Disc

*Cloverfield* (director J. J. Abrams, 2008), and *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (Stephen Daldry, 2011).

In the fifth chapter, I examine sacredness and architecture in films. The twin towers were controversial in how they have been portrayed after their collapse, and I examine how specifically 9/11 films have remembered the twin towers. I will use *World Trade Center* (Oliver Stone, 2006), History Channel's *102 Minutes That Changed America* (2008), and *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (Stephen Daldry, 2011), but will focus mostly on *Remember Me* (Alan Coulter, 2010) and how this movie seems to use two human brothers to symbolize the twin towers.

In the concluding chapter, I will present my findings on Sturken's theory compared against films. I will determine whether the 9/11 films I have chosen to study hold up against Sturken or if they go against what she theorizes. I expect the films to fit in several of Sturken's categories, but I will determine which of these films for example fit within Sturken's innocence than kitsch.

## 2 Innocence

Innocence is a comfort in times of trauma. Central to Sturken's theory of finding comfort is innocence of both the individual and of the nation. American exceptionalism makes it possible to retain the idea of innocence, and to smooth over predominant violence in society, whether it be violent attacks from an outside source or from inside one's own nation.<sup>86</sup>

The definitions of innocence is generally of moral and ethical virtues and honesty, guilelessness, naïveté or childlikeness, harmlessness, chastity, a lack of knowledge or understanding, and not guilty. Innocence and "good" is not necessarily the same thing, but innocence and goodness share a few niches. A good person can be morally and ethically upstanding, someone forthright and not cunning. Beyond similar definitions to innocence, a good person can be kind and polite to others, someone who loves children and animals. In the Western world, being a Christian might also qualify a good person – despite a long global history of horrors committed in the name of this religion. Some of these horrors have been committed because of a lack of understanding of other cultures and a bias towards one's own culture. Part of innocence is unawareness – naïveté or childlike behavior, without being childish, as well as a lack of knowledge or understanding. Lack of knowledge or understanding does not need to stem from stupidity but rather a lack of experience with the world's realities.

### 2.1 Sturken's Teddy Bear versus Films as Teddy Bears

Sturken theorizes that to buy a teddy bear in relation to a specific tragedy connects the consumer to the victims, and allows that consumer to grieve. In Sturken's theory, on the surface teddy bears give the impression of innocence. The teddy bear promises to comfort trauma. However, the teddy bear is limited because – whereas the teddy bear's "message of sentimentality and reassurance" is supposed to comfort trauma – people react differently to traumas.<sup>87</sup> Similar to Sturken's teddy bear theory, films can also act as teddy bears. Films provide comfort, but whereas teddy bears are limited, films can take on various frames. The comfort of films comes from the connection that the

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<sup>86</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 15-18

<sup>87</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 13

audience develops with the film storylines, with film characters and what these characters symbolize.

According to J. Hillis Miller, “the reading of a novel produces the powerful illusion of an even more intimate access to the mind and heart of another person than the reader can ever have in real life.”<sup>88</sup> In *Remember Me* (2010), the protagonist, Tyler Hawkins, narrates throughout the movie, although he is not an omniscient presence. Tyler’s narration is an intimate journey through his thoughts. The audience lives vicariously through Tyler’s evolution from a cynical young man to a mature grownup who has gained a new perspective on life and family. Tyler is not strictly speaking to the audience, but to his dead older brother, Michael.<sup>89</sup> Throughout the film, Tyler carries a leather-bound journal in the back pocket of his pants, in which he writes his thoughts. Tyler’s journal is actually Tyler’s way of trying to cope with the death of his brother, to find a way to communicate. Tyler cannot know whether his dead brother hears his thoughts or sees what he writes in the journal, but the slight possibility that maybe his dead brother is aware might be a comfort.<sup>90</sup> The point of teddy bears is not to change a tragedy, but to make you feel better about what happened.<sup>91</sup> Tyler’s narration gives us insight into Tyler’s thoughts and feelings, and although it is an illusion, the audience feels a connection. The audience feels less alone in their thoughts and feelings. The connection to Tyler, and through Tyler, the movie, is a metaphysical hug from a teddy bear.

Films become a kind of memorial, and the descriptions, photographs and reenactments of the victims in these films become a way to communicate with the dead.<sup>92</sup> In *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (2011), the protagonist, Oskar Schell, is a traumatized little boy whose father died in one of the twin towers. Oskar takes the audience on a journey of healing by helping other people heal. Oskar has trouble communicating with people, and yet ends up connecting with several of the people he meets on his journey of discovery. The audience watching the movie lives vicariously through Oskar’s experiences and his connection with the other movie characters who

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<sup>88</sup> J. Hillis Miller, *Ariadne’s Thread: Story Lines*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992) via Jacob Lothe, *Narrative in Fiction and Film: An Introduction*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) 78

<sup>89</sup> *Remember Me*, dir. Coulter (2010)

<sup>90</sup> *Remember Me*, dir. Coulter (2010)

<sup>91</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 13

<sup>92</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 184-185

also have their own traumas. At first, Oskar sets out to reconnect or talk to his dead father, but ends up helping other people find closure instead. By helping other people, Oskar heals himself, and through this, the film tries to help heal the audience watching this film.<sup>93</sup>

## 2.2 Innocence Portrayed in Films

Innocence can be portrayed in a number of ways in film – one of which is the setting. Sometimes the setting foreshadows future events or reflects innocence. Clear blue skies and a brightly shining sun symbolize innocence. A majority of films begin by pointing out what a lovely morning it is – portraying innocence. Discovery Channel’s documentary *9/11 New York Firefighters* (2002) opens with a black screen and city sounds. A city view of New York City slowly materializes, and several individuals describes how beautifully the day began before the terrorist attacks.<sup>94</sup> *Flight 93: The Flight That Fought Back* (2005), plays a slow, cheerful song, “Lovely Day,” while archival footage of the WTC towers with an early morning, or setting, sun between the two towers tilts from side to side as if looking at the incoming towers from an airplane cockpit window.<sup>95</sup> Discovery Channel’s documentary *9/11 after the Towers Fell* (2010) first shows a still photograph of the Twin Towers in sunset lighting, while the jet whine sounds and the image transforms into a moving image of a plane crashing into the World Trade Center.<sup>96</sup> The *World Trade Center* (2006) movie show early morning commuters on a train into the city show their tickets, taxis drive in nearly empty streets and people on a subway train. These people’s morning routines under clear blue skies establish the day’s and the people’s innocence. A man on the ferry heading into New York City stands at the railing admiring the city landscape, which includes the Twin Towers – foreshadowing what will happen to the towers later in the morning.<sup>97</sup> Two buildings previously disliked for their design and height, compared to the surrounding buildings, have suddenly become precious to people. The changed skyline is a tragedy. Sunshine is associated with bright happiness, joy in life, and no worries. The sun

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<sup>93</sup> *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, dir. Daldry (2011)

<sup>94</sup> *9/11 New York Firefighters*, prod. Schnall (2011)

<sup>95</sup> *Flight 93: The Flight That Fought Back*, dir. Goodison (2005)

<sup>96</sup> *9/11 after the Towers Fell*, prod. Towers (2011)

<sup>97</sup> *World Trade Center*, dir. Stone (2006)

shining in between the two twin towers suggests to the audience the innocence of these two buildings, and how unaware of the subsequent events.

Another form of innocence portrayed in films is photography. Photographs of missing people after traumas symbolize an earlier innocence, before the experience of something horrible happens to lose that innocence. The photographs were taken in one context, but were shown in a different context. These photographs were mostly, if not all, of people in happy situations, with family, friends, or pets. According to Sturken, “the temporal rupture of these images demonstrated in many ways the power of the still image to convey a mortality and finality.”<sup>98</sup> Using these pictures in the context of people thought missing or dead gave the pictures a different meaning. Anyone who looks at these pictures knows that something bad has probably happened to the person in the picture, a knowledge that the person in the picture was not to know at the time. People hung photographs of missing family members and friends on walls, fences, and memorial sites with descriptions of their missing.<sup>99</sup> *Remember Me* (2010) contrasts of innocent pictures moments before the main character’s death. During one of the last scenes, in Mr. Hawkins’ office, on the computer, Tyler discovers a screensaver with family photographs of a much happier period in the family’s life, before any tragedies. In the first image, Mr. Hawkins plays with a baby, Tyler or one of his siblings. More photographs show a smiling Mr. Hawkins playing with his smiling children in a past where their family was happy and ignorant of future tragedies. Right after Tyler finds the screensaver pictures, the first plane hits one of the twin towers. The contrast between photographs taken in moments of innocent happiness versus the subsequent death and destruction of the terrorist attacks are supposed to inspire shock and sympathy from the film audience. Sturken points out that those observing such photographs know the fate of the subject, however, the audience of *Remember Me* (2010) is unaware of where Tyler is until a second before the first plane hits the WTC. The audience members are themselves made innocent observers. They might have a feeling that something might occur, but they do not know what because Mr. Hawkins’ office location is undisclosed to the audience. Photograph subjects are unaware of the trauma they will experience at a later point in time, while the observer is aware, but not in this case. Furthermore, Tyler as a contemporary observer of the old family photos is

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<sup>98</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 183

<sup>99</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 183-187

knowledgeable of what will happen to the photo subjects, except he is unaware of how he himself will die moments later. Tyler is both a knowledgeable observer of family photo subjects and an innocent observer, and he is himself an innocent subject unaware of his own upcoming mortality.<sup>100</sup>

*Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (2011) also uses still photography, but unlike *Remember Me* (2010), these photographs show lost innocence. Sturken believes that “the urge to take photographs and to look at the images of disaster was a means of assimilating the event.”<sup>101</sup> The main character, Oskar Schell, takes photographs of people post-9/11. On Oskar’s journey throughout the movie, he photographs every person he seeks out, and pastes the photographs in a scrapbook. Oskar has also printed out and collected pictures of people falling from the twin towers. A photograph, given to Oskar by one of his photo subjects, is of an elephant, which looks like it is crying. Elephants are known for their great memory, and they care about their family members and grieve when someone dies, although they do not cry per se. This photographed elephant seems to symbolize grieving Americans after 9/11, who will always remember what happened.<sup>102</sup>

Still photography is not the only way films use missing person posters. By taking the time out of the story of trauma, either through reenacting moments in a specific person’s personal history or by showing home videos provided by the victim’s family and friends. In a way, films act as a window into the past, a sort of time travel if you will – the present looking in on the past. The present day contemporary audience watches the victims’ actions or reenacted daily rituals from a different perspective than the victims in that past moment would have. Like the pictures Sturken talks about, taken in a past moment of innocence but later used in a context of death,<sup>103</sup> reenactments or home video footage show montages of innocent victims’ past moments of innocent happy unawareness, experiencing milestones in their lives and making plans for their future – in short living life to its fullest.

Films start out showing how unaware victims are before they lose their innocence in the terrorist attacks. In video footage of Mark Bingham on a sports field, a friend asks

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<sup>100</sup> *Remember Me*, dir. Coulter (2010)

<sup>101</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 187

<sup>102</sup> *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, dir. Daldry (2011)

<sup>103</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 183-185

him when his birthday is. Bingham grinningly responds that it is May 22, and he will be 30 years old. The film does not specify how old Bingham was when he died, but it suggests that he will stay 30 years old forever, because he died a few months later in the plane crash. In a reenactment, the actor playing Bingham rushes to catch the plane, while a haunting voice in the background says, “proud, patriotic, tough American.”<sup>104</sup> Birthdays are associated with innocent joy, a celebration of life, a renewing of life. Bingham had to rush to catch flight 93. The contrasts between the birthday video and Bingham rushing to catch the plane containing the terrorists point out how tragic it was that Bingham should make it to the plane just in time – and basically rushed to his death. A video of Jack and Lauren Grandcolas’ wedding plays, and the happy couple smile for the camera while holding flutes with champagne. In other home videos, Lauren Grandcolas skydives, smooches her orange cat, and graduates. Skydiving and graduating shows the audience how much Grandcolas loved life and made use of her full educational or intellectual potential. To get an education is to plan ahead in life – people who expect to die do not (necessarily) make future plans. The film might show Grandcolas graduating to create the contrast between Grandcolas’ plans for the future with the terrorists’ plans to cut her future short. The cat symbolizes loving a small defenseless animal. The film returns to the skydiving, but this time both Lauren and her husband are both safely on the ground again – laughing, and her husband kisses her cheek. The last scene represents how Grandcolas should have been able to walk away from the flight alive and well if the terrorists had not intervened. In two home videos provided by Tom Burnett’s wife, Burnett reads a bedtime story to his two daughters, and dances with one of his daughters in his arms, smiling and waving to the camera.<sup>105</sup> Children and animals symbolize childlike innocence, and to love children and animals suggest that a person is morally good and virtuous. Showing this man interacting with his children tells the audience that he is a family man, someone who provides for and cares for his family – an innocent and good person who did not deserve to die at the hands of a terrorist plot. Children and animals are also harmless, chaste, guileless beings with a lack of knowledge or understanding of the world around them, despite how curious they are. To see the world through their eyes is to see the world with childlike wonder. We feel the need to protect the innocent from the less savory aspects of life,

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<sup>104</sup> *Flight 93: The Flight that Fought Back*, dir. Goodison (2005), “Chapter 6-7”

<sup>105</sup> *Flight 93: The Flight that Fought Back*, dir. Goodison (2005), “Chapter 6-7”



maybe because to lose that innocence is to lose the opportunity to see the world vicariously through their eyes. When this innocence is shaken or lost, people react differently. Some people hold on to their innocence, while others might become jaded with the world.<sup>106</sup>

Once innocent unawareness has been established, films proceed to show how innocently good and how filled with integrity the characters are, and thus how undeserving of their individual fates. *Flight 93: The Flight That Fought Back* (2005) has a long montage of photographs and home videos that show some of the passengers that the film has chosen to focus on. Richard Guadagno, a Law Enforcement Officer of the National Wildlife Refuge System was returning from his grandmother's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday party. Guadagno's father describes his son as having, "No regard for anyone who broke the law." Lori Guadagno describes her brother as being very protective of the land and the animals, and if anyone caused harm to any of these, he was "the enforcer." On more than one occasion, pictures of a younger Guadagno hold firearms, and hugging a puppy.<sup>107</sup> Both the family's descriptions of Guadagno and his job, define him as innocently good. Guadagno upholds the law, so he lives by and enforces certain rules of conduct and law. Protecting nature and animals means Guadagno also lives by fundamental personal principles of what is right or wrong rather than just because of legalities. The pictures of Guadagno holding both weapons and hugging his puppy connect moral principles with love. Other examples of protection are the passengers trying to protect their families from how dire their situation currently was. The passengers phoned the proper authorities or home to their families. Of those passengers talking to their families, they tried to gather information while simultaneously trying to downplay the hostage situation. The passengers spoke calmly and collectedly with or to their loved ones. Lauren Glick merely tells her husband that the plane has a little problem; she does not tell him that the problem is hijackers with a bomb and other weapons. Glick's husband describes her voice as calm, loving, and trying to stop him from worrying about her.<sup>108</sup> These examples give evidence of the victims as compassionate and protective people, mindful of their surroundings and others. Even though the passengers could not protect themselves, it was probably a comfort for

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<sup>106</sup> *Flight 93: The Flight that Fought Back*, dir. Goodison (2005)

<sup>107</sup> *Flight 93: The Flight that Fought Back*, dir. Goodison (2005)

<sup>108</sup> *Flight 93: The Flight that Fought Back*, dir. Goodison (2005)

themselves to protect their loved ones as much as possible. In relation to innocently good these victims were, none of the documentaries I have watched portrays the innocent victims in the least bit negative light. None of the films shows anyone arguing with either a loved one or a stranger right before they died, which is statistically improbable. No one says anything remotely negative about any of the victims – all the victims are apparently the greatest person, and the least deserving of dying prematurely in a terrorist attack.

