

**PhD IN ADVANCED ENGLISH STUDIES:  
LANGUAGES AND CULTURES IN CONTACT**

UNIVERSIDAD DE SALAMANCA

Departamento de Filología Inglesa



PhD Thesis

**TRAUMATIC SPACES IN THE POST-9/11 NOVEL**

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Salamanca 2015

## **AUTHOR'S DECLARATION**

The work presented in this PhD thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original and my own work, except as acknowledged in the text. The work in this thesis has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university.

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
PhD in Advanced English Studies: Languages and Cultures in Contact  
to  
Universidad de Salamanca  
by  
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July 2015

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## ABSTRACT

The attacks on September 11, 2001 have left a mark in the history of the world and its effects have been realized in several disciplines. Literature is one these disciplines to reflect the aftermath situation not just in American but all over the world. Up to today, there are more than one hundred novels published post-9/11. Though not all of them directly deal with 9/11 attacks, they mostly mention about that day and its outcomes.

This thesis studies the novels that deal with trauma in the context of September 11 attacks. The selected novels focus on the dominant traumatic instances as well as the traumatic spaces that have influenced the characters' lives. The repetitive and unforeseeable instances of trauma dominates the spaces and places of the characters' everyday-life which brings after spatial analysis in conjunction with trauma studies in this thesis. The main objective of this thesis is to present the extents that trauma that has occupied the fictional lives, with references and examples to real lives post-9/11. While this study mainly focuses on three novels, Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, Nilüfer Kuyaş's *Serbest Düşüş* and Amy Waldman's *The Submission*, there are also allusions to some other 9/11 novels.

There are four main chapters in this thesis. The first chapter, 'Trauma and Space in the Post-9/11 Novel', analyses how these two terms interact with each other and tries to place it with a theoretical framework. The second chapter, '*The Road*: Post-apocalyptic Trauma', discusses how trauma is represented as post-apocalyptic. The third chapter examines 'Nilüfer Kuyaş's *Serbest Düşüş* (Free Fall): Trauma at the Crossroads' and shows how September 11 attacks are received and responded in Turkey. The fourth chapter discusses 'Amy Waldman's *The Submission*: Trauma on a National Scale' and explores the connection between the plan of a memorial site and trauma and draws clear lines of traumascapes.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis has been written in three different cities from three different countries (Salamanca/Spain, Glasgow/Scotland, Istanbul/Turkey), and has taken me nearly five years.

I have to declare my gratitude to some ‘wonderful people’ who supported me during these years.

My first thanks goes to Professor Ana María Manzanás-Calvo, without whose professional encouragement, this study would not be possible. This thesis is her work as much as mine; the shortcomings that remain are my responsibility.

My gratitude goes especially to Peter Davies, who has offered me more support than one can ever hope for.

I also thank Dr Kenan Koçak, my other half, without whom this thesis would not have been written, and of course my family: my father Hüseyin, my mother Fatma, my sister Tuğba, her husband Emre.

Additionally, thanks are also due to my second family: my father-in-law Muhittin, my mother-in-law Cemile. Also my ‘aunts’ Arzel and Şehime. And Mehmetcan, Cüneyt, Serpil and Şeyma.

Thank you to all my beautiful and brilliant friends who have supported me throughout this entire process: Münevver, Gökhan, İnciser, Hande, Dilek, Seda, Sabire, Burakhan, Ana Belen, Gökçe, Özgü, Taner, Seniz, Defne and Pilar.

## INTRODUCTION

In the morning of September 11, 2001, the world was shaken by the events that happened in the U.S. Al-Qaeda militants hijacked four airplanes and crashed two of them into the World Trade Center (WTC) in New York City at 8.46 a.m. (North Tower) and 9.03 a.m. (South Tower) local time. This was followed at 9.37 a.m. by the crash on the Pentagon in Arlington County, Washington, D.C. At 10.03 a.m. a fourth plane (United Airlines Flight 93) crashed in a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, causing the deaths of all aboard but no other damage, after at least three of the 33 passengers fought the four hijackers. American Airlines Flight 11 hit the north tower while United Airlines Flight 175 crashed into the southern façade of the south tower. The third plane that impacted the Pentagon produced less damage than that inflicted on the Twin Towers, but even so caused the death of 125 Pentagon workers. By 10.30 a.m., both the north and south towers of the WTC had collapsed, causing Lower Manhattan to be the site with the highest death toll, currently put at 2,753 (out of a total of 2,077) including 414 emergency workers, although these figures does not take account of the many who have subsequently died of cancer owing to their exposure to toxins released in the disaster zone. From that day on, the date has been etched on the world's history and thus millions of people shortly started to name it 9/11 or September 11, mostly without needing to mention the year 2001.

Upon the total collapse of one of the tallest buildings in the world, the debris-strewn site was immediately named Ground Zero. Soon, hundreds of people gathered in the area of the attacks to provide emergency help, and many also volunteered to join in the rescue work. Soon, innumerable small memorials were built in addition to the poems, writings, toys and photos left for the commemoration of the victims not just at the Ground Zero site but all

around the country. The clearing of the site continued for nine months,<sup>1</sup> and the absence of the World Trade Center gradually caused feelings of void in several Manhattan residents as well as in the people who were in various ways more directly affected by the events. According to some reports, there were quite a few people who immediately needed professional psychological help and, though today almost fourteen years have passed, there are still some people who have been diagnosed as suffering from trauma.

The psychological aftermath of the events has been discussed in studies and treated in creative works reflecting several disciplines, from politics to arts. Among these, literature has played a significant role in conveying the abrupt nature of the cataclysm in New York. As of today, there have been quite a few novels that deal with the September 11 attacks and their aftermath. In addition to American authors, there are also novels written by authors from other parts of the world, a fact that illustrates the transcultural dimension of the catastrophe. Though not all of them directly deal with the 9/11 attacks, they mostly mention that critical day and its outcomes.

## **1. Methodology**

This thesis studies three novels that deal with trauma in the context of the September 11 attacks. The selected novels are Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, Nilüfer Kuyaş's *Serbest Düşüş (Free Fall)* and Amy Waldman's *The Submission*. All of them focus on instances of trauma as well as on the traumatic spaces that have influenced the characters' lives. The three novels are analysed within the theoretical framework of trauma studies and spatial studies.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Rescue & Recovery', in *9/11 Memorial* <<http://www.911memorial.org/rescue-recovery>> [accessed 20 June 2015]

The opening chapter will first provide a brief historical overview outlining the emergence of psychological trauma. For insight into questions of spatial analysis, I draw on the works of Yi-Fu Tuan, Tim Cresswell, Edward Casey, Michel Foucault, Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau and Marc Augé. Before presenting the psychological outcomes of the events of 11<sup>th</sup> September and their post-9/11 fictional representations in terms of trauma and spatiality in the light of recent scholarship, I examine how trauma and space intersect both in real life and also in narratives of trauma. For a contemporary approach to the analysis of relevant novels, the discussion will synthesize the gist of the latest studies of psychological trauma by Cathy Caruth, Kai Erikson, Geoffrey Hartman, and Laurie Vickroy.

Chapter II, 'The Road: Post-Apocalyptic Trauma', analyses McCarthy's tenth novel *The Road*, which depicts the life of a father and a son who try to survive in a devastated landscape where the reason for the nearly total destruction is unknown. In the nearly wiped-out land, there are few surviving people, most of them cannibals, and grey is the most dominant colour as there is not a single day of sunlight. Despite all the hostility of the situation, the two unnamed characters try to keep being 'the good guys' as much as they can and continue their journey to wherever it may lead. Though the father may sometimes fall into despair, most of the time he finds consolation in the presence of his son who, in general, believes in their survival. In spite of the absence of any references to the September 11 attacks, the novel is generally classified, and here analysed, as being an example of the post-9/11 novel, treating the post-apocalyptic aftermath. The sudden collapse of the World Trade Center created a sense of void, both literal and psychological, and many suffered from a lost sense of place owing to a massive change in the accustomed view of Manhattan in addition to the psychological hardship and any personal loss that needed to be overcome. Soon, in order to heal the psychic wounds, a sense of solidarity emerged all over the country. There was also a renewed sense of hope. Many people thought about the importance of having children because of the innocence and future security that children represent, the two



significant feelings the country especially needed at that time. It is here that the fictional narrative in *The Road* matches the ‘traumascapes’ of real life after 9/11. This thesis underlines the attempts of fiction to represent people’s efforts to make the transition from the traumatic atmosphere of 9/11 to a belief in hope.

The third chapter is ‘Nilüfer Kuyaş’s *Serbest Düşüş (Free Fall)*: Trauma at the Crossroads’ and discusses the second novel analysed in this thesis. It is an example of trauma fiction that deals with the life and love affair of Şirin, a middle-aged Turkish woman, with an American man called Bruno, who was in the north tower on the day of the attacks. After listening to Bruno’s experience on September 11 on the very first moments of their chance meeting, the traumatic moments when she was involved years previously in a train accident revive in Şirin’s memory and take her back to those days of her own cataclysmic experience, which she several times combines with that of Bruno’s. With such a plot, Kuyaş not only contributes to the post-9/11 novel but also opens a different window enabling the reader to view the experience of 9/11 and its aftermath from a different country. Although Kuyaş has created a rather fragmented piece of trauma fiction, she successfully manages to depict the traumatic spaces experienced after cataclysms while also universalizing the theme by drawing attention to some other previous catastrophes in other parts of the world.

The last chapter is ‘Amy Waldman’s *The Submission*: Trauma on a National Scale’. The novel is about the controversy surrounding an American (initially non-practising) Muslim, who successfully submits a proposal in a ‘blind’ competition to design a Manhattan garden memorial to the victims of a terrorist attack. Compared to most post-9/11 novels, it provides quite an objective viewpoint for those readers who are willing to understand and see the perceptions of both Americans and non-Americans after the attacks. In addition, the writer uses a multidimensional presentation while narrating the story by showing the views of people who are of different nationalities and varying status but who, at the same time, share the same space in New York.

Through *The Road*, we see how trauma is portrayed in a post-apocalyptic world – symbolising the aftermath of September 11 –, whereas with the Turkish author Nilüfer Kuyaş the discussion centres on how 9/11 is perceived through the eyes of a Turkish citizen – illustrating the worldwide ramifications of 9/11 as a cause of trauma; through study of a work by the American author Amy Waldman, the thesis examines how an American sees both her compatriots and, non-Americans after the September 11 attacks.

## **2. Objectives**

Different theories of trauma started to be proposed by surgeons after the 1850s with the number of train accidents increasing on account of technological advances in the Industrial Revolution. The two world wars led to the development of war-related trauma theories, as did the Korean and Vietnam Wars some years later, all of which gradually led to research not only on the physical but also on the possible psychological effects of all cataclysms.

Like the two world wars and other conflicts, the attacks on September 11 have led to psychological difficulties in many people's lives. It is reported that hundreds of people, who either witnessed the attacks live or watched them on television, rushed to get help from psychologists and psychiatrists immediately after the events and that there are still people who find it hard to cope with the bitter experience that they underwent on that day. Both the media and the literary world promptly reacted in order to present what the country had experienced. The attacks and their aftermath have been endlessly discussed in television shows, documentaries and films. Besides these, quite a lot of novels treating both the individual and the collective trauma were published not only by American writers but also by authors from different backgrounds to draw attention to the dimensions of the cataclysm that threatened thousands of people's lives.

Throughout the thesis, discussion of the three novels by writers from different countries will show that repetitive and unforeseeable instances of trauma dominate the spaces and places of the characters' everyday lives. Taking my cue from Fredric Jameson that 'our daily life, our psychic experience, our cultural languages, are today dominated by categories of space rather than by categories of time, as in the preceding period of high modernism',<sup>2</sup> it is my contention that categories of space dominate our psychic experience. Space is understood here not as a once-and-for all coordinate that fixes the subject and his/her experience at the intersection of horizontal and vertical axes, but rather as a category that generates identity as it intersects with different aspects of experience. Moreover, space is viewed here not as an absolute, finished-once-and-for-all, but as a processual category, as Patricia Price claims in *Dry Place*<sup>3</sup>. Individuals, then, find themselves repeatedly replaying upsetting memories. There is no end to places in trauma, for catastrophic effects have the uncanny ability to repeat themselves in a series of flashes. This intersection of space theory and trauma becomes a starting point for my analysis. Inflected by traumatic visions, reality becomes arrested by a sense of repeatedness. Through the striking recurrence of flashbacks linked to specific spaces from the past transplanted spaces cut through everyday reality. Inner spaces become outer spaces. They are not re-presented in memory as a twice-removed experience, but relived as if they were fully present. These inner-turned-into-outer spaces stand in direct and uneasy juxtaposition with the customarily real. It is the purpose of this project to inquire both into the nature of this repetition and this abrupt intrusion of reality.

The three novels suggest that trauma inflects the processual and unfinished quality of space with a sense of involuntary repetition, for having involuntary and intrusive memories is a normal way of responding to dreadful experiences. Individuals, then, find themselves

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<sup>2</sup> Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Patricia L. Price, *Dry Place: Landscapes of Belonging and Exclusion* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

repeatedly replaying upsetting memories around *traumascapes*, to use Maria Tumarkin's term. According to her, the remnants of the one-time event may emerge in untimely fashion in several different places. Originating in the past, existing at intervals in the present and future, a traumatic incident claims distinct portrayals which are far beyond the reach of daily life. Envisaging her traumascapes 'as spaces, where events are experienced and re-experienced across time',<sup>4</sup> Tumarkin explains that traumatized people

[...] cannot fully take in or comprehend what has happened to them or what they have happened to witness. They are overwhelmed by a traumatic event. So much so that the ways in which they usually experience the world and make sense of their own place in it are effectively shattered.<sup>5</sup>

The ruined memory consigns the traumatic incident to eternity resulting in unusual lapses both in mind and the memory, which shows that there is no end to places in trauma, for catastrophic effects have the uncanny ability to repeat themselves in a series of flashbacks. Therefore, what I intend in this thesis is to explore the intersection of trauma and space.

In addition, as trauma has deep roots in the past, extending into the present and future, it becomes inevitable for the traumatic memory to be caught up in these traumascapes as will be seen with the fictional characters' lives that closely parallel the real lives of survivors in the aftermath of the attacks.

### 3. Definitions

Certain terms used throughout this thesis merit explanation from the outset. As terms such as trauma, space and place, and apocalypse and post-apocalypse will often be used, it would be appropriate to define them at the very beginning of the thesis.

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<sup>4</sup> Maria Tumarkin, *Traumascapes: The Power and Fate of Places Transformed by Tragedy* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2005), p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

### 3.1. Trauma

The term trauma has gained a wider currency since the 1980s, awareness and pioneering studies of the psychological phenomenon, whose name derives from the Ancient Greek term for ‘wound’,<sup>6</sup> can be dated as far back as analyses of the psychological consequences of train accidents in the second half of the nineteenth century. Hence the two concurrent senses of the term ‘trauma’ today are defined in pathology and psychiatry as seen below. This thesis uses the psychiatric meaning:

Pathology:

- a) A body wound or shock produced by sudden physical injury, as from violence or accident.
- b) The condition produced by this; traumatism.

Psychiatry:

- a) An experience that produces psychological injury or pain.
- b) The psychological injury so caused.<sup>7</sup>

Trauma studies initially advanced a great deal both in the clinical and the cultural fields thanks to the technological advances of the Industrial Revolution that gave rise to some horrific railway accidents during the development of the railways. The difficulty that the survivors had in achieving mental recovery led to broad research, which later resulted in the association of psychological and physical trauma. It was noticed that regardless of the survivors’ healing from physical injury, patients suffered from long-term and persistent mental disturbances:

The railway accident as an agent of traumatic experience occupies an important place in the history of mid and late nineteenth century medical and medico-legal discourses over trauma and traumatic disorder. [...] The investigation of this condition led many nineteenth-century surgeons to examine the role of psychological factors [...] in provoking physical disorders, some thirty years before Freud and Breuer considered the matter in *Studies on Hysteria*, and half

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<sup>6</sup> This sense, first attested in Steven Blancard’s Physical Dictionary of 1694, is retained in pathology today. <<http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/trauma>> [accessed 08 October 2013]

<sup>7</sup> <<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/trauma?s=t>> [accessed 16 October 2013]

a century before the advent of shell shock among the soldiers of the First World War brought a general recognition of the reality of the ‘psycho-neuroses’.<sup>8</sup>

As indicated in the explanation of the lexicography of trauma above, after a cataclysm, one may experience either or both physical or psychological effects as a consequence of the event:

An event is traumatic if it is extremely upsetting and at least temporarily overwhelms the individual’s internal resources. [...] People who experience major threats to psychological integrity can suffer as much as those traumatized by physical injury or life threat [...]<sup>9</sup>

Surgeons such as Herbert Page, John Erichsen, and Thomas Furneaux Jordan proposed different theories on trauma after the 1850s. Whereas Page asserted the importance of the psychological consequences of accidents, Erichsen concentrated on the physical aspects due to spinal damage. Their theories were later challenged by Robert Thomsen and Hermann Oppenheim, who developed the notion of ‘traumatic neurosis’.<sup>10</sup> The term ‘trauma’ subsequently acquired a wider psychological meaning through the studies of scholars such as Jean-Martin Charcot, Pierre Janet and Sigmund Freud. Charcot, especially, was the first neurologist to investigate the relationship between trauma and mental illness.<sup>11</sup> Extensive research continued to show that the ‘traumatized psyche was conceptualised as an apparatus for registering the blows to the psyche outside the domain of ordinary awareness’.<sup>12</sup> Despite the often bitter disputes between European psychiatrists in the nineteenth century, it can be said that these scholars at least agreed that unexpected severe horror, despair and terror had the potential to destroy one’s physical and psychological system.

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<sup>8</sup> Ralph Harrington, ‘The Railway Accident: Trains, Trauma and Technological Crisis in Nineteenth-Century Britain’ in *Traumatic Pasts: History, Psychiatry, and Trauma in the Modern Age: 1780-1930*, ed. by Mark S. Micale and Paul Lerner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 31-57 (p. 31).

<sup>9</sup> John Briere and Catherine Scott, *Principles of Trauma Therapy: A Guide to Symptoms, Evaluation, and Treatment* (London: Sage Publication, 2006), p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> Frank J. Sulloway, *Freud, Biologist of the Mind: Beyond the Psychoanalytic of the Mind* (New York: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 37.

<sup>11</sup> Shoshana Ringel and Jerrold R. Brandell, *Trauma: Contemporary Directions in Theory, Practice and Research* (London: Sage Publications, 2012), p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 4.

As for clinical advances in the twentieth century, Neil J. Smelser summarizes them by saying that, ‘the concern with “shell shock” in particular and the war neuroses in general during World War I firmly established battlefield experiences as a species of trauma. World War II added new interest and knowledge’.<sup>13</sup> He also stresses that the Korean and Vietnam wars contributed to the development of an understanding of war-related trauma. In addition to this, there are inevitably also other potentially trauma-inducing incidents: ‘death and loss, natural catastrophes such as earthquakes, floods, and accidents, domestic violence as a social problem, traumas of child abuse, application of extreme discipline, spousal battering, incest, rape, and traumatic sexual mistreatment — and the witnessing of all these’<sup>14</sup> can all be among the causes of trauma. By the twentieth century, some scholars were prepared to allow that the notion of trauma could encompass both physical and psychological damage that a cataclysmic event had inflicted upon a subject.

In addition to providing new horizons for literature and literary studies, this realization, resulting in the transfer of the phenomenon of trauma from the exclusively physiological to the psychological arena, was sanctioned when, ‘as a category in psychological medicine, trauma was given official recognition by the American Psychiatric Association in 1980 in the form of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)’.<sup>15</sup> The studies on PTSD have not just contributed to its depiction in literature, but also concluded, perhaps definitively, the previous controversies in trauma studies:

A study of the history of the concept of psychological trauma reveals that the introduction of PTSD in DSM-III [Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders] put a provisional end to the long-lasting debate concerning the relative contribution of the event and the characteristics of the person as etiological factors in favour of the event.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Neil J. Smelser, ‘Psychological and Cultural Trauma’ in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, ed. by J. Alexander and others (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), pp. 31-59 (p. 56).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>15</sup> Mark Micale and Paul Lerner, ‘Trauma, Psychiatry, and History: A Conceptual and Historiographical Introduction’ in *Traumatic Pasts: History, Psychiatry, and Trauma in the Modern Age, 1870-1930*, pp. 1-28 (p. 1).

<sup>16</sup> Gregory Bistoien and others, ‘Nachtraglichkeit: A Freudian Perspective on Delayed Traumatic Reactions’, *Theory & Psychology*, 24 (2014), 668-87 (p. 670).

The term may be briefly explained as ‘the way the mind responds to as overwhelming trauma’.<sup>17</sup> Symptomatically, a person who suffers from PTSD ‘will relive the traumatic event through nightmares and flashbacks, and they may experience feelings of isolation, irritability and guilt. They may also have problems sleeping, such as insomnia, and find concentrating difficult’.<sup>18</sup> Though it may seem that there is nowadays a clear and unquestionable definition of the word, the American Psychiatric Association indicates that it remains ambiguous with regard to its chronicity and the multiplicity of its possible causes, which include the following:

The development of characteristic symptoms following exposure to an extreme traumatic stressor involving direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one’s physical integrity; or witnessing an event that involves death, injury or a threat to the physical integrity of another person; or learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or other close associate.<sup>19</sup>

For the individual who suffers from PTSD, there is not just one fixed time or duration. The term is conceived ‘as a timeless diagnosis, the culmination of a lineage that is seen to run from the past to the present in an interrupted yet ultimately continuous way’.<sup>20</sup> The previous century bore witness to numerous bloody incidents together with a growing apprehension of trauma and its outcomes. Extensive investigation has resulted in an awareness that either minor or major incidents can have a long-lasting psychological influence on humans as well as affecting the mind’s functioning at the time of the traumatic event.

The clinical acceptance of PTSD has gained recognition in the world of sociology and literary theory thanks to scholars like Kai Erikson, Cathy Caruth, Dori Laub, Shoshana

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<sup>17</sup> Bessel A. van der Kolk, ‘Posttraumatic Therapy in the Age of Neuroscience’, *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 12.3 (2002), 381-92 (p. 390).

<sup>18</sup> ‘Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)’, in *Nhs.uk* <<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Post-traumatic-stress-disorder/Pages/Introduction.aspx>> [accessed 10 October 2013]

<sup>19</sup> ‘Anxiety Disorders’, in *DSM IV: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4th edn (Washington: American Psychiatric Association, 2005), pp. 393-444 (p. 424).

<sup>20</sup> Leys, p. 3.



Felman, and Geoffrey Hartman, who apply clinical knowledge to sociological cases and literary works. Although their theories are generally based on the example of the Holocaust, they are also applicable to other individual and collective traumas. Sexual abuse, accidents, natural or man-made disasters, wars and terror are discussed ‘in the same language, both clinical and metaphorical, of trauma: one signifier for a plurality of ills signified’.<sup>21</sup> The term has thus gradually come to be used in both medical and everyday contexts.

Eva Hoffman has recently remarked that “‘trauma’ is the contemporary master term in the psychology of suffering’.<sup>22</sup> Despite the fact that the theoretical definitions of trauma do not diverge greatly, writers’ terminology may differ as they discuss what it is and what it is not. It is conceivable that in these debates creative writers are sometimes exploring the boundaries of the mental condition. Nevertheless, there is possibly a consensus that was once known as ‘suffering’ is now called ‘trauma’<sup>23</sup> as the roots of tragic incidents mainly and initially contain despair.

### **3.1.1. Individual and Collective Trauma**

Whatever the cause of a cataclysm, be it man-made or natural, accidental or deliberate, its repercussions may well extend far beyond those immediately affected by the destruction. Throughout history, generations have witnessed several cataclysms such as World Wars I and II, the Holocaust, the Chernobyl Disaster or earthquakes and tsunamis due to natural

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<sup>21</sup> Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman, *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood*, trans. by Rachel Gomme (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. xi.

<sup>22</sup> Eva Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge: Memory, History and the Legacy of the Holocaust* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), p. 34.

<sup>23</sup> Before the widespread use of the term trauma, ‘suffering’ was used to refer to psychological unease: ‘Up until and into the nineteenth century, the idea of universal suffering, the eligibility of all people to suffer psychologically, existentially or spiritually, was justified mainly on philosophical or theological backgrounds [*sic* for ‘grounds’]. This is not the case today (at least in the West): psychobiology and psychiatry have provided us with a new rhetoric of suffering, grounded in the authority of science and predicated on the mechanism called psychogenic trauma’. Allan Young, ‘Suffering and the Origins of Traumatic Memory’, *Daedalus*, 125. 1 (1996), 245- 60 (p. 246).

causes. On the other hand, when people are exposed to a single catastrophic event or series of events in the same community, the case assumes wider significance owing to these recently harmed individuals having shared pasts and possibly similar anxieties about the future. It was after the February 1972 Buffalo Creek flood in West Virginia, which killed 125 people, injured a further 1,121 and rendered over 4,000 homeless, that Erikson distinguished between individual and collective trauma, explaining the former as ‘a blow to the psyche that breaks through one’s defences so suddenly and with such brutal force that one cannot react to it effectively’ and, secondly, collective trauma as ‘a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality’.<sup>24</sup> The unexpectedness of the event as well as its damaging forces prompts both the individual and collective responses. Massive cataclysms ‘damage [...] the texture of community’,<sup>25</sup> as is quite natural since masses share and gather around the same wound.<sup>26</sup> In collective trauma, normal reality is transformed. The difficulty that victims have in believing what has happened makes the incident seem to them somewhat unreal yet the sharing of their common experience serves to confirm its reality:

The trouble with representing a collective trauma is that it simultaneously bombards the everyday with the grave magnitude of the extraordinary and, paradoxically, converts this extraordinary experience to a generalizable phenomenon across a collective. Collective traumas, then, change how we think about the ‘real’ – they show extreme unbelievable, and unrealistic events emerging from the matrix of the everyday.<sup>27</sup>

As stated above, at the time of the cataclysm and in its aftermath, the sufferer of the traumatic event cannot be thought separate from social life and outer aspects. In other words, the individual’s reactions will largely be shaped by on-going factors, which highlight the

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<sup>24</sup> Kai Erikson, ‘Notes on Trauma and Community’ in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. by Cathy Caruth (London: The John Hopkins Press, 1995), pp. 183-200 (p. 187).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Kimberly Rostan, ‘Reading Traumatically and Representing the Real in Collective Suffering’, *College Literature*, 33.2 (2006), 172- 83 (p. 173).

‘social dimension’<sup>28</sup> and cannot be separated from the circumstances in which it is created. Although each individual suffers separately, in the case of a massive event affecting large numbers of people, the presence of other sufferers does not let him/her endure mental or physical torment alone. The sense of spiritual community that inevitably emerges from the general sorrow and shared grief can help to relieve or heal individual pain and the feeling of loss.

Either individual or collective, trauma has certain social dimensions and cannot be analysed without the social aspects that automatically imply the notion of spatiality. One is not exposed to trauma in a void. There is always an associated environment. Once a traumatic incident occurs, be it man-made or natural, it needs to be evaluated in spatial terms in order to ascertain the relationship between the subject and the location of the cataclysm so that stress counselling may eventually provide a cure.

### **3.2. Space and Place**

The world’s changing values have led to wider research in the social sciences with particular reference to the study of space. Since the early twentieth century the plurality of meanings ascribed to space and place has led to modern studies with broad approaches to space theory not only in geographical or historical terms but also drawing on the social sciences. Spatial theory is a vast discipline that requires its representatives to consider *inter alia* such influencing factors as history, culture, art and literature. In addition, whereas according to Ian Buchanan and Gregg Lambert, ‘spatial thinking before the Second World War was concerned with the seemingly damaging effect space was having on the modern individual’,<sup>29</sup> because of several forms of mental and physical sickness caused by the rigours

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<sup>28</sup> Erikson, p. 185.

<sup>29</sup> *Deleuze and Space*, ed. by Ian Buchanan, Gregg Lambert (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p. 2.

of wartime, ‘there was an associated malady diagnosed for each new type of spatial experience and the effect of (often confined) space on individuals resulted in questions like how space affected individuals and could individuals affect space?’.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, other than space in the geometrical sense, spatial studies in human geography have enabled the ever more probing analysis of the relationship between mankind and the world we inhabit, affording further insights into human nature and as a result, the term ‘lived space’ started to be applied in philosophy and architecture in the post-war years. Furthermore, despite long paramount in schools of architecture and urban planning (Hippodamus, Wren, Nash, Haussmann et al.), studies about space and place have recently gained wider popularity in academia beyond the schools of architecture and urban planning.

Concomitant with the concept of space is, almost by definition, that of place. To quote Phil Hubbard, Rob Kitchin and Gill Valentine, ‘For geographers, [...] these twin terms have provided the building blocks of an intellectual (and disciplinary) enterprise that stretches back many centuries’.<sup>31</sup> According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* while space is ‘a continuous area or expanse which is free, available or unoccupied’ or ‘the dimensions of height, depth, and width within which all things exist and move’,<sup>32</sup> place is ‘a particular position, point or area’ or ‘a portion of space designated or available for being used by someone’.<sup>33</sup>

Consideration of spatiality is necessary for the purposes of this thesis as ‘understandings and concepts of space cannot be divorced from the real fabric of how people live their lives’.<sup>34</sup> The exploration of spatial terms and their intersection with trauma studies are analysed in the context of 9/11 together with the use in daily life as well as the apocalyptic

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>31</sup> *Key Thinkers on Space and Place*, ed. by Phil Hubbard, Rob Kitchin and Gill Valentine (London: Sage Publications, 2004), p. 3.

<sup>32</sup> <<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/space>> [accessed 17 January 2013]

<sup>33</sup> <<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/place>> [accessed 17 January 2013]

<sup>34</sup> Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 7.

references and feelings that have added an additional perspective to the aftermath of the attacks. Before the consideration is given to the events seen in an apocalyptic light, a brief explanatory overview of this last term is provided in the following subsection.

### 3.3. Apocalypse and Post-apocalypse

The roots of the term apocalypse come from Greek, *apocalypsis*, meaning ‘uncovering’ and denoting the ‘revelation’ of the future granted to St John on the island of Patmos as recorded in the book of that name in the New Testament and foretelling the Second Coming of Christ and the ultimate destruction of the world. The term is generally used in theology, yet its use in literary works is also common. In the social sciences, it designates any current disaster resulting in drastic, irreversible damage to human society or the environment, esp. on a global scale, i.e. a cataclysm. Although the term ‘apocalypse’ has its roots in religion, this study will not take account of its original religious meaning.

According to James Berger, apocalyptic thinking focuses on the consequences of a critical event of global significance.<sup>35</sup> Among the events that are perceived to have an apocalyptic value, Berger lists the following: ‘Nuclear war, the Holocaust, apocalypses of liberation (feminist, African American, postcolonial), and postmodernity’.<sup>36</sup> Although Berger’s somewhat eccentric approach relies on what he calls apocalypses of liberation and postmodernity, his emphasis on the present when referring to an apocalypse is instructive. Just as the aftermath of at least some of the disasters, events or movements that he cites resulted in the appearance of philosophical, literary and artistic works, post-apocalyptic

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<sup>35</sup> This is a conclusion that James Berger has reached through his reading of Frank Kermode’s *The Sense of an Ending*. James Berger, ‘Twentieth Century Apocalypse: Forecasts and Aftermaths’, *Twentieth Century Literature*, 46.4 (2000), pp. 387-95 (p. 389).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 390. The main literary works exemplifying the apocalyptic genre are Pat Frank’s *Alas, Babylon* (1959) and Richard Mateson’s *I am Legend* (1954).

imagination has also contributed a great deal to the literary and artistic atmosphere of both the later twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

While apocalyptic literature ‘predicts a coming crisis that is to result in the destruction of the current order, the judgement of the living and the dead, and the subsequent establishment of a new, divinely governed order’,<sup>37</sup> post-apocalyptic fiction deals with ‘time and eternity, death and dying, ultimate meaning and judgement, cosmic conflicts, divine and demonic forces, salvation and ultimate life’.<sup>38</sup> It depicts a distinct period of life where survivors of a generally unspecified disaster witness and experience its aftermath. According to the common definition, post-apocalyptic is defined as referring, firstly, to a period following a large-scale disaster in which civilization has been destroyed or has regressed to a more primitive level and, secondly in a literary context, to a story having such a setting. And the study of a post-apocalyptic world focuses on ‘what disappears and what remains, and of how the remainder has been transformed’.<sup>39</sup> The cataclysm reflected in works of this nature is vast enough to have destroyed the normality and materialism of daily life and to deprive the remaining individuals of their previous standard of living.

The origins of post-apocalyptic literature can be traced as far back as 1826 with Mary Shelly’s science fiction novel *The Last Man*, the three volumes of which tell of a deadly plague that destroys the world. In 1885 there followed another example of post-apocalyptic fiction, namely Richard Jefferies’s *After London*, a tale recounting the aftermath of an unspecified natural disaster that has devastated and depopulated most of England. Other works that are worth mentioning in this summary retrospective are, Edgar Allen Poe’s short story ‘The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion’ (1839), H. G. Wells’ short novel *The Time Machine* (1895) and *The War of the Worlds* (1897) and Stephen Vincent Benêt’s short story

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<sup>37</sup> Gabriel McKee, *The Gospel According to Science Fiction: From the Twilight Zone to the Final Frontier* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2007), p. 235.

<sup>38</sup> David J. Leigh, *Apocalyptic Patterns in Twentieth Century Fiction* (Indiana: University of Nottingham Press, 2008), p. 34.

<sup>39</sup> James Berger, *After the End: Representations of Post-apocalypse* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 7.

‘By the Waters of Babylon’ (1937). These trail-blazing works notwithstanding, according to Keith Booker and Anne-Marie Thomas, ‘It was not until the atomic bombing of Hiroshima in August, 1945, followed by Cold War nuclear tensions that the post-apocalyptic stories [...] were propelled to the forefront of science fiction’.<sup>40</sup> The anxieties following the nuclear disasters of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the subsequent development and proliferation of thermonuclear weapons encouraged the spread of the genre as often protesting authors sought to voice their apprehension at the immediate effects of these catastrophes.<sup>41</sup> Gary K. Wolfe identifies five stages in the creation of post-apocalyptic fiction: the experience or discovery of the cataclysm; the journey through the wasteland created by the cataclysm; settlement and establishment of a new community; the emergence of the wilderness as antagonist and a final; and a decisive battle or struggle to determine which values shall prevail in the new world.<sup>42</sup>

While Wolfe is attempting to chart its broad development, Matthew Wolf-Meyer outlines the broad aims of post-apocalyptic fiction. For the critic,

Post-apocalyptic narrative has been seen as one of three possible readings: 1.) The re-advancement of technology, thereby allowing the reader to perceive the inevitable triumph of technology in a more primitive society than his or her own, 2.) A warning against war, which is simply political in that it attempts to defuse militaristic leanings within the culture that has influenced the author to produce the novel, 3.) The Neo-Luddite reduction of modern society (or possibly near-future society) to a simpler version, sometimes also allowing the author to entertain “inevitable” historical cycles if the narrative spans the chronological development of a culture of post-apocalyptic survivors [...].<sup>43</sup>

As indicated above, post-apocalyptic literature may cover a wide range of issues from

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<sup>40</sup> M. Keith Booker and Anne-Marie Thomas, *The Science Fiction Handbook* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p. 53.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54. George R. Stewart’s *Earth Abides* (1949), Leigh Brackett’s *The Long Tomorrow* (1955), Judith Merrill’s *Shadow on the Earth* (1950), John Wyndom’s *The Day of the Triffids* (1951), Walter Miller’s *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (1960) are considered among the primary examples of the post-apocalyptic fiction published after the Second World War.

<sup>42</sup> Gary K. Wolfe, ‘The Remaking of Zero’ in *Evaporating Genres: Essays on Fantastic Literature*, ed. by Gary K. Wolfe (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2011), p. 106.

<sup>43</sup> Matthew Wolf-Meyer, ‘Apocalypse, Ideology, America: Science Fiction and the Myth of the Post-Apocalyptic Everyday’, *Rhizomes: Cultural Studies in Emerging Knowledge*, 8 (2004) <<http://www.rhizomes.net/issue8/wolfmeyer.htm>> [accessed 1 December 2013]

technological advancement to politics and even consumerism. Berger adds that ‘the post-apocalypse in fiction provides an occasion to go “back to basics” and to reveal what the writer considers to be truly of value’.<sup>44</sup> Of particular relevance to the study of trauma in fiction is Berger’s remark that in post-apocalyptic narrative, ‘the writer and reader must be in both places at once, imagining the post-apocalyptic world and then paradoxically “remembering” the world as it was, as it is’.<sup>45</sup>

According to Mary Manjikian’s definition, ‘post-apocalyptic literature is primarily concerned with the *consequences* of the apocalyptic moment, the ways in which society’s norms and values and social practices will be changed as a result, rather than the moment itself’.<sup>46</sup> The fictional post-apocalyptic landscape presents a hostile world with many kinds of horridness that leave the survivors little chance of seeing goodness around them: famine, drought, cannibals, absence of sunshine, devastated places that are abandoned. Furthermore, in these landscapes grey is the only colour to dominate every single day. Already in Lord Byron’s poem *Darkness*, that absence of sunlight is depicted as being permanent and determinant:

The winds were wither'd in the stagnant air  
And the clouds perish'd; Darkness had no need  
Of aid from them — She was the Universe.’<sup>47</sup>

The space of the post-apocalyptic landscape therefore allows the exploration of the spatial and the intersecting traumatic atmosphere.

It is my contention that trauma and space studies are apt critical tools to address the novels that deal with the aftermath of the September 11 attacks.

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<sup>44</sup> Berger, *After the End: Representations of Post-apocalypse*, p. 8.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>46</sup> Mary Manjikian, *Apocalypse and Post-Politics: The Romance of the End* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2008), p. 65.

<sup>47</sup> Lord Byron, ‘Darkness’, *Poems* (London: George Routledge and Sons, [n.d.]) p. 369.



# CHAPTER I

## TRAUMA AND SPACE IN THE POST-9/11 NOVEL

### 1. Introduction

The psychological outcome of the events of September 11, 2001 in New York, Washington DC and Pennsylvania was a reaction to a massive destructive force perceived by Americans as a threat to the entire country. In the immediate aftermath, news about the attacks was broadcast throughout the world, and the episode has become one of the most widely discussed topics in history, leaving behind psychological traces which are mostly regarded as traumatic, especially in the media and in novels published not just in America but all over the world.

This chapter will first provide a brief historical overview outlining the emergence of psychological trauma. As for insight into questions of spatial analysis I draw on the works of Yi-Fu Tuan, Tim Cresswell, Edward Casey, Michel Foucault, Henri Lefebvre, and Marc Augé. Before presenting the psychological outcomes of these events and their post-9/11 fictional representations in terms of trauma and spatiality in the light of recent scholarship, I examine how trauma and space interacts and in addition to their inclusion in narratives of trauma. For a contemporary approach to the analysis of relevant novels, it will synthesize the gist of the latest studies of psychological trauma by Cathy Caruth, Kai Erikson, Geoffrey Hartman, and Laurie Vickroy.

## 2. Contemporary Approaches to Trauma

One of the leading names in the field of trauma theory is that of the Cornell Comparative Literature specialist Cathy Caruth to set alongside those of her compatriots and fellow-academics, psychoanalyst Dori Laub of Yale and Shoshana Felman, now at Emory University. The theory of trauma has been reinterpreted in the last twenty years. Scholars have explained the various stages of trauma in-depth analysis including shock, psychological death and survival. Contemporary analysis has built a bridge between narratives of fiction and trauma theory, which also has given a way to observe the experiences of traumatized individuals. Telling traumatic incidents in literary portrayals provides new and distinct ways of seeing and approaching tragic instances and their aftermath. It makes the reader develop a more sentient and perceiving eye during the traumatic process and thus helps to have a clearer understanding in the flow of the novel.

Caruth explains that ‘the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it: To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event’.<sup>48</sup> In a wider context, this concept was to have implications for ideas about society, culture and the so-called traumatic era and it is at the same time still applicable to recent trauma studies in conjunction with narrative analysis. In her rereading of Tasso’s romantic epic *Gerusalemme Liberata*, trauma is presented as a mental wound that features a ‘striking juxtaposition of the unknowing, injurious repetition and the witness of the crying voice’.<sup>49</sup> ‘This cry of pain’ is due to the incomprehensible nature of the traumatic event that arrives all of a sudden and is beyond the victim’s control. The ‘unexpectedness’ and the ‘incomprehensibility’ of an accident distance the victim from

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<sup>48</sup> Cathy Caruth, ‘Introduction’, in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. by Cathy Caruth (London: The John Hopkins Press, 1995), pp. 3-13 (p. 4).

<sup>49</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 9.

reality,<sup>50</sup> as does his or her inability to reckon the future damage it is liable to bring. Curiously, after such incidences, Caruth clearly claims that the individual cannot perceive the traumatic event as it comes so suddenly and leaves the victim with extremely blurred memories. In addition to the burden of an unclear range of happenings in the past, there is also the problematic case of the now and the days to come. Because trauma expands in one's life with the experience of the past, it has its effects in the present and continues in the future with its repeating traces. That is, trauma comes to dominate one's life as experience of the past is prolonged in the affected mind, darkly colouring the present through obsessive recurrence and thus hijacking the future.

Caruth underlines the necessity of historicity in trauma studies by arguing that it is the element that allows us to consider and revise our perceptions of the condition: 'Through the notion of trauma, [...] we can understand that a rethinking of reference is aimed [...] at precisely permitting *history* to arise where *immediate understanding* may not'.<sup>51</sup> The understanding of the disastrous or hurtful occurrence cannot happen very easily or quickly since memory needs time to revisit and reimagine what has happened. The self generally apprehends and records upon the first impression of any traumatic event as a shock, a frightening and threatening incident. Freud explained this reaction as a natural consequence of the victim's inability to perceive and understand rationally. 'For Freud, the trauma came from the world outside the ego and had the effect of a surplus, an overload of excitation that the system of the psyche was unable to manage'.<sup>52</sup> As it is hard for the memory to overcome the level of unpleasant excitation, resurgences of the moments of incident may happen naturally. Memory serves as a reminder so that the individual can trace what has happened once.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>52</sup> Susan Stewart, *Crimes of Writing: Problems in the Containment of Representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 227.

Caruth's definition of trauma 'describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena'.<sup>53</sup> From the definitions above, it can be deduced that trauma and PTSD are sudden, incomprehensible, uncontrollable, injurious, and repetitive in character. The repetitiveness of the condition suggests that 'it is a symptom of history'<sup>54</sup>, and Caruth extends this notion by explaining that trauma has its own bond with different places and times. It is not possible to go back to the original cataclysm, nor is it something that can be understood at the time of its occurrence.

The studies by the American sociologist Kai Theodor Erikson generally focus on the individual and society in the case of disasters, be they man-made or natural affording the reader a broad view of post-cataclysmic effects. He has a relatively distinct approach, which is appreciably clear and well-targeted. He states that trauma consists of the resurgence of painful memory that the mind cannot perceive and that the reaction of individuals to a damaging or painful event is also a factor in defining the traumatic situation: 'it is *how people react to them* rather than *what they are* that gives events whatever traumatic quality they can be said to have'.<sup>55</sup> Additionally, he underlines the importance of the 'damage done' and explains that there is in our lives a chain of events that needs to be evaluated alongside the particular and suddenly intrusive crisis:

It is the damage done that defines and gives shape to the initial event, the *damage done* that gives it its name. [...] "Trauma" has to be understood as resulting from a *constellation of life experiences* as well as from a discrete happening, from a *persisting condition* as well as from an acute event.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History*, p. 11.

<sup>54</sup> Caruth, 'Introduction', in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, p. 5.

<sup>55</sup> Kai Erikson, 'Notes on Trauma and Community' in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. by Cathy Caruth (London: The John Hopkins Press, 1995), pp. 183-200 (p. 184).

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185. [Italics are Erikson's own.]

The individual may not be totally aware of the traumatic incident to which he was exposed, or else the memory of the crucial event may not be recurrent in the individual's psyche but inconspicuously latent. In such instances waking dreams or split and scattered memories may serve to evoke vestigial recollection. As Caruth indicates, 'it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality [...].'<sup>57</sup> Since the psychic wound is still open, the voice inside it (to borrow Caruth's poetic expression) wants to express what the conscious mind has rejected.

With ever more studies of trauma appearing throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is becoming increasingly clear that the experience of a traumatic event or situation is at least partly dependent upon pre-existing historical, social and political factors. Taking these into consideration that all these happen in a spatial frame, it becomes inevitable to examine the terms more detailed.

### **3. Space and Place**

The production of space is not independent from its relation to society and culture. Whatever its nature, space clearly is and always has been primarily a product of society and social relations although the relationship is one of unending synergy. The importance of underlining space's relation to society lies in the notion that practices originating in the spatial framework may not cover all the spatial process but nevertheless play a crucial part in forming people's realization of their surroundings in terms of manners, communication and, more generally, their lives. In that sense, as Lefebvre argues, space plays 'an active role in producing and shaping'<sup>58</sup> daily life. The role of space here lies in its being one of the key elements contributing to the formation of a nominative experience. For Lefebvre:

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<sup>57</sup> Caruth, 'Introduction', in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, p. 4.

<sup>58</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), p. 8.

Specialized works keep their audience abreast of all sorts of equally specialized spaces: leisure, work, play, transportation, public facilities — all are spoken of in spatial terms. [...] We are thus confronted by an indefinite multitude of spaces, each one piled upon, or perhaps contained within, the next: geographical, economic, national, continental, global.<sup>59</sup>

Lefebvre continues that the interrelationship between social space and social product resembles a ‘double illusion’,<sup>60</sup> both notions being reflections of each other. Edward Soja similarly comments that Lefebvre’s description is ‘actually lived and socially created spatiality, concrete and abstract at the same time, the habitus of social practices’.<sup>61</sup> Both explanations of spatiality emphasize that the individual acquires heightened awareness according to what is happening around him/her. Initially, the individual merely identifies a sense of rather special space. That distinctive area becomes for him/her a place that enables self-expression or the performance of actions. It should be said that, within this simple twofold process, it is through social space that sorrow, happiness or enjoyment becomes perceivable. Thus, space is perceived as dynamic and productive so that architecture consequently becomes an area where (social) space finds life. The individual encounters and may fulfil a wide range of options, most of them no doubt materialistic, and may continually divert and transform his focus of attention:

Once brought back into conjunction with a (spatial and signifying) social practice, the concept of space can take on its full meaning. Space thus rejoins material production: the production of goods, things, objects of exchange — clothing, furnishings, houses or homes — a production which is dictated by necessity.<sup>62</sup>

Lefebvre’s such explanation suggests that there is a constant and inevitable interaction with the individual and the outer world. Either by our movements or by conscious actions, the individual contributes to the formation of space.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>61</sup> Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989), p. 18.

<sup>62</sup> Lefebvre, p. 137.

Similar to space, the notion of place is invested with various meanings. For instance, ‘Everything in its place, a place for everything’.<sup>63</sup> This well-known seventeenth-century dictum promoting tidiness and order that is often ascribed to Benjamin Franklin encapsulates the double meaning of the term ‘place’, which in the first instance here means location whereas in the latter instance it is a referent for space. Other uses of the word ‘place’ are attested in expressions such as ‘Let’s meet at my place tomorrow!’, where ‘place’ denotes location associated with a material possession or ‘All of you have no place at our house’, suggesting space. As illustrated in the examples quoted, in everyday English the word ‘place’ is ‘wrapped in common sense’.<sup>64</sup>

Like Augé and Tuan, Tim Cresswell regards the term ‘space’ as denoting something abstract, whereas ‘place’ has more concrete connotations that are imbued with the legacy of experience:

Cast your mind back to the first time you moved into a particular space - a room in college accommodation is a good example. [...] In that room there may be a few rudimentary pieces of furniture such as a bed, a desk, a set of drawers and a cupboard. [...] They are not unique and mean nothing to you beyond the provision of certain necessities of student life. [...] Now what do you do? [...] You add your own possessions, rearrange the furniture within the limits of the space, put your own posters on the wall, arrange a few books purposefully on the desk. Thus space is turned into place. Your place.<sup>65</sup>

For Yi-Fu Tuan and Tim Cresswell, place and space thus differ from each other in the sense of experience. The presence of a place could be accomplished provided it is practiced. That is, a space may become a place provided it is inhabited and has meaning within itself, even if only temporarily. Hence, as Tuan suggests, each term needs the other in an interdependent way:

The ideas “space” and “place” require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows

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<sup>63</sup> Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p. 2.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place.<sup>66</sup>

Other than the notions of space and place, there is also the term ‘non-place’. Marc Augé defines ‘space’ as being ‘more abstract in itself than the term “place”, whose usage at least refers to an event (which has taken place), a myth (said to have taken place) or a history (high places)’.<sup>67</sup> Space consists of the area where human activity may potentially take place but which is not yet associated with past human experience. As already stated, by comparison with place, space is exposed to changes due to its mobility as well as to the ‘successive contexts’<sup>68</sup> applied to it. The constant transformation that this situation presupposes leaves little opportunity for a meaningful and stabilizing accumulation of human experience and may evoke a sense of alienation. The non-place is a characterless area that nevertheless has its own boundaries and is in Augé’s view a recently emerging phenomenon. According to him, with the developments and constantly changing values of the modern world, the number of places that are called non-places is on the increase. Non-places can be any areas that imply a disconnection between the individual and the place. That is, the concept of non-places reflects the superiority and distance of the place where a materialistic environment is drawn with a greater sense of indifference to the agenda due to its instant shifts. The mutability associated with the concept implies that the non-place is devoid of creativeness and the driving energy, which individuals may lend to a given place. The most common example of a non-place is the airport, where people are recognized by the information on their identity cards/passports and where their names, place of birth, addresses, and occupations are recorded upon entering and leaving. Along with airports, bus/railway stations, supermarkets or superstores contain non-place elements as they ‘do not

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<sup>66</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), p. 6.

<sup>67</sup> Marc Augé, *Non Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (London: Verso, 1995), p. 82.

<sup>68</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 117.



contain any organic society'.<sup>69</sup> In such locales, social connections become passive as non-places are essentially areas of coming and going. To be more specific, these types of everyday milieu can have a limiting or stultifying effect upon individual behaviours and ideas. This restrictive process also happens owing to the rapid and ever-changing sequence of daily events that can result in a sense of disaffected rootlessness and even sometimes in people thinking that the world we see around us is fictional. Hence, 'this reaction produces a feeling of discomfort, of crisis, which is linked to the consciousness that each one of us can see everything and do nothing'.<sup>70</sup>

The demands of modern life influence people's lifestyles to the point of ultimately changing their behaviour generally. These changes mostly involve the glorification of commodities and property including high-rise buildings, each of which ensures that there is less communication and more remoteness between individuals. For instance, one does not need or feel the necessity to talk to the sales assistant in a supermarket. Also, there are self-pay machines available that require no contact with anyone. Obviously, examples of non-places are not limited to supermarkets.<sup>71</sup> It is valid for places where there is more machinery and high-rise buildings.

In contrast to anthropological places, which provide an individual with the sense of experience on account of their historicity and record of human interaction and sharing, these so-called non-places generally lack facilities for communication and interpersonal ties. Mostly, the sole form of communication that they offer consists of cards, buttons, and computerised machines underlining 'solitary contractuality' (to borrow Augé's term) much as when, via the internet, we share information with people whom we have not met personally:

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<sup>69</sup> Augé, p. 112.

<sup>70</sup> Alan Read, *Architecturally Speaking: Practices of Art, Architecture and the Everyday* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 8.

<sup>71</sup> Other places that may be regarded as non-places are stated in the following pages.

Clearly the word “non-place” designates two complementary but distinct realities: spaces formed in relation to certain ends (transport, transit, commerce, leisure), and the relations that individuals have with these spaces. Although the two sets of relations overlap to a large extent, and in any case officially (individuals travel, make purchases, relax) they are still not confused with one another; for non-places mediate a whole mass of relations, with the self and with others, which are only indirectly connected with their purposes. As anthropological places create organically social, so non-places create solitary contractuality.<sup>72</sup>

To judge from these examples, it is clear that non-places lack the benefit of a multi-layered accretion of experience and will continue to do so as long as they stay remote from human interaction. In contrast to anthropological places, which provide the individual with a sense of historically accrued experience due to the historical background, non-places representing solitary contractuality lack the opportunity for communication and any ties with the former group:

If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place.<sup>73</sup>

In addition to the quotations that frequently emphasize the presence of humanistic traces in order to call a site as place, Ian Buchanan’s practical explanation is also informative as it provides to perceive the difference between place and non-place according to Augé’s view.

After imagining a busy day of Augé’s, Buchanan tells

Augé’s point, I think, is that jet travel has enlightened our step on earth; we no longer dwell as heavily as we once did. We swim through places more than we dwell there and consequently a new type of social space has emerged whose precise purpose is to facilitate a frictionless passage — airports, train stations, bus terminals, fast food outlets, supermarkets and hotels. Because they do not confer a sense of place, Augé calls these non-places.<sup>74</sup>

Buchanan’s thinking of Augé’s one day once again clearly explains what is meant by non-places.

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<sup>72</sup> Augé, p. 94.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., pp. 77-78.

<sup>74</sup> Ian Buchanan, ‘Space in the Age of Non-Place’, in *Deleuze and Space*, ed. by Ian Buchanan, Gregg Lambert (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), pp.16-35, p. 28.

The Foucauldian interpretation of non-place is, however, relatively different from that of Augé as Foucault argues that non-places are like degraded forms of contemporary utopian spaces ‘with no real place [...]. They represent society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down, but in any case, these utopias are fundamentally unreal spaces’.<sup>75</sup> The modern utopia, then, transforms into a deviant form of social space and thus becomes a non-place. For Foucault, then, a non-place is a deviant form of social space resulting from the distortion or perversion of a modern utopia.

Additionally, it is worth mentioning that the use of non-place in the following chapter is analysed within the framework of traumatic spaces in the post-apocalyptic world where the protagonists have neither names nor their individual spaces. They just reside in a devastated land where they recurrently encounter with generic spaces.

Lastly, besides places, non-places and space, there is another fundamental socio-philosophical concept elaborated between 1967 and 1984 by Michel Foucault and called heterotopia. The term covers ‘various institutions and places that interrupt the apparent continuity and normality of ordinary everyday space’.<sup>76</sup> Because they inject alterity into sameness, the commonplace, the topicality of everyday society, Foucault called these places ‘heterotopias’ – literally ‘other places’<sup>77</sup> but more freely ‘counter-sites’ or alterative utopias’. As they are produced by society in its continual self-generation, he refers to them as ‘real’ places.<sup>78</sup> Cemeteries, cinemas, theatres, libraries, gardens and fairgrounds are among the examples he lists. There are some distinguishing features of heterotopias: ‘they are capable of juxtaposing in a single real place, several spaces that are in themselves incompatible’,

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<sup>75</sup> Michel Foucault, ‘Des Espaces Autres’, in *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité*, 5 (October 1984), 46–49, translated by Jay Miskowic as ‘Of Other Spaces’, *Diacritics*, 16.1 (Spring 1986), 22–27, reproduced in *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society*, ed. by Michel Dehaene and Lieven de Cauter (Paris: Editions Galimard, 1997), pp.13-31 (p. 16).

<sup>76</sup> Michel Dehaene and Lieven de Cauter, ‘Introduction’ in *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society*, ed. by Michel Dehaene and Lieven de Cauter (Paris: Editions Galimard, 1997), pp. 3-11 (p. 3).

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

‘they are linked to particular slices of time’, and they ‘presuppose a system for opening or closing’.<sup>79</sup>

Foucault states that it is possible to see the establishment of heterotopias in almost every culture in the world. The roots of heterotopias go even back to early history of humanity when they are identifiable as concessional places arising at times of difficulty and which he calls ‘heterotopias of crisis’.<sup>80</sup> Therefore, one of the important characteristics of heterotopias is that their development is unusual and interrupts the normal course of events in chronological sequence. Foucault calls them ‘singular spaces to be found in some given social spaces whose functions are different or even the opposite of others’.<sup>81</sup> Thus, in social spaces, heterotopias serve as shelters that suggest difference.

#### **4. Space and Trauma in Interaction**

Space and place are two major axes for charting the course of trauma. Traumatic moments, which are hidden or unreachable for some time, can appear at any instant and expand throughout the spatial progress. Traumatic images bring about a caesura in time and space that allows for a layered vision of the individual. It is a key moment of intrusion, but also a moment of interrogation that posits the possibility of a new beginning through the conversation with the past.

Through his concept of *Nachträglichkeit* (rendered in English as ‘Retroaction’ or, more awkwardly, ‘Afterwardsness’), Freud claims that unreachable moments of a traumatic event may well subsequently come to light, shaping and inflecting the subject’s future behaviour. It is ‘the phenomenon of a “delayed reaction” to trauma’.<sup>82</sup> After being exposed

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p.19

<sup>82</sup> Bistoien and others, p. 671.

to it, trauma can take over the subject's life as it brings the relived experience of the past into the present and continues recurrent traces in the future. From Caruth's analysis of Freud's chapters (especially those in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*), a traumatic event is regarded as one whose aftereffects persist in the life of the individuals who suffer from it. In other words, it becomes an inevitable ingredient in each victim's psyche. Like Caruth, Felman notes that a traumatic event 'registers a *belated* impact: it becomes precisely haunting, tends to historically return and to repeat itself in practice and in act'.<sup>83</sup> In addition to the recurring condition, the shock and suddenness of the tragic happening makes it *un-owned* and unavailable to knowledge and to consciousness.<sup>84</sup> According to Dori Laub, trauma

has no beginning, no ending, no before, no during and no after, [...] the survivor, indeed, is not truly in touch either with the core of his traumatic reality or with the datedness of its reenactments, and thereby remains trapped in both.<sup>85</sup>

Upon survival, instead of feeling of joy, the victim lives as a constant prey to abrupt interruptions of the past accident. Understandably, these mental flashbacks may be induced by the connotations of certain places, objects, or even faces, the effect of which is to make the individual aware of what had happened previously. These explanations of the contemporary approach to trauma reveal that the essence of the traumatic happening is present in the course of our lives and materializes through place. The cataclysmic moment invariably captures the victimized individual randomly and hence, the psychological experience finds itself located in this space. Edward Casey explains that

To be in a place is to be sheltered and sustained by its containing boundary; it is to be held within this boundary rather than to be dispersed by an expanding horizon of time or to be exposed indifferently in space. In fact, the most

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<sup>83</sup> Shoshana Felman, *The Juridical Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century* (London: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 174.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 69.

characteristic effect of place is that of maintaining or retaining rather than dividing or dispersing.<sup>86</sup>

Memories, initially called ‘parasites of the mind’,<sup>87</sup> are like residual elements that have ‘always been central to the study of trauma’.<sup>88</sup> Trauma and memory are indeed connected to space since both happen in the spatial frame. The predominantly negative elements of the past are stored in the memory and are later unconsciously recalled in the flow of space. As a consequence, unwanted and disturbing memories of the past keep recurring insistently in any number of different venues, bringing with them the continual cycle of space and trauma. With its unrealized effect, trauma arises in the incomplete and continuous sphere of space and as a result, individuals repetitively encounter distressing remembrances of the past. The subject’s daily life is, in a way, interrupted by the previous sudden and shocking moment.

The process of recovery from a traumatic experience, on the other hand, entails the individual’s understanding of what has happened in order to place it in his/her own view/perception, and then the blending of this experience of loss and healing into his or her own life. ‘Positing a spatial transmission of trauma, [...] PTSD is said to ripple through time. It is projected from the past into the present and the future’.<sup>89</sup> The suppressed feelings and thoughts come to the surface affecting the present and future. Hence, the relationship between the theories of space and trauma is also due to the intrusion of the past into the present. Since the individual is not in a proper psychic state on account of the influential and hurtful memories of the past, unsurprisingly, the present becomes affected by his or her twisted perception. In other words, ‘the memory of one particular event comes to taint all other experiences, spoiling appreciation of the present’.<sup>90</sup> The mentioning of time (past,

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<sup>86</sup> Edward S. Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 186.

<sup>87</sup> Bessel A. van der Kolk and Alexander McFarlane ‘The Black Hole of Trauma’, in *Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body and Society*, ed. Bessel A. van der Kolk, Alexander McFarlane and Lars Weisaeth (New York: The Guilford Press, 2007), pp. 3-24 (p. 9).

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. x

<sup>89</sup> Thomas Degloma, ‘Expanding Trauma through Space and Time: Mapping the Rhetorical Strategies of Trauma Carrier Groups’, *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 72 (2009), 105-22 (p. 109).

<sup>90</sup> van der Kolk and McFarlane, p. 4

present, future) does not have a reference to real timing as the traumatized individual is in the space of his/her own psychic zone and cannot assert any control over the time span. The condition that the individual experiences is not totally like a non-living space yet is closer to any-time space owing to the real psychic pain that is endured. Drawing on his reading of Caruth, Luckhurst also comments that 'in trauma, the contemporary is ghosted or haunted by an insistent past that intrudes on, overlays, and redetermines the present'.<sup>91</sup> The relationship between trauma, memory and place (landscape) thus turns the traumatic event into a timeless incident since it 'is not fully registered in the first place but experienced as trauma only belatedly, when it resurfaces in flashbacks, nightmares, intrusive thoughts, and repetitive reenactments'.<sup>92</sup> The occurrence of 'something' that cannot be defined or put into words clearly alters the meaning of the present time for the survivor and acts like a catalyst that precipitates a change in his or her life. The perception of the past event as a catastrophe results in its persistent recollection.

## **5. Narratives of Trauma**

Literary texts can have an important role in bearing witness to traumatic incidents. One of the most important reasons for that function is possibly the urge and responsibility that writers feel to convey historical information accurately and to leave reliable sources for future generations. This tendency in trauma fiction allows readers to grasp both the personal and shared nature of trauma as well as providing them with a clear access to its public and psychological aspects.

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<sup>91</sup> Roger Luckhurst, 'In War Times: Fictionalizing Iraq', *Contemporary Literature*, 53.4 (2012), 713-37 (p. 723).