Alexander Pope said, “To err is human, to forgive divine.”<sup>109</sup> It is human to make mistakes, but to forgive mistakes is sacred. Forgiveness is part of innocence while hatred is not innocent. Hatred is a factor of lost innocence. People react differently to trauma, and some might become cynical or jaded. Innocence can be regained, however. One of the flight instructor for the Lebanese terrorist, Ziad Jarrah, Arne Kruithof, described the terrorist who flew the UA93 plane that crashed in Pennsylvania as knowing when to laugh and make jokes, before he “decided to join a “gang of lunatics that decided they were going to change history by killing a lot of innocent people.”<sup>110</sup> Kruithof says that he chooses to remember Jarrah, the way he was, “when he was one of us,” because it would be too difficult “to think of him as a brutal, evil person.”<sup>111</sup> One interpretation of this scene is that Kruithof smooths over Jarrah’s acts of terrorism. Kruithof taught Jarrah how to fly a plane, and despite the fact that if Kruithof had not, Jarrah would have gone to another flight school – Kruithof might feel guilty for his indirect part in the 9/11 terrorist attacks. However, if Kruithof chooses to remember Jarrah as someone he could have thought of as a friend, that is an act of innocence. In *Remember Me* (2010), Tyler Hawkins does not start out as purely innocent, but he reestablishes himself as an innocent through forgiveness. Tyler’s older brother, Michael, has committed suicide – leaving behind a broken family. They have lost their innocence because of Michael’s suicide, leaving them unhappy, cynical, and disillusioned. Michael’s death is surrounded in mystery until Tyler tells his love interest, Allie toward the middle of the film. During the third scene, the broken family visits Michael’s burial site, but the family members do not talk about how or why Michael died – reminiscent of the smoothing over of reasons behind terrorism, foreign or domestic. Suicide is often

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<sup>109</sup> Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism* (1711)

<sup>110</sup> *Flight 93: The Flight that Fought Back*, dir. Goodison (2005)

<sup>111</sup> *Flight 93: The Flight that Fought Back*, dir. Goodison (2005), “Chapter 5”

a taboo or difficult subject. In Christian religion, suicide is a sin, and for families left behind a suicide is a personal betrayal. The latter is a betrayal, because family is supposed to protect each other, but by committing suicide, that person inflicts pain, and does not protect the family from hurt and emotional harm. Tyler is a disillusioned, cynical, aloof, and self-destructive young man with a chip on his shoulder because of the pain inflicted upon him by his brother's suicide. The trauma of his brother's betrayal has the consequences of Tyler himself betraying someone who loves him and thus inflicting pain – in a way he repeats trauma. Tyler deceives his love interest, Allie. In one of Tyler's narrations, Tyler speaks to his brother, "Michael, Caroline asked me what I would say if I knew you could hear me. I said I do know. 'I love you. God, I miss you. And I forgive you.'"<sup>112</sup> Tyler betraying Allie gives him a betrayer's perspective. Suddenly Tyler understands the humanity in his brother – to be human is to be flawed, and make mistakes. Michael did not commit suicide to hurt his family, but because he was in pain, and Tyler realizes that now. Through forgiveness, Tyler both recovers and moves on from Michael's death, but also becomes an innocent again – just in time to become one of the innocent victims of 9/11.<sup>113</sup> Films portray the nation as built up of good people who were not doing anything wrong.

Individual innocence is not necessarily national innocence, but sometimes 9/11 films use their characters as analogies for national innocence. The victims of 9/11 tend to symbolize the U.S. as a nation. Many films seem to adhere to Sturken's and David Noble's claims that innocence is one of the most important features of American identity.<sup>114</sup> Films often show the terrorist attacks happening out of the blue – without any relevant prior history. According to Sturken, "[the] narrative of innocence is so pervasive in American political narrative and self-identity that it is constantly reiterated in times of crisis."<sup>115</sup> National innocence is such a huge part of American politics and American identity that the insistence of American innocence after an attack is repeatedly declared. National innocence might infringe upon individual innocence. In *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004), Michael Moore implies that the need for national innocence to remain intact infringes on individual civil liberties. Moore shows individual Americans from a variety of perspectives, on a scale of the dominant frame authorities adopted to

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<sup>112</sup> *Remember Me*, dir. Coulter (2010)

<sup>113</sup> *Remember Me*, dir. Coulter (2010)

<sup>114</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 15-16

<sup>115</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 95-96

Americans who realize that the U.S. might not be as innocent as it presents itself to be. Meanwhile, Moore shows that many Government officials, such as George W. Bush, his administration, and members of Congress seem to have hidden truths, infringed on Americans' civil liberties, including the freedom of speech, and finally, sacrificed both American lives and their money by going to war against Iraq. *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004) is pretty hard-hitting in its critique of national authorities. Films that do not place the U.S. government in an assumed position of constant innocence are the antithesis to Sturken's argument. While most films seem to portray events surrounding 9/11 through perspectives of innocence, there are a few exceptions to this dominant frame.

### 2.3 Not Innocent

The prologue of *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004) consists of Moore painting a less than flattering image of George W. Bush during the 2000 Presidential Election in Florida. He more or less claims that President Bush won the election through any means necessary. Consequently, the President has an uphill battle in the White House. According to the Washington Post, in the first 8 months in Office, George W. Bush is on vacation 42 per cent of the time. The introductory credits starts with a hesitant guitar melody, and interspersed with the credits a slideshow of Bush administration people, including Bush who rehearses facial expressions before on-air time, getting make-up on, and laughing and smiling. The screen turns black, and for several moments, one hears the sound of airplane noise overhead, a crash, screaming, and sirens. The camera fades in to people in tears, looking up in horror and shock, while a string soundtrack plays. People run in slow motion while the camera shows debris on the ground and swirling paper in the air with dust. A selection of posters of missing people shows. The horror scene of the WTC, shifts to the pleasant scene of George W. Bush is at an elementary school. When a Secret Service agent whispers in his ear that there has been a terrorist attack in New York City, the President does not know what to do with this situation, and just sits there reading for nearly 7 minutes. Moore theorizes that Bush must have been sitting there frantically thinking of who of his family's connections could have orchestrated the

terrorist attacks.<sup>116</sup> Moore implies that Bush suffers from childish stupidity, as opposed to childlike lack of knowledge, or that he is cunning.

Many 9/11 films are innocently framed, but there are elements of knowledge or worry in some of film characters, making these characters not innocently unaware of the future. In Oliver Stone's *World Trade Center* (2006), innocently unaware future victims Port Authority Police officers, John McLoughlin and Will Jimeno both get ready for work at the beginning of the movie. However, while one of the future victims is unaware, Mrs. McLoughlin counteracts her husband's innocence. Mrs. McLoughlin hides her worry from her husband, and as he leaves, she tightly closes her eyes, and grasps the pillow tighter. She is afraid for him. The wife's reaction to the husband leaving for work foreshadows what will happen to McLoughlin and Jimeno later in the morning. Mrs. McLoughlin's behavior – hiding her worry from her husband makes her not entirely innocent. She is not honest about her feelings, but it is admirable of her to try to protect her husband from her worries. Mrs. McLoughlin knows that it might be the last time she sees her husband because of his job – being a police officer is a dangerous profession – so she lacks neither knowledge nor understanding.<sup>117</sup>

The main character in 9/11 films are usually portrayed as innocent in one aspect or another because the audience tend to automatically identify with the protagonist, but that is not the case in *Remember Me* (2010). If this was a film about heroics, the main character would be characterized as an anti-hero, a phenomenon that has become more common in films and TV shows the last decade or so. The anti-hero character often display characteristics of someone who has lost their innocence, and in *Remember Me* (2010), Tyler Hawkins has become cynical, aloof, and does not seem to care for the world and people around him after suffering a family tragedy. Tyler's love interest, Ally Craig, has also had a tragic loss in her family, but her mother was shot during a robbery, and although she is more careful in life, she also tries to live life to the fullest. One example of Ally's change is that she always eats dessert before dinner, just in case she were to die suddenly. The differences in behavior between these two characters seem to fit with Sturken's idea of violence that comes from outside or inside forces. Tyler lost his brother to suicide – an inside force, while Ally lost her mother to a robbery-homicide – an outside force. The former was a betrayal, while the latter was a surprise

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<sup>116</sup> *Fahrenheit 9/11*, dir. Moore (2004) "Chapter 1-2"

<sup>117</sup> *World Trade Center*, dir. Stone (2006), "Chapter 1-2"

attack from the outside. The movie seems to agree with Sturken's assessment of how domestic and foreign terrorism are framed. As Sturken says, "the innocence narrative ... cannot sustain the presence of insiders, so-called home-grown, who ... deliberately ... kill innocent civilians."<sup>118</sup> Tyler's loss of innocence has affected his personality negatively, because the person he loved and lost is also the person who betrayed him.

In some aspects, Tyler acts as a villain – not as an innocent. Tyler betrays his love interest, Ally Craig, who has a father in the police force, Sergeant Neil Craig. Sergeant Craig once used excessive force when he arrested Tyler and Tyler's best friend, Aidan, who convinces Tyler of getting friendly with Sergeant Craig's daughter in revenge for violating their civil liberties. Tyler does not realize that in trying to avenge himself for his wrongful arrest, when Tyler was trying to do the right thing and help two musicians attacked by third parties. When Tyler eventually has to admit his originally hidden agenda to Ally, and he claims to not have wanted to hurt her, when that was actually exactly what he was doing, even if, in his mind, he was punishing her father. Tyler does not understand the full scope of his betrayal of Ally.<sup>119</sup> Essentially, I could compare Tyler to the U.S. justifying going to war against Iraq to punish someone in place of someone else, namely bin Laden and Afghanistan. Tyler punishes Ally, whose only crime is being the daughter of Sergeant Craig, who wronged Tyler. The comparison of Tyler's deceitful actions with Sturken's definition of terrorism, means that Tyler is being compared to a terrorist, which is a bit extreme, and most people who watch the movie will probably not make that comparison unless they have read Sturken, but my argument stands.

In *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (2011), Oskar Schell suffers from survivor's guilt. The survivor's guilt seems to stem from when his father called home after one of the planes hit the WTC but before the collapse. Oskar heard his father on the answering machine, but Oskar did not pick up the phone. Oskar's father knew he was in the apartment, but Oskar was frozen in shock. The fact that his father knew, and that Oskar did not respond when his father probably needed to hear his voice and get in contact with him, along with the subsequent death of his father leaves Oskar feeling guilty. Related to the phone messages, Oskar lies to his mother about receiving them. He tells her that his father did not leave any messages. Later that night, he sneaks out to

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<sup>118</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 17

<sup>119</sup> *Remember Me*, dir. Coulter (2010)

buy a new answering machine. In his voice-over, he explains his actions as, “Now no one will ever have to listen to them like I did. Just like nothing ever happened.”<sup>120</sup> He wants to protect his family from the emotional pain of listening to those messages, however, Oskar’s motives might not be as pure as he reasons with himself that they are, because he listens to the answering machine messages several times himself. Oskar’s deception, no matter how he justifies it to himself, does not make him an innocent, however, it does not a villain make either. There are no villains in this movie, despite how guilty Oskar feels and how much he tries to punish himself by pinching and harming himself.<sup>121</sup>

## 2.4 Villains

Using Sturken’s theory, by demonizing the perpetrators or villains, the audience can discard the idea of possible motives behind a criminal act, such as a terrorist attack. When villains are thought of as motivated simply by evil, “they are dismissed as irrational, insane, and inhuman.”<sup>122</sup> The villains were simply monsters with no rational reason for doing what they did, and there is the fear that their words hold enough power to persuade others to copy their crime – copycat crimes, in other words. The authorities try to censor the information flow and the villain’s access to mass media. For instance, after 9/11, the Bush administration tried to prevent Osama bin Laden’s speeches from airing on the news. To give voice to villains is thought dangerous,<sup>123</sup> and probably because of this 9/11, films usually show no insight into the terrorists’ lives before the terrorist attacks. It is easier to discard someone as evil when no context and no insight is given as to what motives the villain may have had.

In the documentary, *Flight 93: The Flight that Fought Back* (2005), there are clear distinctions between the victims and the hijackers. The passengers are innocent, both good people and unaware of what will happen. Family and friends of the passengers onboard flight united 93 describe the various ways that their loved and lost ones were innocent. Meanwhile, no one represents the terrorists, and almost no information is given about them and their history. In a motel room, CBS Morning News plays on the

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<sup>120</sup> *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, dir. Daldry (2011)

<sup>121</sup> *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, dir. Daldry (2011)

<sup>122</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 159

<sup>123</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 159-161

television, another foreshadowing the day's future events. Two men, Ziad Jarrad and Ahmed al Haznawi prepare themselves in a Newark Airport hotel. The narrator, Kiefer Sutherland, tells the audience, that these are al Qaida members. Intermittent archive footage of training camps and Osama bin Laden is shown between scenes to make the audience automatically associate the hijackers with bin Laden, who is often associated with the Devil incarnate. In the scenes showing both victim Tom Burnett and the hijackers, they have similar preparations for their day, but we as the audience know that the intentions behind these morning preparations are vastly different, and thus despite mirroring each other, the victim's bathroom scene is acknowledged as innocent, while the terrorists' bathroom scene is not.<sup>124</sup>

The parallel, or the mirrored actions, between the passengers and the terrorists establish "the struggle between good and evil,"<sup>125</sup> and an 'Us versus Enemy Other' framework. *Flight 93: The Flight That Fought Back* (2005) makes sure to point out that Jarrad, one of the al Qaeda members, has been living in Germany with his fiancé – that is the only piece of background information the film provides the audience. This piece of information seems irrelevant to why the hijackers do what they do on board, however, it means that Jarrad has a significant other who he was betraying, and leaving behind, by hijacking the plane. It further suggests to the audience that the hijackers had lives of their own, and no real reason for their terrorist attacks.<sup>126</sup>

The level of innocence among the victims, also sometimes depend on nationality. Some victims are displayed as more innocent than other victims. Actions similar or even identical in nature might be shown and interpreted differently when a German passenger does or says something than if an American passenger does or says something. In *Flight 93: The Flight That Fought Back* (2005), American Law Enforcement Officer Richard Guadagno explains to his fellow passengers that the hijacking or hostage procedure is to remain calm and cooperative, because that is what is done during normal hostage situations.<sup>127</sup> The director of *United 93* (2006) allows the actor of the German passenger to display negative stereotypical behavior. The German first tries to convince the other passengers to cooperate with the terrorists. The German tries to warn the terrorists of the

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<sup>124</sup> *Flight 93: The Flight that Fought Back*, dir. Goodison (2005) DVD, "Chapter 1"

<sup>125</sup> Anker, "Villains, Victims and Heroes," 24

<sup>126</sup> *Flight 93: The Flight that Fought Back*, dir. Goodison (2005) DVD "Chapter 1"

<sup>127</sup> *Flight 93: The Flight that Fought Back*, dir. Goodison (2005)



plan to take back the plane, and the other passengers physically subdue him.<sup>128</sup> There was actually a German passenger onboard the plane, however, there is insufficient evidence to support, or refute, the claim that he tried to warn the terrorists.<sup>129</sup> The actor playing German passenger, Christian Adam, portrayed European stereotypes believed to stem from the belief that the U.S. is a “virtuous nation, distinct from and embattled by corrupt European nations,” according to David Noble.<sup>130</sup> The actor who played Adam suggested the “defeatist attitude”<sup>131</sup> based on a conversation he had had with Adam’s former colleague, who described Adam as never doing anything without thinking it through properly. The actor playing Adam, interpreted Adams as someone who “was ‘not one of those gung-ho Americans wanting to storm the cockpit and smash people’s skulls in.’”<sup>132</sup> The former colleague also seems to have interpreted from Adam’s personality, that he would behave the way he did in the film.<sup>133</sup> However, at the point that Adam in *United 93* (2006) tried to warn the hijackers, the passengers knew airplanes had crashed into the WTC and the Pentagon, therefore it seems illogical that anyone would think there was any possibility that the plane was headed back to the airport, so the hijackers to make their demands. The passengers all knew the hijackers more than likely intended to use the aircraft to fly into another building.<sup>134</sup> The actor and the interpretation of Adam’s former colleague seem flawed. The German tries to calm down the other passengers, and make them cooperate with the hijackers, something Law Enforcement Officer Guadagno did in the documentary *Flight 93: The Flight that Fought Back* (2005), and which his parents also thinks he would have done in real life. Guadagno’s parents told the interviewer for *Flight 93: The Flight that Fought Back* (2005) that their son had taken numerous update courses, some of which had included hostage situations.<sup>135</sup> The reason for the German’s defeatist attitude versus the American’s expertise in hostage situations might stem from a historical bias. The U.S. has been in major conflicts or wars with Great Britain, Germany, and Russia, which films often reflect. Movie villain nationalities tend to reflect who and which nation the U.S. has been in conflict and wars with.