<sup>92</sup> Marinella Rodi-Risberg, 'The Nature of Trauma in American Novels by Michelle Balaev', *Journal of Literature and Trauma Studies*, 1.2 (2012), 147-152 (p. 148)

As Jeffrey Alexander explains, language is naturally considered to be one of the fundamental means of transmitting individual experience, serving at times as a medium whereby experience is transferred:

Within the psychoanalytic tradition, it has been Lacan who has emphasized the importance of language in emotional formation, it has been Lacanian theory, often in combination with Derridean deconstruction that has informed these humanities-based studies of trauma.<sup>93</sup>

In this sense, ‘language not only represents or refers, but in Heidegger’s words, “discloses” our being-in-the-world’.<sup>94</sup> James Berger argues that the presence of language enables an evocation of physical experience as well as of associated abstract feelings. It is through the medium of the narrative that the general reader and the historian come to recognize the traumatized individual and the nation. For Berger, the role of language in identifying and conveying trauma is self-evident:

Trauma theory is another such discourse of the representable, of the event or object that destabilizes language and demands a vocabulary and syntax in some sense incommensurable with what went before. [...] Theories of trauma can help to demystify all sorts of “narrative fetishes” [...] and ideologies. For traumatic symptoms are not only somatic, nonlinguistic phenomena; they occur also in language.<sup>95</sup>

According to Kali Tal, this ‘literature of trauma is written from the need to tell and retell the story of the traumatic experience, to make it “real” both to the victim and to the community’.<sup>96</sup> Hence, it is thanks to language that individualistic experience of trauma is conveyed and has made it possible to understand and analyse the differing personal stories as well as the fictionalized lives.

Just as there are scholars that deal both with the theory of trauma and its aesthetic reflection, there are also numerous fictional trauma narratives that portray the once real-life

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<sup>93</sup> Jeffrey Alexander, *Trauma: A Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), p. 6.

<sup>94</sup> Quoted in Thomas J. Csordas, *Embodiment and Experience: The Existential Ground of Culture and Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 11.

<sup>95</sup> James Berger, ‘Trauma and Literary Theory’, *Contemporary Literature*, 38.3 (1997), 569 - 82 (p. 574).

<sup>96</sup> Kali Tal, *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* (New York: University of Cambridge, 1996), p. 137.



trauma due to war, catastrophe or other kinds of grief. Since trauma includes prolonged reliving of the shocking but comparatively fleeting past, fictional narratives revive traumatic memory. Geoffrey Hartman explains that trauma narratives ‘go beyond presenting trauma as subject matter or character study. [...] They reveal many obstacles to communicating such experience: silence, simultaneous knowledge and denial, dissociation, resistance, and repression, among others’.<sup>97</sup> The way trauma is represented makes it possible to compare and contrast pre and post-traumatic periods, thus providing the reader with a better understanding of the condition. The distinctiveness and enlightening character of the narration of the central shocking event also contributes to fixing it in the cultural memory and collective history. Thanks to fictional narration, trauma theory can metamorphose into trauma aesthetics.

Writing no doubt shortly before 9/11 (although his study was published afterwards), Hartman also states that ‘narratives about trauma flourished particularly in the 1980s and 1990s with increased public awareness of trauma and trauma theory’.<sup>98</sup> This increase in the production of trauma narratives helps to explain the recent inclusion of the genre in the literary canon. It has moreover been suggested that ‘comprehending traumatic reactions necessitates the study of the place of the traumatic event in the course of a person’s life, the manner in which it affects the whole of that person’s knowledge about the self and the world’.<sup>99</sup> Such an approach is not confined to trauma studies but also forms the basis of the literary analysis of trauma narratives. As noted above, narratives enable one to comprehend the before and after, that is, to observe the progress of a traumatic case. Representing in trauma fiction the devastating experience that restricted or shattered the individual’s speech and psyche may not be an easy task. Thanks to trauma theory, says Anne Whitehead,

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<sup>97</sup> Geoffrey Hartman, ‘Representing Trauma: Issues, Contexts, Narrative Tools’, in *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction*, ed. by Laurie Vickroy (London: The University of Virginia Press, 2002), pp. 1-36 (p. 2).

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3

<sup>99</sup> Gregory Bistoien and others, ‘Nachtraglichkeit: A Freudian Perspective on Delayed Traumatic Reactions’, *Theory & Psychology*, 24 (2014), 668-87 (p. 682).

attention ‘has shifted away from the question of what is remembered of the past to how and why it is remembered’.<sup>100</sup> Similarly, trauma fiction requires a combination of reasoning and imagination if the story is to appear entirely credible as a portrayal or echo of the event that inspires it.

It is incidentally worth noting that the phenomenon of trauma was understood and aesthetically represented in literature long before it was named or studied by medical experts and psychiatrists:

Before the mid-nineteenth century, the psychological impact of exposure to traumatic stress was recorded by poets, dramatists and novelists. Trimble, Shay and others have pointed out that Homer, Shakespeare and Dickens (to name only a few) had sophisticated understanding of the profound impact of traumatic stressors on cognitions, feelings and behaviour.<sup>101</sup>

Hence, long ago, literature enabled the creation of a distinct zone where one’s experience is transformed and this transformation of traumatic events into a narrative memory brings about the revelation of the story. That is, ‘when a narrative seeks to represent the trauma, it is forced to intensify the stakes of narrative convention – to continue to seek new formal means of representing pain, accident, disruption’.<sup>102</sup> Once expressed and written in at least an approximately ordered sequence, it becomes transmitted via publication, possibly in serialized form. Therefore, trauma narrative can also help convey the experience of cataclysmic events told in a fragmented way into a coherent narration. Richard Gray states this necessity as follows:

The writer, acting here as both victim and witness, with their text both symptom and diagnosis, can, in the words of another authority on trauma and recovery, “see more than a few fragments of the picture at one time,... retain all the pieces and ... fit them together” into a meaningful story.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Anne Whitehead, *Trauma Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p. 3.

<sup>101</sup> Matthew J. Friedman, ‘PTSD and Related Disorders: Historical Antecedents’, in *Posttraumatic Stress Disorders*, ed. by Dan J. Stein, Matthew Friedman, Carlos Blanco (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), pp. 1-35 (p. 3).

<sup>102</sup> Stewart, p. 281.

<sup>103</sup> Richard Gray, *After the Fall* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), p. 24.

The narration of the traumatic incident in a sequenced way can also lead to a healthier grasp of the occurrence and gives way to comment effectively both on the event and the situation of the traumatized victim(s). Such narration also enables a deeper exploration of terms such as space, place and the condition of the characters since those terms reflect the subject's experience and memory of a traumatic incident. This kind of an exploration also requires a closer look to society at least within the time frame of the incident. Balaev states that in trauma fiction, such broad analysis serve as 'meaning-making sites that portray the wide-ranging signification of emotional suffering'.<sup>104</sup> As a result, such an extensive study not only results in a deeper understanding of traumatic spaces in narration but also endows with an eye to the societal context that add to the emotional suffering.

## 6. 9/11 and Trauma

Loud noise, extremely thick dust, flames, smoke, and falling bodies were the first impressions of those in New York and Washington who lived through the attacks on September 11, 2001. Lots of people, whether eye-witnesses or those who watched the events on TV, were haunted by what they saw. There were also plane crashes at the Pentagon and in Pennsylvania on the same day, yet the death toll was much higher in the Twin Towers in Manhattan than elsewhere,<sup>105</sup> and that is why most media attention turned to NY. Regardless of their ethnic and national differences, the unity of the residents in New York on 9/11 left its mark on history. Although the New York World Trade Center had previously experienced an attack in 1993,<sup>106</sup> the destructiveness of that event cannot be compared to the one in 2001.

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<sup>104</sup> Michelle Balaev, *The Nature of Trauma in American Novels* (USA: Northwestern University Press, 2012), p. xv.

<sup>105</sup> It was reported that 189 people died in the Pentagon attacks. Christopher C. Kelly 'Forensic feat IDs nearly all Pentagon victims' in *DcMilitary.com* <[http://ww2.dcmilitary.com/dcmilitary\\_archives/stories/112901/12279-1.shtml](http://ww2.dcmilitary.com/dcmilitary_archives/stories/112901/12279-1.shtml)> [accessed 12 October 2013]

<sup>106</sup> On 26 February 1993, the World Trade Center was bombed. Six people died and several were injured in this attack.

Since neither New Yorkers nor people around the world were prepared for such unprecedented scenes of destruction on the North American mainland, the event created a giant change in people's behaviour and perceptions.

The atmosphere at the time of the attacks and their aftermath is captured by Michael Sorkin and Sharon Zukin:

The suddenness of our loss created a need to reach out, to talk and to pull together. Downtown we became part of a creative, public outpouring that was especially tangible at Union Square. [...] Acts of public goodwill and kindness flourished. Even the poorest gave something. [...] Greencard holders remarked how they felt "American" for the first time. This version of "we" — with millions of consolers — was genuine and true.<sup>107</sup>

From this explanation, it is clear that people in New York were indeed attached to the Twin Towers, but it would be fair to say that the degree of this attachment increased after the unexpected destruction in New York City. In other words, before 9/11 this sense of attachment was felt particularly strong among those who identified themselves with New York City. Here is the answer of a New Yorker when asked about the meaning of the Twin Towers: 'In my opinion, the Twin Towers of World Trade Center meant everything about New York City. It meant that you were in the greatest city in the world and the Financial Capital of the world'.<sup>108</sup> While it is without doubt that the attacks shook the country economically, they acquired a primarily symbolic significance since the World Trade Center had been regarded as 'the heart of the world financial system'.<sup>109</sup> Its destruction produced a change in spatial awareness. The place, which was once important as means of power at the time of the Twin Towers, became a zone of remembrance and was immediately named Ground Zero. 'On September 10<sup>th</sup>, this was 16 acres of real estate. A day later, it was sacred

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<sup>107</sup> Michael Sorkin and Sharon Zukin, *After the World Trade Center: Rethinking New York City* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 33.

<sup>108</sup> 'What did the Twin Towers mean to you?' in *Yahoo Answers* <<https://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20110811224724AApf4jH>> [accessed 10 September 2013]

<sup>109</sup> Floyd Norris, 'A Symbol was Destroyed, Not America's Financial System', *The New York Times*, 13 September 2001 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/13/business/a-symbol-was-destroyed-not-america-s-financial-system.html>> [accessed 10 August 2013]

ground. Sacred to the people who were killed here'.<sup>110</sup> The sight of the flattened Twin Towers doubtlessly affected the vast majority of people because they realized the extent to which 9/11 curtailed or changed many lives.

In addition to the disruption to the lives of grieving families, many people's daily routines were totally turned upside down as the familiar space formerly occupied by the World Trade Center was altered. So,

when these conditions are challenged, interrupted, de-routinized and violently disturbed, as they were on 9/11, 3/11 [the 2004 train bombings in Madrid], and 7/7 [the 2005 London Underground Station bombings], it poses physical, psychological and emotional challenges to the everydayness of city living'.<sup>111</sup>

The process of habituation was not easy for the citizens of New York and soon the difficulties of facing the aftermath of the events were felt nation-wide. To ease the burden of living through those post-traumatic days, 'Psychologists invited to TV programmes to tell the relatives of victims on how to cope with pain. "Share your pain with others, talk..."'.<sup>112</sup> Talking about the common pain and sharing the sorrow via television became one of the main cures. Therefore, those who were affected were not only people who lived through the events in person but also the ones who watched it happen live on TV and saw the subsequently repeated news coverage. Analysis after the attacks suggests that

The degree of psychological response to the September 11 attacks was not explained simply by degree of exposure or proximity to the trauma. Many individuals who lived hundreds of miles from the attacks or had low levels of exposure (i.e., individuals who watched the attacks live on TV and those who reported no direct exposure at all) reported high levels of symptomatology.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Jon Anderson, *Understanding Cultural Geography: Places and Traces* (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 180.

<sup>111</sup> Luke Howie, *Terrorism, the Worker and the City: Simulations and Security in a Time of Terror* (Surrey: Gower Publishing Limited, 2009), p. 37.

<sup>112</sup> Ashish Bose, 'Zeroing in on Ground Zero: Trauma of September 11', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 37 (2002), 1321-22 (p. 1321).

<sup>113</sup> Roxane Cohen Silver and others, 'Exploring the Myths of Coping with a National Trauma: A Longitudinal Study of Responses to the September 11th Terrorist Attacks' in *The Trauma of Terrorism*, ed. by Yael Danielli and others (Philadelphia: The Haworth Press, 2005), pp. 129- 41 (p. 139).

People who watched the demolition of the towers on television were not only viewers in America. Live coverage was also given by television channels worldwide, so that most of the planet's population was arguably following the momentous developments. To quote Smelser, 'It was a trauma to be sure but a trauma with a rare historical twist'.<sup>114</sup> The event's historical importance resulted in wider attention than usual being focused on the USA as a whole. In the aftermath, though there were some controversies surrounding the question of how to classify the psychological outcome of the events, many decided on defining it as trauma:

The term "trauma" and its variants have been heavily employed since the 9/11 attack. The events themselves have been labelled "traumatic," and persons wounded by the attacks have been described as "traumatized" and as vulnerable to "retraumatization" should further calamities occur. Moreover, individuals who experienced a particular amalgam of reactions, including flashbacks, intrusive memories, numbing, and nightmares, frequently have been diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder.<sup>115</sup>

While 'trauma' has been the term most widely consulted by those seeking to treat forms of psychological unease in the aftermath of the attacks, Karen Seeley observes a tendency to generalize the use of the term 'trauma' regardless of the degree of pain in such cases. And as a result of this process, according to Jack Rosenthal, the word 'victim' started to be used instead of 'patient' for each person who was somehow affected by the explosions:

"Victim" has been used freely to describe not only those lost but also those injured, displaced, financially ravaged, or subject to the psychic effects of 9/11 shock. [...] Therapists working with traumatized rescue workers learned that there is one word not to use: "patient"<sup>116</sup>

The amplification of the event has led to the enhancement of its status not only nationwide but worldwide. To say it differently, the differences between one individual's 9/11-related

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<sup>114</sup> Neil Smelser, 'September 11, 2001, as Cultural Trauma', in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, by Jeffrey Alexander and others (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), pp. 264-283 (p.268, 269).

<sup>115</sup> Karen M. Seeley, *Therapy after Terror: 9/11, Psychotherapists, and Mental Health* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 17.

<sup>116</sup> Jack Rosenthal, '9/11', *The New York Times*, 1 September 2002

<<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/09/01/magazine/01ONLANGUAGE.html>> [accessed 10 July 2012]

trauma and another's have tended to become lost in the collective memory of that eventful day.

It is an accepted fact that 'being a witness to a distressing event can be traumatizing, even in the absence of direct threat to self'.<sup>117</sup> In the case of the events of 9/11, regardless of whether one was personally involved in them or saw them on television, the feeling it gave was one of a total divorce from everyday reality and of fictitiousness since the explosions and process of destruction reminded most people of Hollywood films. It was inconceivable for a lot of people and that is why referring to it in terms of filmic representations helped them to understand the nature of the situation. Zizek explains this as 'the rationale of the often-mentioned association of the attacks with Hollywood disaster movies: the unthinkable which happened as the object of fantasy, so that, in a way, America got what it fantasized about, and that was the biggest surprise'.<sup>118</sup> What the nation underwent resulted in difficulty for many people, as it was 'unexpected, unpredicted, surprising, shocking, repulsive'.<sup>119</sup> Several psychologists claimed that sorrow dominated the aftermath of the attacks and that 'many thousands of people were traumatized, at all degrees of intensity and to degrees of transience or permanence'.<sup>120</sup> A survey of the psychological studies produced in the aftermath of 9/11 suggests that the events will never be totally erased from the minds of many individuals and the nation, so seared into the memory is the downward spiral of momentous events involving the destruction of iconic buildings, massive loss of civilian life and the contrast of fanatic terrorism, courage and humanitarianism. On one exceptional day of a traumatic nature the ordinary daily anxieties of modern city life gave place to bigger problems. It has been argued that

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<sup>117</sup> Patrick J. Bracken, 'Post-traumatic Anxiety' in *Trauma: Culture, Meaning and Philosophy* (London: Whurr Publishers, 2002), pp. 45-63 (p. 48).

<sup>118</sup> Slavoj Zizek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* (London: Verso, 2002), p. 16.

<sup>119</sup> Piotr Sztompka, 'Cultural Trauma: The Other Face of Social Change', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 449-66 (p. 452).

<sup>120</sup> Elisabeth Young-Bruhl, 'The Interpretation of an Architect's Dream: Relational Trauma and its Prevention', *Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society*, 8.1 (2003), 51-56 (p. 55).

after 9/11, New York was faced with the task of physical and psychical building. [...] The absent presence of the Twin Towers foregrounded the extent to which cities are invisible – founded on the spaces between things, the spaces where things once were.’<sup>121</sup>

In examining the dimensions of trauma associated with 9/11, Smelser counts several other reactions such as ‘solidarity, national mobilization, revenge, and glory’.<sup>122</sup> In keeping with these attitudes, in the aftermath of the attacks, American society shared a united spirit such as it had not known since the national outrage at the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, to which 9/11 was compared in the media. The nation galvanized around the idea that ‘The United States was attacked by some bad guys. We were attacked and, during that time on that day, this country became very close’.<sup>123</sup> The common sorrow was embraced by the majority of Americans and intensified national solidarity. As a result, there appeared several expressions of social unity, positing proper examples to people’s reactions in a collective trauma advocating various exemplary ways for people to respond to the unexpected crisis.<sup>124</sup> These ranged from the suggestion that people change their attitude in dealing with their neighborhood to proposals to construct different communities on the internet as well as in daily life. The aftermath of the events showed that the sense of solidarity was spread not only to the zones that were affected by the attacks, but throughout the United States:

Perhaps September 11 could be called the first historic world event in the strictest sense: the impact, the explosion, the slow collapse – everything that was not Hollywood anymore but, rather, a gruesome reality, literally took place in front of the “universal eye witnesses” of a global public.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Brian Jarvis, ‘New York, 9/11’, in *Urban Space and Cityscapes: Perspectives from Modern and Contemporary Culture*, ed. by Christopher Lindner (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 49-63 (p. 54).

<sup>122</sup> Neil Smelser, ‘Epilogue: September 11, 2001, as Cultural Trauma’, in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, ed. by Jeffrey Alexander and others (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), pp. 264-[2]83 (p. 268).

<sup>123</sup> Julie Fiedler, ‘Fort Riley Soldiers, Students, Communities Commemorate 9/11 during Freedom Walks’, in *Fort Riley* <[http://www.fortrileypost.com/newsdetail.asp?article\\_id=8572](http://www.fortrileypost.com/newsdetail.asp?article_id=8572)> [accessed 1 September 2012]

<sup>124</sup> This will be broadly discussed in the following chapter.

<sup>125</sup> Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror, Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 28.



Yet, although 9/11 is a recent event, it is nevertheless still possible to comment on its traumatic effects in comparison to those of earlier historical examples such as the Great War, the Holocaust and The Vietnam War. Indeed, the approach of the American government, media, and US citizens to the event has mostly involved related 9/11 with past instances of trauma. For months after 9/11, as Brian Jarvis noted five years later, ‘the traumatic wounding that left New York [...] was replayed in news reports, documentaries, films, video walls at globally broadcast concerts, photographs, paintings, graphic novels, street art and kitsch and memorabilia’.<sup>126</sup> These efforts at contextualization may be seen as part of an attempt to come to terms with the extent of the emotional destruction in New York, which was evident in the widespread and multi-focused reflection of the sorrow that still lingers today.

The truth of the remark that ‘trauma affects more than the individual’<sup>127</sup> is tested once again with the September 11 attacks. Though it is also possible for the individual to feel the necessity to be alone after a tragic event such as a major accident, disaster, or a shocking event, the opposite reaction may also be observed. That is, the person who is suffering, especially from grief at someone’s loss, can seek to interact with companions with whom to share and endure pain and to find consolation. The American Psychiatric Association nevertheless identifies the September 11 attacks as a more recent category in trauma studies, describing them as ‘intentional violence that involves high numbers of injuries or casualties – but does not occur in the context of war [...]’.<sup>128</sup> It is also added that, by way of an unexpected beneficial side-effect, the attacks ‘stimulated a dramatic increase in North American Research on the effective short term treatment of mass trauma’.<sup>129</sup>

The various events on 9/11 have turned out to be common grief in which almost every American citizen took part, at least in his or her imagination. Thus, the original sequence

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<sup>126</sup> Jarvis, p. 55.

<sup>127</sup> Deborah Antai-Otong, ‘Culture and Traumatic Event’, *Journal of the American Psychiatric Nurses Association*, 8.203 (2002), 203-08 (p. 205).

<sup>128</sup> John Briere and Catherine Scott, *Principles of Trauma Therapy: A Guide to Symptoms, Evaluation, and Treatment* (London: Sage Publications, 2006), p. 5.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

soon changed its profile to become almost exclusively New York's shared sorrow. Jack Saul writes that 'much of the discourse in New York City at the time was focused on individual stress reactions and PTSD'.<sup>130</sup> A year after the attacks, the atmosphere in downtown Manhattan was said to be that of a place with 'spontaneous memorials and "missing" notices replete with vital data and photographs [that] sprang up everywhere [...] A whole part of Manhattan had been turned into a cemetery'.<sup>131</sup> The face of the city led not only New Yorkers but also Americans and even other countries to question the meaning of American space and place. Namely, it 'irrevocably altered the spaces and consciousness of New York City [...] disrupting everyday lives, place attachment, and place identity for thousands'.<sup>132</sup> Much was written about the tragedy in the economic or social press, while in the world of literature there emerged a genre called the post-9/11 novel (or post-9/11 fiction).

## 7. Space and Trauma in Post-9/11 Literature

The aftermath of the attacks has led to unpleasant psychological consequences for a majority of people who were directly affected. The day of the attacks has been retold through various ways ranging from films, television series, and documentaries to novels and graphic novels, which even resulted in the discourse called 'Nine-Elevenism'.<sup>133</sup> Within this discourse that has been much in demand, 'in the past ten years, over 150 novels by American or non-

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<sup>130</sup> Jack Saul, *Collective Trauma, Collective Healing: Promoting Community Resilience in the Aftermath of Disaster* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 78.

<sup>131</sup> Andreas Hussyen, 'Twin Memories: After Images of Nine/Eleven' in *Grey Room*, 7 (2002), 8-13 (p. 9).

<sup>132</sup> SETHA M. LOW and DENISE LAWRENCE-ZUÑIGA, 'Locating Culture' in *The Anthropology of Space and Place: Locating Culture*, ed. by SETHA M. LOW and DENISE LAWRENCE-ZUÑIGA (Australia: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), pp. 1-48 (p. 37).

<sup>133</sup> This article deals with the representation and criticism of a wide range of things such as publications, political discussions, films, and psychological condition after 9/11 events. Juanjo Bermúdez de Castro, 'Nine-Elevenism', in *L'Atelier*: , <<http://acrh.revues.org/3572#tocto1n4>> accessed [22 August 2014]

American writers have fictionally re-enacted, reflected, or revised the dominant media narrative of “the day that changed everything”.<sup>134</sup>

The unexpected situation on September 11, 2001 required explanation and triggered considerable productivity on the part of novelists. Most of the authors attempt to express the viewpoint of participants either at the time or in retrospect and to give readers a sense of what happened. Jarvis claims that ‘much of the fiction and poetry after 9/11 converges at the ground zero of communication and thus seems to belong under that umbrella term “the literature of trauma”’.<sup>135</sup> Most post-9/11 novels reveal the traumatized condition of both the individual and the nation. While some of them deal with September 11 trauma in a familial framework,<sup>136</sup> some do reflect political issues.<sup>137</sup> Interestingly, the publication of numerous novels centred on 9/11 has contributed to the relationship between history, trauma and literature by authors not just from America but also from other countries.<sup>138</sup> The bridge between narratives of fiction and trauma theory gives the reader, especially the foreign reader, an opportunity to observe individuals’ experiences as well as to acquire a broad knowledge of the era. Therefore, literature enables the creation of a distinct zone where one’s experience is transformed through imaginary participation.

The writing of trauma fiction may be no easy task given the devastating experience that has imprisoned the individual and shattered his or her speech and psyche. Trauma narratives, which are ‘personalized responses’ to trauma can be ‘manifested in narrative.’<sup>139</sup> Therefore, trauma fiction requires the collaboration of reasoning and imagination if the

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<sup>134</sup> Birgitt Däwes, ‘Ground Zero Fiction: History, Memory, and Representation in the American 9/11 Novel’ in *Mainz Uni* <<http://www.uni-mainz.de/eng/15284.php>> [accessed 03 November 2013].

<sup>135</sup> Jarvis, (p. 58).

<sup>136</sup> Jay McInerney’s *The Good Life* (2006), Ken Kalfus’s *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* (2006), Don DeLillo’s *Falling Man* (2007), and Helen Schulman’s *A Day at the Beach* (2008) are among the novels that represent dysfunctional family life post 9/11.

<sup>137</sup> John Updike’s *Terrorist* (2006), Joseph O’Neill’s *Netherland* (2008), and Amy Waldman’s *The Submission* (2011) revolve around Muslim (immigrant) issues post 9/11.

<sup>138</sup> Frédéric Beigbeder’s *Windows on the World* (2005), Laila Halaby’s *Once in a Promised Land* (2007), and Kamila Shamsie’s *Burnt Shadows* (2009) are some of the novels written by non-American authors.

<sup>139</sup> Laurie Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction* (The University of Virginia Press, 2002), p. x.

author is to succeed in making the entire story appear as a convincing portrayal or echo of the all too credible event. It presupposes not only the survivor's realization of his or her own trauma but that of other participants as well. It involves the creation of an applied form of trauma that also takes account of 'the human consequences of socio-historical phenomena and the interconnections between public and private, the political and the psychological'.<sup>140</sup> The reader becomes the witness of a multi-faceted event through aesthetic representation. The distinct plot of every novel represents the extent of the human imagination and the author's choice from the wide and varied range of possible ways of conveying and experiencing trauma.

Despite differences in plot, the feeling common to all novels published after the attacks was the sense of unease created by the unexpectedness of the events. Authors such as Don DeLillo and Jay McInerney reflected their immediate opinions and feelings about the attacks as New Yorkers. Having witnessed the attacks from his apartment window, McInerney said: 'I don't know how I'm going to be able to go back to this novel I'm writing. The novel is set in New York, of course. The very New York, which has just been altered forever. [...] I have a feeling that everything will be "before" and "after" now'.<sup>141</sup> For the writer, the event was like the beginning of a new era and nothing would ever be the same again. Don DeLillo's approach, on the other hand, was more like a personal response at once praising both the city and the nation and reflecting upon the writer's duty:

We have to take the shock and horror as it is. But living language is not diminished. The writer wants to understand what this day has done to us. Is it too soon? [...] The writer begins in the towers, trying to imagine the moment, desperately. [...] The event asserts its singularity. There is something empty in the sky. The writer tries to give memory, tenderness, and meaning to all that howling space.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid, p. 221.

<sup>141</sup> Jay McInerney, 'Brightness Falls', in *The Guardian*, 15 September 2001  
<<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2001/sep/15/september11.usa1>> [accessed 2 December 2011]

<sup>142</sup> Don DeLillo, 'In the Ruins of Future', *Harper's Magazine*, December 2001, 33- 40 (p.39).

From their statements, it is evident that for both authors New York means a lot and the events of 9/11 provided a significant contribution to their output of novels. However, within the corpus of literary works written in post 9/11 and inspired by the terrorist attacks, the novels of these writers are notable for their ‘domesticated’ plots.<sup>143</sup> That is, the shock and trauma of the demolition of the towers is reflected in a familial context. Couples starting to question their lives and marriages are among the most common plots of post-9/11 trauma narrative. Richard Gray complains that here ‘sex, love, the public and the private, art and economics everything has changed, according to those writers who have offered preliminary testimony to 9/11 and its aftermath, from the material fabric of our lives to our terms of consciousness’.<sup>144</sup> The problem with such novels is their restricted scope by comparison with the magnitude of the terrorist onslaught and its political and human implications; they focus exclusively on the life of New York’s upper-class families and on their dysfunctional communication even among people of the same class.

There are, on the other hand, post September 11 novels that represent the aftermath of the attacks through treatment of either political or cultural issues as well as of the characters’ ties with different countries implying a global dimension.<sup>145</sup> In these novels the reader is informed about the cultural and political condition of survivors of the attacks but is also presented with representations of multifaceted trauma through a broader approach to dealing with the aftermath of a big crisis.

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<sup>143</sup> Richard Gray, ‘Open Doors, Closed Minds: American Prose Writing’, *American Literary History*, 21.1 (2009), 128-148 (p. 133).

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, (p. 131).

<sup>145</sup> Ian Mc Ewan’s *Saturday* (2005), Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), Nadeem Aslan’s *The Wasted Vigil* (2008), Amy Waldman’s *The Submission* (2011) and Nilüfer Kuyaş’s *Serbest Düşüş* are some of these novels.

## **8. Conclusion**

There are many ways to understand and explore the extents of either manmade or natural disasters. The after-effects of such disasters do not only appear physically but also psychologically, causing long-term psychological scars mostly diagnosed as trauma, in the mind and memories of victims. The degree of the traumatic wound mostly causes unexpected disturbances in the life of victims, sometimes even claiming the control of their lives by confusing the concepts of space and place. This psychological wound leaves the sufferers deprived of the feeling of time and place and offers them blurred memories of the past and a more complex present and even future. Such cases have been explained in the aftermath of several cataclysms throughout history.

Generally, what trauma victims mostly suffer is the emergence of disrupting flashbacks in dreams, sometimes as nightmares or as flashbacks during the day that distance victims away from reality. One example of this can be explained with the unmatched places that appear in the victims' memories, which do not exist, in real life or the on-going struggle in dreams to survive from an accident or trying to rescue someone else. Studies especially after 1980s diagnosed such disrupting psychological uneasiness as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Following the attacks on September 11, 2001 in New York City, several people suffered from PTSD due to the shocking images of the destruction in addition to the number of death toll, which is nearly three thousand. Several people who worked at World Trade Center as well as the ones who helped in the rescue process lost their lives.

In addition to the difficulty of coping with loss, there were also people who suffered from the city's new face without the Twin Tower blocks and there are still people who are still under the treatment of trauma. In order to convey what the country has been through, there have been made several documentaries, TV series, films in addition to the considerable number of fictional and non-fictional novels. Among the works of fiction, there are many

novels that portray the trauma experienced following the attacks and the selected novels in this thesis focus on how trauma is perceived within traumatic spaces and dealt in differing ways. Yet, despite the differing reactions and responses, the intrusion of traumatic memory into the lives of the characters shows similarities with real life experiences post-9/11. This has caused uneasiness and grief in the everyday space of the individuals, which resulted in the building of Ground Zero as an example of traumascapes.

## CHAPTER II

### *THE ROAD: POST-APOCALYPTIC TRAUMA*

#### 1. Introduction

The use of the notion of post-apocalypse has become popular in literature and cinema after the 9/11 attacks. A great majority of people in the U.S. and around the world who saw the attacks on television or witnessed them live in Manhattan were shocked that such a disaster was happening. Even years after, the devastating scenes of the destruction still survive in people's memories as many people likened the day and its aftermath to 'an apocalyptic world'.<sup>146</sup> While the events that befell on 9/11 are comparable to an apocalypse, the experience of the aftermath is worth considering as life in a post-apocalyptic world. The effect of this 'apocalyptic' fear and anxiety has resulted in the production of numerous films, songs, poems and novels. Among the literary pieces created after 9/11, Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Road* reflects the minds of many Americans as they felt as if they were living in an post-apocalyptic world in the aftermath of the attacks. The novel successfully depicts the condition of humankind in wake of a disastrous incident that causes not just material but also psychological destruction, and which provides the reader with an imaginary picture of a wasteland.

Like other literary critics, Richard Gray classifies *The Road* among the post-9/11 novels in his book *After the Fall*. Also, Aaron De Rosa suggests that it is difficult to read the novel 'outside the context of 9/11 literature'<sup>147</sup> despite the fact that the novel does not

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<sup>146</sup> 'Witness to Apocalypse', *The New York Times*, 8 September 2011  
<<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/08/us/sept-11-reckoning/escape.html?pagewanted=all>> [accessed 30 September 2014]

<sup>147</sup> Aaron DeRosa, 'Analyzing Literature after 9/11', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 57.3 (2011), 607-618 (p. 612).



explicitly refer to the attacks. However, the portrayal of a city devastated by an unknown cause in addition to the author's statement about why he decided to write this novel (which is given in the following pages) shows that it has contributed to the understanding of why 9/11 was (and still is) perceived as a post-apocalypse by some people even six years after the attacks. Soon after the attacks, reports were published showing that many people rushed to psychologists and psychiatrists to help them overcome the immense shock to which they were exposed.<sup>148</sup> Charles Strozier, a practising psychoanalyst in Manhattan, claims that 'after 9/11 many New Yorkers returned often to apocalyptic images to try and make sense out of their experiences'.<sup>149</sup> The fear and shock experienced during the unexpected event resulted in the survivors' minds conceiving it as one of the worst scenarios that could have happened.

Within this atmosphere, *The Road* is significant in two respects: firstly, the feeling of strong attachment to the home city is implicit in the constant evocation of spatial values and the remnants of a traumatic past; and secondly, the contrasting notion of hope is symbolized by the child figure within the traumatic spatiality of the post-apocalyptic world. In the analysis within the scope of the attitude especially in America after the demolition of the Twin Towers, 'The boy with no name' and his father both convey a sense of placelessness. The child may be seen as contributing to an illustration of the Foucauldian notion of heterotopia. This is evident through his potential to be a messenger of hope amid the bleak wasteland of Ground Zero, once more usually associated with despair, especially in America, but now both a memorial and symbol of regeneration.

The aim of this chapter is firstly to discuss the reactions and feelings of people in America, especially in New York, with particular focus on the so-called post-apocalypse,

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<sup>148</sup> See: Melissa Healey, '9/11 attacks lead to more study of post-traumatic stress disorder', *Los Angeles Times*, 5 September 2011 <<http://articles.latimes.com/2011/sep/05/health/la-he-911-ptsd-20110905>> [accessed 10 April 2013]; 'David Spiegel on 9/11 and post-traumatic stress disorder', in *Stanford Medicine News Center*, 5 September 2006 <<http://med.stanford.edu/news/all-news/2006/09/david-spiegel-on-911-and-post-traumatic-stress-disorder.html>> [accessed 10 April 2013].

<sup>149</sup> Charles Strozier, *Until the Fires Stopped Burning* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 102.

space, place, trauma and hope experienced in society. To illustrate these, following a biographical note on the author and summary of the novel, this chapter continues with the post-apocalyptic perceptions of the 9/11 attacks in the U.S. in the light of the introductory information about apocalypse and post-apocalypse. It then examines the relationship between *The Road* and its references to 9/11 in political, psychological and societal terms. Thirdly, this chapter focuses on the traumatic incidents that befall the protagonists together with sensuous and/or tactile aspects of space and place. Lastly, it deals with the theme of heterotopia and the parallel theme of hope that has become widespread following the 9/11 attacks.

## 2. The Author and the Novel

The American novelist Cormac McCarthy was born on 20 July, 1933, in Providence, Rhode Island, which is one of the oldest cities in the United States. He started his literary career with the publishing of two stories between 1957 and 1959, and before long, he had produced his first two novels *The Orchard Keeper* in 1965 and *Outer Dark* in 1968, both of which received good reviews. After these, he continued to publish books in every following decade.<sup>150</sup> Other than his novels, he has also written plays and screenplays. The author travelled and lived for a while in Europe. However, he ‘has not set a novel outside the Americas, though his Westerners are set both in Mexico and the United States and liberally use Spanish dialogue’.<sup>151</sup> Generally, his novels draw a bleak world owing to the dominant use of violence and death that may disturb some readers.

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<sup>150</sup> The rest of McCarthy’s publications are as follows: *Child of God* (1973), *Suttree* (1979), *Blood Meridian or The Evening Redness in the West* (1985), *All The Pretty Horses* (1992), The Border Trilogy: *The Crossing* (1994), *Cities of The Plain* (1998), *No Country for Old Men* (2005) and *The Road* (2006).

<sup>151</sup> ‘Biography of Cormac McCarthy’, in *Critical Insights: Cormac McCarthy*, ed. by David N. Cremean, (Massachusetts: Salem Press, 2013), pp. 18-25 (p. 19).

In one of his interviews, McCarthy declared that ‘there is no such thing as life without bloodshed’.<sup>152</sup> And in 2005 he reiterated the point: ‘death is the major issue in the world. For you, for me, for all of us. It just is. To not be able to talk about it is very odd’.<sup>153</sup> With the predominance of dark themes in all his works, he is also regarded as ‘the great pessimist of American literature, using his dervish sentences to illuminate a world in which almost everything (including punctuation) has already come to dust’.<sup>154</sup> Perhaps unsurprisingly, therefore, the apocalyptic tone is a central feature of all McCarthy’s books.

Throughout his writing career, McCarthy has received several awards.<sup>155</sup> His works have also attracted considerable attention in the media worldwide. *Blood Meridian* was listed among the hundred best English-language novels published since 1923.<sup>156</sup> Some of the author’s novels have also been adapted for the screen, the film versions receiving high levels of interest.

Cormac McCarthy’s tenth novel *The Road*, which was also adapted to film in 2009, has been regarded one of the best examples of post-apocalyptic fiction. Published in 2006, it almost immediately aroused huge attention. It was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2007 and has been mentioned in prominent newspapers and magazines. It is listed as the best read of the last twenty-five years according to *Entertainment Weekly*,<sup>157</sup> while the *New York Times* hails it as ‘an exquisitely bleak incantation — pure poetic brimstone’.<sup>158</sup> Different from Cormac McCarthy’s previous novels, it ‘marks a turn from his Western and

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<sup>152</sup> Richard B. Woodward, ‘Cormac McCarthy’s Venomous Fiction’, *The New York Times*, 19 April 1992 <<http://www.nytimes.com/books/98/05/17/specials/mccarthy-venom.html>> [accessed 10 September 2013]

<sup>153</sup> Richard B. Woodward, ‘Cormac Country’, *Vanity Fair*, August 2005, pp. 103-104.

<sup>154</sup> Tim Adams, ‘Cormac McCarthy: America’s Great Poetic Visionary’, *The Guardian*, 20 December 2009, <<http://www.theguardian.com/theobserver/2009/dec/20/observer-profile-cormac-mccarthy>> [accessed 18 August 2013].

<sup>155</sup> McCarthy won National Book Award and National Book Critics Circle Award for *All The Pretty Horses* (1992); Pulitzer Prize (2007) and James Tait Black Memorial Prize for Fiction for *The Road* (2006).

<sup>156</sup> Richard Lacayo, ‘All-Time 100 Novels’, *Time*, 6 January 2010 <<http://entertainment.time.com/2005/10/16/all-time-100-novels/slide/how-we-picked-the-list/>> [accessed 10 August 2014]

<sup>157</sup> ‘The New Classics: Books’, *Entertainment Weekly*, 18 June 2007, <<http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,20207349,00.html>> [accessed 8 August, 2013]

<sup>158</sup> Janet Maslin, ‘The Road through Hell, Paved with Desperation’, *The New York Times*, 25 September, 2006 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/25/books/25masl.html?r=0>> [accessed 20 December 2013]

Southern story-telling to a deviation of post-apocalyptic tale'.<sup>159</sup> The author's previous novels *The Orchard Keeper* (1965), *Child of God* (1973), and *Suttree* (1979) were set in Tennessee, the birthplace of the author, during various decades of the twentieth century,<sup>160</sup> and in *Blood Meridian*, *Border Trilogy* and *No Country for Old Men*, the writer turns his attention to the American West. However, *The Road* has little in common with these two groups of novels as here the writer has not only shifted from his usual style but also changed the setting and time-frame. The novel also differs from McCarthy's previous ones in that it features a world 'in which civilization leaves his characters, for once, McCarthy's protagonist is not a drifter.'<sup>161</sup> Although the themes of death and bleakness are also treated in almost all of his novels, *The Road* is the one that marks their highest expression.

*The Road* does not consist of parts, yet small sections like blank spaces divide the pages and generally the sections follow one another coherently despite intermittent disruptions due to flashbacks or the protagonist's inner monologue. With regard to punctuation, the novel has a unique approach. While contracted spoken forms such as 'I'm, it's, let's, he'll' are conventionally written with a separating apostrophe, the contracted negatives 'didn't, couldn't, can't' stay unseparated. The author explicitly claims that in this respect his style resembles that of James Joyce: 'James Joyce is a good model for punctuation. He keeps it to an absolute minimum. There's no reason to blot the page up with weird little marks. I mean, if you write properly you shouldn't have to punctuate'.<sup>162</sup> Further, he says that he uses no semicolons because his manner of writing 'believes in periods, in capitals, in the occasional

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<sup>159</sup> Lindsay Parnell, 'Cormac McCarthy: Reinventing the Southern Gothic', in *The Culture Trip*, <<http://theculturetrip.com/north-america/usa/texas/articles/cormac-mccarthy-reinventing-the-southern-gothic/>> [accessed 10 October 2013]

<sup>160</sup> *The Orchard Keeper* is set in the inter-war period. *Child of God* is set in the 1960s. *Suttree* is set in the early 1950s.

<sup>161</sup> Scott Esposito, 'Cormac McCarthy's Paradox of Choice: One Writer, Ten Novels and a Career-Long Obsession', in *The Quarterly Conversation* <<http://quarterlyconversation.com/cormac-mccarthy-essay-the-orchard-keeper/>> [accessed 10 September 2013]

<sup>162</sup> Josh Jones, 'Cormac McCarthy's Three Punctuation Rules, and How They All Go Back to James Joyce', in *OpenCulture.com*, 13 August 2013 <<http://www.openculture.com/2013/08/cormac-mccarthys-punctuation-rules.html>> [accessed 20 September 2014]

comma, and that's it. In the drive for clear communication all the punctuation signs used are intended to make it easier, not to make it harder'.<sup>163</sup>

Throughout the novel, the reader finds her/himself in an indeterminate setting possibly somewhere in the U.S. at an unspecified time. The absence of any exact time-frame, location or explanation for the preliminary catastrophe is a crucial aspect of the novel. It is reminiscent of Walt Whitman's poem *This Compost*, which starts with the line: 'Something startles me where I thought I was safest'.<sup>164</sup> While the author conveys the message and feeling that what the reader is going to read is predominantly pessimistic in tone, the novel is nevertheless written in a style that increases the reader's appetite and curiosity. Though the author explicitly evokes a devastated past, there are still surprises and unexpected details, either hopeful or dreadful, that hold the reader's attention. Also, as in his previous works and interviews, McCarthy approaches savagery and death as things that can happen to anyone at any time. Therefore, his choice of an indeterminate setting where time, place, and the cause of the destruction are unspecified can be seen as an attempt to suggest the universality of his themes. The destruction that has happened in the 'open country'<sup>165</sup> can happen to any country.

The novel is eminently readable with its short and clear sentences and it engages the reader till the end. A third-person narrator tells the story yet, most of the time, the father's voice provides a parallel 'incantatory'<sup>166</sup> narrative. Throughout the narration, the reader can easily identify with the father's feelings. The title of the novel might bring to mind an adventure story. While this might be true for some because though reluctantly, sometimes the father and the boy need to look out for food and some water to stay alive. It is probably

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Walt Whitman, 'This Compost', *Leaves of Grass* (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1900), poem n° 159, available in *Poets.org* <<http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/compost>> [accessed 4 November 2014]. First published in 1856 under the title of 'Poem of Wonder at The Resurrection of The Wheat'.

<sup>165</sup> Cormac McCarthy, *The Road* (London: Picador, 2006), p. 6.

<sup>166</sup> Richard Crownshaw, 'Deterritorializing the "Homeland" in American Studies and American Fiction after 9/11', *Journal of American Studies*, 45 (2011), 757- 76 (p. 772).

in this sense that, Michael Chabon argues that ‘the adventure story in both its modern and epic forms [...] structures the narrative.’<sup>167</sup> In the wake of an undefined cataclysm that has transformed nature into a bleak and barren land, two unnamed protagonists, a father and his young son, head on a journey, as they follow a route leading to an unknown south, hoping to encounter some remains of the lost civilization or to shelter in a coastal place where the climate is expected to be less harsh.

The father and his son are not alone in the early stages of the narrative as they are initially accompanied by an unnamed woman, who is the man’s wife and the boy’s mother, but who leaves them when her son is still very young and is now presumed dead. The man’s flashbacks indicate that her desertion was motivated by depression at the bleak, post-apocalyptic world in which they lived. Her absence is quite a traumatic issue, especially for the man, and leaves the father and son to walk continuously in the bleak roads of nothingness and reinforces the impression of a dreary, meaningless world through which the two are travelling.

Although the reader learns that the places they pass by were once very familiar to the father, they have acquired a completely different aspect since the unknown calamity. In the new, post-apocalyptic era, ‘[there was] no sign of life anywhere. It was no country that he knew. The names of the towns or the rivers’.<sup>168</sup> Among the effects of the massively destructive cataclysm visited upon the world that the father and son inhabit is climate change. They neither have enough equipment to stay safe under the harsh weather conditions nor to defend themselves against cannibals, thieves and killers. Still under these conditions, they aim to be ‘good guys’. The father only resorts to violence when he needs to protect his son from threats, and even at these life-threatening moments the boy is still in favour of keeping peaceful and remain the good guys:

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<sup>167</sup> Michael Chabon, ‘After the Apocalypse’, *The New York Review of Books*, 15 February 2007.

<sup>168</sup> McCarthy, *The Road*, p. 216. The last fragmentary phrase quoted obviously implies that the (ruined) towns and rivers are now so unrecognisable that they can no longer be identified.

You wanted to know what the bad guys looked like. Now you know. It may happen again. My job is to take care of you. I was appointed to do that by God. I will kill anyone who touches you. Do you understand?  
 Yes.  
 [...] After a while he looked up. Are we still the good guys? he said.  
 Yes. We're still the good guys.  
 And we always will be.  
 Yes. We always will be.  
 Okay.<sup>169</sup>

Since the novel frequently features similar dialogues, for Carole Judge, it 'operates as a vector for human decrepitude, where boundaries and morality are being reflected'.<sup>170</sup> It serves to test humanity's moral values even when the world is closest to its end. Therefore, it is possible to deduce that, despite the depressing setting of the novel, Cormac McCarthy's ultimately positive message is that, at best, moral values may remain unchanged, no matter what the circumstances. And he tries to give that message by featuring the existence of a child figure, traditionally accepted as the symbol of innocence and messenger of the purest intentions and emotions.

### 3. 9/11 as Apocalypse and Post-apocalypse

I had a dream, which was not all a dream.  
 The bright sun was extinguish'd, and the stars  
 Did wander darkling in the eternal space,  
 ...

Morn came and went—and came, and brought no day,  
 And men forgot their passions in the dread  
 Of this their desolation; and all hearts  
 Were chill'd into a selfish prayer for light  
 ...

The habitations of all things which dwell,  
 Were burnt for beacons; cities were consum'd,  
 ...

A fearful hope was all the world contain'd;  
 Forests were set on fire—but hour by hour

<sup>169</sup> McCarthy, *The Road*, p. 80.

<sup>170</sup> Carole Judge, 'Biography of Cormac McCarthy' in *Cormac McCarthy: Critical Insights*, ed. by David Cremean (Massachusetts: Salem Press, 2013), pp.18-25 (p. 23).

...  
 Famine had written Fiend. The world was void,  
 The populous and the powerful was a lump,  
 Seasonless, herbless, treeless, manless, lifeless—  
 A lump of death—a chaos of hard clay.  
 The rivers, lakes and ocean all stood still,  
 And nothing stirr'd within their silent depths;  
 Ships sailorless lay rotting on the sea,  
 ...  
 The winds were wither'd in the stagnant air,  
 And the clouds perish'd; Darkness had no need  
 Of aid from them—She was the Universe.<sup>171</sup>

The English literary critic James Wood argues that ‘in addition to the 9/11 novel, [...] an old genre has been reawakened by new fears: the post-apocalyptic novel’.<sup>172</sup> Though the genre has been known since 1826, the attacks on New York and Washington in September 2001 have revived the use of it. Additionally, since 9/11, more than fifty post-apocalyptic films have been produced.<sup>173</sup> Taken together, the total number of books and films on the re-emerging theme produced since 2001 suggests the immensity of the fear experienced on that day and on those following. One of the best ways to understand the extent of public anxiety during and after the events in question is to consult psychological sources.

The psychoanalyst Charles B. Strozier, who is also the author of *Until The Fires Stopped Burning*,<sup>174</sup> expresses his view that the events of 9/11, ‘where the fires were not entirely put out until Dec. 20, 2001’,<sup>175</sup> cannot be called apocalyptic but that the experience of it can. Having conducted several interviews with people who saw the attacks, he has come to the conclusion that

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<sup>171</sup> Lord Byron, ‘Darkness’, *Poems* (London: George Routledge and Sons, [n.p.]) p. 369.

<sup>172</sup> James Wood, ‘Cormac McCarthy’s The Road’, in *The Fun Stuff and Other Essays* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2013), Amazon Kindle e-book.

<sup>173</sup> Lecturer Sue Weaver Schopf explains that ‘there have been fifty post-apocalyptic films produced in the last three years alone.’ Sue Weaver Schopf, ‘The Post-apocalyptic Novel and Film’, in *Harvard Extension School Lectures*, 7 September 2013  
 <[http://cm.dce.harvard.edu/2014/01/14194/L01/index\\_H264SingleAudioOnly.shtml](http://cm.dce.harvard.edu/2014/01/14194/L01/index_H264SingleAudioOnly.shtml)> [accessed 1 August 2014]

<sup>174</sup> It is significant to mention about this book as Strozier writes about the experiences of people who either experienced or witnessed the attacks of 9/11. Based on the attacks, he also compares the experience of people in other worldwide events such as Holocaust, Hiroshima and Katrina.

<sup>175</sup> Charles B. Strozier, *Until the Fires Stopped Burning: 9\11 and New York City in the Words and Experiences of Survivors and Witnesses* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 140.



Indeed, the culture of fear that emerged out of 9/11 has to be understood in the context of our apocalyptic experience, as much as the event itself. Because it was so intense, so awful, such a surprise and so totalistic, our experience of it was apocalyptic. But we have to distinguish between what the event actually was and our experience of it. Psychologically, the felt experience of the people within the disaster was that it was an apocalyptic event. It was not: it was monumental, and it was an apocalyptic experience, but it was not an apocalyptic event.<sup>176</sup>

Strozier here states an objective and a quite clear comment on what apocalyptic feeling and an apocalyptic event is. He suggests that there should be no confusion between the perception and the phenomenon, which is rather unmistakable. His mild opposition to the perception of 9/11 as an apocalyptic event is also related to the nuclear age:

Apocalyptic dread is a new thing in the nuclear age, because we no longer need God to end things: We can end the world, and we know it. Therefore, nuclear weapons changed us psychologically in ways that we're just beginning to understand. It's one of the intriguing but terrifying aspects of 9/11. 2,479 people were killed. I hate to say it, but there have been events where far more were killed. So it's not the numbers that were lost that makes 9/11 so huge. It's when it happened and how it happened and our experience of it that led to such an incredible psychological and political perfect storm after 9/11.<sup>177</sup>

Strozier's interpretation is highly illuminating as it matches society's general impression and reaction. It even helps to empathize with Cormac McCarthy and to understand his intention in writing *The Road*. In the light of the psychoanalyst's observation, the author's opinion about the perception of the cataclysm proves to be not so different from that of the general public. Like the majority, the writer also thinks that apocalyptic imagination has developed and changed its form in the aftermath of 9/11. In an interview made five years after the attacks, the clinical psychologist Randall Marshall stated that 'many of our patients' experiences had an apocalyptic nature: They not only thought their own lives were in danger, but that their entire community.'<sup>178</sup> Similarly, on the tenth anniversary of September 11 it

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<sup>176</sup> Charles B. Strozier, interviewed by Pythia Peay, in *Huffingtonpost.com* <[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/pythia-peay/psychology-of-911\\_b\\_946731.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/pythia-peay/psychology-of-911_b_946731.html)> [accessed 10 October 2013]

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> 'Gaps in Mental Health Care Seen After Terrorist Attacks', in *In Vivo: The Newsletter of Columbia University Medical Center* 5. 4 (2006) <[http://www.cumc.columbia.edu/publications/in-vivo/september\\_october\\_2006/9\\_11\\_research.html](http://www.cumc.columbia.edu/publications/in-vivo/september_october_2006/9_11_research.html)> [accessed 10 October 2013]

was anticipated that ‘emotional trauma will be part of the vicissitudes of daily life for many people, particularly those who are most vulnerable’.<sup>179</sup> It is possible to infer that, for many individuals, this long-lasting emotional trauma resulting from the apocalyptic experience of 9/11 is likely to endure for many years and will continue to interrupt their daily lives.

In the literary world some writers also drew attention to the apocalyptic side of the events. For example, Berger wrote that ‘Just after the destruction, people spoke in apocalyptic terms’.<sup>180</sup> Ian McEwan echoes this sentiment when he says, ‘Yesterday’s apocalyptic scenes far outstripped anything Hollywood has ever imagined. Amid the confusion, only one thing seemed certain [...] the world would never be the same again’.<sup>181</sup> The impression that the event has left has resulted in some people sharing a common feeling that the term ‘apocalypse’ has come to best define that day, as Joseph O’Neill has also stated in *The Netherland*. O’Neill conveys the sense of apocalypse through his Dutch protagonist Hans as he experiences mixed feelings in the city of New York, to which he has moved from London. His picture of the new face of the city explicitly renders his startled condition following the attacks:

Very little about anything seemed intelligible or certain, and New York itself—that ideal source of the metropolitan diversion that serves as a response to the largest futilities – took on a fearsome, monstrous nature whose reality might have befuddled Plato himself. We were trying, [...] to avoid what might be termed a historic mistake. We were trying to understand, that is, whether we were in a preapocalyptic situation, like the European Jews in the thirties or the last citizens of Pompeii, or whether our situation was merely near-apocalyptic, like that of the Cold War inhabitants of New York, London, Washington, and for that matter, Moscow.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Jeffrey A. Lieberman and Yuval Neria, ‘Coping With Disaster: The Mental Health Effects of Trauma’, in *Brain Tumour Survivor* <<http://www.btsurvivor.com/bb/viewtopic.php?f=5&t=1922&start=240&view=print>> [accessed 1 November 2014]

<sup>180</sup> James Berger, ‘There is no Backhand to This’, in *Trauma at Home After 9/11*, ed. by Judith Greenberg (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), pp. 52-59 (p. 56).

<sup>181</sup> Ian McEwan, ‘Beyond Belief’, *The Guardian*, 12 September 2001 <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/sep/12/september11.politicsphilosophyandsociety>> [accessed 12 December 2013]

<sup>182</sup> Joseph O’Neill, *Netherland* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2008), p. 29.

Here, while the author emphasizes that those events in history had quasi-apocalyptic effects, the impression of the aftermath of the attacks was no different and would rank alongside the earlier historic events. Similar comparisons were also made in the very early days after the attacks. In one article, the architecture critic Herbert Muschamp wrote:

As I gazed down on Lower Manhattan from the 44<sup>th</sup> floor of a residential highrise, the scene brought to mind Karl Brulloff's "Last Day of Pompeii." The small figures below, running north through Foley Square, evoked the frozen panic of fossilized Romans trapped by ash as they fled the eruption of Vesuvius.<sup>183</sup>

Though seven years separate the two articles, the feeling of shocked awe that they express evidently remains the same. Although this reaction was inevitably first conveyed via the media, it has been most fully developed in narrative literature and, in film. One of the stories in Ulrich Baer's collection published a year after the attacks also draws attention to a sense of fear that is close to the horror described by O'Neill:

Coming up the West side Highway is a post-apocalyptic exodus, men and women wandering north, walking up the center of the road, following the white lines, one foot in front of the other, mechanized.<sup>184</sup>

The above examples illustrate the obvious extent to which many authors' works reflect real-life, post-apocalyptic sensations in the aftermath of the attacks. The traumatic spaces in witnesses' experience have continued to be represented in some of the novels as post-apocalyptic traumascapes.

#### **4. *The Road* as a Response to 9/11**

The mesmerizing apocalyptic view of 9/11 was and is shared by people who personally

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<sup>183</sup> Herbert Muschamp, 'Art/Architecture; Filling the Void: A Chance to Soar', *The New York Times*, 30 September 2001 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/30/arts/art-architecture-filling-the-void-a-chance-to-soar.html>> [accessed 5 February 2015]

<sup>184</sup> A. M. Homes, 'We All Saw It, or the View from Home' in *110 Stories: New York Writes after September 11*, ed. by Ulrich Baer (New York: New York University Press), pp. 151-153 (p. 153).

witnessed the fall of the towers and by the masses that rushed to watch it on television. It is in this respect that *The Road* shows similarities with the anxieties that appeared after the attacks and that symbolize ‘America’s fear of “falling” in the post 9/11 era’.<sup>185</sup> As in post-apocalyptic films, people ran to escape from the disaster while finding it hard to believe that it could be happening. Several critics have linked the mass panic of New Yorkers on 9/11 with various aspects of the story line of *The Road*. While thousands of people were obsessed by the images after the demolition of the towers for several months and some even for years, the Iraq war in the aftermath triggered and contributed to the fear and shock. Below, some critics’ ideas are indicated in order to lay out different perspectives about the link between *The Road* and September 11.

James Berger opines that ‘apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic representations serve varied psychological and political purposes’.<sup>186</sup> *The Road* is no exception in this respect. Not very long after the release of the novel, there criticisms did not only draw attention to the novel’s psychological content but also to its political content. Moreover, the arguments may also remind one of the disruption of the dominant belief that America is a superpower<sup>187</sup>. In addition, one of the questions raised upon the sudden decline was: ‘Is optimism, one of the defining pillars of the American character, on the wane?’<sup>188</sup> According to what McCarthy said in Oprah Winfrey’s show in the following pages show that he seems to be among the people who believed on America’s superpower but later appalled with the 9/11 attacks. Interestingly, the unspecified reason of the cataclysm in *The Road* may be a reference to the

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<sup>185</sup> Veronique Bragard, Christophe Donny and Warren Rosenberg, ‘Introduction’ in *Portraying 9/11: Essays on Representations in Comics, Literature, Film and Theatre*, ed. by Veronique Bragard, Christophe Donny and Warren Rosenberg (North Carolina: McFarland Publishers, 2011), p. 4

<sup>186</sup> Berger, *After the End*, p. 7.

<sup>187</sup> America is defined as the superpower in this article. Gregor Peter Schmitz, ‘Bush’s Tragic Legacy: How 9/11 Triggered America’s Decline’, *Spiegel Online International*, 9 September 2011 <<http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/bush-s-tragic-legacy-how-9-11-triggered-america-s-decline-a-785405.html>> [accessed 22 May 2015]

<sup>188</sup> Ted Anthony, ‘After 9/11, Searching For American Optimism’, *Associated Press*, 11 September 2011 <[http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2011/09/after\\_911\\_searching\\_for\\_amer.html](http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2011/09/after_911_searching_for_amer.html)> [accessed 22 May 2015]

elusiveness and shocking aspect of the attacks. Some critics also mentioned the further worries that the novel includes as stated in the following paragraphs.

John Cant writes on how the novel fits into the post-9/11 context. He considers it in both local and universal terms and states that, ‘The apocalyptic tone of the novel reflects the mood of America following the destruction of the World Trade Centre (if not its religiosity) just as Cormac McCarthy’s *Blood Meridian* reflected the mood generated by the Vietnam War’.<sup>189</sup> He also observes that ‘*The Road* seems to reflect the mood of fear that has permeated the Western mind in the first decade of the twenty-first century’.<sup>190</sup> As for the resemblance of the novel to the recent political and global occurrences, he refers to the attack on the Twin Towers, the war in Iraq, the fear associated with Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay and the natural disaster of Hurricane Katrina.<sup>191</sup> Chris Walsh deals with *The Road* in a broad perspective ranging from political to spatial considerations. Politically, he puts forward reasons for making a connection between the novel and the attacks. He argues that *The Road* evokes

the bleak sensibility prevailing in post-September 11 America, the sorry mess of a war in Iraq which represents a grim note on the history of American exceptionalism, the specter of global warming and ecological disaster, and the implications of economic globalization and trans-nationalism.<sup>192</sup>

His references to the Iraq war can be linked to the widespread use of ‘bad guys’ that ‘infiltrated our national conversation [...] as a testament to the ways trauma has warped the nation’.<sup>193</sup> The two protagonists’ determination to uphold righteousness against the evil of the post-apocalyptic world may have been intended to imply that ‘from here forward, it is

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<sup>189</sup> John Cant, *Cormac McCarthy and the Myth of American Exceptionalism* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 331.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>192</sup> Chris Walsh, ‘The Post-Southern Sense of Place in *The Road*’, *Cormac McCarthy Journal*, 6 (2008), 48-54 (p. 53).

<sup>193</sup> Christopher Hayes, ‘After Osama bin Laden’s Death, an End to Bad Guys’, *The Nation*, 4 May 2011 <<http://www.thenation.com/article/160405/end-bad-guys#>> [accessed 20 October 2013]

the bad guys who need to be afraid every waking moment.’<sup>194</sup> Here, the use of bad guys is interesting as in *The Road*, it also refers to the boy’s desire and determination not to be the bad guys.