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<sup>128</sup> *United 93*, dir. Greengrass (2006), “Chapter 18”

<sup>129</sup> Riegler, “9/11 on the Screen,” 158

<sup>130</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 15-16

<sup>131</sup> Riegler, “9/11 on the Screen,” 158

<sup>132</sup> Xan Brooks, “United 93 ‘Surrender Monkey’ Defends His Role in Film,” *Guardian*, (June 7, 2006) Available at <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2006/jun/07/news.xanbrooks> [Accessed May 6, 2014]

<sup>133</sup> Brooks, “United 93 ‘Surrender Monkey’”

<sup>134</sup> *United 93*, dir. Greengrass (2006), “Chapter 18”

<sup>135</sup> *Flight 93: The Flight that Fought Back*, dir. Goodison (2005)

The blurring of innocence and villainy are more pronounced in some movies in recent years, but these movies tend to be further removed from 9/11. The comparison of Christopher Nolan's *Batman Begins* (2005) with Discovery Channel's *Flight 93: The Flight That Fought Back* (2005) and Greengrass' *United 93* (2006) demonstrate the difference in characterizations. These films were made at roughly the same time. Nolan's movie is an allegory and critique of Bush's war on terror, yet the difference in "good" and "evil" characterizations and the reasons behind the character actions are substantial. *Batman Begins* (2005) blurs the lines between the so-called "good" and "evil" sides, not to mention that the terrorists were able to attack Gotham City (symbolizing NYC) with weapons made by Bruce Wayne's company. In short, the "good" side was indirectly responsible for the attack in *Batman Begins* (2005), something which is sorely missing from most 9/11 films. Wayne was trained in a terrorist camp, and in real life, the CIA trained Osama bin Laden – the same man responsible for 9/11.<sup>136</sup>

## 2.5 Chapter Conclusion

Innocence is prevalent through most of the 9/11 films at my disposal. With few exceptions, the victims are portrayed as innocently unaware and innocently good. The audience is given extensive background information on the victims of the terrorist attacks, either through reenactments or through interviews with the remaining family members. By providing such an extensive insight into the victims of 9/11, the public watching the film or films, are supposed to feel sympathy for the victims.

Violence in American society has no real bearing on the subject of 9/11 films, other than the fact that it probably helps to maintain the idea of innocence. With the exception of Moore's documentary, the films add no context behind the terrorist attacks. In addition to this lack of context, the films usually begin with the morning of the surprise terrorist attacks, as if that is the real start.

The American public consumes 9/11, but does not necessarily understand why the 9/11 terrorist attacks happened, and the political aspects surrounding memorial

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<sup>136</sup> *Batman Begins*, directed by Christopher Nolan (2005)

practices. In the next chapter, I will examine the consumerism of 9/11 films, which entails tourism of history and kitsch.

# 3 Consumerism

## 3.1 Consumerism

Sturken focuses on how consumerism enables a continued belief of innocence, which nurtures American “tourism of history.” The consumer is convinced to buy kitsch items, such as an innocent teddy bear, which sends the message to other people that the consumer agrees with the government’s politics when buying this item. No need for sacrifice, just consume – and this was how American authorities convinced the public to support the Iraq War. Americans were convinced to buy, and through consumption there was no need for sacrifice – the authorities glossing over military casualties and how expensive the war would be. Buying kitsch consumer products from terrorist sites turned tourist sites, signals a quiet political agreement with the government.<sup>137</sup>

### 3.1.1 Quick Healing & Bringing People Together

According to Sturken, the American “culture of mourning and memory has converged with the concept of healing and closure”<sup>138</sup> – the belief is that you can quickly move on from and close traumatic chapters in your life, and you can do so with the help of retail therapy.<sup>139</sup> Psychologists have found that nearly half of Americans have reported suffering posttraumatic stress symptoms. Tens of thousands of people saw with their own eyes the destruction of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, but even more witnessed it through media. The article argues that people who searches for and finds meaning for a terrible event, are more likely to recover sooner from posttraumatic stress syndrome (PTSD). On the other hand, those who search for meaning, but find none are more likely to suffer longer from posttraumatic stress.<sup>140</sup> Films are some of the consumer products that might be able to help someone struggling with what happened 9/11. Some movies are designed specifically to give the watching consumer a cathartic experience – they are informally called feel-good movies, and in my opinion, they fit

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<sup>137</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 18, 25

<sup>138</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 14

<sup>139</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 14

<sup>140</sup> John A. Updegraff, Roxane Cohen Silver, and E. Alison Holman, “Searching for and Finding Meaning in Collective Trauma: Results from a National Longitudinal Study of the 9/11 Terrorist Attacks,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 95:3 (September 2008) 709

into Sturken's quick healing through consumption. Despite the fact that the film subjects in 9/11 films are about tragedies in one way or another, some films leave the audience feel better after seeing it. If this is because the "consumer-citizen," as Sturken calls the public, feels solidarity by consuming the product,<sup>141</sup> or as Spence et al suggests, that the consumer achieves the feelings that are socially acceptable by the movie's and society's norm,<sup>142</sup> remains to be seen. The documentary *Flight 93: The Flight That Fought Back* (2006), and the movies *United 93* (2006), *World Trade Center* (2006), and *Remember Me* (2010) are all of the feel-good, melodrama genre that are supposed to play on the audience members' emotions through plot, characterizations, and music. The emotions someone feels while watching melodramatic films is supposed to be a cathartic experience. These films seem designed to inspire quick healing in the consumption, the experience, of the films.

A large number of films about 9/11 focus on authority figures, predominately firefighters, but also included are police, military, flight control crews. My theory is that this is to show the public that despite the tragedy, the authorities never stop working to keep the nation safe or to avenge the nation. In *9/11* (2002) the firefighters are clearly caught off guard, and they themselves confirm that they were not prepared nor equipped for what happened in the WTC. Despite being unprepared, the firefighters pulled themselves together and helped the best they could – even firefighters who were not supposed to help at the WTC showed up to help. In *World Trade Center* (2006), several authority figures helped search for survivors from the WTC collapse, including the military. When the usual authority figures cannot help, or struggle to help the population, the public feel a sense of calm when military authorities show up to lend a hand after a crisis – or at least that is the impression given by this film.

In *Flight 93: The Flight That Fought Back* (2006), before the attack is shown, family members talk about imagining their loved one in on the attack, and they talk about their loved ones working with other named passengers. The family members are comforted that the passengers did not take the hijacking sitting down – letting it happen. It brought them hope that someone fought back that day. Jack Grandcolas comments, "They took the ultimate step in fighting the first war against terrorism, and they

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<sup>141</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 15

<sup>142</sup> Spence, "Presence, Sex, and Bad News," (2009), 239-256

won.”<sup>143</sup> “Won” might be a little inaccurate a description, but they fought and tried to reclaim the aircraft from the hijackers – might even have killed one or more of the terrorists, before the plane hit the ground. Louis Paul Nacke II states, “[I] want to finish what [my father] started.”<sup>144</sup>

The statement that tragedy brought out the best in people repeats in several documentaries and movies mirror that statement. *World Trade Center* (2006) shows the dedication of the search and rescue teams before the towers collapsed and in the aftermath. There is a tight-knit bond between them as they clear the rubble, and carry out the injured. McLoughlin monologues that it is important to remember the goodness tragedies can bring out in people. Officer Jimeno happily lifts his youngest daughter up in his arms, and the scene fades out to innocent child laughter.<sup>145</sup> This scene is a nonverbal way to communicate quick healing, and that tragedy brings people together. In the History Channel’s documentary, *102 Minutes That Changed America*, (2008), Cheryl Dunn depicts people helping each other on the street, giving each other water. Dunn’s theory was that basic human survival instinct kicked in, to band together for survival.<sup>146</sup> Quick healing from sadness and grief is encouraged because it makes us vulnerable, and one does not want to linger in a vulnerable state. Vulnerability equates weakness, which is problematic in American culture. Sturken believes that this quick healing is one factor that leads to an inability to empathize with other cultures and societies.<sup>147</sup>

Allan Coulter’s *Remember Me* (2010) shows the different ways to cope with tragedy – depending on whether it is a suicide, on one side of the scale, or a tragedy such as 9/11, on the other side of the scale. The message the film gives the audience is that suicide, often considered shameful, or not talked about, will tear families apart. However, tragedies brought on the family from the outside bring people together. When Ally Craig, protagonist Tyler Hawkins’ love interest, was eleven, she witnessed her mother’s murder on a subway station. Ally’s mother’s murder has made Ally realize that she cannot savor the best things for last, but get the best first, because she knows

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<sup>143</sup> *Flight 93: The Flight That Fought Back*, dir. Goodison (2005), “Chapter 6”

<sup>144</sup> *Flight 93: The Flight That Fought Back*, dir. Goodison (2005), “Chapter 6”

<sup>145</sup> *World Trade Center*, dir. Stone (2006)

<sup>146</sup> *102 Minutes That Changed America*, dir. Rittenmeyer & Skundrick (2008), “Special Features interview: I-Witness to 9/11”

<sup>147</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 30-31

that life can end abruptly and sooner than expected. Ally and her father, Sergeant Craig, have grown apart because of the tragic death in the family. They live life together amicably, but when tension brought on by Tyler Hawkins scratches the father-daughter relationship surface, the floodgates open, and father and daughter can finally heal from Mrs. Craig's death. The Craig family's tragedy is a middle ground on the scale, and suggests that the creator of *Remember Me* (2010) does not think that tragedy necessarily brings out the best in people – unless there is communication between the grieving parties. The Hawkins and Hirsch family also suffer from a tragedy in the family. Tyler's older brother, Michael, committed suicide a few years earlier. Michael's suicide split the Hawkins family, Tyler and Caroline's parents divorced, and their mother, Diane remarried. When the film begins, it is several years since Michael passed away, but the family only skirts around the issue of his death. Already in the second chapter of *Remember Me* (2010), Tyler and his family, consisting of mother, Diane Hirsch, new husband, Les Hirsch, little his sister, Caroline Hawkins, and their father, Charles Hawkins, all stand in front of a tombstone marked Michael Hawkins. Caroline pulls out a round, decorated rock and puts it on top of the tombstone.<sup>148</sup>

In *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (2011), the protagonist and narrator of the story, Oskar Schell, has not healed quickly after his father's death during 9/11. Oskar only begins the stages of healing, by searching for answers to a mystery he finds in his late father's closet. Oskar has found a mysterious key, in connection with the name Black, and wants to find out what the key opens. Retracing his father's footsteps in the days before his death, Oskar meets and connects with everyone named Black in the phonebook. In the process of reenacting his father's last actions, Oskar inadvertently ends up helping someone else in the process.<sup>149</sup>

A number of films about 9/11 want the consumers to feel healed or helped along the way to a speedy healing, but there are exceptions to this idea of quick healing. *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (2011) shows the emotional damage done to families after the terrorist attacks, and it shows the work it takes to recover from emotional trauma. The Schell family shows that life goes on after 9/11, but trauma from an outside source does not necessarily bring those left behind together. In fact, the widow and the son seem to have drifted further apart – the mother struggles to

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<sup>148</sup> *Remember Me*, dir. Coulter (2010)

<sup>149</sup> *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, dir. Daldry (2011)

communicate with her own son after the husband and father dies in the collapse of the WTC. At the beginning of the movie, the family seems barely holding on, but through hard work by the movie characters, the family members reach a stage where they can accept the loss of Mr. Schell and finally move on with their lives. The movie suggests how those still suffering from the tragedy of 9/11 might be able to recover. The protagonist, Oskar Schell seeks out people he believes might have known his father and speaks with them, and some of the people he ends up helping. The way Oskar finally works through his trauma and grief is by helping another son with the loss of his own father – by helping someone else, he helps himself. The journey Oskar goes through is not a quick recovery that magically happens in a time lapse or scene jumps, but he puts in the work, and works through the trauma.<sup>150</sup>

### 3.2 Tourism of History

Tourism of history and consumerism steers the consuming public's reaction in certain directions while steering them away from alternative interpretations of the nation's politics and foreign affairs. According to Sturken, in a world where reasons behind conflicts often are varied and complex, Americans tend to see these conflicts as battles of good versus evil.<sup>151</sup> By expressing sympathy and empathy for the victims of a trauma, while wearing proverbial blinders to the reason for the trauma, the tourist can imagine him- or herself absolved of responsibility. Therefore, the tourist paradoxically wants to feel a connection, but from a distance so as to appear without responsibility for his or her presence.<sup>152</sup>

Films act as proverbial teddy bears. Not all 9/11 inspired films are supposed to comfort the consuming public, however, those that are supposed to be innocently sentimental, often claim to not be political. The teddy bear is one of Sturken's examples to demonstrate consumerism and tourism working together to achieve certain emotional responses. However, according to Sturken, the teddy bear "also disables certain kinds of responses. It is not a versatile object that can be employed for a range of responses; it is a circumscribed object precisely because of the message of sentimentality and

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<sup>150</sup> *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, dir. Daldry (2011)

<sup>151</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 9-11

<sup>152</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 13



reassurance it offers.”<sup>153</sup> In other words, the purpose for which the teddy bear was created is also its weakness – it limits the consumer’s emotional responses to love, pity, or nostalgia, when responses to trauma are so much more complex. On the surface, not many things seem more innocent than a teddy bear, but the underlying purpose of the teddy bear means that it is not actually as innocent as it presents itself to be.<sup>154</sup>

### 3.2.1 Authenticity

According to Sturken, “reenactment raises the question of the relationship of experience and authenticity.”<sup>155</sup> Like rings forming on a water surface, “hierarchies of grief and trauma”<sup>156</sup> develop. Experience of trauma – to be close to the event and maybe injured – is more authentic than to lose a significant other in said event. To be in close proximity is more authentic than a mediated experience. Most Americans, however, experience history through television, and therefore most Americans experienced 9/11 through mass media.<sup>157</sup> In the competition between documentaries and movies, documentaries are supposed to be, the “most authentic”<sup>158</sup> of the two genres. Authenticity seems to have become more important for an audience, even in movies which purpose is really entertainment. People seem to consider documentaries as the elite option of the visual media genre because of its basis in historical or other types of facts, while movies, although with a bigger audience, are popular culture fiction. Some movies claim to have a basis in historical reality, but then come under the scrutiny of the audience, perhaps unjustly. Documentaries and movies have different purposes, one is to educate, while the other is to entertain, but this distinction seems to blur together increasingly (similarly to how the distinction between history and memory seem to blur together more with the modernization of mass culture).