Among the various reactions to the attacks expressed by writers and critics, that of Cormac McCarthy provides arguably one of the strongest links between the events and literature. In his very first interview on television, responding to Oprah Winfrey’s comment ‘If we had read this book twenty-five or twenty years ago, it would have seemed futuristic, but something about it feels ominous and real’,<sup>195</sup> McCarthy replied, ‘You know, I think it is maybe since 9/11 that people’s emotions are more concerned about apocalyptic issues, we are not used to that’.<sup>196</sup> Additionally, when Winfrey asked him ‘Had you not had this son at this time, this book wouldn’t have been written?’,<sup>197</sup> the author replied ‘No. Absolutely not. Never would it have occurred to me to write, try to write a book about a father and a son’.<sup>198</sup> Such statements from a quiet and ‘media shy’<sup>199</sup> author such as McCarthy are significant, suggesting how greatly the attacks have affected him and augmented his parental anxiety for his son. Particularly prominent among reviewers of the novel are fathers who emphasize the impact of the book on their relationships with their sons.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, ‘Foreign Affairs, Talk Later’, 28 September, 2001 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/28/opinion/foreign-affairs-talk-later.html>> [accessed 20 January 2012] and to echo George W. Bush’s demotic turn of phrase in reaction to news of the attack on Twin Towers, see <<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/dramatic-account-president-george-w-4204123>> [accessed 25 March 2014]

<sup>195</sup> Cormac McCarthy, interviewed by Oprah Winfrey, *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, 5 June 2007 <[http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xb74sg\\_cormac-mccarthy-bombs-on-the-oprah\\_creation](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xb74sg_cormac-mccarthy-bombs-on-the-oprah_creation)> [accessed 20 June 2014]

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Judge, p. 18.

<sup>200</sup> Please see reader contributions in the following pages:

Joe Fassler, ‘Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* May Have the Scariest Passage in All of Literature’, *The Atlantic*, 14 May 2013 <<http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2013/05/cormac-mccarthys-i-the-road-i-may-have-the-scariest-passage-in-all-of-literature/275834/>> [accessed 20 July 2013]; ‘It’s 2:48 AM. Just finished *The Road*. Don’t know what to do with myself. Even having watched the movie first, I wasn’t ready for this shit.’, in *Reddit.com*, 25 September 2014 <[http://www.reddit.com/r/books/comments/2g9ste/its\\_248\\_am\\_just\\_finished\\_the\\_road\\_dont\\_know\\_what/](http://www.reddit.com/r/books/comments/2g9ste/its_248_am_just_finished_the_road_dont_know_what/)> [accessed 27 September 2014]; Scott Berkun, ‘Book review: *The Road*, by Cormac McCarthy’, in *Scottberkun.com*, 14 January 2010 <<http://scottberkun.com/2010/book-review-the-road/>> [accessed 20 September 2013]

The unexpected events of 9/11 also resulted in the emergence of an unusual kind of behaviour in terms of growing expectations from the future. People started to develop differing senses such as ‘guilt, anger or radical hope as a way of ‘using’ the event in the life continued.’<sup>201</sup> Moreover, the feelings and thoughts might even be in favour of ‘a simple narrative of global hope: hope that we can learn, hope that we can improve, hope that we can make the world a better place.’<sup>202</sup> The differentiations and labelling between good and bad gained more significance due to the case of increasing vulnerability in the aftermath of the attacks. This matter has brought about special importance on the children. That is, throughout the USA there has been even more attention to children than previously as symbols of hope. Peter Pufall and Richard Unsworth note this growing tendency in the media:

Mass media now reach into children’s lives in an unanticipated way. [...] This public tragedy has alerted us all – scholars, parents, public policymakers, and politicians alike – to the reality that the lives of children are no longer bounded by their homes, schools, or neighbourhoods.<sup>203</sup>

Sorrow and anxiety resulted in a sense of hope that has become a dominant feeling in post-9/11 United States. American popular culture in the last decade or so has been saturated with determinedly upbeat news like ‘American Musician turns 9/11 grief into musical hope’,<sup>204</sup> gloom-defying books with titles like *Faces of Hope: Babies Born on 9/11*, by Christine Naman,<sup>205</sup> or a documentary film named *Reclaiming Hope in a Changed World*,<sup>206</sup> all of which reflect the increasing desire for hope after the attacks. Significantly, the note on

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<sup>201</sup> James Brassett, ‘Cosmopolitan Sentiments after 9-11? Trauma and the Politics of Vulnerability’, *Journal of Critical Globalisation Studies*, 2 (2010), pp. 12-29 (p.16).

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Peter B. Pufall and Richard P. Unsworth, ‘The Imperative and the Process for Rethinking Childhood’, in *Rethinking Childhood*, ed. by Peter B. Pufall and Richard P. Unsworth (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004), pp. 1-21 (p. 3).

<sup>204</sup> ‘American musician turns 9/11 grief into musical hope’, in *Blog.al.com*, 2 September 2013 <[http://blog.al.com/wire/2013/09/american\\_musician\\_turns\\_911\\_gr.htm](http://blog.al.com/wire/2013/09/american_musician_turns_911_gr.htm)> [accessed 2 February 2014]

<sup>205</sup> Christine Naman, *Faces of Hope: Babies born on 9/11* (Florida: Health Communications Inc., 2002)

<sup>206</sup> *Reclaiming Hope in a Changed World*, directed by Robert Parish (2002, American Psychological Association, 2002), VHS.

the back cover of Naman's book, *Faces of Hope*, features Carl Sandburg's words about babies as a hope-inspiring symbol: 'A baby is God's opinion that the world should go on'.<sup>207</sup>

There are also families who, after the attacks and in keeping with the traditional values of the first settlers, (middle) named their children — especially their daughters — 'Hope'<sup>208</sup> or, motivated by a sense of having survived a cataclysm and wishing to cling to life more strongly, decided to have a child with the expectation of making a new beginning.<sup>209</sup> Here, it is worth noting that the practice of naming daughters 'Hope' revives a seventeenth-century American Puritan tradition and so this endorses the upholding of the traditional values of the first settlers.<sup>210</sup> Some families who had previously hesitated to have a child totally changed their minds after the attacks. In expressing her changed opinion about having a baby a woman from New York explicitly likens Ground Zero to a post-apocalyptic place / site / zone:

As I stand on line at the morgue, ... I can't stop envisioning myself with a child — with my child by my side, my child whom I will nurture, comfort, mentor, love, and protect, who will inspire me to work harder to make the world a safer and better place, a world in which such a terrible thing won't happen again. . . I promise myself that when things have settled down a bit, when John and I can open our apartment windows without breathing in thick, overwhelmingly putrid smoke, when the National Guard ceases patrolling our block, when he and I can walk freely in our neighbourhood without having to show I.D., . . . the subject of our becoming parents hasn't been put to bed, after all. And I feel hopeful—confident.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Carl Sandburg, *Remembrance Rock* (Florida: First Harvest/HBJ, 1991 [1948]), p. 7.

<sup>208</sup> 'Living with Loss', *New York Times*, 6 September 2011 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/11/us/sept-11-reckoning/11portraits.html>> [accessed 20 September 2013]

<sup>209</sup> Regina Brett, 'Boy born on 9/11 dreams of rebuilding the Towers', in *Cleveland.com*, 6 September 2011 <[http://www.cleveland.com/brett/blog/index.ssf/2011/09/boy\\_born\\_on\\_911\\_dreams\\_of\\_rebu.html](http://www.cleveland.com/brett/blog/index.ssf/2011/09/boy_born_on_911_dreams_of_rebu.html)> [accessed 20 September 2013]

<sup>210</sup> 'Early American Baby Names' in *Babynames.allparenting.com* <[http://babynames.allparenting.com/babynames/Ideas/Early\\_American\\_Baby\\_Names/](http://babynames.allparenting.com/babynames/Ideas/Early_American_Baby_Names/)> [accessed 25 September 2013]

<sup>211</sup> Janice Eidus, 'Baby Lust', in *110 Stories: New York Writes after September 11*, ed. by Ulrich Baer (New York: New York University Press, 2002), pp. 80-90 (p. 88).



Here Janice Eidus expresses the sentiment common to many people who in various ways witnessed the same unexpected grief and later chose to believe in the power of a new-born to somehow remove the horror of the post-apocalyptic landscape they had beheld.

In addition to these reflections of hope after 9/11, internet communities such as *9/11 Families*, *Remembering 9/11*, and *9/11 Day* became resources for survivors, for people who lost a beloved one, and for first responders and volunteers. Among them, nine months after the collapse of the towers a society page called *Meetup* was founded with the aim of connecting people in New York City. Through this organization, several Americans started to construct a community to share and overcome their common grief. Founded ‘directly as a result of 9/11’,<sup>212</sup> *Meetup* is significant in the sense that it has created new relations in the local community of New York with massive behavioural differences compared to pre 9/11. Within time, it both spread to other states in the US and later to other countries with different names. It is also interesting and worth mentioning that *Meetup* ‘was launched nine months after the attacks’.<sup>213</sup> This delay in establishing the *Meetup* team, reminiscent of the pregnancy period for human babies, could arguably suggest that its organizers may have been intending to follow others’ aim of having a baby as a means of healing the wound and bringing hopefulness to the American nation after the tragedy by creating *Meetup* as ‘a 9/11 baby’.<sup>214</sup>

Furthermore, following the cataclysm, New Yorkers felt the necessity to greet their neighbours whom they would normally have ignored before the attacks. Obviously, one of the main reasons for such a behavioural change was people’s need to reach out to others and to unite after the shocking event so as to recover together since, as Judith Herman states,

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<sup>212</sup> Scott Heiferman, interviewed by Danielle Horry, in *The Meetup Organizer Boot Camp*, 10 June 2009 <[http://www.meetup.com/organize/pages/Interview\\_with\\_Scott\\_Heiferman\\_-\\_Our\\_First\\_Event%21](http://www.meetup.com/organize/pages/Interview_with_Scott_Heiferman_-_Our_First_Event%21)> [accessed 20 September 2013]

<sup>213</sup> Terri Nakamura, ‘Connecting in Real Life’, in *Seattledesigner.blogspot.co.uk*, 30 September 2011 <[http://seattledesigner.blogspot.co.uk/2011\\_09\\_01\\_archive.html](http://seattledesigner.blogspot.co.uk/2011_09_01_archive.html)> [accessed 10 September 2013]

<sup>214</sup> Morgen Bailey, ‘Meetup.com is a 9/11 Baby’, in *Morgen Bailey’s Writing Blog*, 11 September 2011, <<http://morgenbailey.wordpress.com/2011/09/11/meetup-com-is-a-911-baby/>> [accessed 10 August 2013]

‘traumatic events overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection and meaning’.<sup>215</sup> She explains that individuals’ concern for others develops because what happens is ‘extraordinary and overwhelms the ordinary human adaptations to life’.<sup>216</sup>

The fictional framework of *The Road* is also inspired by child-centric parental feelings similar to those of people who sought to bond with each other and to find encouragement through babies because the means of transcending the September 11 cataclysm with its apocalyptic overtones and its destruction of the pre-9/11 American outlook or *Weltanschauung*. While reflecting the fear and panic that a majority of the American population experienced following the 9/11 destruction, the novel has also become a vehicle for reflecting the American imagination that contemplated on the worst scenario for a long time reflecting that part of the American imagination that has long viewed the past and the future in a pessimistic light. Therefore, this post-apocalyptic novel ‘stands in the midst of crisis and between two catastrophes: one historical (remembered and suffered), and one imagined (desired and feared)’.<sup>217</sup> The attacks of September 11, 2001, will be remembered among the most destructive events of American history, and this post-apocalyptic novel can be seen as exemplifying and illustrating the collective response of people who have witnessed a world-shattering event.

## 5. Traumatic spaces in the novel

The post-apocalyptic journey of the father and son in *The Road*, as stated in the brief summary above, involves several disillusionments regarding mankind and civilization. After

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<sup>215</sup> Judith L. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), p. 33.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>217</sup> Berger, *After the End*, p. 35.

the end of civilization, the face-off with Man's worse nature has had traumatic effects on the protagonists. Thanks to the flashbacks and continually dark picture of the world since the beginning of the novel, the reader becomes familiar with the drab scenario where days are 'more gray each one than what had gone before'.<sup>218</sup> The colour 'gray' permeates both the narrative and the characters throughout the novel. There is no Sun, nothing growing from the soil, no social life and no laughing people. Though the boy does not know about the state of the world before the apocalypse and so is unable to make a comparison between the two worlds, the atmosphere is still haunting with its evocation of a barren wasteland. Compared with the son, the father naturally has a much wider range of experience, having been brought up and later married before the apocalypse. Because of the waking dreams that continue to haunt him even at inopportune moments, he bitterly confronts the massive differences between his two lives before and after the apocalypse. Though the traumatic condition of both protagonists will mostly be treated together, there are also instances where each is dealt with separately owing to the differences between the ages and life experience of father and son.

Dreams dominate the world of McCarthy's characters in quite a distressing way. The father's experiences of the world after the apocalypse are punctuated by dreams that continually remind him of his past. Regardless of the father's attempts to free himself from the memories, they become more like daydreams: 'From daydreams on the road there was no waking'.<sup>219</sup> As his depressed wife deserts him, the man's dreams also get greatly affected by that: 'In dreams his pale bride came to him out of a green and leafy canopy. [...] Her smile, her downturned eyes. In the morning it was snowing again. Beads of small gray ice strung along the lightwires overhead'.<sup>220</sup> The wife's choice of suicide in preference to continuing to share the journey along the road inflicts further hurt upon the man whose

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<sup>218</sup> McCarthy, *The Road*, p. 1.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*

condition is already massively tragic. In order not to be interrupted by the recurrent flashbacks reminding him of his wife, the father mostly escapes them by denying suicide, her past existence and the apocalypse even to himself. Most of the time he suppresses his thoughts about his wife and tries to find excuses for his dreams: ‘He said the right dreams for a man in peril were dreams in peril and all else was the call of languor and of death’.<sup>221</sup>

The man’s approach to his own dreams is like completing an obligation in which there is both denial and guilt. He denies seeing his wife in visions because inside he feels anger towards her as she has chosen to end her life and to renounce the struggle to survive with the nuclear family. Additionally, he might be feeling guilty because in such desolate territory the mere dream of something beautiful is as inappropriate as an insult. ‘In his dream she was sick and he cared for her. The dream bore the look of sacrifice but he thought differently. He did not take care of her and she died alone somewhere in the dark [...]’.<sup>222</sup> The man is severely trapped by the past and the feeling of guilt at not stopping her from suicide still torments him:

Once he remembers his conversation with his wife:

We’re survivors he told her across the flame of the lamp.  
Survivors? She said.  
Yes.  
[...] We’re not survivors. We’re the walking dead in a horror film.<sup>223</sup>

In keeping with psychoanalysts’ revelation that ‘there are always limits to our capacity to escape the past – that the more we wish to repudiate it on the conscious level, the more insistently it reasserts itself through the unconscious’,<sup>224</sup> no matter how hard the father struggles to survive, he is haunted by the unlikelihood of being rescued from the burden of

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>224</sup> Mari Ruti, ‘From Melancholia to Meaning How to Live The Past in the Present The Ailing Spirit’, *Psychoanalytic Dialogues: The International Journal of Relational Perspectives*, 15:5, 637-60 (p. 638).

the dreams. In a similar manner, Jenny Edkins suggests a relationship between survival and inescapability from dreams:

Trauma has very much to do with the fact of survival in the face of death. The repetition that takes place in the dreams of trauma sufferers is not so much an attempt to make sense of the trauma itself, but an attempt to come to terms with the fact of survival.<sup>225</sup>

The degree of the trauma experienced by the two protagonists may differ, yet both of them experience confinement to the emptiness and harshness of the wasteland. The remains of his past often disrupt the father's current life and, though he is later awakened to the tragic reality of the cold and gloomy terrain, this in turn represents another bad dream for him.

Besides the man's dreams of his wife, there are also flashbacks of life before the apocalypse, in which he continuously vacillates between dreams and reality. The downward course of events continues especially for the father since the spiritual and material values of past life with its memories are obviously no longer attainable for him since the beginning of the post-apocalyptic era. The past is revived only in the flashbacks and memories associated with some places and in objects that the father encounters during their long walk to the south. Throughout the novel, the father is an example that shows the reader what happens when one loses his/her sense of place and belonging. Several instances that are discussed below indicate the relationship between a sense of place and trauma.

Tuan suggests that

man, out of his intimate experience with his body and with other people, organizes space so that it conforms with and caters to his biological needs and social relations. [...] When we use the terms "man" and "world," we do not merely think of man as an object in the world, [...] but also of man as inhabiting the world, commanding and creating it.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Jenny Edkins, 'Forget Trauma? Responses to September 11' *International Relations*, 16.2 (2002), 243-256, p. 246

<sup>226</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), p. 34.

Their residence in post-apocalyptic territory is obviously an unwanted choice, which is almost totally different from life before the apocalypse. The two live there at a time of survival where they are on the watch all the time. In this monochromatic world where nature seems inert and nothing can grow or be born, the father has a sense of space but he cannot help feeling its slight, insufficient existence:

The blackness he woke to on those nights was sightless and impenetrable. A blackness to hurt your ears with listening. Often he had to get up. No sound but the wind in the bare and blackened trees. He rose and stood tottering in that cold acoustic dark with his arms outstretched for balance while the vestibular calculations in his skull cranked out their reckonings. An old chronicle. To seek out the upright. No fall but preceded with by a declination.<sup>227</sup>

According to Tuan, the individual needs to be upright ‘to act’<sup>228</sup> and ‘to assume his full stature’.<sup>229</sup> The father’s quest for the upright is motivated by a desire to protect himself and the boy from the threats of the post-apocalypse and to head south where they hope to find a better life including warm weather, some good people or decent folk and maybe some last crumbs of civilization. Additionally, regarding the importance of the environment to the individual, Tuan claims that ‘the organization of human space is uniquely dependent on sight’.<sup>230</sup> Throughout the novel, the man feels no connection with his surroundings as he thinks they are deteriorating. The decreased awareness of space is due to fact that almost everything has changed. As in the newly degraded post-apocalyptic city, it is hurtful to continue living with nostalgia for the past and it is not possible for the father to feel as if he belonged to that unrecognizable city, as it does not appeal to his sense of place. Similarly to Tuan, Edward Casey states that ‘*memories are selective for place*: they seek out particular places as their natural habitats. [...] More precisely, places are *congealed scenes* for remembered contents;

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<sup>227</sup> McCarthy, *The Road*, p. 14.

<sup>228</sup> Tuan, *Space and Place*, p. 35.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

and as such they serve to situate what we remember'.<sup>231</sup> The houses, streets, buildings that were once occupied by people who shared the same lifestyle hold memories that have now become a part of the past. Also the possibility of continuing the same kind of life in the post-apocalyptic world appears impossible among people struggling to survive by violating traditional morality, unlike the two who strive to keep their promise to be the good guys.

Because of the unceasing bleak and grey condition of the post-apocalyptic world described in *The Road*, the flashbacks experienced by the characters and the desolation that rules the world after the end of civilization, trauma is one of the elements that are indispensable and essential in any analysis of the novel. The traumatic moments in the novel include those that reveal the need for the sense of a place for both father and son. The father shows his need to catch a crumb of something belonging to his pre-apocalypse life as the unexpected cataclysm has resulted in several losses for him. He has not only lost his wife but has also been left without the possibility of reaching places where he once lived. There are also times when he seems to have lost connection with the present. The boy, on the other hand, is among the few to have recently joined the newly post-apocalyptic world. Compared with the father, naturally, he does not know enough about what it feels like to belong to a place. Still, throughout their journey with his father, the boy is seen as the one who can easily adapt to a place and accept it. Although he asks his father about their former house, unsurprisingly he does not seem to show strong feelings about it because neither the conditions of the time when he was born nor the family's psychological condition have instilled such feelings in him. He seems to miss his birthplace, as the sole property that they had before leaving, yet he has not collected a store of memories comparable with his father's.

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<sup>231</sup> Edward S. Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987 (2000), p. 189.

When one day they come across a gas station, the father uses the phone inside the ruined office and unthinkingly dials his own father's house. He is probably awakened from this irrationality when the boy asks what he is doing.<sup>232</sup> This disturbing and unexpected episode triggered by an encounter with an object from the past (a phone) epitomizes trauma, conforming to the observation of Serlin and Cannon that 'from a humanistic perspective, a traumatic event is a disruption so serious that it threatens our existence, shaking the foundation of who we are and who we once were. It makes us face our basic helplessness and mortality'.<sup>233</sup> At that moment, the father totally abandons any consciousness of place and time. Far from facing the reality of the situation, he shows inability to control himself and reveals that there are still aspects of the past that he fails to realize. Here, Casey's argument that 'the body's manoeuvres and movements, imagined as well as actual, make room for remembering placed scenes in all of their complex composition'.<sup>234</sup> Temporal deferral of a cataclysmic event is one of the fundamental features of trauma according to contemporary theory. The individual shows the delayed reactions of the traumatic event not at the moment of its occurrence but later. The earlier incidence rises by a stimulant from the later incident. In the light of Freud's analysis, Cathy Caruth claims that

trauma is not experienced as a mere repression of defense, but as a temporal delay that carries the individual beyond the shock of the first moment. The trauma is a repeated suffering of the event, but also a continual leaving of its site.<sup>235</sup>

The past becomes more meaningful once the individual faces the future. The memories revive upon seeing or finding things to remind one of the past. The father does not mention the catastrophe that has destroyed their lives but owing to the mental displacements of time

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<sup>232</sup> McCarthy, *The Road*, p. 5.

<sup>233</sup> Llene Serlin and John T. Cannon, 'A Humanistic Perspective of Trauma', in *Living with Terror, Working with Trauma: A Clinician's Handbook*, ed. by Danielle Knafo (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004), pp. 314-30 (p. 314).

<sup>234</sup> Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, p. 189.

<sup>235</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 10.



and space and enthrallment by the past, the dreams, nightmares and flashbacks that obsessively torment him show the enormity of his traumatic experience. The return to places with which he somehow has connections and the sight of objects that revive his memories combine to make him feel a foreigner in his own land. His son, on the other hand, does not quite understand what he is going through, as the things in his father's life are in turn alien to him.

For the son, the past is like an unrecognized object. In a scene when the father encounters his childhood home during one of their endless walks, the reactions of the two are rather different. The boy asks,

What is this place, Papa?  
 It's the place where I grew up.  
 [...]  
 Are we going in?  
 Why not?  
 I'm scared.  
 Don't you want to see where I used to live?  
 No.<sup>236</sup>

When they enter the house the boy does not show any interest in the place whereas the father succumbs to mixed feelings of melancholia and sorrow as he touches lots of objects so that he can sense the warmth of the good old days.

The rooms empty. [...] He felt with his thumb in the painted wood of the mantle the pinholes from tacks that held stockings forty years ago. This is where we used to have Christmas when I was a boy. [...] The boy watched him. Watched shapes claiming him he could not see.<sup>237</sup>

Though he does not clearly state it, the boy is not attracted to this place as much as his father is, mostly because he lacks strong attachments to the place, even though it is the house where his father grew up, and references to the past have no special significance for him. Thus, there is a clear gap between the two in terms of a shared past. The father is aware that

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<sup>236</sup> McCarthy, *The Road*, p.24.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

it would not be appropriate to expect and share the same feelings as his son yet he cannot help feeling disturbed by the discrepancy as a realization dawns on him: ‘Maybe he understood for the first time that to the boy he was himself an alien. A being from a planet that no longer existed’.<sup>238</sup> The reason for that discrepancy is offered by Tuan as follows:

Place can acquire deep meaning for the adult through the steady accretion of sentiment over the years. Every piece of heirloom furniture, or even a stain on the wall, tells a story. The child not only has a short past, but his eyes more than the adult’s are on the present and the immediate future.<sup>239</sup>

The father is well aware of this fact and he is also aware that there are not many things he can do to make a new life in which he can present or hand down to his son the things they used to have. His knowledge of the difficulty of constructing and repairing this generation gap is voiced by the narrator: ‘He could not construct for the child’s pleasure the world he’d lost without constructing the loss as well and he thought perhaps the child had known this better than he’.<sup>240</sup> The impossibility of the father’s reaching his dreams, the ruination of the places that once made the world more meaningful and inhabitable are also present in the post-apocalyptic world. While time seems to be on the boy’s side, the same cannot be said for the father. Neither memories, nor the past or future appeal to him:

Sometimes the child would ask him questions about the world that for him was not even a memory. He thought hard how to answer. There is no past. What would you like? [...] The child had his own fantasies. How things would be in the south. Other children.<sup>241</sup>

The father’s difficulty in explaining his feelings towards the places to which he is sentimentally attached is due to the fact that his son has not spent time in these places. When, like the father in parts of this novel, an adult tries to explain memories to a young child, the youngster’s mind is arguably just like a *tabula rasa*, a situation in which it may be impossible

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<sup>238</sup> Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>239</sup> Tuan, *Space and Place*, p. 33.

<sup>240</sup> McCarthy, *The Road*, p. 163.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

for the immature mind even to imagine what places once were. Casey explains that ‘there is no knowing or sensing a place except by being in that place, and to be in a place is to be in a position to perceive it’.<sup>242</sup>

Human contribution and experience in space that results in the creation of meaningful places allows for a better understanding of trauma studies. The mental construction of meaningful places resulting from mankind’s spatial experience allows a better understanding of trauma. Except for genuine nomads, most human beings identify themselves as belonging to a place, be it a home, a country or a workplace, and, if a person undergoes a traumatic experience that occurs there, the two notions of cataclysm and location become mutually dependent. Otherwise, the separation of the two would be meaningless. For Michelle Balaev, a scholar who deals with the relationship between trauma, culture and places,

Place is some kind of location and ensemble of features. Such things are human creations, in the sense of perceptions, a mental imposition of order, a parcelization of the earth’s surface, a transformation of space – an abstraction – into something more specific and limited.<sup>243</sup>

Allusions to places contribute to the outpouring of the individual trauma victim’s feelings. Therefore, it is the individual subject who mentally changes solid space to liveable place. With the transformation from concrete to abstract space, every object in a built place or area may contain a meaning for the individual, allowing ‘emotional responses to occur.’<sup>244</sup> According to Balaev, it is not possible for the human mind to deal with trauma separately from considerations of place. Both concepts are fundamentally and essentially human whether one of the major symptoms of trauma, namely ‘dislocation’, offers firm evidence of the interdependence of these two concepts. As Caruth claims, the affliction involves ‘the fundamental dislocation implied by all traumatic experience that is both its testimony to the

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<sup>242</sup> Edward Casey, ‘How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena’, in *Senses of Place*, ed. by Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (Santa Fe NM: School of American Research Press, 1996), p. 18.

<sup>243</sup> Michelle Balaev, *The Nature of Trauma in American Novels* (Illinois: North Western University Press, 2012), p. xv.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*

event and to the impossibility of its direct access'.<sup>245</sup> The disastrous character of the incident does not allow the survivor to fully comprehend the event as it happens so that s/he clings to the more familiar idea of the location where it occurs much as a drowning person grabs a lifebelt; and in the post-trauma period, the survivor, who is already gripped by the tragic event, suffers from place-specific dreams and flashbacks as vestiges of that day.

The absence of comprehensive coverage of issues is another important feature of the book. The reader is not told about the catastrophe; instead we are obliged to deduce it through the flashbacks and inner monologues of the narrator who is at times the father. For Richard Gray, the explanation for this type of narration is that 'to tell a story that cannot be told is to tell it aslant, to approach it by stealth',<sup>246</sup> i.e. the traumatic context determines this elliptical narrative. The portrayal of the traumatic desertion of his wife (as well as of the other calamities that will be discussed in the following paragraphs) requires him to remember the 'unspeakable' and 'unrepresentable'.

Although the reader is aware that the world they inhabit will inevitably result in their physical and psychological illness, their current surroundings are not explicitly blamed as a source of suffering but are described in an impressionistic way that at times makes the reader want to complete the picture in his/her mind's eye:

In the morning they went on. Desolate country. A board nailed to a door. Ratty. [...] Inside the barn three bodies hanging from the rafters, [...]. There could be something here, the boy said. There could be some corn or something. Let's go, the man said.<sup>247</sup>

Surprisingly, the boy does not show his feelings after seeing such a horrific scene. Instead, he remains almost indifferent and continues searching for whatever they can find to remain alive. Though as a good-hearted boy he must be feeling worried, frightened and sad, he does

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<sup>245</sup> Caruth, p. 9.

<sup>246</sup> Richard Gray, *After the Fall: American Literature Since 9/11* (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2011), p. 34.

<sup>247</sup> McCarthy, *The Road*, p. 16.

not display a shocked reaction to this spectacle. In contrast to his father, the feelings that the boy has towards cannibalism and dead bodies are relatively deadpan because (at the risk of labouring the point) he belongs to the post-apocalyptic generation by whose standards his minimal reaction can be considered normal. On the other hand, the father has lived long enough to see life both before and after the apocalypse. Though under normal conditions of civilization it is possible to recover from trauma through stress counselling, the world in which they find themselves affords the survivors little hope of finding a cure.

The territory they are in is like a vicious circle that traps them in the unchanging monotony of everyday reality, regardless of passing time. Even the passing hours become just like one of the other things (such as no growing trees) that stay barren. The repetitiveness and non-progressing circumstances do not allow anything to continue and the progress of the protagonists' journey is unmatched by any other form of development. The father alludes to a specific time but cannot identify or explain to his son what kind of catastrophe has occurred: 'The clocks stopped at 1:17. A long sheer of light and then a series of low concussions. He got up and went to the window. What is it? she said. He didnt answer'.<sup>248</sup> The lack of any specific information such as what has happened, what kind of a life the man has led in the past, what happened to his parents, what motivated them to survive the apocalypse instead of succumbing to it like the mother remain unanswered. Hence, briefly, the lack of information contributes as much to the novel's ambiguity as does the affliction of trauma itself.

Throughout the novel there are times when the narrator switches from the omniscient third person to the first person, the father. The novel is imbued with a pessimistic tone from the very beginning with allusions to the absence of colours, time and security; the occupants of this grey soil are deprived of everything. Lit by a harsh grey 'gunmetal light',<sup>106</sup> the

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<sup>248</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

protagonists ‘look for anything of color’<sup>107</sup> amid a bleak landscape of dust and ash punctuated only by ‘dead trees’.

When they are together, the boy serves as a reminder of the past to the father, obliging him to explore the depths of his memory, which is a thing he is very reluctant to do. The father’s knowledge of the pre-apocalyptic world results in the major symptoms of trauma where he is concerned and in a sense of alienation from the newly transformed, totally damaged appearance of the once familiar world. The father’s telephone call from the gas station to his father’s home where he spent his childhood suggests that he still ‘lives in another kind of reality’.<sup>249</sup> The past, world-shaking cataclysm invades his present so ‘now’ becomes a meaningless thing based ‘nowhere’ and in the ‘non-present’. Throughout the book, he does not show any sign that he will at least try to get accustomed to living in this bleak space because he ends up in a world that is very different from the one he inhabited before the apocalypse. Hence, the moment of the father’s calling his father also indicates his attempt to escape from the present moment. Though he is already aware that such an attempt is in vain, he cannot keep himself from doing it, his action is like a rejection of present reality and silent scream against the hopelessness of the future. In his analysis, Richard Crownshaw explains what happens in terms of time and space in the novel is

a concertina of time as different historical memories occupy the same space. Where trauma has been argued to produce a rupture between past and present, because of the unprecedented nature of the event, McCarthy’s post-apocalyptic, post-traumatic landscape is suffused with memory.<sup>250</sup>

This explanation highlights that the father is entrapped within memories. He cannot find any serenity as he carries unclear memories with him all the time that do not leave him at peace. The places that were once important and meaningful for him have changed

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<sup>249</sup> Robert D. Stolorow, *World, Affectivity, Trauma: Heidegger and Post-Cartesian Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 55.

<sup>250</sup> Richard Crownshaw, ‘Deterritorializing the “Homeland” in American Studies and American Fiction after 9/11’, *Journal of American Studies*, 45 (2011), pp. 757-776.

tremendously and thus he has blurred remembrance of the past generally awakened by getting engaged in space, which Crownshaw explains as ‘spatial acts’. He proposes that

Spatial acts (crossing, occupying space) are memorative acts, as in the father’s visit to his childhood home, and on the occasions when, exploring ground or interiors and in a memorative frame of mind, he is conscious that he has overlooked something, something that would have been conspicuous in the pre-apocalyptic world and its landscape.<sup>251</sup>

Therefore, as a survivor, the father lives in a ‘durational rather than chronological time, continue to experience the horrors of the past through internal shifts back in time and space rather than experiencing the past as differentiated from the present’.<sup>252</sup> The memories of the past appear in a disorganized way, disrupting the flow of present time. The surprising experience of a totally ruined world is a tough transition for the man to assimilate, especially when he is expected to prepare a future for his son.

In this post-apocalyptic world the father is left with no other option than merely to be able to show the ruined remains of his memories of the house, which was formerly a real place for him. He has long been aware that between the two of them, only he finds the past meaningful, and he knows that he cannot blame his son for feeling otherwise because he knows that ‘he could not enkindle in the heart of the child what was ashes in his own’.<sup>253</sup> The life before the apocalypse is inaccessible, there is no way to visit it again except in memories.

The discovery of a bunker by the father and the boy is one of the most important and longest parts of the novel. The bunker they find is an old shelter that contains ‘crate upon crate of canned goods’<sup>254</sup> in addition to sanitary things, clothes, and some electric devices. They stay there for a few days. This bunker becomes the most ‘proper’ and safest place they

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<sup>251</sup> Ibid., p. 774.

<sup>252</sup> Geoffrey Hartman, ‘Representing Trauma: Issues, Contexts, Narrative Tools’, in *Trauma and survival in Contemporary Fiction* by Laurie Vickroy (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2002), pp. 1-36, (p. 5).

<sup>253</sup> McCarthy, *The Road*, p. 163.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

have encountered during their post-apocalyptic journey providing them with the opportunity to bathe, sleep and eat relatively comfortably. For the father, this bunker represents the loss of the familiar places that the visit to his childhood home signified. During their stay in the bunker, the boy starts to experience something of that 'loss' as he educates his palate by tasting the variety of different canned foods available. Upon finding the treasure of tinned food, the father explains to him what is in each can as such types of food are quite new to the youngster. Anne Coyle comments that

They treat this bunker as their property, taking their time and acting in ways they had not in any other place [. . .] the bunker represents the closest they have been to actually possessing a territory, inhabiting a place.<sup>255</sup>

This contrast between father and son underlines the sad fact that, despite their temporary good fortune, in the longer term the boy has little chance of enjoying anything of the privileged lifestyle that his father knew before the apocalypse.

Knowing what theft, hunger and cannibalism are, the child has certain fears; yet he does not lose his faith in encountering good people. The child is also promising since his space 'expands and becomes better articulated as he recognizes and reaches out to more permanent objects and places. That way space is transformed into place as it acquires definition and meaning'.<sup>256</sup> Although he cannot say what and how it might be, the boy reveals his intention to belong to a place, which triggers the idea that he promises a future. The evening when they have their second dinner in the bunker reminds one of a normal family dinner. They sit at the clean, neat table and eat proper dishes (green beans and mashed potatoes) in candlelight. Though he cannot finish his glass, the father drinks whiskey, making the reader imagine that this was a past habit of his. The order of their meal suggests that the father is teaching the boy how and what they used to eat in the pre-apocalyptic

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<sup>255</sup> Anne Coyle, 'Morels and Morals: Hope in the Post-apocalyptic *The Road*', in *Critical Insights: Cormac McCarthy*, ed. by David N. Cremean (Ipswich, Massachusetts: Salem Press, 2013), pp. 271-87 (p. 283).

<sup>256</sup> Tuan, *Space and Place*, p. 136.



period. The father's drinking of whiskey and his preparation of a proper meal for his son reveal his longing for the things and associated happiness of the past and his intentions to teach and leave in the boy's mind what people were once normally accustomed to. In the meantime, while probably feeling content with the atmosphere of the present meal, the boy does not show any regret about the things that he does not have after having briefly glimpsed the pre-apocalyptic life in the bunker. The tragic deprivation into which he was born does not affect the boy in a negative manner even when for once in his lifetime he encounters a chance of abundance on their journey. Notwithstanding the agreeable atmosphere and happy discovery of a well-stocked larder in a luxurious temporary abode, he needs little by way of incentive to continue his life with his father. Therefore, the relationship between the two also represents their divergent perspectives in their struggle to survive. The father experiences nostalgia upon encountering objects and memoirs from the past. His trauma is triggered by the newly presented world that coincides with the birth of his son and it later worsens with his wife's leaving the nuclear family.

In the novel, it is always the father who remembers the past. Another example of a case that reflects the inequality of their experiences is in the scene when the father takes possibly the last tin of Coca-Cola from the broken and dirty vending machine. When he offers it to his son, the boy asks what it is. It is apparent that the man used to like Coca-Cola but this time he does not intend to tell his son anything about it, possibly already knowing that his memory would sound irrelevant to the boy, showing once again the scarcity of the experiences the two can share. Also, the father may want to see if his son enjoys the taste as much as he did (and still does) and so hopes that the experience will be a pleasant surprise for the boy. Although the father and the boy encounter many tinned products in the bunker, the resulting feast leaves a more intense and happier impression on the father. When asked why he chose iconic Coca-Cola to symbolize the lost civilization of humanity, Cormac McCarthy replies:

Well, it just struck me. It's the iconic American product. The one thing that everybody knows about America, the one thing above cowboys and Indians, above everything else that you can think of, is Coca-Cola. You can't go to a village of 18 people in the remotest part of Africa that they don't know about Coca-Cola.<sup>257</sup>

When the father attempts to offer the drink to his son, he wants to show him both the pre-apocalyptic world's tastes and his belief that there might be a future for his son. So, by making him know the taste of something iconic and (in his eyes) uncorrupted, the father shows his attempt to bequeath his son another memory. Despite all the real things of the past, a tin of coke becomes an important essence as regards to experience and memory for the father and the boy. Though it may seem at first somewhat quirky that amid the wealth of luxurious items in the bunker it should be a humble tin of coke that, for the father, becomes the memento of past experience and, for the boy, the introduction to past palatable pleasures, the boy will think of his father if he sees it again and, given the ubiquity of Coca-Cola cans before the apocalypse, the chances of this happening are reasonably high. Already knowing the taste of coke, the father becomes the representative of the lost place, or as McCarthy depicts it, the representative of the 'open country'.<sup>258</sup> Balaev offers a different interpretation of the coke and its reflection in traumatic terms:

The protagonist carries out a significant component of trauma in fiction by demonstrating the ways that the experience and remembrance of trauma are situated in relation to a specific culture and place.<sup>259</sup>

In keeping with McCarthy's emphasis that Coke is an 'iconic American product', the father approves this opinion as his memory is stimulated as he 'sat looking at a Coca-Cola'.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> John Jurgensen, 'Cormac McCarthy On How Coca-Cola Ended Up In "The Road," and Other Musings', *The Wall Street Journal*, 12 November 2009 <<http://blogs.wsj.com/speakeasy/2009/11/12/cormac-mccarthy-on-how-coca-cola-ended-up-on-the-road-and-other-musings/>> [accessed 30 September 2014]

<sup>258</sup> McCarthy, *The Road*, p. 6.

<sup>259</sup> Michelle Balaev, 'Trends in Literary Trauma Theory', *Mosaic: Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*, 41.2 (2008), 149-166. p. 156.

<sup>260</sup> McCarthy, *The Road*, p. 22.

The father's traumatic reflections are explicit in some parts of the novel, and most of these are given after seeing corpses or badly ruined places, which are already hard enough for the child to witness:

A corpse in a doorway dried to leather. Grimacing at the day. He pulled the boy closer. Just remember that the things you put in your head are there, forever, he said. You might want to think about that. You forget some things, dont you? Yes. You forget what you want to remember and you remember what you want to forget.<sup>261</sup>

At this point the father is moralizing generally upon their current state of limbo. What the two see in this place are dead bodies, people reduced to cannibalism, isolated and destroyed houses, and the absence of any greenery. Other than the cannibals, there are references to just a few living organisms such as a dog, some old apples in an orchard, some mushrooms and moss. In addition, the fact that they do not have any names suggests another feature to the traumatic space, emphasizing that they are in a generic space where nothing is individualized. In this sense, the ashen landscape is their non-place.

Traumatic moments unfold for the father as he finds this new sunless world hard to accept as a place to live in. Although while talking to the boy, the lack of sunshine and fetid air add to the heavily depressing atmosphere, there are awakening memories of sunny days in the father as he waits for the sun to reappear some day:

He woke toward the morning with the fire down to coals and walked out to the road. Everything was alight. As is the lost sun were returning at last. [...] The color of it moved something in him long forgotten. Make a list. Recite a litany. Remember.<sup>262</sup>

The man's recollection of sunshine prompted by the light of the fire is for him like a mental reviver as he continuously expects and looks for an exit from the terrain they tragically inhabit. Indeed the father is constantly remembering things from the past even while remaining ever vigilant. Though he is aware of the material and spiritual barrenness of their

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<sup>261</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

situation, he still shows little sign of hope for salvation while he is immediately reminded of massive deprivation. In other words, this moment of regret for the lost sun can be explained as follows:

The fire's appearance as palliative for the lost sun performs the function of stimulating memory [...]. The visual splendour of the fire serves as a simultaneous reminder of loss and as a call to an ongoing labor of memory — the work of melancholic consciousness.<sup>263</sup>

The father also remembers the good old days that he once had in his childhood and during his marriage, yet he is only too painfully aware that these past images do not match up to their present situation. He endeavours to remember the good old days but cannot help falling into a confusion of time and places as well, much as Judith Herman suggests that 'traumatized people feel and act as though their nervous systems have been disconnected from the present'.<sup>264</sup> The traumatized person recalls scenes from the past and without being aware of it, transposes them into the present. Regarding the repetitive nature of trauma, Dori Laub states that

The traumatic event, although real, took place outside the parameters of 'normal' reality, such as causality, sequence, place and time. [...] Trauma survivors live not with the memories of the past, but with an event that could not and did not proceed through to its completion, has no ending, attained no closure, and therefore, as far as its survivors are concerned, continues into the present and is current in every respect.<sup>265</sup>

In order for an individual to gather or obtain the sense of place, there needs to be some life experience as stated previously. It is widely accepted that learning starts at home where the child informally assimilates its first 'lessons'. These are mostly words, idioms, and parental sayings or phrases expressing advice, approval or encouragement, for example, but include culturally transmitted structures as well. In this home environment, what is

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<sup>263</sup> Grace Hellyer, 'Spring Has Lost Its Scent: Allegory, Ruination and Suicidal Melancholia in *The Road*' in *Styles of Extinction: Cormac McCarthy's The Road*, ed. by Julian Murphet, Mark Steven (London: Continuum Books, 2012), p. 59.

<sup>264</sup> Herman, p. 35.

<sup>265</sup> Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 69.

transmitted is not only the linguistic heritage but also the feelings that make a space liveable as well. Tuan claims that words are of high importance for the atmosphere of a place. He says that ‘people still find it difficult to accept the seemingly magical idea that mere words can call places into being’.<sup>266</sup> He similarly highlights that ‘the telling itself [...] has the power to endow a site with vibrant meaning’.<sup>267</sup> Just as interior décor requires complementary lighting and furnishings to be complete, language too provides a sense of place, particularly for children in a family home.

Yet what happens in *The Road* is different. The young protagonist does not have the same opportunities that his father and others of that generation once had and for this reason he lacks most of the above-stated cultural and affective things that in pre-apocalyptic times were generally gained in the family. In other words he risks showing a trans-generational culture gap. This becomes mostly obvious in the case of language. When his father says ‘I’ll be in the neighborhood’, he asks ‘Where is the neighborhood?’<sup>268</sup> and only later learns that his father means that he will not be far away. He also grabs either words or sentences from the daily language of his father. Sayings such as ‘Warm at last’<sup>269</sup> or ‘long term goals’<sup>270</sup> give glimpses that he is eager to learn, implying his intention that he generally has the future in mind. Likewise, from his father the boy learns some wise sayings such as ‘If you break little promises you’ll break big ones’.<sup>271</sup> Tuan indicates that ‘insiders see “homeplace”— an environment that is familiar to them, not because they have materially transformed it but because they have named it. It is their place – their world – through the casting of a linguistic net’.<sup>272</sup> The child’s learning of such things is important in two senses: First, he does not normally learn these lessons in a home environment but on the road. Teaching or telling

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<sup>266</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, ‘Language and the making of Place: A Narrative Descriptive Approach’, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 81.4 (1991), 684-696 (p. 691).

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 687.

<sup>268</sup> McCarthy, *The Road*, p. 100.

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.

<sup>271</sup> McCarthy, *The Road*, p. 35.

<sup>272</sup> Tuan, ‘Language and the Making of Place: A Narrative Descriptive Approach’, p. 686.

daily words or sayings to his boy could be difficult for the father, yet on the other hand, the boy's learning these happens in the post-apocalyptic time and place. While this case represents a challenge for the traumatized father, as raising his child may not have been among his aims or dreams, it may create a different situation for the boy since the post-apocalyptic world gradually starts to become his place.

As shown in the instances above, the prime factor in the father's trauma was the cataclysmic event that changed the world. In addition to this, he has desperate attempts to adapt himself and his son to the new post-disaster world. While the transition to the post-apocalyptic world has been relatively unacceptable and traumatic for the father, he manfully persists in struggling for his son. The boy on the other hand, differs a lot from the father for reasons previously discussed. However, despite the child leading a far from settled life, his deep inner desire to belong to somewhere appears in some parts of the novel. At one point he reveals his willingness to stay in the bunker when he asks 'How long can we stay here Papa?'<sup>273</sup> The boy is surprised to see some of the felicities of life before the apocalypse. For this reason, he tries to understand that the bunker is not safe but still considers that it would be nice to stay there for a very long time, as there is not any place to harbour them other than the bunker.

## **6. Heterotopia and the Child: From *Traumascape* to *Hopescape***

The relationship between the father and the son is essential in order to understand the issue of hope in the novel. Despite their situation, whenever there is a chance of the issue of death arising in conversation, the two generally avoid talking about it. The father consciously skips the boy's questions about death because he wants his son to focus on the hope for survival. When the youngster asks 'If we were going to die would you tell me?', the father replies 'I

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<sup>273</sup> McCarthy, *The Road*, p. 157.

dont know. We're not going to die'.<sup>274</sup> This kind of conversation is not exceptional, being repeated in several other parts of the novel.<sup>275</sup>

On one day during their endless walk the two meet an old man called Ely, who is unaccompanied because he has lost everyone after the apocalypse. When they see the man, the boy wants to help him by holding his hand and giving him something to eat, but the father at first behaves very cautiously since he has no trust in the people remaining in the wasteland. Night approaches, the three of them start to have a conversation. While both of the protagonists are already aware that the time in which they are now living is barren in all senses, the old man Ely nevertheless feels obliged to remind them again of this fact. He says,

I have not seen a fire in a long time, that's all. I live like an animal. You dont want to know the things I've eaten. When I saw the boy I thought I died.  
You thought he was angel?  
I didnt know what he was. I never thought to see a child again. I didnt know that would happen.<sup>276</sup>

Though the old man does not show great astonishment, the boy's existence is for him quasi-miraculous because obviously before their meeting he thought that no child could have survived in this post-apocalyptic world. With his good heart, decent behaviour and sense of responsibility to help people in need, the boy situates himself somewhere that is simultaneously realistic but different from the reality of the actual time. His attempt to help the black man who stole all their food and clothes is another sign that he symbolizes goodness and hope.

In Foucault's explanation of his term heterotopia coined to describe places and spaces that function in non-hegemonic conditions, there are some principles that correspond to Americans' actions post 9/11. Foucault defines heterotopia as having the following principles:

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<sup>274</sup> McCarthy, *The Road*, p. 99.

<sup>275</sup> In pages 105, 106, 136, the conversation of 'death' is seen again.

<sup>276</sup> McCarthy, *The Road*, p. 183.

The heterotopia has the power to juxtapose in a single real place several places, several emplacements that are in themselves incompatible. The heterotopias begin to function fully when people find themselves in a sort of absolute break with their traditional time. They have, in relation to the rest of space, a function.<sup>277</sup>

As there is a correlation between *The Road* and the websites and communities cited above, the tendency to make the child one of the vehicles of hope is revealed especially at the end of the novel when the boy admits his fright when his father is about to die:

I'm really scared Papa.  
I know. But you'll be okay. You're going to be lucky. I know you are.<sup>278</sup>

The father's sudden use of the word 'lucky' increases his expectations from his boy. The appearance of such a word may also stun the reader as previously the narrator has reflected the father's thoughts, which are not exactly optimistic: 'He knew he was placing hopes where he'd no reason to. He hoped it would be brighter where for all he knew the world grew darker daily'.<sup>279</sup> On the other hand, the boy does not explicitly mention the end of their lives in the post-apocalyptic world nor does he show obvious signs of hope, but his good, honest character makes him stay positive for most of the time. In one of the scenes when the man reads his son's mind after enduring another cold day, he tells the boy, 'I know you thought we were going to die'<sup>280</sup> and the boy agrees. But generally, though moments of despair were given because of the lack of sunshine, his innocence and positiveness feed his imagination and hope. Like some latter-day Icarus he asks his father:

If you were a crow could you fly up high enough to see the sun?  
Yes. You could.  
I thought so. That would be really neat.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', in *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society*, ed. by Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Cauter (New York: Routledge, 2008), 13-30 (pp. 19-20).

<sup>278</sup> McCarthy, *The Road*, p. 299.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*



The use of sun here is symbolic for better days in the future. For the boy, the sun is attainable yet difficult to reach. Though the father is aware that there is a slight possibility of a better future, his feelings and expectations for his son may still gladden the reader because they imply that, in the father's view at least, there may be a future in which the boy will be blessed. Such a future prospect may seem over-optimistic yet it demonstrates the father's will and touching belief in justice for his boy who has always been the symbol of good-hearted righteousness. The father's anticipation of a better future raises the strong possibility of heterotopia as such optimistic thoughts run counter to the negative atmosphere in which the two live. The desire to promote goodness in a world where evil and barbarism predominate can be seen as forming an antithesis that Foucault defines as 'counter-emplacements [...] that are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted'.<sup>282</sup> Although these opposing positions are localizable, it is the child who stands as the person challenging the destroyed society they are left with.

Until the boy meets a family after his father's death, the only people that do neither of the protagonists harm is the old man Ely and the little boy that the son wants to talk to but desists upon receiving his father's warning. Other than these two, in the father's lifetime the pair do not meet anyone with good intentions. By nevertheless instilling hopeful thoughts in the boy, the man wants his son to create his own space despite the contradictions that it might mean in the drab world in which they reside. In addition to symbolizing hope the boy embodies heterotopic features because, as Henry Jenkins argues, a child represents a malleable projection of others' adult values:

As a category created but not occupied, the child could be a repository of cultural needs or fears not adequately disposed of elsewhere. [...] The child carries for us things we somehow cannot carry for ourselves, sometimes anxieties we want to be divorced from and sometimes pleasures so great [that] we would not, without the child, know how to contain them.<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> Foucault, *Of Other Spaces*, p.17.

<sup>283</sup> Henry Jenkins, 'Introduction: Childhood Innocence and Other Modern Myths', in *The Children's Culture Reader*, ed. by Henry Jenkins (New York: New York University Press, 1998), p. 4.

As the boy is the father's only real point of support in the unfamiliar and ruined landscape of *The Road*, in a sense he also represents his father's heterotopia. 'Although this new land is full of unknown spaces, the boy, with his innocence and true character, is carrying the father's feelings of hope and fear.'<sup>284</sup> Though the father is aware that he will not be able to survive, he differs from his departed wife in maintaining expectations that the boy will continue his well-intentioned journey as he says: 'All I know is the child is my warrant'.<sup>285</sup> By evoking the notion of a guarantee, he once again shows that for him the boy is the one person who symbolizes all the righteousness and expectation in this world. It is the boy's existence, dreams, determination to be a good person and his belief in finding good people that gives the father the power to struggle and teach his son the basics of survival. The boy simultaneously embodies the legacy of the past and looks to the future: he has father's memories and the things he has taught him and also keeps the fire of inner hope kindled amid such a bleak world.

I want to be with you. You cant. Please. You cant. You have to carry the fire. I dont know how to. Yes you do. Is it real? The fire? Yes it is. Where is it? I dont know where it is. Yes you do. It's inside you. It was always there. I can see it.<sup>286</sup>

By the end of the novel, the boy becomes wiser and more experienced. The father handed down to him his own life experiences as much as he could. He has taught him survival skills, how to be good and honest. The father, who sometimes perceives fire as if it were sunlight, persists in maintaining this mental image, still believing that it is the light of survival. He advises his son not to lose that light as he is convinced that it will take him to an enlightened tomorrow.

Although the notion of hope is not very dominant, one of the father's desires comes

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<sup>284</sup> Betül Ateşçi Koçak, 'Children of Hope: The Portrayal of Children in Post-Apocalyptic Films After 9/11' in *The Child in Post-Apocalyptic Cinema*, ed. by Debbie Olson (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2015), pp.107-129 (p.123).

<sup>285</sup> McCarthy, *The Road*, p. 3.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 298.

true, showing that there are still moments in the post-apocalyptic world when wishes are indeed realized. The father's belief that 'There are people. There are people and we'll find them. You'll see',<sup>287</sup> comes true at the end of the novel as the boy encounters a family after losing his father. There is not much information about this newly met family other than it comprises a father, a mother, a boy and a girl whose presence may support the possibility of fertility in the future. When thought of in that way, the idea of hope that the reader instinctively awaits appears unexpectedly in the tradition of a saving (and somewhat implausible) Deus ex machina. Therefore, such thinking on the part of the reader coincides with the American view of the child as a saviour and symbol of hope.

## 7. Conclusion

For numerous people the September 11 attacks assumed an apocalyptic dimension. Since New Yorkers saw the scarred face of the city for a long time, Ground Zero constantly jogged memories of the great destruction that in its wake brought much upheaval in the life of the city and many conflicts and disturbances all around the world. Numerous individuals were greatly affected and the anxiety of people with families and children was remarkable. After the attacks many Americans wanted to have babies, while others with families became more cautious about their children. Also, for some, bringing up children in the aftermath of the attacks meant raising good future citizens to keep and protect the country against the forces of evil.

Such a general attitude coincides with Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Road*, which appeared following the author's fears for his son especially after 9/11. Both the author and a part of American society had considered such an apocalyptic happening well-nigh impossible. In the aftermath, the city kept its post-apocalyptic aspect for

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<sup>287</sup> Ibid., p. 260.

some time and the traumatic effects that 9/11 triggered continued down the following years. This period provided New Yorkers especially with the realization of the importance of their everyday space and how fundamental it was for them to see the iconic buildings of their city. What was generally realized was how strongly individuals need to belong to somewhere that they can call a place and to teach and transmit the feeling of sense of place to their children as they are the symbols of the future. For all the discussed cases considered, in the context of the *The Road*, the child figure as heterotopia creates a new sense of space. In that sense, traumascapes of the post-apocalyptic landscape suggests a transition to hopescapes.

## CHAPTER III

### NİLÜFER KUYAŞ'S *SERBEST DÜŞÜŞ* (FREE FALL):

#### TRAUMA at the CROSSROADS

##### 1. Introduction

Reflections and effects of September 11 attacks were not spread just throughout America. Flash news of the events was covered at the same time in America and in other countries. Turkey was one of these countries that witnessed the events live miles away as well as the repetition of the images of destruction. Though there are several books that deal with 9/11 attacks and the War on Terror written by Turkish scholars or politicians, there are not many works of fiction written about that day. However, Nilüfer Kuyaş's *Serbest Düşüş* is a good example among the few novels written after 9/11 and it contributes to this genre with the view of a Turkish author although she says she did not aim to make such a contribution. This chapter will initially present a very brief summary of the Turkish novel and trauma novels written so far in Turkish literature. Then, an overview about September 11 and its aftermath perceptions in popular culture and academia in Turkey will be given. After the presentation of the literary works that deal with 9/11, *Serbest Düşüş* will be analyzed broadly within the aspects of the cities, disasters and traumascapes.

## 2. Brief Historical Background to the Turkish Novel

The novel, as a genre, entered Turkish literature after the 1860s during the Tanzimat era.<sup>288</sup> It arrived relatively late in comparison with its development in the West as poetry was the dominant genre with its origins in oral tradition. Though there are several ways of classifying the history of the Turkish novel, this thesis prefers to use the one that is most generally accepted. The first is the Ottoman period from 1860s to 1923; then comes the period from post-1923 till the late 1950s; thirdly, there are the novels written during the three military interventions between 1960 and 1980, and finally the decades since the 1980s that have seen the emergence of post-modern novels.

The first novel to be published in Turkey, *Telemak*, which appeared in 1862, was actually a translation of François Fénelon's *Les Aventures de Télémaque* (1699). After this novel, many others were translated into Turkish.<sup>289</sup> The first genuinely original Turkish novel was published in 1872, namely Şemseddin Sami's *Taaşuk-ı Talat ve Fitnat* (*The Love of Talat and Fitnat*). It opened the gates to a flood of Turkish novels published in the remainder of the century, followed in 1901 by a pioneering Turkish psychological novel, *Eylül* (*September*) by Mehmet Rauf. According to M. Fatih Andı, in the wake of the declaration of the Turkish Republic (1923)<sup>290</sup> novels focused on history and saw the launch and development of the Turkish historical novel:

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<sup>288</sup> The Tanzimat era includes the years between 1839 and 1876. It starts with the declaration of the *Tanzimat Fermanı* (The Imperial Edict of Reorganization) by the Ottoman Sultan Abdülmecid I at the very start of his twenty-two-year reign in 1839. One of the main motives for this declaration was to check the slow decline of the Ottoman Empire by strengthening the tie between non-Muslims and the empire, in other words the Caliphate; and as a consequence, it guaranteed the rights of all Ottoman citizens regardless of religion or ethnic group.

<sup>289</sup> In the years between 1860 and 1880, many Turkish translations of novels appeared. Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* of 1862, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* of 1719, and Alexandre Dumas's *Le Comte de Monte Cristo* (completed 1844) were among the earliest other novels to be translated into Turkish.

<sup>290</sup> After the First World War, the Ottoman Empire collapsed and a new Turkish state, the Republic of Turkey, was founded in 1923. This new regime, with its policy of Kemalism, derived from the founder of Modern Turkey, Mustafa Kemal, who wanted to create a new ideology depending on the following six principles: republicanism, nationalism, populism, statism, secularism, and reformism. This new-born nation-state started to cut its connections with the old regime in order to achieve its independent sovereignty.

One of the most important characteristics of the novels written in the Republic period is that they reflected its mindset, ideologies, world views, and even utopias. Turkism, Islamism, Marxism, liberal thinking, cosmopolitanism, religious views and beliefs, all reveal themselves in the novel of this period'.<sup>291</sup>

None were classified as trauma fiction at the time, thus this category of novel is still hardly recognized in Turkish literature today. Thus, although the novels that deal with the political situation and military coups affecting the nation between 1960 and 1980 have highly traumatic content, the term 'trauma fiction' does not have a distinct place in the literature of the nation. Some novels that can nevertheless be considered as examples of trauma fiction are as follows: *Ateşten Gömlek* (The Shirt of Flame - 1922) by Halide Edip Adıvar; *Yaban* (The Strange - 1932) by Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu; *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* (The Time Regulation Institute - 1962) by Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar; *Ölmeye Yatmak* (Lie to Die - 1973) and *Bir Düğün Gecesi* (A Wedding Night - 1979) by Adalet Ağaoglu; *Beyaz Kale* (The White Castle - 1985) and *Kar* (Snow - 2002) by Orhan Pamuk; *Rumeli Benimdi* (Rumeli Was Mine - 2003) by Ayten Aygen; Murat Uyraklı's *Har* (2006) and Perihan Mağden's *Biz Kimden Kaçıyorduk Anne?* (Whom Were We Escaping from, Mummy? - 2007).

### 3. The Author and the Novel

The author of *Serbest Düşüş*, Nilüfer Kuyaş, is another of Turkey's postmodernist female writers. After her first novel *Başka Hayatlar* (Other Lives, 2004), she has written *Yeni Baştan* (All Over Again, 2007), *Adadaki Ev* (The House on The Island, 2011) and *Yok Adam* (The Absentee, 2014). Besides being an author, she is also known as a columnist and a former radio producer and presenter for BBC London in the 1980s. This experience no doubt explains why, although her fourth novel is not set in New York, it has been observed that

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<sup>291</sup> M. Fatih Andı, 'Türk Edebiyatında Roman: Cumhuriyet Devri', *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi*, 4.8 (2006), pp.165-201 (p. 167). (Unless otherwise specified, all translations are my own).

the author's reaction to and reflection upon the events of 9/11 conform to a westernized viewpoint in expressing sorrow at what happened.

Although there were some articles and interviews with Kuyas following the publication of *Serbest Düşüş*, from the scarcity of the information about the novel, it is clear that the novel has not aroused particular attention in Turkish readers despite its literary merit. In the criticisms so far, there are not many references to the novel and its reflection of 9/11. This possibly shows that either the criticism of the novel so far is not broad or that criticism is not yet that interested in the attacks' taking place in a Turkish novel. As the novel talks about several different cataclysms around the world in different years, though not mentioned, one might also be easily reminded of the Madrid train bombings on March 11, 2004. In the event known in Spain as 11-M, nearly 200 people died more than 1800 people were wounded. As the attacks happened nearly two and a half years after September 11, one could easily yet bitterly remember 11-M attacks as well. In addition, the scenes and memories of debris and rescue attempts on the train may resound with the train accident Şirin had in France in the 1980s.

From its very first paragraph the novel guides the reader to its content and the genre to which it belongs: 'A story brought us together. It was about survival. It was the story of how he survived, which aroused my interest, and I gravitated'.<sup>292</sup> Though it may appear at first glance that the protagonist merely aims to compare their respective ways of overcoming real or potential traumas, the love affair appears to develop without the protagonist being aware of it. Throughout the novel, the reader is reminded that upon the encounter with Bruno Şirin is taken back to the traumatic moments of her life. Their chance meeting opens the door to a long exploration of their respective backgrounds centred mainly on their accounts of the catastrophes in which they have been involved. Although the novel is broadly discussed

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<sup>292</sup> Nilüfer Kuyas, *Serbest Düşüş* (Istanbul: Can Yayınları, 2013), p. 15.



throughout the chapter, a very brief overview of the plot would be beneficial for a better grasp of the novel and the analyses:

The protagonist, Şirin, has a loving husband called Ekrem and two children, Ayça and Rüstem, who are probably in their twenties. As a talented person, Şirin is both an artist and a photographer who is preparing an upcoming exhibition. Although Ekrem and Şirin have a peaceful marriage where both sides understand each other, things start to change in Şirin's life one day after she attends a conference on Lacan and women. The event takes place on the top floor of a very high building and when it finishes, the electricity is cut off, the lifts fail and the lights go out. As Şirin experiences vertigo-inducing phobia, she spends some time sitting on the floor waiting to overcome her fear. While she is there, an American man named Bruno, who is somewhat younger than Şirin, approaches and tries to help her calm down by explaining his own story on September 11, 2001:

I was in the Twin Towers [...] I am one of the survivors, do not be afraid, nothing [bad] will happen, we will go down the stairs calmly and slowly, I will hold your hand, you do not need to be afraid.<sup>293</sup>

The reference to the attacks when Bruno and Şirin first meet draws attention to the immediacy and similarity of their mental anguish. As it subsequently transpires that Şirin was the only person in her carriage to survive a horrific train accident in France in the 1980s with a death toll of 104 people,<sup>294</sup> she immediately asks the American: 'How did it affect you to survive? Can you tell me your story? I want to feel it. I want to draw the [mental] picture'.<sup>295</sup> Featured at the outset of the novel, the woman's wish to learn more about the man's life forms the beginning of both the narrative and love affair that gradually leads us to the path of traumascapes.