Due to the trend toward authenticity in films the last couple of decades or so, the director of a complete work of fiction, *Ladder 49* (2004), Jay Russell, sent the actors playing firefighters to the fire academy before he started the film production. During the first house fire in the film, which is actually a flashback, the director instructed the

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<sup>153</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 13

<sup>154</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 13

<sup>155</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 29

<sup>156</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 30

<sup>157</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 29

<sup>158</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 29

actors to just do what they had been trained to do at the fire academy. Everything the “firefighters” prepared before walking into the burning house on the set is what real firefighters would do. Russell wanted to recreate the realism – he also had real firefighters present on set, acting as advisors, during production of the film to make sure everything was realistic.<sup>159</sup> In other instances of realism, Russell took advantage of a real blizzard in Baltimore. Russell himself grabbed a camera and filmed a Christmas Eve fire during the biggest snow blizzard in 100 years of Baltimore history. The snow in that scene is real, while the smoke in the apartment building was added later during post-production, because realistically, firefighters cannot even see their own hand in front of them when they are inside a burning and smoking building.<sup>160</sup>

Sturken hypothesizes that the “culture of survivor envy”<sup>161</sup> that has developed, stems from the power achieved by traumatized World War II survivors. “Historical events,” such as World War II, produce veterans and survivors who hold a certain authenticity that is coveted by others.<sup>162</sup> The director of the feature film *United 93* (2006), director and writer Paul Greengrass, wanted to make the movie as realistic, as authentic, as was possible. Greengrass used less known actors who could better portray the average person, and real pilots, flight attendants, air traffic controllers, and military personnel.<sup>163</sup> The aircraft black box has been recovered from the aircraft wreckage in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, and phone calls made by the passengers, give us an idea of what took place onboard United Airlines flight 93. Greengrass kept very close to what is known of events onboard, but he “took some artistic license.”<sup>164</sup>

Director Greengrass wanted the film to feel as close to reality for the audience, therefore unknown actors were hired to play the passengers and flight attendants. Greengrass wanted the audience to see the actors and actresses as normal people, and that way identify and empathize with the characters. Famous actors were excluded probably because Greengrass felt they would bring too much spectacle to the movie, take away focus from the film. Famous actors or actresses would overshadow the

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<sup>159</sup> *Ladder 49*, dir. Russell (2004), “Chapter 3-4,” *Commentary*

<sup>160</sup> *Ladder 49*, dir. Russell (2004), “Chapter 10,” *Commentary*

<sup>161</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 28

<sup>162</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 28

<sup>163</sup> *United 93*, dir. Greengrass (2006), “Chapter 3,” *Commentary*

<sup>164</sup> Riegler, “9/11 on the Screen,” 158

story,<sup>165</sup> and as Riegler describes it, “a no-name cast was ... deliberate to establish the passengers as a collective.”<sup>166</sup> Several of the actors and actresses in the Boston Air Traffic Control Center (BATCC), the National Air Traffic Control Center (NATCC), and the Northeast Air Defense Command Center (NADCC) are actual air traffic controllers and military personnel. Some of the air traffic controllers were in the Air Traffic Control Center (ATCC) they are shown to be in during 9/11, while others were in other ATCCs. In the words of Greengrass, “Who better to play air traffic controllers? Who better to bring this thing to realistic screen portrayal than professional people themselves?”<sup>167</sup> Greengrass wanted to capture normalcy in an extraordinary situation. Likewise, Greengrass wanted real flight attendants and pilots. The pre-flight checks the pilots in the movie do are pre-flight checks all pilots have to go through before take-off.<sup>168</sup> Despite the urge for authenticity, as Sturken states, the public settle for inauthentic or shallow experiences. A step toward a more authentic mass mediated experience was if the terrorists were given a background, a possible reason for their actions, instead of leaving the characters are mere 2D villains. The problem is that Americans believe themselves innocent and not part of overseas history and politics,<sup>169</sup> and films that show no context for why the terrorist attacks happened reflect that attitude.

Films usually begin with the terrorist attacks or the morning right before the terrorist attacks – as if the following events sprang out of thin air – out of context. If the film starts before the morning of the terrorist attacks, the documentary, and film usually tell a story, directly unrelated to 9/11. Butler, sardonically, claims that to give a context behind 9/11 would be to complicate the authenticity behind the righteous anger of the attacks. This in turn, would lead to the realization of moral lies, that is, the realization that the terrorist attacks might not have been unprovoked, although, the loss of innocent lives can never be justified. To establish a compelling first-person narrative of events, to establish an “Us versus Them” story, and gain sympathy for “Us,” the story has to begin with the shock of violence to ignite the viewer’s righteous anger. The audience usually identifies with the first-person/protagonist, almost like an imprint on the first person the

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<sup>165</sup> *United 93*, dir. Greengrass (2006) “Chapter 3,” *Commentary*

<sup>166</sup> Riegler, “9/11 on the Screen,” 158

<sup>167</sup> *United 93*, dir. Greengrass (2006), “Chapter 3,” *Commentary*

<sup>168</sup> *United 93*, dir. Greengrass (2006), “Chapter 3,” *Commentary*

<sup>169</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 8-11

viewer sees, and when the protagonist is victimized, shown physically vulnerable, a narcissistic need to save face and regain the first-person's, and by extension the audience members', pride. A story emerges, unrelated to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, to try to counteract the moment of victimization – to try to regain control of the situation.<sup>170</sup>

The movie, *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (2011), the protagonist is a young boy with Asperger's Syndrome, probably to make him less kitsch – less of a mass produced character. People seem to have a difficult time connecting to people they do not understand. Because of Oskar's Asperger's Syndrome, he has trouble communicating or understanding other people, and people have trouble communicating and understanding Oskar. Likewise, the audience watching the film also has trouble completely connecting to the character at first. Miscommunication works both ways, and the audience is meant to “experience” grief through the eyes of a little boy that they will have difficulty understanding because of his condition.<sup>171</sup> Oskar has no shortage of knowledge, but he does not understand people because people do not fit neatly into clearly defined categories.

### 3.3 Kitsch

Several of the films included in this thesis contain clichés that render them predictable to “media-savvy consumers.”<sup>172</sup> Kitsch plays on “prescribed codes of sentiment,”<sup>173</sup> which offer “simple and consumable emotional registers.”<sup>174</sup> Kitsch is supposed to trigger certain emotional responses in its consumers, such as “sympathy, sadness, comfort, and the reassurance of cuteness.”<sup>175</sup> When 9/11 happened, people felt vulnerable and in need of comfort – kitsch is comforting in its predictability.

“Melodrama is a mode of popular culture narrative that employs emotionality to provide an unambiguous distinction between good and evil through clear designations of victimization, heroism, and villainy.”<sup>176</sup> According to Elizabeth Anker, the

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<sup>170</sup> Craps, “Conjuring Trauma,” (2007), 194

<sup>171</sup> *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, dir. Daldry (2011)

<sup>172</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 52

<sup>173</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 52

<sup>174</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 52

<sup>175</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 25

<sup>176</sup> Elisabeth Anker, “Villains, Victims and Heroes: Melodrama, Media, and September 11,” *Journal of Communication*, 55:1 (March 2005) 23

Melodrama recipe consists of five elements. The first element is the morally virtuous protagonist and narrator whose story is supposed to evoke compassion. The second element, is “a ruthless villain, a suffering victim, and a heroic savior who can redeem the victim’s virtue through an act of retribution.”<sup>177</sup> The victim and the hero can be the same person. The divide between good and evil is the third element. This divide is portrayed both through the characters and through events. The fourth element is a “cyclical interaction of emotion and action meant to create suspense and resolve conflict.”<sup>178</sup> Finally, the last element is “images, sounds, gestures, and nonverbal communication”<sup>179</sup> to justify moral righteousness, and for the audience to sympathize with the victim, while disliking the villain.<sup>180</sup>

*Remember Me* (2010) and *Cloverfield* (2008) seem mass produced – plots that are near identical to numerous other movies. The movies are reproductions or near clones to other movies. Films follow a general plot recipe, and very little is truly unique to the stories. Boy meets girl, they fall in love, drama happens, they separate for a period, and then there is the reunion when the person in the wrong redeems himself or herself. *Remember Me* (2010) does follow most of this recipe, and it follows – the only deviation is when the main character dies in the WTC. The audiences feels for the characters, feeling sad for what they go and have gone through emotionally, while the comfort of experiencing an intimate insight to the mind and thoughts of the protagonist leaves us with a feel-good movie. It is also a cute movie, despite the tragedy that befalls the characters toward the end of the movie.

Similar to romantic dramas, horror stories also follow a set of rules. An individual or several individuals experience a traumatic event and has to scramble to survive. More often than not, there is a so-called “damsel in distress” who is trapped and in need of saving from the main character or characters. In *Cloverfield*, a group of friends has to save the main character’s love interest.

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<sup>177</sup> Anker, “Villains, Victims and Heroes,” 24

<sup>178</sup> Anker, “Villains, Victims and Heroes,” 24

<sup>179</sup> Anker, “Villains, Victims and Heroes,” 24

<sup>180</sup> Anker, “Villains, Victims and Heroes,” 24

### 3.3.1 Kitsch as Smoothing Over

Kitsch smoothes over trauma, either by repeating until it becomes rather boring, or censorship of some kind (by others or oneself). *9/11* (2002) is “guilty” of self-censorship. When one of the Naudet brothers films the firefighters in the lobby of one of the twin towers, the sound of something heavy falling right outside can be heard. The sound turns out to be falling bodies of people who were presumed trapped upstairs in the building.

The video footage from the History Channel’s documentary *102 Minutes That Changed America* (2008) seems to suggest that at least some of the people falling, if they were all alive on the way down, were not panicking and waving their arms and legs. According to a witness statement made by firefighter Tom Spinard with Engine Seven, “The people jumping.... Some were falling and not moving. Others were moving their arms and legs. The fear in these people to make them do that had to be unbelievable. They were jumping from above the impact. I didn’t see anybody below. It was all above. I imagine how hot it was up there.”<sup>181</sup> One man falling or jumping for the WTC struck me as floating towards the ground, arms and legs relaxed, and staring up towards the sky.<sup>182</sup> He seemed almost at peace with his fate, or he could simply have died before he fell out of the tower.

“The essence of spectacle is an erasure: the awe-inspiring image of the explosion masks the bodies that are incinerated within it.”<sup>183</sup> Most films surrounding the subject of 9/11, avoid displaying exploding building, or objects crashing into skyscrapers. The 9/11 films do not directly show the impact of the planes crashing into the World Trade Center towers or the plane crash in Pennsylvania. Stone’s *World Trade Center* (2006) show the shadow of the first plane reflected on skyscrapers, flying low over the city. While patrolling the street, rookie police officer, Will Jimeno, hears a roaring sound, turns around, and spots a huge shadow fly across an adjacent yellow building across the street. The scene shift to a below view of the WTC for just a split second, to make the audience associate the plane shadow with the WTC. In the Port Authority office, a Port Authority police officer feels the sudden thump sound and vibration from the first plane

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<sup>181</sup> *9/11*, dir. Hanlon & Naudet (2002), “Special Features Interview: “It Was 8:46 in the Morning...”

<sup>182</sup> *102 Minutes That Changed America*, dir. Rittenmeyer and Skundrick, “Chapter 2”

<sup>183</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 172

hitting the WTC. Jimeno and his partner returns to the Station, where the other police officers are standing in front of a small television, looking at images of a smoking tower.<sup>184</sup> In the aftermath of 9/11, many people remember how they were sitting right in front of the television when the planes hit. Whether this is true or not, that is what they remember. This is a prosthetic collective memory,<sup>185</sup> because so many people were standing and staring at a television screen, including all the people in Times Square.

In the opening scene of *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, a person falls through the air. He almost seems to float. Only, out of focus, parts of the body can be seen at a time – fragments. The title *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* is ethereal and fragmented, before it floats away on the wind, just like the falling man. Pieces of paper flies through the ethereal title, reminiscent of the falling paper and other debris after the planes flew into the twin towers. One half of a face floats across the screen – enough to recognize Tom Hanks, who plays the late father in the film, Thomas Schell. This is Oskar's late father. The falling man floats out of the screen, making way for shredded pieces of the image of a boy, who turns out to be Oskar. It reminds us of shredded pieces of paper.<sup>186</sup>

Depicting falling people in documentaries and films seem to have been largely taboo from the lack of footage, archival footage or fiction, however, *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (2011), shows a falling man several times for the duration of the film. A person is falling through the air. It is out of focus, and only parts of the body are seen at a time. Fragments. The title *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* is ethereal and fragmented. The fragments of the title floats away on the wind. Half of a face floats across the screen – enough to recognize Tom Hanks, who plays the father, Thomas Schell, of what we find out is the protagonist, a young boy. This falling man floats to the side, making way for shredded pieces of paper transforming into the image of a boy. The shredded pieces consisting of the boy dominates the image of the falling man. During a bathroom scene, where Oskar seems to suffer an anxiety attack, out of nowhere, a man, out of focus, in the distance almost floats through the air. It is unclear whether the floating man is a memory from a news report, or if Oskar in his mind's eye imagines his father falling during the WTC collapse. If Oskar is having an anxiety

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<sup>184</sup> *World Trade Center*, dir. Stone (2006), “Chapter 2”

<sup>185</sup> Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory* (2004)

<sup>186</sup> *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, dir. Daldry (2011), “Chapter 1”

attack, the falling man might not only represent his father, but rather Oskar feeling out of control. Thomas Schell tells his son of how he as a boy used to swing as high as he could, before he jumped, and, for a moment, he would feel as free as a bird. Oskar does not want to go on the swings – he seems always to have been afraid of everything. Falling is the ultimate loss of control. Oskar is scared of losing control.<sup>187</sup> This film seems to have turned the taboo image of falling or jumping people into something positive. Thomas Schell’s parallel between jumping from a swing set to the probability that he, and in reality people jumping or falling out of the WTC towers, has transformed the horrible images of people falling to their deaths, into jumping from the swing set and experience the brief feeling of freedom. One can only hope that the people falling from the WTC felt a brief feeling of freedom.<sup>188</sup>

### 3.3.2 Trauma Made Trivial

Horrifying images repeatedly shown is a way to make the repetition trivial. This is a way to make people used to the images, no matter how terrible and traumatic they may be. The Holocaust museum Sturken mentions: History Channel’s documentary, *102 Minutes That Changed America* (2008) is a collection or preservation of numerous eyewitness accounts from NYC’s 9/11. The lack of narration gives the documentary more impact. The only narration is the witness in front of or behind the cameras, while an eerie background soundtrack occasionally adds suspense. Unlike other 9/11 documentaries and movies, *102 Minutes That Changed America* (2008) archival footage show people hanging out of the WTC windows, trying to stay clear of the smoke and fire in the building. More than one camera footage show the taboo subject of people falling from the first WTC tower. Witnesses to the disaster did not start to panic until the second plane hit the other WTC tower. The first archival footage only captures something dark and heavy falling in the distance and someone shouts in the distance that it is a person falling. The next footage is closer and a person can clearly be seen. The man falling does not wave his arms and legs around trying to fly, but seems to look up towards the sky while falling to the ground below. A third camera captures several people falling, one after the other seems to almost float towards the street below.<sup>189</sup> The

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<sup>187</sup> *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, dir. Daldry (2011)

<sup>188</sup> *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, dir. Daldry (2011)

<sup>189</sup> *102 Minutes That Changed America*, dir. Rittenmeyer & Skundrick (2008), “Chapter 2”



History Channel documentary does not smooth over, or only show “acceptable parts,” in accordance with Olalquiaga’s definition of kitsch. The inclusion of footage of falling people defines the documentary as not kitsch. Furthermore, kitsch in the context of trauma is about trivializing the traumatic. The archival footage does not seem to have been edited nor censored. The documentary is simply shown in all its reality.