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<sup>293</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

#### 4. Reception of 9/11 in Turkey

In Turkey, like all around the world, the attacks of 9/11 were immediately given as breaking news on TV and provided the headlines of almost all newspapers.<sup>296</sup> The future outcome of the events was widely discussed in both its political and economic dimensions in the Turkish media at the time and it has been an ongoing issue in Turkey ever since. There were also books published by several scholars focusing on the political and cultural side of the events.<sup>297</sup> Most of these studies concentrated on how the event was seen from an American perspective as well as on the subsequent effects of the attacks in Turkey and in the Middle East, although additionally, there was also a book titled *Tarihin 11 Eylül Durağı (September 11: A Historical Turning Point - 2003)* comprising a collection of interviews made with nine outstanding academics such as Tanıl Bora, Soli Özel, Erol Manisalı, and Ahmet Davutoğlu, the present prime minister of Turkey.

Another important book to appear in 2003 was *9/11 New York-Istanbul*, which is another collection of essays, this time by twelve well-known scholars from diverse cultural and professional backgrounds and with a wide range of different experiences. Although ‘not a 9/11 book’ as stated by the editor, the miscellany ‘takes September 11 as a point of departure to contemplate the identities of the two cities’.<sup>298</sup> Other than these works, there are two films that deal with the September 11 attacks. The first one, *Kelebek (The Butterfly, 2009)*, directed by Cihan Taşkın and Günay Günaydın) is about the life of a young man, Yusuf, who despite the disapproval of his family joins a group of Muslims who want to help

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<sup>296</sup> Some of the Turkish newspaper headlines on 12 September 2001 were as follows: ‘Üçüncü Dünya Savaşı Gibi (Like World War III)’ in *Hürriyet*; ‘Dünya Şokta (The World is in Shock)’ in *Türkiye*; ‘Kıyamet Günü (Doomsday)’ in *Sabah*; and ‘Dünyanın Kalbine Kamikaze (Kamikaze into the Heart of the World)’ in *Milliyet*.

<sup>297</sup> Some of the books published post 9/11 in Turkey are as follows: Remzi Gökdağ, *Amerikan Medyasında 11 Eylül [September 11 in American Media]* (Istanbul: E Yayinlari, 2002); Sedat Laçiner, *11 Eylül Sonrasında Ortadoğu [Middle East post-September 11]* (Istanbul: USAK, 2011); and Faruk Aslan, *Matrix'in 11 Eylül Kurgusu [Matrix's September 11 Fiction]* (Istanbul: Q-Matris, 2006).

<sup>298</sup> *9/11 New York-Istanbul*, ed. by Feride Çiçekoğlu (Istanbul: Homer Kitabevi, 2003).

and educate little children in Afghanistan in 1996. The group also aims to keep the children away from al-Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden. As the film proceeds from 1996 to September 11, 2001, the protagonist Yusuf starts to contemplate the progress of the events as well as the effectiveness of his attempts to convey a peaceful interpretation of Islam. Though not a high quality production, this Turkish film nevertheless is on the list of the world's post-9/11 cinematic productions. The second film, Mahsun Kırmızıgül's *New York'ta Beş Minare* (*Five Minarets in New York*, 2010)<sup>299</sup> is about Islamophobia in America post-9/11. It focuses on cases of false imprisonment in America, especially of Muslims following the attacks. Though both films have approximately the same rating on Amazon's Internet Movie Database (IMDB), Kırmızıgül's has attracted more attention and had much bigger audiences than its predecessor. It is also worth noting that both films focus on the way Islam is perceived following the attacks and thus, as Turkish productions, both aim to show Islam as a peaceful religion.

Although in America comics and graphic novels were among the relatively quick reactions to the event as mentioned in the introduction, hardly any have been published in Turkey even today. In terms of scholarly publications, however, numerous Turkish academics, especially in American Culture and Literature departments, have paid attention to the events and expressed their ideas on the matter either in books or journals.<sup>300</sup>

Though no poem in Turkish has been dedicated to or inspired by the 9/11 attacks, interestingly, the winner of the Grand Jury Prize in the September 11 Poetry Competition organized by the American Poets Academy in 2003 was a young Turkish writer and

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<sup>299</sup> *Kelebek* [The Butterfly], dir. by Cihan Taşkın (Sanayi-i Nefise, 2009); *New York'ta Beş Minare* [*Five Minarets in New York*], dir. by Mahsun Kırmızıgül (Pinema, 2010).

<sup>300</sup> Özden Sözalın, *The American Nightmare: Don DeLillo's Falling Man and Cormac McCarthy's The Road* (Bloomington: Author House, 2011) is one of the important studies of these two novels, which it analyses with a wide perspective in explaining the fear and shock in America in the aftermath of the attacks. Secondly, Murat Erdem's article 'Anti-Americanism in Turkey and Its Reflections after September 11' *Türkbilim*, 8 (2012), 137-159, analyses popular anti-Americanism aroused in Turkey post 9/11 while examining similar cases in other countries. He approaches how Turkey is perceived throughout America and its historical relations with the USA.

polymath, Aziz Dođdu (b. 1976) with his famous English-language Poem of the Year *United We Stand*. After winning the prize, he diplomatically expressed his aim as follows: ‘My intention is to write what people in the world experience from the perspective of a Turk, and to globalize my ideas. If I can do that, that is the biggest prize I can get’.<sup>301</sup> Although Aziz does not live in Turkey, his contribution is important as it reflects the American reaction to the events of 9/11 as perceived by a foreigner. The Turkish response to 9/11 in traditional literary genres however, is rather more evident where the novel is concerned.

### 5. Novels on September 11 in Turkish

Alongside Kuyaş’s novel *Serbest Düşüş* (*Free Fall*), another Turkish novel inspired at least partly by the events of 9/11 is Müge İplikçi’s *Kaf Dağı*<sup>302</sup> published in September, 2008. It is set in America and is about two big disasters that have left significant scars on both the Turkish and American nations, the first being the 1999 earthquake in Turkey<sup>303</sup> and the second being the 9/11 attacks in America. The novel is about a journalist, called Emel, who lost all her family in the 1999 (Marmara) earthquake in Gölcük. As a survivor, she spends long years in psychological therapy to overcome her trauma. After making up her mind that she wants to live instead of feeling sorry for herself, she applies for a scholarship in journalism with a project about America’s War on Terror and the country’s policy towards Muslim detainees. Through this project, Emel also aims to find traces of her friend Zahide,

<sup>301</sup> ‘Turk Wins Poet of the Year Award’, *Turks.Uz*, 17 September 2003, <<http://www.turks.us/article.php?story=20030917125529776>> [accessed 17 July 2014].

<sup>302</sup> *Kafdağı* is ‘a fabulous mountain inhabited by djinns (often used to express enormous difference [or a] great obstacle)’ (*Oxford Concise Turkish Dictionary*, 1980 edition, p. 166)

<sup>303</sup> On 17 August 1999, an earthquake measuring 7.4 on the Richter scale occurred in north-west Turkey, the epicentre of which was near the town of Gölcük in the region of Marmara. According to Government Crisis Centre reports, more than 95,000 houses were reduced to rubble or severely damaged and 18,243 people died. The earthquake left some 250,000 people homeless and incurred a loss of US\$ 20 billion in property and production. Hundreds of aftershocks followed the earthquake. See Ebru Salcıođlu, Metin Bařođlu and Maria Livanou, ‘Post-traumatic Stress Disorder and Comorbid Depression among Survivors of the 1999 earthquake in Turkey’, *Disasters*, 31.2 (2007), 115-29 (p. 117).

whom she met many years ago at university. After learning that Zahide has been arrested, Emel grows more interested in the subject and tries to find out what has happened to her friend and listens to her story.

The novel provides a clear and supposedly objective understanding of the political situation in post 9/11 America and implicitly evokes a few of the traumatic cases that occurred as a consequence both of 9/11 and the massive 1999 Marmara earthquake in Turkey. It highlights political issues in the aftermath of the attacks and cross-cuts between the two catastrophes (inviting comparison between them) when Emel thinks about the earthquake and her friend Zahide at the same time. This novel could have been chosen for analysis as well as being one of the rare examples of the post-9/11 Turkish novel but it has not been selected for detailed study because in dealing primarily with the relationship between America's so-called War on Terror and the CIA it somehow ensures that individuals' trauma is overshadowed.

A third Turkish novel in which 9/11 is mentioned is Nermin Yıldırım's prize-winning *Unutma Beni Apartmanı* (*Forget-Me-Not Building*) that was published in 2011 by Doğan Kitap. It concerns the relatively extraordinary life of a girl who hears her mother's voice for the first time when she is forty-three. While the novel portrays the protagonist's life from her childhood till her adolescence, it brings up several themes, from popular culture to the political situation in Turkey in different eras, especially drawing attentions to military coups in the country. Like Kuyuş and İplikçi, Yıldırım also employs one of the most trauma-causing incidents, the 1999 Marmara earthquake in Turkey in addition to another massive earthquake in Van in 1976 with a death toll over 3500. In her novel, which meticulously combines important historic events and cultural pieces with fiction, the day on September 11, 2001 occupies a remarkable space. Furthermore, the author shares some similarities with Kuyuş in the narration. As in Kuyuş's novel, in some parts of the novel the presentation of the attacks shows the similar shock felt from Turkey. And as stated in an interview, it turns

out that this was what the author indeed aimed. When asked to the author,

your telling about the attacks and the aftermath is almost four pages yet it is quite informative and even detailed for the ones who know little about that day. While you narrate the shock of the people who witness the first images (of the attacks), you deal with the moments of destruction and its long aftermath in a rather explanatory way. Considering your addressing some other historical events and natural catastrophes, your touch on 9/11 is not a surprise. While writing about that day, did you also want to call attention to the unimportance of the distance and place in our reactions to disasters? Or did you just want to show how the attacks were perceived from Turkey?<sup>304</sup>

Yıldırım replies:

The world is our common disaster and cataclysms either natural or political somehow affect us all. Süreyya gets affected differently from the earthquake in the city she lives and differently from another destruction in the far end of the world. But as especially these kind of political affairs in countries such as America can put the rest of the world under debris, the extents reach as far as Süreyya. With Süreyya, I wanted to present how the events in America affected psychology of Turkey and Turkish people. I also wanted to show that any kind of destruction is actually universal; some may get affected a little while the others get highly affected.<sup>305</sup>

While living at that time in Istanbul, the narrator Süreyya tells how she first witnessed the attacks:

While I was passing from the local butcher, I realized the crowd piled in front of the shop. The (other) shopkeepers gathered, they mumbled weird words while they were staring at one point in awe and shock as if they were witnessing doomsday. When I turned my head, [...] I saw they were looking at a small television. When I came across the scenes full of crashes, explosions with smoke and dust, I first thought it was one of the action films I dislike. Dust was turned into smoke, blood into gunpowder, sky into soil upon a diverted plane's entering a huge building. It did not take me long to understand that this was not a film frame. I knew that buildings, they were the Twin Towers in New York. Moreover, the scene on television was taken by a hand camera or even by a cell phone. There was not a single sign of American movies' gleaming colors' joy, [nor] ... in these images. Then I understood why that entire crowd was in dismay. What happened was not a film nor a game. Something happened to the world's emperor who is the first in anger.<sup>306</sup>

The initial shock that the protagonist experienced is not quite different from most of the

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<sup>304</sup> Nermin Yıldırım, interviewed by Betül Ateşci Koçak, 1 June 2015.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid.

<sup>306</sup> Nermin Yıldırım, *Unutma Beni Apartmanı* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2011), p. 341.

American novels and the general rhetoric, even including the apocalyptic perception. Though people who saw them were thousands of miles away from the place of the real incident, Yıldırım's narration makes the reader feel and visualize the event as if it was happening in Istanbul. The fear and shock of people around is given almost the same as it was experienced real in Manhattan. And the author's own feelings presents the extent of the immediate psychological effect of the event:

I rushed home to learn about the details from my own television. I did not even put the bags in the kitchen but left them thereby. I did not try any new recipe with the things in that bag. I even ended my cooking curiosity that day.<sup>307</sup>

To the question

Your ideas about the political side of the event are quite clear. Is there anything you could add for the psychological side? For instance, after September 11, 2001 Süreyya does not try new recipes, she distances herself from kitchen... Metaphorically, can we see this end of enthusiasm as endings for several things for lots of people after the attacks? And is her psychological fading at a traumatic extent?<sup>308</sup>

Yıldırım replies,

When Süreyya sees the first scenes of the incident, she is coming from grocery shopping. She is in a time that she has not experienced until that time. She keeps trying new recipes (every day) and as you said, her end of enthusiasm coincides with the same day when she sees the scenes of the attacks. [...] Without doubt, the ending of her behaviour has relation with everything in her life. However, it is not a coincidence that the events occur at the same time as September 11. Though far away in a geographical sense, September 11 is experienced in Süreyya's life, in the life where she indeed lives. After all, her putting aside (her) experiments of hope may be related to her re-realizing that the world is not a place to cherish hopes.<sup>309</sup>

Among the few other Turkish literary figures who responded to 9/11 was the internationally acclaimed writer and champion of free speech Orhan Pamuk, the first Turkish citizen to win the Nobel Prize in Literature (in 2006) and whose books have been translated

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<sup>307</sup> Ibid., p. 342.

<sup>308</sup> Yıldırım, interviewed by Betül Ateşçi Koçak.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid.

into sixty languages. Soon after 9/11, he wrote an article drawing attention to the difficulties and problems of conciliation between the Eastern and Western nations.<sup>310</sup> He starts by mentioning one of his neighbours, whom he identifies as a lower middle-class person who is not religious or well-informed but who immediately expresses angry approval of the attacks. Though he draws a rather westernized view of the world, Pamuk then proceeds to indicate the opposition between Islamic and western countries, stating that Islamic and third world countries nourish hatred towards western nations and that it is necessary for the West to realize the necessities of the silenced Eastern countries. He also indicates that the clash between the east and west has also caused economic inequality, which has added to the feelings of desire for revenge. Pamuk writes:

The problem facing the west today is not only to discover which terrorist is preparing a bomb in which tent, which cave, or which street of which remote city, but to understand the poor, scorned majority that does not belong to the western world.

War cries, nationalistic speeches and impetuous military operations take quite the opposite course. The new visa restrictions for the Schengen countries; law-enforcement measures aimed at impeding the movement in western countries of Muslims and people from poor nations; suspicion of Islam and everything non-western and crude and aggressive language that identifies the entire Islamic civilisation with terror and fanaticism are rapidly carrying the world further from peace.

What prompts an impoverished old man in Istanbul to condone the terror in New York in a moment of anger, or a Palestinian youth fed up with Israeli oppression to admire the Taliban who throw nitric acid in women's faces, is not Islam, nor the idiocy described as the clash between east and west, nor poverty itself, but the feeling of impotence deriving from degradation and the failure to be heard and understood.<sup>311</sup>

In order to explain to the non-Turkish reader the reasons for his neighbour's behaviour, the author outlines Turkey's socio-historical development since the foundation of the Republic:

The wealthy, pro-modernist class who founded the Turkish republic reacted to resistance from the poor and backward sectors of society not by attempting to understand them, but by law-enforcement measures, interdictions, and the army. In the end, the modernisation effort remained half-finished, and Turkey became

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<sup>310</sup> Orhan Pamuk, 'Listen to the Damned', *The Guardian*, 29 September 2001, <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/sep/29/afghanistan.terrorism7>> [accessed 10 November 2014].

<sup>311</sup> Ibid.



a limited democracy in which intolerance prevailed.<sup>312</sup>

As seen from the explanations above, Pamuk's conclusions with regard to Turkish reactions to the attacks include comments not only about Turkey but also about Islamic countries. In addition to drawing an image as an outsider who embraces both sides, he emphasizes what both east and west lack. These deficiencies can namely be given as self-esteem in the former case and understanding empathy in the latter.

As for Elif Şafak, who is among the most well-known Turkish female authors with books published in more than twenty languages, as befits someone born in Strasbourg, she emphasizes the necessity of drawing a cosmopolitan world without limits or discrimination between cultures. When reminded in an interview of her once saying that 'East and West are illusional concepts we have created in our minds',<sup>313</sup> she elaborates upon this idea saying:

[...] if we perceive the world from a humanistic and cultural viewpoint, how can we draw boundaries? Everything is so connected! [...] Everybody's stories are interrelated, especially after 9/11. Our fates became interrelated. Unhappiness in Pakistan affects happiness in Canada. [...] We are living in [a] world where everything lives in everything else's embrace.<sup>314</sup>

Şafak's reflection on 9/11 also draws attention to the worldwide ramifications of the event, much as does Kuyuş's *Serbest Düşüş (Free Fall)*. In keeping with Şafak's explanation, Kuyuş tells the crushing stories of two people from different countries, who find that their fates meet at some point. Hence, Kuyuş's novel is an example of a text that provides a broad view and analysis of the events of 9/11 from a different country on the other side of the world. In addition, it serves as a connection to observe two cities that offer different views of criticism in terms of the city life and historical background as discussed in the following pages.

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<sup>312</sup> Ibid.

<sup>313</sup> Elif Şafak, interviewed by Euronews, 6 July 2010 <<http://www.euronews.com/2010/06/06/elif-safak-turkey-s-most-read-woman-novelist/>> [accessed 8 October 2014]

<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

### 6. *Serbest Düşüş: The Bridge in Witnessing the Event from Istanbul and New York*

Nilüfer Kuyaş's fourth novel, *Serbest Düşüş (Free Fall)*, is set in Istanbul and recounts in a mixed first- and third-person narrative about the life of Şirin, a woman whose mid-life crisis is intensified by her trauma due to a train accident as it re-emerges after her having met an American who is one of the witnesses of the September 11 attacks. The novel provides a distinctive twist to the post-9/11 novel in many ways. It offers an insight into how a massive cataclysm is witnessed from another country, in addition to the author's personal interpretation coloured by her awareness of Turkish cultural history with its controversial heritage of Byzantine iconicity.<sup>315</sup> Hence, in *Serbest Düşüş* Kuyaş considers and comments on 9/11, offering any foreign readers who know Turkish a vision of the event as seen from a city in another continent.

In her 2003 collection *9/11 New York–Istanbul*, Çiçekoğlu's stated objective exactly corresponds to the approach adopted throughout this chapter and it assumes a multi-faceted critical viewpoint. In the prologue, Çiçekoğlu concentrates on the scenic and spectacular side of the events as she draws attention to differences and similarities between the two cities.<sup>316</sup>

She states that

Istanbul and New York are among that rare breed of cities, which do not belong to any specific group of people who happen to live there at any particular bracket of time. This might be the reason for the similarity of the aura which both owe to their common character of being a port. But their differences outnumber their similarities. [...] The main dissimilarity of Istanbul and New York is a visual derivative [...]. Their images are different. New York is vertical and phallic, an iconic symbol of the modernist image of success. Istanbul, [...] refuses to yield herself to any iconic image, sprawling between two continents and two seas.<sup>317</sup>

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<sup>315</sup> Istanbul owes its identity to this controversy ever since the city of Byzantium, founded by Greek colonists in seventh century BC, was transformed into Constantinople by Constantine I: Feride Çiçekoğlu, 'Prologue', in *9/11 New York-Istanbul*, pp. 25-50 (p. 42).

<sup>316</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

However, despite the differences, the sharing of opinions and experiences on that spectacular day enables one to see how the incident is perceived from a city that was once home to world of icons. Çiçekoğlu adds that

Looking at New York from Istanbul would add a dimension difficult to grasp in the affinity of Ground Zero, as the site of the towers came to be called. I felt that the iconoclastic venture of the terrorists versus the iconography of the Twin Towers would be seen better if viewed from the distance of Istanbul, which is not only the cradle of the conflict over icons but is also the city where this controversy is still in agenda.<sup>318</sup>

Like the protagonist Şirin in *Serbest Düşüş*, Çiçekoğlu was also mesmerized by the tragic spectacle when she first saw the collapse of the Towers. Yet Çiçekoğlu also tells us that she first thought it was just another scene from a Hollywood disaster movie, as if the calamity were something fairly trashy and unimportant, suggesting her uncertainty about how to interpret the momentous and exceptional event that she was witnessing. In this respect, Çiçekoğlu's reaction resembles the nonplussed paralysis of Kuyaş's protagonist Şirin as the novel contributes to the numerous depictions of 9/11 as perceived by a Turkish protagonist and an American who witnessed the events live in the north tower.

With regard to 9/11 and its effect on people, the novel draws attention to the unexpected, shocking and traumatic side of the events. While making the reader reconsider and visualize again what happened in the natural flow of the novel, the protagonist's attitude ensures that the reader is obliged to question him/herself 'Where was I that day, what was I doing?'<sup>319</sup> Interestingly, Şirin's insistence on interrogating herself echoes an enduring nation-wide reality in America. Indeed, at times Kuyaş seems to be consciously reflecting the ongoing concerns of Americans who contribute to online 9/11 memorial forums<sup>320</sup>. She says,

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<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> Kuyaş, p. 47.

<sup>320</sup> See the names of the forums created: *Where were you on September 11?* <<http://www.wherewereyouon911.com>> [accessed 25 December 2014]; 'Where were you on Sept. 11, 2001', *The New York Times*, 8 August 2011 <[http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2011/09/08/us/sept-11-reckoning/map911-browse.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2011/09/08/us/sept-11-reckoning/map911-browse.html?_r=0)> [accessed 25 December 2014]

Everyone wants to remember where they were when they are reminded of 9/11. Prettier things should have united humanity. While listening to Bruno, Şirin was thinking, where was I that day? Ten years ago, while Bruno was trying to go down the stairs, what was I doing?<sup>321</sup>

Whether or not the author is aware of the presence of these websites, her reminder of a specific moment contributes to the novel's universal message. Questioning again where she was on that day on the very next page, the author retransmits the successive moments of shock one might feel upon hearing the news from afar and attempts to take the reader back to that cataclysmic day. Shortly afterwards, Şirin again remembers those moments when driving to meet her American friend Laura, who immediately calls Şirin to tell her about the news. Upon hearing it, Şirin promptly follows the Americans she sees in Sultanahmet Square who are rushing to find a television. Together with them, Şirin 'looks confusedly at the screen in a basement restaurant'.<sup>322</sup> Then, changing the narrator, in a first-person voice, she relates that

it was all about watching desperately. As in other big disasters, watching mesmerized. It is so massive that you cannot help watching. Massive and terrifying, so terrifying that it is even entrancing impossible not to watch. But the dreary planes' smash-up devastated us all, it will be never erased from our minds.<sup>323</sup>

While evoking the incredible and shocking nature of the event, Şirin also mentions the weird excitement she felt upon witnessing it:

In the terror, there was an unutterable excitement – because it was like watching an execution, a dirty excitement, a surrender that oldies called awe, the reality of the limitedness of destruction.<sup>324</sup>

As already indicated, Şirin has confused thoughts and feelings upon watching the collapse of the Twin Towers. She witnesses the event thousands of miles away from where

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<sup>321</sup> Kuyaş, p. 47-8.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid.

it takes place, yet the way she describes it is quite close to Bruno's. Like many commentators interviewed at the time, Bruno also stresses his first impressions on seeing the incredible visual effect and states that when they saw the giant plane passing it was 'as if they were watching Godzilla',<sup>325</sup> thereby endorsing a comment by Brian Jarvis in 2006:

The sight of a plane crashing into the World Trade Center has frequently been described as cinematic spectacle. Victims and voyeurs, journalists and politicians, writers and critics have repeatedly framed the attack on New York as 'disaster film', or 'war film', or 'horror film'.<sup>326</sup>

Şirin too concentrates on the filmic aspect of the collapse when telling of her very immediate perception of it. As it vacillates between 'reality and fiction',<sup>327</sup> the novel suggests that there is little or no difference between the perceptions of the real, first-person witness (who, if s/he survives, may nevertheless also be a victim to some extent), and those, of the person who watches it on-screen. The implication is that people's responses are universal whether events are experienced at first-hand or via a live broadcast.

Bruno, then, adds that the day of the attacks was 'beyond words, an experience quite beyond language, a nameless thing'.<sup>328</sup> By making Bruno describe his traumatic experience as something ineffable, the author also shows herself as conforming to what since September 11 has become the conventional way of representing people's reaction to the calamity, and Bruno continues as follows: 'You want to stop and look. You want to stare without doing anything, mesmerized, staying put as if it were doomsday. No, really, it is something indescribable'.<sup>329</sup> In his evocation of the seemingly interminable atmosphere, Bruno again

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<sup>325</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>326</sup> Brian Jarvis, 'New York, 9/11', in *Urban Space and Cityscapes: Perspectives from Modern and Contemporary Culture*, ed. by Christopher Lindner (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 49-63 (p. 49).

<sup>327</sup> An article by Daniel Ziegart opens with an introduction highlighting that 'many of the initial 9/11 commentaries pointed to a shattered relationship between reality and fiction'. He adds that upon seeing the images of destruction, many people preferred to call them 'action-images' instead of seeing them 'as what they were'. Daniel Ziegart, 'Radical Measures: 9/11 and/as Deleuze's Time-Image', *Rhizomes: Cultural Studies in Emerging Knowledge*, 16 (2008) <<http://www.rhizomes.net/issue16/ziegart/index.html>> [accessed 10 August 2014].

<sup>328</sup> Kuyuş, p. 44.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid.

uses common expressions, which the post-9/11 reader is mostly familiar with. And several pages later he still keeps the moments of the collapse clearly in mind, albeit in third-person narrative:

He sees scattered bodies when he goes to the Plaza floor, dead bodies, wounded bodies, burnt bodies, metal and glass pieces, [...]. 'I am tired of seeing', he said. [...] 'It was strange to get on the subway, on the bus. You want to talk to people about what happened [...]'.<sup>330</sup>

The need to talk about the event is one of Bruno's most immediate reactions. His desire to tell what he went through in the towers shows the normal reaction after a disaster. Though he tries to stay calm and help other people in the tower, he comes to a point where he cannot endure it alone and needs to find urgent relief by talking to other witnesses and victims.

Kuyaş does not abstain from giving the details as seen through the eyes of a New-Yorker protagonist any more than Don DeLillo does in the opening page of his widely-discussed novel, *Falling Man*:

It was not anymore but a world, a time and space of falling ash and near night. He was walking through rubble and mud and there were people running past holding towels to their faces or jackets over their heads. [...] They ran and fell, some of them, confused and ungainly, with debris coming down around them, and there were people taking shelter under cars.<sup>331</sup>

It can be seen that, in evoking the exceptional disaster and alluding to the densely-occupied debris area, Kuyaş has somewhat paradoxically chosen to follow a familiar path and to use a language that is becoming commonplace. Also, just as the presence of God is questioned after all the disaster in *Falling Man*,<sup>332</sup> Bruno more naively says that 'Angels were somewhere else that day, angels did not come to Twin Towers.'<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>331</sup> Don DeLillo, *Falling Man* (New York: Picador, 2007), p. 3. For some critics such as John Duvall, DeLillo's novel 'merely [shows] symptoms of an American literature that has retreated from politics into domesticity'. John N. Duvall and Robert P. Marzec, 'Narrating 9/11', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 57. 3 (2011), pp. 381-400 (p. 384).

<sup>332</sup> In *Falling Man*, some of the characters such as Keith, Lianne and some other New Yorkers question the presence of the God saying that 'How God could let this happen? Where was God when this happened?' Conversely, there are also some who say that they are now 'closer to God than ever'. p. 60, 61.

<sup>333</sup> Kuyaş, p. 109.

The common element in the impressions shared by Şirin and Bruno with regard to what they claim to have seen and experienced either remotely or at first hand on 9/11 is an air of unreality and illusion. Though ostensibly the novel just expresses the view of two people sharing similar thoughts, they are the mouthpieces for the multitude, epitomizing the observations of Alex Houen:

For anyone who was not an actual victim, what lay at the heart of the disaster was the traumatic crossing between mediation and visceral reality. The sheer horror of the event seemed unreal, and not simply because it was disseminated through media images; even eye-witnesses on the ground claimed the attacks had seemed filmic.<sup>334</sup>

While Şirin was neither a first-hand witness nor a resident in America at the time of the attacks, it is understood that she has felt sorrow similar to that of thousands of people who were directly involved. Additionally, she provides an outsider's view of the attacks, suggesting where the sympathies of an impartial observer lie. Yet in response to the question: 'In the novel, Şirin does not want to go to Ground Zero. What about you, have you been there?' If yes, could you please say what your impressions were?', Kuyaş replies:

No, I have not been to Ground Zero, I do not have a special reason to go there, either. Yet, the idea of a monument there is interesting, indeed. I believe in its symbolic meaning. But it should not be confused with sacredness, unfortunately people tend to do this. In my opinion, trauma spaces are not sacred. They are just important as a legacy.<sup>335</sup>

Similarly, when Şirin visits her daughter Ela, who lives in New York, the latter suggests to her mother that they should visit the Ground Zero memorial together. However, Şirin rejects the idea of going there and tells Ela that she could go there alone if she wants to. This information is given in the novel via the third-person narrator:

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<sup>334</sup> Alex Houen, 'Novel Spaces and Taking Places in the Wake of September 11', *Studies in the Novel*, 36.3 (2004), 419- 37 (p. 419).

<sup>335</sup> Kuyaş, interviewed by Betül Ateşçi Koçak, 20 November 2014.

Şirin did not go to Ground Zero; she indeed wanted but resisted. She did not want to see the place that captivated her, she became superstitious. Instead, she read Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*, and she liked it a lot.<sup>336</sup>

The things that Bruno has told her as well as Şirin's own fertile imagination together explain her reluctance to visit the place. In addition to the sorrow that she has felt for thousands of people victimized on Ground Zero, she ascribes special meaning to the site because of her love for Bruno, which makes the situation harder to confront.