Throughout *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (2011), out of focus images of a falling man repeatedly appears in the middle of present timeline scenes. The film opens up to person free falling through the air. The camera is out of focus, and only parts of the body are seen at a time. Only fragments are shown at a time. The title of the film slowly emerges – ethereal and fragmented. White fragments flits across the title. The white fragments turn out to be pieces of paper flying through the air – in reference to the flying pieces of paper and loose debris that New Yorkers saw after the planes hit the World Trade Center towers. Half of a face floats across the screen – enough to recognize Tom Hanks, who plays the beloved father, Thomas Schell, of Oskar. This falling man floats to the side, making way for shredded pieces which slowly forms into the image of a boy staring into the camera. The boy, Oskar, has made a figure where a small stick-figure man falls from one the WTC towers.

### 3.3.3 Irony

To criticize the government’s foreign policies and measures taken to ensure the safety of the U.S. was not without risk in the fallout of 9/11. Immediately after 9/11, irony became taboo because of its understood flippancy towards violence and the reasons for violence.<sup>190</sup> Despite irony becoming taboo for a period post-9/11, Moore’s documentary had enormous success, both globally and in the U.S. The success rate suggests a different interpretation of Sturken and Noble’s everlasting innocence. The repercussions could come from either the public or the government. The Dixie Chicks were boycotted on the radio after publicly criticizing Bush’s foreign affairs policies,<sup>191</sup> and according to Michael Moore’s *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004), the FBI detained a man after he criticized Bush (compared Bush to Osama bin Laden) among other gym

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<sup>190</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 52

<sup>191</sup> Altheid, “Chapter 1 Fear, Terrorism, and Popular Culture”

members. From the very beginning of Moore's documentary, Moore deliberately does not show Bush and his rise to the presidency in a flattering light.

Moore shows President George W. Bush as anything but innocent. In fact, Moore portrays Bush as lazy, stupid, incompetent, and possibly corrupt. Moore sets the stage for suggesting that Bush and his administration were "in bed with the enemy," handled information pertaining to 9/11 incompetently while simultaneously taking advantage of the terrorist attacks to implement a plan already in place – the Patriot Act, and criticizing Bush's war in Iraq. Despite Moore's harsh critique of Bush, or maybe because of it, the documentary was extremely popular. Another reason for the popularity might stem from Moore's famous use of irony when exposing hidden or smoothed over truths, even though he does this in an atmosphere where irony became taboo for a time. While exposing ugly truths, Moore does it similarly to a comedian, by telling the truth in such a way that the audience themselves feel the exasperation by how authorities abuse their political power. Thus, while being horrified about exposed home truths, the audience is entertained. Jon Stewart has used the same strategy on his Late Night Show, exposing truths in such a way that the audience is entertained. Moore and Stewart's popularity suggests that the notion of perceived American innocence might not be as all encompassing as Sturken indicates.<sup>192</sup>

### 3.3.4 Politics (Patriotism)

"[The] investment in reaffirming innocence not only functions to mask U.S. imperialistic policies, and the history of the United States as an active history of empire, but also obscures the degree to which violent conflict has been a fundamental aspect of U.S. society."<sup>193</sup> The terrorist attacks of 9/11 were used as an excuse to declare war on Afghanistan and Iraq. In Iraq, President Bush removed dictator Saddam Hussein from power, and "incidentally" got access to oil fields. Kiefer Sutherland is the narrator of the docudrama *Flight 93: The Flight That Fought Back* (2005), and by choosing this famous actor as narrator, the documentary from the very beginning shows its conservative, patriotic, militaristic frame. Sutherland narrates, "The 40 men and women that make up Flight 93, come from small towns and big cities, they are business people

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<sup>192</sup> *Fahrenheit 9/11*, dir. Moore (2004)

<sup>193</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 16

and students, they are grandparents, parents and children, of all ages, races, backgrounds, and beliefs. Together they are about to find themselves on the frontline of a new kind of war.”<sup>194</sup> The people summed up by Sutherland are Americans of various classes, ages, ethnicities, and religions, and the use of “frontline” is militaristic and seemingly meant to bring forth feelings of patriotism and a sense of duty and honor.<sup>195</sup> This seems set up to high light the innocence of the people, and the use of “frontline on a new kind of war” is militaristic and seemingly meant to bring forth feelings of patriotism and a sense of duty and honor.

*Flight 93: The Flight that Fought Back* (2005) has other militarizing elements as well. During the interviews with the martial arts expert Rodriguez, Deena Burnett, Louis Nacke II, and Tom Burnett, certain suggestive tools caught my eye. The martial arts expert shows himself sparring with a martial arts student while telling the interviewer why Ziad Jarrah became his student, and that they trained on combat in close quarters. During the interviews with Tom Burnett’s widow, Deena Burnett, three American flags are folded together in triangles in the book case behind her chair. The flags are not that noticeable, because they are out of focus – due to the camera focusing on Mrs. Burnett – but the blue color and white stars are unmistakable. Another display of patriotism, is Joe Nacke’s son, Louis Nacke II, who has been interviewed in his pale blue West Point ceremonial uniform. The passengers charging the hijackers allude to a Civil War charge. A reenactment of Tom Burnett reading a book called “Stonewall” is pictured. The subject of the book in question is most likely Andrew “Stonewall” Jackson.” The widow of one of the passengers, describes how her late husband had been an avid reader, and lately he had been focusing on the Civil War. Her husband had commented about the courage the soldiers at Gettysburg. They had known that they were going to die, but instead of running, they had pinned notes to their loved ones on trees before they marched onto the battlefield. Mrs. Burnett hypothesizes that her husband had probably asked himself how he would handle such a situation.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> *Flight 93: The Flight That Fought Back*, dir. Goodison, 2005

<sup>195</sup> *Flight 93: The Flight That Fought Back*, dir. Goodison, 2005

<sup>196</sup> *Flight 93: The Flight That Fought Back*, dir. Goodison (2005)

### 3.3.5 Dual Storylines

Films make use of showing photographs and posters of missing people. Documentaries often show a montage of pictures and home videos taken during family moments or on vacation of smiling, happy people. The pictures are taken in the context of innocent times, before the tragic event occurs, and before the photographed person loses his or her innocence. The person smiling to the photographer have yet to find out what the later observer of the photograph knows, that something bad has happened to them. “The temporal rupture of these images demonstrated in many ways the power of the still image to convey a mortality and finality.”<sup>197</sup> The photographs were taken in innocence, but their display sends the message that the person is potentially dead. The person in the photograph is innocently unaware of what might befall them, while the watcher of the photograph has the knowledge that something awful might have happened to the person photographed.

Photographs also represent arrested time.<sup>198</sup> “Photographs of people alive and naïve about events to come...acted as counterimages to the iconic images that came to define 9/11, not only the images of spectacle but also the haunting images of people falling and jumping to their deaths.”<sup>199</sup> In *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (2011), Oskar finds a close-up photograph of a crying elephant. Oskar looks for answers to his father’s last quest, and on his journey of discovery, he creates a scrapbook photograph collection of all the people he encounters that are named Black. Each picture he takes tells a story of the person in it. Oskar has also printed out and collected pictures of people falling from the WTC towers, of the falling man. At the end of the scrapbook, he has sketched a stick figure that falls in reverse until he disappears into the skyscraper. He wishes to turn back time, and to prevent what happened to happen, or to freeze time. On the other hand, apparently, by taking pictures of something, that moment/object is already dead, but it might be different with a video camera. Maybe it is an attempt to bring history to life again.<sup>200</sup>

Dual storylines is a simile for Sturken’s snow globe, where both the innocent past and innocence lost moment of the trauma takes place in the same space. Sturken

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<sup>197</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 183

<sup>198</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 3

<sup>199</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 184

<sup>200</sup> *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, dir. Daldry (2011)

describes snow globes, as “represent[ing] a ‘permanent instant’ in which time is arrested, yet they are also objects in which that instant is meant to be in constant replay.”<sup>201</sup> *Cloverfield* (2008) has two timelines for main characters Rob Hawkins and Beth McIntyre. The camera that the main characters use to document the catastrophe in the movie, tapes partially over a previous recording. Rob in the past timeline has filmed happy moments with his girlfriend, Beth. On the last recording of the past timeline, Rob and Beth sit on a Ferris wheel on Coney Island, and Beth happily and innocently says into the camera, “I had a good day.”<sup>202</sup> Beth’s last words, in the past timeline, allude to the phrase that has repeatedly been used about the morning of 9/11, before the planes hit. An often spoken comment was that it was a beautiful morning. In the present camera timeline, one of the last things Beth says into the camera is, “I don’t know why this is happening.”<sup>203</sup>

The dual timelines is to make a clear distinction between the innocent past, and the innocence lost present. *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (2011) also makes use of a dual storyline – in the past storyline, the protagonist’s father, Thomas Schell, is alive, and in the second storyline he has been dead for about a year. In the past storyline, the family is happy, whereas in the present storyline, Mr. Schell is dead. The protagonist, Oskar Schell, does not cope well with the tragedy, and his mother tries the best she can to communicate with her son, but the tragedy of 9/11 has nearly torn apart the little remaining family. Mrs. Schell and Oskar exist together, but they do not really communicate.

### 3.3.6 Chapter Conclusion

Kitsch is a crutch to cling onto because kitsch adheres to simple emotions and binary thinking. Kitsch and melodrama seem to be the preferred method of making films that move the audience. The films use several melodramatic methods to make the audience as sympathetic to the plot, the characters, and the moral of the story. Melodrama is an aspect of kitsch. The storyline usually has a moral to its story, and the characters are villains, victims and, or heroes. Along with these tools used to tug on the audience’s emotions, the music also moves the audience along with the action on screen.

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<sup>201</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 3

<sup>202</sup> *Cloverfield*, dir. Reeves (2008), “Chapter 15”

<sup>203</sup> *Cloverfield*, dir. Reeves (2008), “Chapter 15”

In the fourth chapter, I will use Sturken's theory of spectacle and of reenactment to examine films. A spectacle is an impressive, public display on a large scale, something with which movies are famous or maybe infamous for. When *Independence Day* (1996) premiered in the U.S., the audience cheered when the White House was blown up by invading aliens. This was pure fiction, however, and the real thing – meaning the exploding twin towers – was vastly different and traumatic. Although Sturken does not examine films in her theory, she does mention that, “reenactment of dramatic events is a staple of popular culture in the form of television programs, documentaries, and feature films.”<sup>204</sup> Constant repetition of an event is a sign of trauma.

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<sup>204</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 26

# 4 Spectacles

## 4.1 Film Spectacles

Sturken points out that 9/11 did not produce the highest number of casualties – other historical horrors have had far more casualties, and yet the image of the exploding twin towers is what most people automatically think about when the subject of 9/11 is brought up. Sturken argues that 9/11 was supposed to create “not so much death as an image”<sup>205</sup> and the exploding twin towers are certainly memorable.<sup>206</sup> Some documentaries begin their documentaries with a shock and awe style, with fireballs exploding from the WTC. “The essence of spectacle is an erasure: the awe-inspiring image of the explosion masks the bodies that are incinerated within it.”<sup>207</sup> Mention 9/11 to someone (not immediately/directly connected to any 9/11 victims) and the twin towers will most likely be on the forefront of that person’s mind while the other attacks and the victims end up in the background.

Action movies are widely known for spectacles of image, but according to Sturken, after 9/11

the film industry immediately scrambled to erase [the twin towers] from forthcoming films. ... The initial idea that guided many of these immediate attempts to eliminate images of the towers was that it would be traumatic for television and movie audiences to see the towers as they had stood, which is in complete contradiction to the fact that at the same time New Yorkers and others were rapidly buying World Trade Center postcards.<sup>208</sup>

The film industry and the public disagreed on how best to remember the twin towers – the removal of the twin towers in movies and TV shows was not well received by a public that tried to reinstate the image of the twin towers against the NYC skyline. The movies and TV shows Sturken briefly mention as having removed the twin towers are noticeably not about 9/11,<sup>209</sup> but unlike 9/11 documentaries, the 9/11 movies I have

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<sup>205</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 172

<sup>206</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 172

<sup>207</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 172

<sup>208</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 224-225

<sup>209</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 222-225

watched vary in their portrayal of the twin towers, which is why I believe it should apply also to this category of movies.

#### 4.1.1 Spectacle of Image

Despite Moore using sensationalism and irony to educate consumers on 9/11, he chose not to use the spectacle of image. Moore's first lesson for the watching public was that images might lie. By first showing Al Gore celebrating winning the presidential election of 2000, when George W. Bush ended up winning the presidency, Moore shows that images are not always the truth and that the people need to be skeptical and not believe everything authorities tell them.<sup>210</sup> When the terrorist attacks happen, the screen fades to black, and the audience only hears sounds, thus the images cannot sway the consumer's opinion and the consumer has to rely on memory alone from the event. According to Karen Randell, Moore assumes that the audience has seen what happened 9/11 and that they have personal memories attached to that day. Randell finds Moore's assumption that 9/11 is a memory shared by all – a collective memory of trauma – is problematic because it leaves little room for variation in how different people think of and remember 9/11.<sup>211</sup> I believe Randell has a point, although I suggest that Moore's choice might well be a belief that the spectacle of the fireballs shooting out of the twin towers blinds the public. Similarly, Sturken believes that the spectacle of image, like the fireballs exploding from the twin towers, erases other events from 9/11. What happened to the twin towers left such an impression in people's minds, that the Pennsylvania flight and the Pentagon are largely forgotten, or these events are often after-thoughts when bringing up the subject of 9/11. Moore tried to show the public that the U.S. government is not as innocent as it presents itself to be, and looking at *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004) from Sturken's theory, the spectacle of the twin towers might have worked against Moore's purpose.

Naming the individual victims creates many smaller stories instead of just a single big story with faceless, nameless victims. Large disasters are often “represented as a

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<sup>210</sup> Karen Randell, “‘It Was Like a Movie’: The Impossibility of Representation in Oliver Stone’s *World Trade Center*,” in *Reframing 9/11: Film, Popular Culture and the “War on Terror,”* ed. Jeff Birkenstein, Anna Froula, and Karen Randell (New York: Continuum, 2010), Kindle version, Location 2221-2245

<sup>211</sup> Randell, “‘It Was Like a Movie’: The Impossibility of Representation in Oliver Stone’s *World Trade Center*,” in *Reframing 9/11: Film, Popular Culture and the “War on Terror,”* ed. Jeff Birkenstein, Anna Froula, and Randell (2010), Kindle version, Location 2221-2245



singular entity,”<sup>212</sup> where its individual casualties become a “collective dead”<sup>213</sup> and lose their individuality. Sturken points out that, “naming and describing the unique quirks of those lost serve to pull these individuals out of an abstract image of mass death and to render them different, unlike any others.”<sup>214</sup> Each victim stands out to the audience instead of blurring into a larger mass, and we see their individuality and what makes each person unique.<sup>215</sup>

The victims and the heroes of the UA93 narratives are the passengers and flight crew who became hostages before they decided to fight back. Sutherland and interviewed family members provide background information of several of the UA93 passengers and crew. According to Sturken, innocent people in photographs are unaware of the future, and pictures taken in one context is used in a different than it was meant for – in context with terrorism – and the viewer of the photographs knows what the people in the photographs at the moment the photo was taken do not know. Photographs of innocent people, not knowing their futures,<sup>216</sup> are also “counterimages to the iconic images that came to define 9/11, not only the images of spectacle but also the haunting images of people falling and jumping to their deaths”<sup>217</sup> from the twin towers. Burnett’s wife, Deena Burnett, she describes her husband as a strategic thinker, focused on reaching his carefully planned goals. This is foreshadowing to the moment when the passengers planned a strategy for taking back the plane from the hijackers.<sup>218</sup>

In a *Flight 93: The Flight That Fought Back* (2005) interview, Elizabeth Wainio’s parents describe her as untypical for a teenager – she actually wanted to talk to her parents, and came to them for advice and guidance. Wainio always let her parents know where she traveled. The audience is meant to associate a young, kind woman, who had a close-knit relationship with her parents, morally good, responsible, and thoughtful of others’ potential worries. Flight Attendant CeeCee Lyles was a police officer a year earlier, in Fort Pierce, Florida. According to the archival recording that *Flight 93: The Flight That Fought Back* (2005) used, Lyles leaves a calm and collected message for her husband and children back home:

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<sup>212</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 114

<sup>213</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 114

<sup>214</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 175

<sup>215</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 114, 175

<sup>216</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 183-185

<sup>217</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 185

<sup>218</sup> *Flight 93: The Flight that Fought Back*, dir. Goodison (2005) “Chapter 1”

Hi baby, yeah so listen very carefully. I'm on a plane that's been hijacked. ... I wanted to say I love you. Please tell my children that I love them very much, and I'm so sorry. I don't know what to say. ... I'm trying to be calm. We're trying to be calm. I've heard that there are planes that have been flown into the World Trade Center. I hope to be able to see your face again baby. I love you. Bye.<sup>219</sup>

These depictions of the victims are meant to inspire greater sympathy for the victims, and show the contrast between them and the terrorists. The terrorists are given no background because of their terrorist acts. You could say the spectacle of terrorism erases the individuality of the terrorists. The films that do not use spectacles of image might resort to spectacle of sound instead. Whereas *United 93* (2006) did not show the crash of flight UA93, it did use language and Muslim prayer to present an ominous feeling, insecurity, and foreshadowing.

#### 4.1.2 Spectacle of Sound

Image use is not the only way to create a spectacle – the creation of sound also has a profound effect on the receiver. A variety of sound spectacle are used in films – languages, music or musical soundtracks, “sound effects” and even a lack of sound are supposed to create an emotional response in the audience.<sup>220</sup>

Many documentaries begin the narration with sounds of the terrorist attacks. In *Flight 93: The Flight That Fought Back*, a black screen, with a still picture of a plane that becomes increasingly larger, while archival telephone messages from some of the passengers play. A woman phones home, telling the recipient of her phone call what flight she takes before she stops talking mid sentence. In the background of the woman's phone call an indistinct man's voice says, “Everything is okay. ... Just stay quiet.”<sup>221</sup> Another passenger, Tom Burnett, makes a phone call and quietly blurts out that, “Oh my God, it's a suicide mission.”<sup>222</sup> A 911 emergency operator informs a passenger that terrorists have hijacked airplanes that morning with the intention of crashing them. The 911 operator advises the passenger calling to take back the plane

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<sup>219</sup> *Flight 93: The Flight that Fought Back*, dir. Goodison (2005)

<sup>220</sup> Corey K. Creekmur, “The Sound of the ‘War on Terror,’” in *Reframing 9/11: Film, Popular Culture and the ‘War on Terror,’”* ed. Jeff Birkenstein, Anna Froula, and Karen Randell (New York: Continuum, 2010), Kindle version, Location 1353-1362

<sup>221</sup> *Flight 93: The Flight That Fought Back*, dir. Goodison (2005), “Chapter 1”

<sup>222</sup> *Flight 93: The Flight That Fought Back*, dir. Goodison (2005), “Chapter 1”

from the hijackers, if possible.<sup>223</sup> Discovery Channel's *9/11 New York Firefighters* documentary begins with a black screen, city sounds are heard, and then the black screen turns into a city view of New York. This is a short prologue, as it were, of how the day began so beautifully, before an overview of the morning's terrible events.<sup>224</sup>

Some films use language to portray borders and In *Flight 93: The Flight That Fought Back* (2005), the bomb-wearer, Ahmed Al Haznawi, starts praying in Arabic, and the scene immediately shifts to Todd Beamer praying on the airfone with Lisa Jefferson from Verizon. A female passenger also prays, and the scene shifts again to Ahmed Al Haznawi still praying. An elderly couple huddle together over a Bible and pray with flight attendant Lyles, and the scene quickly shifts to Jarrah in the cockpit who also prays quietly while looking out the cockpit window. The youngest terrorist stands outside the cockpit praying. Both sides are praying to their God....<sup>225</sup> The praying scene shifts continuously between passengers praying to God, and Muslim extremist hijackers praying to Allah.

Some films seem to censor sounds of real terror despite people being willing to experience simulated screams of horror in "torture-porn" visual media. As Creekmur points out, "the overwhelming roar, screams, cries, and sirens that were fully a part of the horrific perceptual experience of 9/11 are often removed from representations of the event, typically viewed in 'respectful silence' or with appropriately muted music (in implicit recognition of the power of sound in relation to disturbing images)."<sup>226</sup> Spectacles of image along with sound are sometimes censored either because of a respect for the victims or because the images might be too traumatizing for the audience.<sup>227</sup> 9/11 films will sometimes censor images but not really spectacles of sound. The essay writer make a good point, however,

Explosions do not happen in vacuums of silence, but History Channel's *102 Minutes That Changed America* (2008) has no narration other than the witnesses and news helicopters filming, news radio reports, radio chatter, people talking on their phones, to each other, and to 911 operators. This documentary is a collection, or a

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<sup>223</sup> *Flight 93: The Flight That Fought Back*, dir. Goodison (2005), "Chapter 1"

<sup>224</sup> *9/11 New York Firefighters*, prod. Schnall (2011), "Chapter 1"

<sup>225</sup> *United 93*, dir. Greengrass (2006)

<sup>226</sup> Creekmur, "The Sound of the 'War on Terror,'" (2010), Kindle, Location 1362

<sup>227</sup> Creekmur, "The Sound of the 'War on Terror,'" (2010), Kindle version, Location 1353-1362

preservation, of numerous eyewitness accounts. The lack of narration gives the documentary more impact, and there is an eerily muted soundtrack added.<sup>228</sup> The documentary feels more as a tool for “prosthetic memory”<sup>229</sup> – gaining someone else’s memories and lived experiences.<sup>230</sup>

#### 4.1.3 Spectacle of Fear

J. J. Abrams’ movie blockbuster, *Cloverfield* (2008) falls in under the category of Sturken’s culture of fear. A huge monster, which no one can clearly see, attacks NYC. This film is an allegory to the planes crashing into the twin towers. In the middle of the film, one of the characters are infected with a possibly alien virus. When the main characters bump into the military, they are at first relieved. However, the military seem unable to help them and have trouble fending off the unknown, alien threat. In fact, one of the main characters dies while in the military’s care – she explodes behind a white plastic covers, so that the audience can only see shadows of what happens but enough to see the blood cover the plastic covers. This scene is not supposed to inspire trust in the authority figures.<sup>231</sup>

Time Magazine Online wonders why disaster films are so popular, and J. J. Abrams, creator of *Cloverfield* (2008), responds that, “destruction of society...are explorations of social fears.”<sup>232</sup> *Cloverfield* (2008) falls in under the category of Sturken’s culture of fear. Science fiction movies often show contemporary fear. During the Cold War and after, science fiction films more often than not show alien invasions by hostile aliens. *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) and its remakes in 1978 and 1993, *The X Files* (1998), *The Faculty* (1998), *Signs* (2002), *The Invasion* (2007), just to mention a few. The setting in *Cloverfield* (2008) takes place in New York City, and the characters experience an attack by a large creature. The origin of the creature is never explained – and the main characters can only speculate as to why it is there in the city and where it comes from. The plot of the movie will remind any viewer of seeing people flee from the events that took place on 9/11. The movie characters start out attending a farewell party for one of the main characters, Rob Hawkins, and then the

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<sup>228</sup> *102 Minutes That Changed America*, dir. Rittenmeyer & Skundrick (2008), “Chapter 1”

<sup>229</sup> Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory*

<sup>230</sup> Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory*

<sup>231</sup> *Cloverfield*, dir. Reeves (2008)

<sup>232</sup> <http://content.time.com/time/arts/article/0,8599,1704356,00.html> [Accessed May 6, 2014]

first catastrophic events happen. The movie is another movie in a long, and getting longer, line of realism, horror movies that have become increasingly popular. More and more people film and photograph their daily lives, and upload the footage onto social media sites – increasing the level of globalization. One man in the group of friends and main characters, Hud, has been given the task of filming everything at the party, therefore when New York City is attacked, he continues filming, or documenting as he claims to be doing.<sup>233</sup> The friends try to get off the island, until Rob gets a phone call from his love interest, Beth McIntyre, who lies injured in her apartment from one of the attacks by the creature. The group of friends trek back to Beth’s apartment building, and against the odds, most of the friends survive the trip.<sup>234</sup>

Time asks Abrams, “Movies that take on themes of terrorism and war head on don’t do very well at the box office. Is sci-fi the best outlet for our social fears about those things?” According to Abrams, he made a film that was a “by-product” of 9/11, maybe even “catharsis,” and he wanted people to “live through their wildest fears but be in a safe place.”<sup>235</sup> In *Cloverfield* (2008), several settings and actions taken, is almost a mirror to people’s actions in New York City during 9/11. Some people from Rob’s farewell party hurry up to the roof of the apartments building to find out why the tremor and blackout happened. In the background, something huge explodes, and it can be assumed it was a building. During 9/11, people filming also ran up to the building rooftops to get a better look at what was happening. Balls of fire, from the massive explosion they saw in the background, streak through the sky, towards the people standing on the roof. The people run inside and down the staircase, reminding viewers of the people running down the staircase in the 9/11 twin towers.<sup>236</sup>

In postmodernism, “violence can burst upon us at any time, even when we least expect it, even when the sun is shining, ... ravaging the life we take for granted.”<sup>237</sup> In *Remember Me* (2010), a young Alyssa Craig, the protagonist’s love interest, experiences having her mother murder right in front of her.<sup>238</sup> The murder of her mother, affects Ally the next ten years. Ally never takes the subway, and she always eats desserts

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<sup>233</sup> *Cloverfield*, dir. Reeves (2008)

<sup>234</sup> *Cloverfield*, dir. Reeves (2008)

<sup>235</sup> <http://content.time.com/time/arts/article/0,8599,1704356,00.html> [Accessed May 6, 2014]

<sup>236</sup> *Cloverfield*, dir. Reeves (2008) “Chapter 5”

<sup>237</sup> Isabel Cristina Pinedo, “Postmodern Elements of the Contemporary Horror Film,” *Recreational Terror*. (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), 93

<sup>238</sup> *Remember Me*, dir. Coulter (2010) “Chapter 1”

before dinner, because, as she tells Tyler on their first date, she knows she could die at any moment.<sup>239</sup> However, Ally, who has lived her life, prepared to die at any moment, is not the person who dies at the end of the film. Maybe one of the morals of the film is that those who are prepared for what can happen at a moment's notice, will live, and those who do nothing to prepare and secure themselves. This might be to create fear in audience members, persuade them to prepare themselves as well. Tyler Hawkins, the cynical college student who in the beginning of the film did not care to get too close to anyone except his little sister, Caroline, before he met and got to know Ally. After getting to know Ally and her quirky perspective on life, Hawkins, a changed man, is ready to start life with his beloved girlfriend. The morning of September 11, is an idyllic morning. Things seem to improve in the split Hawkins and Hirsch family. Tyler and Alyssa say, "I love you," to each other. Tyler's previously estranged father, takes more of an obvious interest in his children. When everything seems to work out, the family members once again communicates with each other, Tyler finally seems ready to commit whole-heartedly to Ally – tragedy strikes. The main character dies young and promising. Tragedies can happen anytime, and anywhere, no matter what you do – this seems to be part of what the director wants the audience to realize from watching this film.<sup>240</sup>

The opening scene of Allen Coulter's *Remember Me* (2010) inspires the audience to feel vulnerable and exposed. Blurred images flash across the screen, until slowly the flashing images blur into a ghostly silhouette, which in turn splits into two silhouettes. A mother and her young daughter stand on a desolate subway platform in 1991. The WTC towers over the other buildings in New York City in the background.<sup>241</sup> The audience are supposed to empathize with the pair on the platform. The subway station scene will remind anyone of feelings of vulnerability when walking home alone at night, or walking to the car, or waiting for other forms of transport. The thought of getting mugged, or worse, before reaching the safety of home is frightening. The mother and daughter are the innocent victims preyed upon by compassionless people. The mother and daughter represents the United States, while the muggers represents the terrorists.

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<sup>239</sup> *Remember Me*, dir. Coulter (2010) "Chapter 7"

<sup>240</sup> *Remember Me*, dir. Coulter (2010)

<sup>241</sup> *Remember Me*, dir. Coulter (2010), "Chapter 1"

## 4.2 Reenactment

According to Sturken,

in psychoanalysis ... compulsive repetition is a state of nonintegration, a disabling form of stasis, and its narrative integration that produces the *memory* of the traumatic event. ... Repetition can be a central part of the processing of a narrative of trauma.<sup>242</sup>

The excessive repetition of something is a sign of trauma that has not been processed or dealt with, and the person finds him- or herself in a sort of never-ending cycle until the trauma has been worked through and become a memory. The process of dealing with or working through a trauma includes taking charge of the trauma, make it part of yourself, and tell the story of it, or alternatively change the outcome of the story. The latter is where stories of for example firefighters rescuing someone instead of carrying someone's dead body out of a building come from – the need to change the outcome, even if it is just a story, in order to move past the trauma and make it a memory you can live with.<sup>243</sup>

### 4.2.1 Trauma

In *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (2011), the protagonist does not assume innocence in the aftermath of 9/11, and as a character, Oskar Schell is sort of unlikeable. During 9/11, Oskar's father, Thomas Schell had called home and left several messages, but Oskar had not picked up, so Mr. Schell had to leave messages on the answering machine, messages that Oskar later hides these messages from his mother. After the bathroom scene, Oskar listens to his father's answering machine messages, while covering his ears. Afterwards, he pinches himself. He has marks from numerous other pinch-marks. Self-harming can be a way to feel control when someone feels too much out of control, because the person harming him- or herself controls his or her own pain, the how and when it occurs, when he or she pinches himself. Oskar confesses to William Black that during 9/11 he had been home when the phone rang the sixth time, but he had been unable to move, to pick up, when his father had needed him the most. Oskar looks on the answering machine as his father keeps asking, "Are you

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<sup>242</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 27

<sup>243</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 26-29

there?” The line cuts off, and Oskar turns his head towards the TV, which shows the tower collapsing. Oskar asks William to forgive him for not picking up the phone when his dad needed him. William realizes that Oskar feels guilty for not picking up when his father called him, and he needs someone – anyone – to forgive him, for his peace of mind.<sup>244</sup> The self-harm might alternatively be a way to punish himself for not helping his father. Oskar Schell, not only assumes guilt, as opposed to innocence, but he tells Abby Black that he may or may not have Asperger’s syndrome. Apparently, Oskar has been tested for the condition, but the tests were inconclusive, although he displays certain quirks relating to Asperger’s syndrome. Oskar has always been uncomfortable around people, does not like eye contact, always tries to be in control, asks discomfiting questions and rattles off inappropriate information. In short, Oskar Schell is what has become increasingly popular in films and television shows, as an Anti-Hero. The Anti-Hero has unlikable qualities, and yet, something about the character appeals to the audience. Oskar is disconnected from most people, but his father tried to make create ways for Oskar to interact with people, through business cards he made for Oskar, and through Reconnaissance Expeditions. Mr. Schell sent Oskar out on adventures he had created specifically for the purpose that Oskar had to get help from other people to find clues that he could bring back to his father. Mr. Schell tried to show Oskar that it was alright to let go a little, and not always be in control of everything.<sup>245</sup>

#### 4.2.2 Repetition

“Reenactment is a key feature of much kitsch. ... Reenactment of dramatic events is a staple of popular culture in the form of television programs, documentaries, and feature films.”<sup>246</sup> Cultures repeat or reenact tragic events, and traumas perceived to bring about great change, to understand why the events took place. Repetition is therefore part of kitsch when trauma is recoded in mass media narratives,<sup>247</sup> such as books, photographs, artwork, documentaries, docudramas, and movies. Action, crime, and horror movies have increasingly become popular genres in the movie and television industry. The stories portrayed are mostly pure fiction, although some are based on true events. The

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<sup>244</sup> *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, dir. Daldry (2011)

<sup>245</sup> *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, dir. Daldry (2011)

<sup>246</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History*, 26

<sup>247</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History*, 29



documentaries and movies about 9/11, varies in narrative focus. Some 9/11 movies center on the WTC towers, or the Shanksville, Pennsylvania plane crash, while in others, the 9/11 tragedy is merely in the background.

In the third chapter about consumerism and quick healing I suggested that the feel-good feeling the audience is supposed to experience stems from either being good “citizen-consumers” showing their solidarity, or that they manage to experience the emotions that both the movie intends and society deems appropriate to feel – that they reach the emotional goal. However, in this chapter I suggest that the reason the audience experience films as cathartic is because the individual watching the drama unfold on screen, for a short time lives vicariously through the characters in the film. The audience acquires “prosthetic memories,” “living” through the characters’ struggles but also the characters’ triumphs.<sup>248</sup>

In *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (2011), Oskar has created a scrapbook, and at the end of this scrapbook, he has sketched a stick figure that falls in reverse until he disappears into the skyscraper. He wishes to turn back time, to prevent what happened to happen, or to freeze time. On the other hand, apparently, by taking pictures of something, that moment or that subject is already dead.<sup>249</sup>

Depicting falling people in documentaries and films seem to have been largely taboo from the lack of footage, archival footage or fiction, however, *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (2011), shows a falling man several times for the duration of the film. A person is falling through the air. It is out of focus, and only parts of the body are seen at a time. Fragments. The title *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* is ethereal and fragmented. The fragments of the title floats away on the wind. Half of a face floats across the screen – enough to recognize Tom Hanks, who plays the father, Thomas Schell, of what we find out is the protagonist, a young boy. This falling man floats to the side, making way for shredded pieces of paper transforming into the image of a boy. The shredded pieces consisting of the boy dominates the image of the falling man. During a bathroom scene, where Oskar seems to suffer an anxiety attack, out of nowhere, a man, out of focus, in the distance almost floats through the air. It is unclear whether the floating man is a memory from a news report, or if Oskar in his mind’s eye

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<sup>248</sup> Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory* (2004)

<sup>249</sup> *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, dir. Daldry (2011)

imagines his father falling during the WTC collapse. If Oskar is having an anxiety attack, the falling man might not only represent his father, but rather Oskar feeling out of control. Thomas Schell tells his son of how he as a boy used to swing as high as he could, before he jumped, and, for a moment, he would feel as free as a bird. Oskar does not want to go on the swings – he seems always to have been afraid of everything. Falling is the ultimate loss of control. Oskar is scared of losing control.<sup>250</sup> This film seems to have turned the taboo image of falling or jumping people into something positive. Thomas Schell’s parallel between jumping from a swing set to the probability that he, and in reality people jumping or falling out of the WTC towers, has transformed the horrible images of people falling to their deaths, into jumping from the swing set and experience the brief feeling of freedom.<sup>251</sup>

### 4.2.3 The Twin Towers

In the aftermath of 9/11, a lot of films removed the twin towers in the background of film scenes for two reasons, so as not to show something that no longer existed, and to not cause the public anymore needless grief by showing the towers. The public did not approve, and went out of their way to acquire or draw the twin towers against the skyline. This is part of why the portrayal of the twin towers has been so controversial. The movies and television shows Sturken mentions that removed the twin towers immediately after 9/11 were however not specifically about 9/11. 9/11 films differ somewhat, and vary in how they show and hide the WTC.<sup>252</sup> *Remember Me* (2010) first deliberately shows the twin towers against the New York City skyline during the prologue of the movie. Portrayal of the twin towers often tends to be a way to comfort, but that is not the case in the first scene in this movie. During the prologue, a mother and her young daughter stand alone on an abandoned subway platform. The audience immediately feel the vulnerability of this scene, and they are right – the mother is mugged and murdered by two young men, by two outside forces that took the mother and daughter by surprise.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, dir. Daldry (2011)

<sup>251</sup> *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, dir. Daldry (2011)

<sup>252</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 222-229

<sup>253</sup> *Remember Me*, dir. Coulter (2010), “Chapter 1”

As symbols of American wealth and stature, the twin towers have often been given anthropomorphic form – giving the twin towers human or humanoid form. The twin towers were remembered in unusual ways in drawings where the twin towers were hugging, or the twin towers were represented as human brothers. People would leave these drawings in memorials around the city. In addition to these drawings, there were also missing posters, describing two missing twin brothers. Before the twin towers were leveled to the ground by the two airplanes, people did not really like the buildings. After their collapse, people mourned them.<sup>254</sup>

In *Remember Me* (2010), Tyler Hawkins and his late brother, Michael, serve as metaphors for the twin towers. Michael Hawkins is not present in the movie, but the absence of his presence is felt by both the Hawkins family and by the audience throughout the movie. Michael died through mysterious circumstances somewhere between the movie's prologue and present timeline, but his absence is felt throughout most of the movie, as if his ghost is a character. Only later in the movie, do we learn that Michael committed suicide on his 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday. Given the way people portrayed the twin towers after 9/11, Michael Hawkins seems like an anthropomorphic representation of the first twin tower that collapsed. Furthermore, when the first plane hit the WTC, there was confusion about what was happening at the time. Not everyone saw the plane fly into the tower. Likewise, the audience knows something has happened to Michael, but not what, how, or why. Only later, are we, the audience, told that Michael committed suicide – his death was deliberate and not an accident. A few days past Tyler's 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday, he dies in one of the twin towers. Tyler represents the second tower, and much like the public suddenly realized what was happening, Tyler's family, friends, and the audience know right away how Tyler dies.<sup>255</sup>

#### 4.2.4 Redemption Narratives

What real heroism is, can be a controversial topic. “The firefighters emerged as the iconic figures of 9/11, ... [but] the sanctification of the firefighters had the effect of erasing the selfless and heroic acts by many people that day.”<sup>256</sup> Oliver Stone's *World*

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<sup>254</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 222, 229

<sup>255</sup> *Remember Me*, dir. Coulter (2010)

<sup>256</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History*, 188

*Trade Center* (2006) is one of the few mass media that portray heroism from people other than just firefighters during 9/11.

The filmmakers of *9/11* (2002) intended to portray the evolution of Tony Benatatos, from a probationary firefighter (probie), to a full-fledged firefighter, instead they created a story of heroes, of redemption, of rising out of the ashes from disaster. The documentary reads like a Hollywood movie. Most Hollywood movies follow a recipe in three parts. Act one, is the introduction to the hero or heroine. During act two, the hero/heroine goes through a trial of some sorts, or a separation from his or her love interest. The last act is the reunion or resolution to a problem. During act one of *9/11* (2002), the audience get to know the filmmakers, the firefighters, and the probie who is the hero of the story. Benatatos was picked out as the focal point of the documentary because he said he wanted to become a firefighter to be a hero. Act two, is the terrorist attacks. The firefighters and the Naudet brothers are separated as they try to handle the disaster at Ground Zero. During the third act, the brothers, and incredibly all the firefighters reunite at the Firehouse before they decide to go back to Ground Zero to help in the rubble of the destroyed World Trade Center towers. Both during the third act and during the later interviews in the more controlled environment, the firefighters and the Naudet brothers try to take back the control they lost in the terrorist attacks.<sup>257</sup>

Firefighters achieved the ultimate social status as the nation's heroes after 9/11. The Naudet documentary, *9/11* (2002). A hero is someone who does what needs to be done even though he or she might be scared and might not know what to do. This documentary portrayed moments like these when they rushed to the WTC twin towers. Despite the fact that two of the three filmmakers of *9/11* (2002) were not American, the transformation from victim to hero was depicted clearly. The documentary shows moments that teach the importance of control, to remain calm under pressure, and always be prepared – only for the universe to, somehow, prove how wrong or futile it is to try to control everything. Moments of foreshadowing gives the audience hints of what will happen, even though they already know what will happen. During the firefighter training and graduation, horrific pictures are shown of the worst case scenarios of burn victims to the probies, which is nothing compared during 9/11. The firefighters at Engine 7 teach probie Benatatos how to remain calm, and always stay in control, while

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<sup>257</sup> *9/11*, dir. Hanlon & Naudet (2002)

in a burning house – opposite of how the firefighters felt while responding to the World Trade Center disaster. The very same firefighters who teach the probie how to be a firefighter, were in shock and bewildered when they arrived at Ground Zero. The 9/11 experience shook even the most experienced firefighter, and several of them later told interviewers that they were prepared for most things, but not 9/11. However, even though the firefighters were bewildered and scared, they tried to help. When people evacuated the twin towers, the firefighters went up to the higher floors to rescue people. After 9/11, the firefighters are interviewed in calmer surroundings, and portray an illusion of control. Just after returning from Ground Zero, one firefighter, Damian van Cleaf, admits to everyone that he does not know what to do – stay at the Stationhouse or go back and help with whatever is needed. Eventually, the firefighters do return to Ground Zero to help clear the rubble, and look for survivors. A group of firefighters go to the top of one of the adjacent buildings to raise the American flag – to raise people’s spirits.<sup>258</sup>

Paul Greengrass’ feature film *United 93* (2006) is a dramatization of what took place 9/11, onboard United Airlines flight 93. The passengers of flight 93 took a stand against terrorism, and prevented another airplane from plummeting into yet another building, becoming everyday heroes.<sup>259</sup> The hostages of UA93 were the first to fight back against the terrorists behind the tragic events of 9/11, and this retaliation brought hope to a traumatized nation, which needed to transform its weakened state, or perception of a weakened state into the image of a nation still able to fight back against bullies.

“An embrace of the ordinary is used to construct stories of heroism, of people who risked their lives to save others in what were chaotic, dangerous, and confusing circumstances.”<sup>260</sup> So-called ordinary people, with ordinary jobs that on a normal day does not have them rescuing other injured people, but who help others during times of crisis, are transformed into feats of heroism. The image of the innocent victim is problematic in the American public because it alludes to weakness. After disasters, such as 9/11, victims often have to be transformed into “narratives of heroism.”<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> *9/11*, dir. Hanlon & Naudet (2002)

<sup>259</sup> Riegler, “9/11 on the Screen,” 158

<sup>260</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History*, 124

<sup>261</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History*, 8

Weakness is a paradox for Americans, and therefore stories of ordinary people doing extraordinary rescues, become stories of heroes. However, the definition of what a hero is can be blurred, which is one of the reasons that there is controversy surrounding this issue. Another reason is that a person cannot automatically become a hero simply from saving someone. Tyler Hawkins dies in *Remember Me* (2010) he repeatedly jumps into the fray to defend those who cannot. Tyler walks his sister all the way into the classroom. He walks close behind her, like the big, protective brother that he is. Before Tyler leaves, one of the mean girls, mockingly, asks Caroline if she has gotten a new haircut, and that it is really nice. Tyler smiles coldly, walks over to the mean girl's desk, scares her, and throws a fire extinguisher through the classroom window. Caroline's big brother avenges her, and Caroline smiles pleased, while the shocked mean girl almost cries.<sup>262</sup> Tyler's best friend, Aidan, drags Tyler to a club where they meet two out of town girls. Tyler is completely aloof and disinterested in them and in going to the club. Tyler has better, or more brooding things to think about – like his brother, who died on his 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday – the same age Tyler will be in a few months. Walking down an alley, Tyler is in his own thoughts, completely ignoring Aidan and the women with them. Down the street, someone shouts “Michael!” more than once, this immediately catches Tyler's attention. He focuses on two musicians who cut off a car driving up the street. Two men jump out of the car and start to hassle the musicians. Michael used to be a musician. The two musicians become a substitute for Michael, and Tyler defends the musicians from the men in the car. Police officers interrupt the fight. This scene, Tyler meets Ally's father. In *Remember Me* (2010), the “hero” of the story is so eager to come to everyone's rescue who cannot defend themselves. I do not think that this can be classified as real heroism. Always coming to someone's rescue also implies that the person defended cannot defend him- or herself – in a way seeing the person as weak, a victim.<sup>263</sup>

“American culture has been preoccupied with the concept of the survivor, to the extent of producing a culture of survivor envy.”<sup>264</sup> A majority of American movies made, the “hero” of the story usually survives disasters and other near-death experiences. However, the movies *Ladder 49* (2004) and *Remember Me* (2010)

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<sup>262</sup> *Remember Me*, dir. Coulter (2010), “Chapter 16”

<sup>263</sup> *Remember Me*, dir. Coulter (2010)

<sup>264</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History*, 28

contradict this storytelling recipe. In the end, both the main character and narrator of the story dies in a disaster, and the “hero” of the story is denied revenge.

“In many ways, these reenactments evoke the need to repeat an image out of grief. The horror of the dead child is mediated by the comfort offered by the firefighter’s presence. These reenactments were attempts to create an image of redemption and comfort from an image of trauma – to remake the image again and again until it is no longer traumatic. ... The image of the firefighter as a protective figure carrying a fire victim from a building had a long history prior to this image. Yet, in light of the sanctification of firefighters as the iconic figures of 9/11, images that evoke this photograph of [firefighter] Chris Fields and Bayle keep reemerging. *Heroes*, a comic book about firefighters in 9/11 published by Marvel Comics in December 2001, featured an image of firefighters carrying a body out of Ground Zero in a pose that resembled the Oklahoma City image. The 2004 film *Ladder 49*, which depicts firefighters finding meaning after fighting a difficult blaze, was released on DVD with an image of a firefighter carrying a small figure from a blaze, one that clearly evoked the image of Baylee Almon. Baylee’s iconic function thus seems to be to reestablish the image of the firefighter, to affirm his iconic role in mediating trauma.”<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> Sturken, *Tourists of History* (2007) 101-103

## 5 Conclusion

It is now more than a decade after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 happened, and it is still one of the most talked about topics. A few terrorists managed to take one of the world's most powerful nations by surprise, and Americans have tried to deal with the fallout of the tragedy since then. The number of casualties in the terrorist attacks was not really what was striking, but rather the lasting impression of the images from that day – how it happened – hijacked passenger airplanes flying into civilian office buildings. Events such as 9/11 are history in the making, and although the impacted areas were somewhat limited, it was a heavily mediated event, thus 9/11 affected a larger populous than those directly affected by either proximity or losing someone to the tragedy.

Marita Sturken does not focus her attention on visual media aspects of memorializing 9/11, but given how exposed people are to visual mass media through most of their lives, I believe this is a weakness of Sturken's. However, I find that Sturken's theory on how Americans memorialize tragic events is very applicable to films. People go to memorials to feel a connection to a tragic event and to the victims of that space, and films can also act as a medium to a tragic event and the lives lost, even if the person watching the film has no physical proximity to, or has not physically visited, that space.

According to Sturken, American culture relates to global history and global affairs similarly to a tourist sightseeing historical tourist sites, like a distant observer who does not understand his or her effect on the space. The American tourist of history wants the authentic experience, but is satisfied with a shallow, inauthentic experience. When you believe yourself to be innocent and an outside observer, it also means you hold no responsibility for subsequent consequences.

After 9/11, American culture turned to kitsch and its easily accessed and prescribed emotionality. Most of the films follow the American innocence route, with no context for the audience to gain more insight into the potential consequences of foreign affairs. This probably stems from American Exceptionalism, and wanting to be a beacon of hope for the rest of the world.



In some aspects, I would say that most of the films I have watched for this thesis fit very well with Sturken's "tourism of history." Even the films claiming to innocently want to memorialize 9/11, without any political agenda behind the making of the film, limit the consumer's emotional response in much the same way of the teddy bear. I refer to the UA93 films and *World Trade Center* (2006).

All of the films are in some way a reenactment of what happened on 9/11. These are bids to handle the tragedy, and move past it, which is also why most of these films can also be consumerist. The films are feel-good, retail therapy films, supposed to help the audience get closure from what happened. Daldry's *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (2011), in my opinion is the only one that is not a consumer product, meant to heal quickly. Daldry shows the characters actively working through trauma through reenactment. These films are not consumerist products, in the sense that they meant for quick healing.

I might have considered Moore's documentary, as well, however, when watching his documentary, I cannot get the feeling that he enjoys criticizing the Bush administration too much. Of the films, *Remember Me* might in some ways classify as reenactment with its themes of loss of control, however, elements such as, innocence gained before becoming an innocent victim, continuously trying to be a "hero," with strongly touching soundtrack to move the audience, makes the film more kitsch than reenactment.

Moore's documentary does not fit neatly into Sturken's theory. The government is portrayed as not guilty, and Moore suggests that the public should not believe what it is told and shown by authorities. The documentary is not a "tourist of history" in that Moore goes into heavy details about the links between the bin Laden family and the Bush family. Moore shows scenes from the trial regarding information that had been ignored by authorities – warnings that something might happen soon, meaning the terrorist attacks. The documentary also goes into detail about civil liberty violations against individuals who just practiced their right to free speech. This documentary is not a kitsch product in the sense that it does not follow the kitsch rules because it does not inspire sympathy or comfort.

What is great about Sturken's theory – despite her not using films in her analysis – is how well her theory fits with most of the films, however, not all parts of all the films I have viewed. One movie stands out as particularly anti-“tourism of history” for lack of a better ascription, and that is Stephen Daldry's *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (2011). As Oskar Schell's Asperger's Syndrome leaves him both incredibly knowledgeable of absolute world facts, it also prevents him from connecting with less easily defined variables such as people, which is why I could define Oskar as both innocent and not innocent. However, I would rather define Oskar as the movie's example of an American “tourist of history,” making the movie itself knowledgeable of the American relationship to the rest of the world, and thus not a product of American “tourism of history.”

In fact, the movie that least follows Sturken's theory, is *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (2011). In addition to acknowledging and showing the audience the American “tourism of history” relationship with global history and political affairs, through a young boy's perspective of the world around him, this film is also not overly innocent, not consumerist in the sense of quick healing, not kitsch, and does not display spectacles. When I say that the movie does not follow Sturken's innocence, I refer to the fact that film protagonists are usually stereotypically innocently good and unaware in their thoughts and behaviors.

Landsberg focuses more specifically on mass media than Sturken does, and she sees the potential for mass media as an educational platform. She prefers prosthetic memory to organic memory. Organic memories are experienced memories. Prosthetic memories are memories that you yourself have not experienced, but gained through mass media, which means that there is a greater potential for gaining other perspectives. The use of propaganda to sway political and social opinions is a hazard. The educational potential of mass media is a double-edged sword in that the potential for good also has potential for bad if this is used for the wrong reasons.

Anderson is an interesting article in terms of possibly explaining the popularity of conflicts, war, and generally spectacles of image films among Americans. As Anderson argues, nations born in conflict are bound to continue reaffirming this birth. The article compares the historic relationship between the United Kingdom and the U.S. with the abusive relationship between a parent and a child. One of the conclusions seem to be

that the abused becomes the abuser, and has to reaffirm the right to freedom. Films can reflect this need for reaffirmation.

However, the success rate of 9/11 films seem mixed among the audience, and this is despite the popularity of action, thriller, and horror movies in general (that is, films that are not on the topic of 9/11). Films that are too close to the reality of 9/11 seem to have less leeway in how disasters and tragedies are portrayed. If it had not been for the giant science fiction monster in *Cloverfield* (2008), the film would probably have been more heavily criticized for its similarity to what happened in NYC and the WTC towers. Moore's documentary proves to be the exception to the rule. Maybe the explanation for the popularity of *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004) is Moore's heavy critique of Bush. Moore was not afraid to criticize Bush's behavior before and after 9/11, and this might indicate a hidden desire to blame the government for 9/11 or maybe the public was simply tired of Bush's grip on the nation and relished watching Moore go against the dominant 9/11 frames of an innocent nation or an innocent government.

What I have realized, although it is hardly a surprise, is that Americans, and probably people in general, are far more comfortable with horrible truths when concealed by film genres of fiction, fantasy, and science fiction, because the audiences can this way keep their idea of innocence, and through this any thought of responsibility. The popularity of movies and TV shows of mentioned genres seem to indicate that people seek out horrors and thrills, for a number of reasons. However, films that are too close to reality, like 9/11 based films, tend to shy away from looking too deep into the background of the terrorist attacks.

Examining how 9/11 and other memorial films are designed is useful, in that the public should be aware of possible underlying political agendas of seemingly innocent objects. Like Sturken says, kitsch objects, or tourist of history objects that present themselves as innocent at first glance, and that may claim to be apolitical, might still have a political agenda, and thus not such an innocent object after all. It is better to be aware of what you expose yourself to than to be a pawn in someone's political game. People are constantly exposed to films and TV shows, and these visual media platforms have great potential to influence people's opinions and perspectives.

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America & Life

# Appendix A: Transcript

9/11 (2002): Interview “It Was 8:46 in the Morning...”

Lieutenant Bill Walsh, Ladder 1:

We hear this tremendous roar overhead. We’re all looking. By the tall buildings, you can’t see where it’s coming from.

Captain Dennis Tardio, Engine 7:

I looked up. I said to myself, “Where’s he going? Nobody flies this low over Manhattan.”

Ed Fahey, Battalion 1:

All the guys just were looking up at it and...I’ll never forget, with their bodies, they were all trying to control the plane. They’d seen it and they were trying to steer it with their bodies.

Damian van Cleaf, Engine 7:

And it just...(pfff)...like the roar was just like it was almost inside you. And then when it hit the building, the feeling I’ll never forget. It’s like somebody took the air and sucked it out of my lungs and my head and I became so light-headed, my knees buckled and it felt like a dream, as I seen the plane crumble into the building, just disintegrate.

Captain Dennis Tardio, Engine 7:

As if there was a bullseye on it and he hit it. We immediately jumped on our rigs and responded to the Trade Center.

John O’Neill, Ladder 1:

When I got off the rig and I looked up, I saw we had two or three floors burning. It looked like heavy smoke was coming out...a number of the upper floors. So my take on it was that we had probably three floors going good and maybe...maybe even more than that starting up. So, five or six floors, maybe, with a fire condition, which is, in a building like that...almost impossible to put out with the kinds of means that we would have had at that point.

Damian van Cleaf, Engine 7:

I wasn’t expecting to see the damage that I saw in the lobby, and the people, the bodies, the burnt people, the injured people. I really wasn’t prepared for that. I really wasn’t prepared, as we swung around in front of World Trade and pulled up, and I take a glance over, I initially look at it and my mind tells me, “Wow. This is bad.”

Tom Spinard, Engine 7:

One thing I did really see was a woman sitting on the centre median of West Street, and it’s about two feet high or so, with some grass. She was sitting there and she looked like a little Buddha statue. And I think she was Oriental and she

was burnt, very badly burnt, not moving, just sitting there. Her eyes were moving and we made eye contact, right at each other. And there was a woman next to her, laying on her stomach. And her back and the back of her legs was all burnt. I figured they were blown out of the building. The lobby windows were out.

Lieutenant Bill Walsh, Ladder 1:

The lobby is six storeys high. It looked as though a bomb had exploded. All the glass was taken out. There were ten foot by ten foot marble panels that were ones walls that were loose from the wall of the Trade Center. Lights were hanging down. They were off. Unfortunately, there were dozens of people in the lobby. They were in a contorted position, they were black in color, moaning and just withering around.

Jamal Braithwaite, Ladder 1:

As soon as I stepped through the first door, there was two people laying on the floor, fully engulfed in flames. So, I'm torn because I know I have to go up. My first priority was to get upstairs. But then I couldn't just stand there and let them pretty much burn. So I seen a Port Authority...I think it was a Port Authority employee. He had like a chemical extinguisher. He was just standing there in shock. So I asked was it full, and he said, "Yeah, it's full." So I took it from him, went back out there and I put the two people...I put them out. Then I dropped the extinguisher right there and grabbed my roll-up and went back into the building.

Captain Dennis Tardio, Engine 7:

I went by the freight elevator and it was just blown. It was just a giant shaft. A fireball or ball of heat, something must have come right down the shaft and out into the lobby and that's what must have burnt the people.

Chief Joseph Pfeifer, Battalion 1:

The sound of the firefighters and their alarms going off is normal. That was a normal sound. The sounds of people jumping was anything but. It was very loud and...and distressing for everybody in the lobby. And it was happening...about once every minute. We would hear a sound of a body falling and it was very loud and we knew what it was.

Tom Spinard, Engine 7:

People started to jump so it had to be a couple of minutes, not many, maybe three minutes when I saw the first one. And...a man, a woman, a couple of... There was a lot of people, maybe 15 to 20 people, probably 15 to 20 on my side alone, only the one side of the building. You had to really look up. You could not look down for a second because you'd get hit with glass or a person. That's how bad it was. It was non-stop.

Ed Fahey, Battalion 1:

It was wild to watch, because you watched and waited for the sound. It was like...like a cherry bomb hitting the floor, you know? And then you...really couldn't tell, you know.... You could tell it was a body, but you couldn't tell if it was a guy or a girl or.... Basically just seeing intestines on the floor. That I'll never forget.



Joe Casaliggi, Engine 7:

It was almost a comfort for me to think that maybe they're from the plane, maybe they were sucked out, maybe they were dead and just falling. But I saw one guy on the north side of the North Tower coming down. As he was falling, he was flapping his arms on the way down like this. That was just, like, "Oh, my God, these people are just jumping." They're not dead, they're not getting sucked out. They're jumping. And that was when I... That's when I felt helpless.

Tom Spinard, Engine 7:

The people jumping... Some were falling and not moving. Others were moving their arms and legs. The fear in these people to make them do that had to be unbelievable. They were jumping from above the impact. I didn't see anybody below. It was all above. I imagine how hot it was up there.

Chief Joseph Pfeifer, Battalion 1:

We had a difficult job and our main concern, my main concern, was that we had 20 floors of people above and we had to figure out a way to get them out. We went into a rescue mode. The only problem was that the elevators were out of service and we had to use the stairs.

Captain Dennis Tardio, Engine 7:

We knew we had to go at least 60 floors, at least...if not more. We had no way of knowing where it hit, what floor, or if the jet fuel was dripping down to the lower floors, causing fires. We just started our way up.

Lieutenant Bill Walsh, Ladder 1:

I think the highest floor that I had heard was a survivor from the 80<sup>th</sup> floor. So we know that that was intact. There were some casualties. There were several people with their hair singed, skin hanging off. Nobody was panicky. That's.... It made the evacuation a lot easier.

Damian van Cleaf, Engine 7:

There were people carrying other people down. There was a blind man with a dog and I asked a guy who was helping him down, I said, "You're gonna stay with him till he's out of the building." The man says, "Yeah, I'll be with him." This was a worker in the building, and I thought that was impressive. Here is, you know, a man that could have ran out. I'm sure he had a lot to run out for and he dedicated himself to help somebody, and there was a lot of that, which was very impressive.

Captain Dennis Tardio, Engine 7:

I just felt so helpless. There were people coming down burnt. I knew we had to get up to help people. We had to get up there. And I just...I feel bad that I couldn't get up there faster but.... You know, carrying the hose.... For me it wasn't humanly possible to get up there faster. I...I knew we'd get there, but it was just gonna take a while.

Lieutenant Bill Walsh, Ladder 1:

We had our hands absolutely full with this one. And I also knew that there were already a lot of people already dead. And just the thought of that, and what was

happening up there, just.... It just...really sent a shock wave of fear...right through me. It was an awful feeling.

Damian van Cleaf, Engine 7:

For me it was scary because it had just never happened before. I was in some sticky situations where once in a while somebody I was with would get shaken up. They would look at me and it would be, "It's all right." You kind of depend on each other. But when you have eight or nine men and you all have the same look, that just tells you that something's not right. Something wasn't right, because never is everyone scared.

Captain Dennis Tardio, Engine 7:

And at that time we heard a huge explosion. And we immediately go for the stairs, get back into the stairs, because I'd seen what happened in the lobby with the elevator being blown out. I said, "If there's another explosion...." I never in a million years feared those buildings coming down. Never. I did fear a secondary explosion and possibly a second plane.

Joe Casaliggi, Engine 7:

I'm looking up and I saw the second plane coming in. It came in from the west. It came in from the west. It banked onto its side like this and then turned. It disappeared behind the building and then the whole building exploded.

Nick Borrillo, Ladder 1:

I don't know. The end of the world was coming. I didn't know what.... I was so...numb. You know? I just didn't know what to think. I thought there was gonna be more planes coming in, there was gonna be bombs going off. I didn't know to what degree they had us surrounded. You know.... That's what was going through my mind.

## Appendix B: Mentioned Films

*Babel* (2006) [Movie]  
*Batman Begins* (2005) [Movie]  
*Brokeback Mountain* (2005) [Movie]  
*Flags of Our Fathers* (2008) [Movie]  
*Independence Day* (1996) [Movie]  
*Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) and its remakes in 1978 and 1993 [Movie]  
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