Among the criticisms of the Ground Zero memorial and museum is Lundborg's comment that 'the traumatic event eludes complete capture and continues to exist somewhere in the background'.<sup>337</sup> While this observation might be valid for people who were psychologically unaffected or have recovered from the events (and Bruno does not openly state his ideas about the memorial site), Şirin exemplifies the opposite case as she is still influenced by the thought of what her lover has gone through. Though she was not in America at the time of the attacks, she empathetically extrapolates to Bruno's case the suffering she experienced several years previously when she was close to death in a major train accident, and reimagines those moments of the attacks that Bruno experienced. For her, trauma becomes a part of the individual.<sup>338</sup>

The reference to Ground Zero appears in two opposite aspects for Şirin. Although she abstains from visiting it, the place has several connotations for her. Ground Zero holds several paradoxical implications for Şirin. When Ela tells her mother about her visit to Ground Zero, Şirin replies:

I have not seen it but I know so much about it that it is as if I had visited the place. People's belongings, a ring, a watch, an earring, [...], a wallet, a purse, coins, burnt pieces of fabric, a shoe, broken glasses, they all lack meaning and yet we look for all the meaning there, I know my dear. It is a museum, a tomb, a monument and a sacred place.<sup>339</sup>

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<sup>336</sup> Kuyuş, p. 103.

<sup>337</sup> Tom Lundborg, 'The Folding of Trauma: Architecture and the Politics of Rebuilding Ground Zero', *Alternatives, Global, Local*, 37.3 (2012), 240- 52 (p. 251).

<sup>338</sup> Kuyuş, p. 131.

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.



Though Şirin thinks that Ground Zero encompasses several values, she does not want to go there because she is afraid that her love for Bruno, which she is trying to suppress, will emerge again if she sees the place. She is aware that there she will be unable to prevent herself from reimagining the moments of Bruno's struggle for survival as well as other people's suffering. Additionally, Şirin's description of Ground Zero naturally draws attention to its national and global importance as the transformation of the place from Twin Towers to Ground Zero arouses multiple concerns.

After the destruction of the Twin Towers, thousands if not millions of people wholeheartedly approved the idea of immediately calling the ruined epicentre of the attack Ground Zero, borrowing the term first used in a June 1946 U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey and in a report on Hiroshima published in the *New York Times* the following month.<sup>340</sup> In her 2004 article about Ground Zero, Marita Sturken discusses the multitude of meanings with which the place is invested. Three years after the attacks, she opined that it would continue to acquire even more meaning. She states that there are various factors that have made it very important and that they are all closely interrelated:

In the months and years since September 2001, Ground Zero in lower Manhattan has become a site of destruction and reconstruction, of intense emotional and political investments, a highly over-determined space. It is a place inspired by local, national and global meanings, a neighbourhood, a commercial district, and a site of memory and mourning.<sup>341</sup>

In the following years, as foreseen by Sturken, the place gained more significance, especially after the inauguration of the 9/11 Memorial on September 12, 2011, and the opening of the associated museum in May, 2014. Additionally, Ground Zero and the Memorial Museum

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<sup>340</sup> 'U. S. Strategic Bombing Survey: The Effects of the Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, June 19, 1946. President's Secretary's File, Truman Papers', in *Trumanlibrary.org* <[http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/bomb/large/documents/index.php?pagenumber=10&documentid=65&documentdate=1946-06-19&studycollectionid=abomb&groupid](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/bomb/large/documents/index.php?pagenumber=10&documentid=65&documentdate=1946-06-19&studycollectionid=abomb&groupid)> [accessed 1 April 2015]

<sup>341</sup> Marita Sturken, 'The Aesthetics of Absence: Rebuilding Ground Zero', *American Ethnologist*, 31. 3 (2004), pp. 311-25 (p. 312).

are on the must-see lists posted on websites for visitors to New York,<sup>342</sup> and there are tours available for people who want to visit the site.<sup>343</sup> Furthermore, despite the controversial nature of the commercial activity,<sup>344</sup> the continuing sale of real or symbolically representative memorial souvenirs in the museum shop shows that there are still lots of people who want to keep the memory of September 11 alive as something special and sacred.

It is also important to note that Şirin's imaginative conception of the pain and hard times that Bruno experienced is conveyed through third-person narrative. Such an approach on the part of the author affords opportunities to explore the contribution of narrating a cataclysm through the eyes of someone who witnesses the event on television, miles away from where the disaster takes place.

## 7. Traumatic Spaces in the Novel

Though it would be an exaggeration to say that the novel is entirely about 9/11, the events form the backdrop to the action. Obvious allusions to their importance and effect upon the protagonists occur throughout the novel, which explores trauma in several ways. Most of the questions and themes that Şirin illustrates (such as questions of survival, heroism, survivor

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<sup>342</sup> See Ground Zero Memorial and Museum, in *NYC Insider Guide* <<http://www.nycinsiderguide.com/ground-zero-memorial#axzz3TtzHwitr>> [accessed 15 January 2015].

<sup>343</sup> See *9/11 Ground Zero Tour* <<http://911groundzero.com>> [accessed 15 January 2015].

<sup>344</sup> There has been controversy and anger regarding the souvenirs sold at the museum gift shop, especially on the part of bereaved families as they think the museum is different from the other museums owing to the remembrance of the people who died at Ground Zero. Abby Philip reports some of the objections as follows: ““They’re down there selling bracelets; they’re making money off my dead son,” said Jim Riches, whose firefighter son, Jimmy, died at the World Trade Center on 9/11”; or, ““It’s crass commercialism on a literally sacred site,” Kurt Horning, whose son Matthew died on 9/11, said in a telephone interview Monday. “It’s a burial ground. We don’t think there should be those things offered on that spot””. Abby Philip, ‘Families infuriated by “crass commercialism” of 9/11 Museum gift shop’, *The Washington Post*, 19 May 2014, <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2014/05/19/families-infuriated-by-crass-commercialism-of-911-museum-gift-shop/>> [accessed 23 December 2014].

Also, a part of the discussion was about some of the victims’ families’ protest ‘against the storage of the remains of their loved ones inside the 9/11 Museum. Jon Swaine, ‘9/11 families angry over ‘disgraceful’ city plan to store remains at museum’, *The Guardian*, 9 May 2014 <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/09/911-museum-families-angry-human-remains-storage>> [accessed 30 January 2015].

guilt, and feelings at Ground Zero) chime with a general American approach to the events.

When asked about the reason for her including 9/11 in the novel, the author replies:

There may be a superficial reason, namely that in those days I was reading American novels. [...] And if we really need to find a reason, [I can say that] I wanted both the woman and man in the novel to have experienced something similar. Both Şirin and Bruno have had a close brush with death. [And] indeed what they share in common draws them together.<sup>345</sup>

Though the novel has not aroused great attention in Turkey, some literary journals covered *Serbest Düşüş* after it was released in October, 2013. Also, in a wider perspective, although not stated in these journals criticisms, the novel represents a Turkish woman author's contribution and success to the post-9/11 novelistic genre. Stylistically, with its short sentences and clear language it is easy to read, it exhibits some stylistic features of trauma narration that may cause the reader some difficulty as is discussed below.

Firstly, the novel has a distinct way of narration regarding the altering narrative voices. There are frequent shifts throughout the narration that sometimes makes the comprehension difficult because of the interrupted flow of the novel. The use of the first-person narrator does not predominate the novel but it makes the reader question the reliability of Şirin as a narrator. On the other hand, Kuyuş's recurrent use of the third person lends a sense of objective confirmation of the first-person viewpoint.

Secondly, as the plot is fragmented, there are no actual chapters in the novel just as in *The Road*. The lack of a set time frame can complicate the flow of the narration and in some parts of the novel not a single moment is narrated at length.<sup>346</sup> These features that are found at the start of the novel will be analyzed in this chapter in order to illustrate the fragmented narration in *Serbest Düşüş*.

The survivor's struggle between the traumatic past experience and its intrusion into the flow of normal present-day life causes disconnection, and this is well reflected in the

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<sup>345</sup> Nilüfer Kuyuş, interviewed by Betül Ateşçi Koçak.

<sup>346</sup> Also, in some passages of the novel the time-sequence causes problems of translation.

narration with its frequent repetitions. Just as trauma destroys a person's dynamism, so narrative coherence is undermined most of the time with sudden changes of narrator. There are two narrators in the novel: one of them is the first-person narrator, the protagonist Şirin, while the other is the third-person voice. Frequent shifts in the narration may sometimes result in the readers' loss of focus as well as raising questions on the narrator's reliability. The change of the narrator's voice becomes obvious in passages such as 'I could stay with him when the night falls. [...] He knew the most important thing about me; he knew I was there', followed by 'the woman thought like that. [...] She will learn later on to whom he (Bruno) was referring when he said "I had someone else in mind"'.<sup>347</sup>

These unexpected switches may create problems for the reader who likes to empathize with the novel's characters since they can alienate the reader: 'The woman in the story refrains from calling the man because she is afraid of hearing his voice. [...] All this feeling of trust, the unmatched relief and security all disappeared. Ground zero. Where would one go from here?'<sup>348</sup> The author correlates the heavy burden of thoughts that the protagonist suffers to Ground Zero. Şirin's fluctuating ideas about her love affair and the traumatic chaos that comes with this results in leaving Şirin with her own self.

In narrative sense, as if and since the third-person narrator is guiding the reader that 'Şirin sets the story as such. It has neither beginning nor end. The story occurs fragmented in her mind. While thinking of the beginning, she skips to the end of the story'.<sup>349</sup> And similarly the presence of the third-person narrator as well as the allusion to Şirin's confusion over the narrative order (with repetitions of 'beginning' and 'end') is again evident on later pages:

It is impossible for me to start this story. I cannot start this story because it has no beginning; neither can I finish it because it does not have an end. There is only an awakening, then an interruption. [...] It is impossible for me to start this

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<sup>347</sup> Kuyaş, p. 46.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

story, said the woman, I cannot find the beginning of it. The story ended before it began, but it has no end, either. How am I going to finish it?<sup>350</sup>

The continual disruption and the shifts in narration such as these also make the reader move between different times and events. After the passage quoted above, on the same page, the author proceeds to relate something totally unrelated and incoherent: 'The woman visits an art exhibition in Nişantaşı<sup>351</sup> as if keeping a diary of pain'.<sup>352</sup> The recurrent interruptions in Şirin's train of thought are frequently interrupted as sudden memories of her traumatic experience on the train are intermingled with and intrude upon her present concern with her ongoing life. As these examples from the novel show, the author frequently makes the reader aware of the protagonist's distracted mind and there are even times when the author wants to reveal the process of creative writing to the reader: 'She chose Bruno. Bruno is a nice name. [...] Let it be so. I should create a character that is foreign to me in all respects; language, religion, race, everything'.<sup>353</sup> Also with the following sentence close to the end of the novel, the author still reflects on the creative process while flaunting the implausibility of the storyline:

How ridiculous, she thought. Why would a man called Bruno, who rides a horse, a survivor of September 11, go to a conference about love and passion? Nonsense. But the fantasy is set up like that, [she] cannot go back but only fictionalize retrospectively. And she does so.<sup>354</sup>

Such interruptions, the presence of more than one narrator, may give the reader a sense of dislocation and incomprehension until the end of the narration. Narrative disunity happens especially when the protagonist talks to Bruno either in reality or in her mind. Yet, as the two only meet three times in real life, the protagonist's inner monologues inevitably outweigh the real conversations in the novel.

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<sup>350</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>351</sup> Nişantaşı, meaning 'Marking Stone', is the name of a neighborhood in Istanbul now famous for its luxury stores and restaurants.

<sup>352</sup> Kuyaş, p. 23.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid., p. 212.

Besides the repetitions noted above, ternary structures are frequent and significant in the narrative: As Kuyaş observes, ‘In fairy tales everything happens three times, there are three from some of the objects. They say it is the symbol of desire. In this narration everything will happen three times, three each from everything’.<sup>355</sup> The same point is repeated on the very next page: ‘There will be three of everything on this page. Have I said that?’<sup>356</sup> Şirin meets Bruno three times,<sup>357</sup> ‘three times in three different ways’,<sup>358</sup> in encounters, which she prefers to call ‘flings’.<sup>359</sup> When asked whether she intends to revise the use of three, the author replies:

As far as I know, the number three is a frequently-used motif in tales and it symbolizes desire. Via the investment that we have in our narcissistic egos and our desires, and the relationship we have with others, it is the symbol of sharing, a kind of sharing in which people such as you, I and s/he participate. From the relationship between any two, there arises a third being, which we may call an ‘aura’. For instance, there is a certain aura in places associated with trauma, a different one in those associated with survival, and each person or relationship has its own aura. [...] September 11 was, in the end, a subversion of a desire for revenge or for punishment. And when Şirin’s suppressed desires burst out, it feels as if her whole life is lost. If only it had been three apples that fell from the sky. Terrifying things are falling today!<sup>360</sup>

The author concentrates on the importance of the feelings associated with places when she explains her reasons for repeating the number three for making repeated use of ternary patterns. Therefore, this practice might represent another effort on her part to remind readers that they are witnesses to the enduring repercussions of the two traumatic incidents that are repeatedly recalled throughout the narration. And as indicated in the quotations noted below, the comment that the story has neither an end nor a beginning is oft-repeated in the novel.<sup>361</sup>

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<sup>355</sup> Ibid., p. 21. Ternary structures are also commonly found in popular English sayings where they tend to imply completeness: ‘lock, stock and barrel’, ‘hook, line and sinker’, ‘bell, book and candle’, etc. For ternary patterns in French, see *inter alia* the examples from La Fontaine’s *Fables* and Corneille’s *Cinna* cited in Susan W. Tiefenbrun’s study *Signs of the Hidden: Semiotic Studies* (‘Faux Titre’, 3: Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1980), pp. 146 and 183.

<sup>356</sup> Kuyaş, p. 22.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid., p. 46. The same information is repeated almost verbatim on pages 99, 116, 143 and 171.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>360</sup> Kuyaş, interviewed by Betül Ateşçi Koçak.

<sup>361</sup> The other sentences from the novel alluding to the indeterminacy of how the story starts and ends — a point first made on p. 23 — are as follows: ‘How am I going to finish this story?’ (p. 104); ‘What were we

Thus, in conjunction with certain distractions such as changes of narrator, place and time, reiterated reminders insisting upon the absence of a beginning and a closure keep the reader aware that the narration constantly threatens to lapse into incoherence as if on the verge of traumatic breakdown.

Offering a different approach to the definition of PTSD, Judith Greenberg suggests ‘that the first word of PTSD, *post*, encapsulates [...] a belated response to an original experience, a temporal delay and a repeated *return* against one’s will of an event, dream, hallucination or other image’.<sup>362</sup> The unforeseeable resurrection and revisiting of tragic moments results in damage to the psyche of the sufferer over and above the original mental trauma. The inability to shake oneself out of these moments from the past can continue to affect the individual for a long time. In other words, once the traumatic incident is involuntarily revived in the psyche, the individual tends to remain subjected to its domination for years. Together with the accompanying anguish at loss, the fear and terror evoked by a past experience can endure as if they were happening in the present. Trauma alters an individual’s perception of time, destroying a person’s ability to see either a carefree past or a positive/peaceful future. The traumatized victim enters a limbo-like state where his/her unclear and distorted conception of time before and after the catastrophe colours all anticipation of what lies ahead. In keeping with Greenberg’s definition of PTSD, Şirin is drawn as a character suffering from a recalled trauma. The moments of the train accident (which occurred one September several years previously) are still clear in her mind. Kuyaş refers to ‘the hours she spent in ruins, that desperate waiting; moaning, emergency shouts, pieces around, a broken hand, a heap of blood-soaked hair, a crushed head’.<sup>363</sup> As the only

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talking about in the story?’ (p. 108) ‘The story has no ending, said [Bruno]’ (p. 109); ‘This story does not have an ending, [it] never had. It will not have an end, will never be. But an end is necessary. It is not possible to have a story with just the body.’ (p. 150). The relevant passages are here cited in sequence in order to indicate the constancy of these statements.

<sup>362</sup> Judith Greenberg, ‘The Echo of Trauma and the Trauma of Echo’ *American Imago*, 55.3 (1998), 319-347 (p. 319).

<sup>363</sup> Kuyaş, p. 34.

survivor in the railway carriage, she still unwillingly keeps and relives in detail the bitter memories of that day. Throughout the book, the author frequently reminds the reader that Şirin's traumatic memories resurfaced after the coincidental encounter with Bruno.

The absence of clear information about the protagonist's life in the years between her accident and her meeting with Bruno suggests the importance that survivors attach to sharing a common sense of togetherness post-disasters. Şirin says, 'A story connected us. It was his story of survival. He would tell, I would listen'.<sup>364</sup> Admittedly, neither in their real conversations nor in imaginary ones does Bruno openly reveal any intention to talk about 9/11 or its aftermath, but neither does he refuse to answer Şirin's questions. He says that on the day when the towers fell, he went to the Twin Towers for a job interview, as he wanted to move to New York to start living with his Turkish girlfriend, Ayça. Before the interview, he had arranged a meeting in the south tower with his friend Rajeev, who worked at a finance company. The first and enduring impression that the crashes made on him was that it was as if they were watching *Godzilla*<sup>365</sup> and both men soon learned that a second plane had also crashed into the other tower. Two major things about that day left their mark on Bruno: his friend's telling him about the situation in and outside the north tower; and his friend's ultimate death. He tells Şirin about Rajeev's situation in his final hours and the things that Rajeev told him:

Rajeev turned with an extremely white face, he said that the plane had hit the other tower, an incomprehensible fire, I saw people leaning out of the window not to get burned, I saw people throwing themselves out of the window, a woman caught fire, he said and he vomited into the nearest bin.<sup>366</sup>

As this passage from the novel shows, traumatic flashbacks and other symptoms of the condition such as nightmares that are prompted by sympathetic reactions to an account of a

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<sup>364</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid., p. 38.



fellow-victim's suffering are not confined to the protagonist, Şirin, but also feature in Kuyuş's treatment of Bruno.

Initially, Şirin's sympathetic listening is quite effective in narration because it helps the reader to understand her insistence on knowing about Bruno. It serves as a source to trigger Şirin's long-suppressed feelings. The listening process does not occur in the novel but it does in Şirin's mind as she imagines inner conversations that she holds with Bruno. In other words, regardless of the fact that the characters do not see each other more than three times in the course of the novel, there are still numerous imaginary conversations in which Şirin pictures herself as a listener. The reader is openly informed about this fantasy: 'Once, I also faced death, I wanted to compare. He would tell his account, I would listen'.<sup>367</sup> From the very beginning of the novel, Şirin seems willing to get lost in a foreigner's trauma by listening to a story through which she enters a world that she has unwittingly concealed from herself and others. In her both imaginary and real conversations with Bruno, she grows aware of her own self as well as of the moments that caused her to suffer for a long time both physically and mentally. Bruno has thus re-awakened Şirin's buried memories, thereby leading her to question the importance of her own survival and to combine and compare it with that of others. Frequent repetitions suggest the female character's urge to listen to someone else's tragedy while at the same time it hints that the issue of death is unresolved. When combined with her urge to listen to someone else's tragedy, the female character's repeated allusions to her own survival correspond to the observation by Cathy Caruth that, for the traumatized survivor, the issue of death is unresolved:

Focusing on survival, rather than on trauma puts the death back into the traumatic experience because survival suggests that there has been death, and the survivor therefore has had a death encounter, and the death encounter is central to his or her psychological experience.<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> Ibid., p. 15. Also on p. 45, there is the same sentence.

<sup>368</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Listening to Trauma* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2014), p. 3.

It may take some time for the survivor to overcome the remnants of the shattering past moment. As previously stated, the traumatized individual, who is at times interrupted by the intrusion of the past, may sometimes suffer from a sense of displacement and of not knowing what time and place s/he is living in. Şirin's memories and feelings about September 11 have reinforced her interest in Bruno, making her all the more inquisitive about him as well as her own self. Despite the differences between these two, their sharing of similar moments of past suffering results in a better understanding of their experience. For Şirin especially, the retelling of trauma has become essential to the reestablishment of her own self, which is revealed at the end of the novel. Trauma made her explore her own self. At the end of the novel, she reveals sharing her memories with Bruno (although the two meet only three times) helped her to find out her real self.

She familiarizes herself with the man she has an infatuation and combines his experience with hers. Her intention of having a spiritual journey with Bruno is similar to that expressed in the dialogue of the listener and testifier recorded by the Yale Professor of Psychiatry, Dori Laub:

For this limited time, [...] I'll be with you all the way, as much as I can. I want to go wherever you go, and I'll hold and protect you along this journey. Then, at the end of the journey, I shall leave you.<sup>369</sup>

By listening, Şirin's trauma is re-awakened as she identifies the incomprehensible moments of her own experience with Bruno's. As a result of trauma's haunting effect, Bruno's survival story intensifies Şirin's desire to listen, which suggests that a part of her is still busy with memories of her brush with death. While listening to Bruno, Şirin seems to lose any sense of present time and to imagine the moments she suffered in the train disaster: 'I found

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<sup>369</sup> Shoshanna Felman and Dori Laub, M.D., *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 70.

myself on the train while listening to Bruno, it was a moment of panic, I was hearing the noise of the iron saw for cutting the mangled body of the train'.<sup>370</sup>

Şirin's dreams and nightmares appear rather unexpectedly in the novel, matching the mental processes of a person who has still not fully recovered from trauma. Reflecting the first-person narrator's idea, the third-person narrator confirms that:

She found herself on the train in her dream. The rescue team were trying to break through, she was hearing the noise of the saw; she saw everything from the carriage window, but they could not reach her, because she will be in an aquarium.<sup>371</sup>

Regarding the dreams of a traumatized individual, Caruth agrees with Freud's theory about the bipartite nature of dreams. Their manifested content, remembered after we awaken, contrasts with their latent content, which we forget on waking and which Freud considers to be part of the unconscious. While generally agreeing with Freud's theories on the interpretation of the dreams of traumatized individuals, Caruth asserts the importance of recalling dreams upon awakening as she states:

It is the experience of waking into consciousness that, peculiarly, is identified with the reliving of trauma. [...] It is not only the dream that surprises consciousness but, indeed the very waking itself that constitutes the surprise: the fact not only of the dream but having passed beyond it.<sup>372</sup>

As Şirin tells herself that 'disaster is something that cannot be fully perceived',<sup>373</sup> the ability to dream or to prevent nightmares is not in the hands of the individual, it is something difficult to control. Thus, Şirin's dreams recur when she least expects them: 'She woke up with the train accident. It was a terrifying waking-up. She saw all the sharp edges of life'.<sup>374</sup>

In spite of the fact that the word 'survival' mostly connotes relief and pleasantness, it also hints at deep psychological disturbance. Caruth evaluates this predicament asking 'Is

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<sup>370</sup> Kuyaş, p. 40.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid., p. 148.

<sup>372</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 64.

<sup>373</sup> Kuyaş, p. 181.

<sup>374</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

the trauma the encounter with death, or the ongoing experience of having survived it?’ She then suggests that it is ‘a kind of double telling, the oscillation between a crisis of death and the nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival’.<sup>375</sup> The individual, unable to realize what has really happened, lacks any meaningful explanation of how s/he has been involved in the incident and managed to survive it. As the mind has no clear awareness of what happened, it does not stop asking questions on the subject, sometimes at inopportune or unexpected moments. Complex and ambiguous inner feelings that can disrupt the psyche may appear any time. The harmful aftershock of the catastrophe does not generally emerge right away but repeatedly appears in blurred images some time after the event since the individual suffers ‘the inherent latency within the experience itself’.<sup>376</sup> Judith Herman stresses that this latency makes total recovery impossible:

Resolution of the trauma is never final; recovery is never complete. The impact of a traumatic event continues to reverberate through the survivor’s lifecycle. Issues that were sufficiently resolved at one stage of recovery may be reawakened as the survivor reaches new milestones in her development.<sup>377</sup>

Şirin’s case epitomizes Herman’s definition of one of the features of trauma here.

Unsurprisingly, Şirin’s questions about survival in *Serbest Düşüş* generally appear after her mentioning the subject, which shows she is still in thrall to her traumatic past. The more she contemplates her past and present life, the more dominant the issue of survival becomes. This tendency in the novel again reveals that ‘trauma is not only an effect of destruction but also, [...] an enigma of survival’.<sup>378</sup> The mystery of staying alive constrains the mind since the individual can neither understand the accident nor how s/he survived it. Though the timespan of the catastrophe is generally quite short, the incidents that fit into it may be hard for the individual to perceive when it happens or very soon afterwards. The

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<sup>375</sup> Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History*, p. 7.

<sup>376</sup> Cathy Caruth, ‘Introduction’, in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. by Cathy Caruth (London: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1995), pp. 3-13 (p. 8).

<sup>377</sup> Judith L. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence – from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), p. 211.

<sup>378</sup> Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History*, p. 58.

scenes of Şirin's own survival do not leave her at peace. She is instantly and at unexpected times interrupted by her own memories: 'Southern France. Train debris. A broken hand. A bruised hand. Intolerable pain. The noise of the saw'.<sup>379</sup> The survivor may spend a long time without consciously realizing what happened in the past but, as in the case of Şirin, painful memories can be revived by a stimulant. Felman explains that trauma 'registers a *belated* impact [...] it remains *un-owned* and unavailable to knowledge and to consciousness'.<sup>380</sup> Suffering from a similar situation, Şirin has several questions in the novel regarding the notion of survival because after long years of PTSD, she sometimes questions the line between death and staying alive. In addition to the shock she experienced at the moment of the accident, getting out alive amounts to another shock, setting the survivor a mystery to solve; and the obligation to deal with two perplexing cases of shock is a burden for even a healthy individual to handle during and after the original disastrous incident. The reader gathers, both from the irregular flow of the novel and the ambiguous opinions in Şirin's mind that Şirin has not overcome the psychological devastation of the train accident that occurred several years previously.

Freud's analysis of the situation of the victim after train accidents leads Caruth to suggest that 'the accident, as it emerges in Freud and is passed on through other trauma narratives, does not simply represent the violence of a collision but also conveys the impact of its very incomprehensibility'.<sup>381</sup> Şirin, who has been facing the severity of the accident, cannot initially digest the event in her mind and thus her own interpretation of what survival means varies a lot. She thinks that survival is 'something that changes one',<sup>382</sup> and after the accident she creates an 'Other Woman'<sup>383</sup> image in her mind thinking that 'pain has become

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<sup>379</sup> Kuyaş, p. 46.

<sup>380</sup> Shoshana Felman, *The Juridical Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century* (London: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 173.

<sup>381</sup> Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History*, p. 6.

<sup>382</sup> Kuyaş, p.17

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

her new identity'.<sup>384</sup> It is also after the train accident that she says 'surviving creates a second, hidden self in one. I know this',<sup>385</sup> and that she understands how much she loves her husband Ekrem (then her boyfriend).

It is only quite a while after the train accident that Şirin starts to draw. We learn that she draws 'the broken pieces of the train's surreal scenery as seen from the window'.<sup>386</sup> By drawing, Şirin shows that she is aware of the cataclysm in which she has been involved and tries to visualize it in her mind in order to make sense of what really happened by objectifying it in her picture. Yet, there is not much implication in the novel whether art has a healing effect on her.

There is another character in the novel to draw conclusions after surviving a massive cataclysm. Şirin's son Rüstem, who lives in Tokyo, witnesses the 2011 earthquake and ensuing tsunami.<sup>387</sup> As a witness and a survivor of the disaster, he shares his feelings with his mother some two years after the event. He says to his mother:

After seeing this disaster my vision of the world has changed. I thought of you. You always said you became someone else after the train accident. My expectations have also changed. Upon seeing that an individual is a miserable creature amid a herd, after contemplating my despair, I have got round to forgiving myself, I show more tolerance now. [...] My expectations have completely changed.<sup>388</sup>

Though it is hard it would be an exaggeration to say that the cataclysm has traumatized Rüstem. What he experienced has made him go through a phase of self-recognition and led him to a more peaceful life.

Besides the 2011 tsunami in Japan, though not dealt with in any very detailed way, some other cases that are known worldwide and have had traumatic results (e.g. the

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<sup>384</sup> Ibid.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>387</sup> The earthquake disaster in 2011 in Japan resulted in a huge death toll of more than 18,000 people, most of whom drowned. Beck Oskin, 'Japan Earthquake & Tsunami of 2011: Facts and Information', *Livescience*, 22 August 2013 <<http://www.livescience.com/39110-japan-2011-earthquake-tsunami-facts.html>> [accessed 10 March 2015]

<sup>388</sup> Kuyaş, p. 74.

Holocaust) are also addressed in the novel.<sup>389</sup> The author implies that major cataclysms resulting in big death tolls and collective suffering have indeed features in common and thus she considers them along with the attacks of 9/11. Although Şirin keeps asking herself hypothetical questions such as, ‘How did it affect her to survive [the collapse of] the Twin towers? She wanted to open the hidden door in Bruno, but she kept silent. She understood that he kept himself closed because he survived with difficulty’.<sup>390</sup> She also shows her concern for survivors in some other massive cataclysms: ‘Does one feel guilty at having survived, I asked, just like the Holocaust survivors?’<sup>391</sup> Şirin’s comparison between the Holocaust and the September 11 attacks implies that she sees a certain degree of similarity between the two crimes against humanity despite their difference in scale. Whether or not Şirin is here serving as Kuyaş’s mouthpiece, this comparison is not unusual in that there are other novels that combine the two worldly events, written unsurprisingly by mainly American Jewish authors. Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2005) and Art Spiegelman’s *In the Shadow of No Towers* (New York: Viking, 2004) mostly deal with the Holocaust in their approach to 9/11 events.<sup>392</sup> It is, however, somewhat more unusual for a gentile such as Kuyaş’s Şirin to draw the comparison, which implies a broad humanitarian perspective. In the novel, though Şirin tends to compare the cataclysm with another historic event, Bruno responds simply yet explicitly enough to reflect the sense of guilt he feels. Without referring to the Holocaust he says of his close friend Rajeev, who died in one of the towers: ‘I still remember him very clearly. I sometimes dream of him. I do not forgive myself for not having rescued him’.<sup>393</sup> Bruno’s response is like a confession that fails to bring him peace or absolution. He still

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<sup>389</sup> Some more are specified in the following pages.

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*, p.136.

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>392</sup> Laura Frost claims that ‘Art Spiegelman invokes the Holocaust comparison at several points of *In the Shadow of No Towers*, suggesting that the feelings of victimhood he experienced on 9/11 are comparable to those experienced by Jews in Europe [...]’ Laura Frost, ‘Still Life: 9/11’s Falling Bodies’, in *Literature After 9/11*, ed. by Ann Keniston and Jeanne Follansbee Quinn (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 180-209 (p. 204).

<sup>393</sup> Kuyaş, p. 42.

feels the guilt of having survived. Although his inability to rescue Rajeev was beyond his power, he is unable to soothe the haunting inner voice. The repeated suggestion that an unwarranted sense of guilt is one of the normal reactions following a survival matches the observations of Kathleen Nader:

Guilt presupposes the presence of choice and the power to exercise it. Survivor guilt may sometimes be an unconscious attempt to counteract or undo helplessness. The idea that one somehow could have prevented what happened may be more desirable than the frightening notion that events were completely random and senseless.<sup>394</sup>

The unceasing feeling of guilt that Bruno suffers from drives him to distraction. From his explanation, it is clear that the idea that he could not stop Rajeev going up the stairs to rescue more people keeps recurring to him is a repetitive problem.

For Jonathan Boulter, ‘a traumatized space is one continually marked by its relation to the disaster that preceded it and provided its foundations and ground’.<sup>395</sup> As a survivor who frequently mentions stepping back from the brink of death, Şirin generally reflects an inescapable sense of void and incompleteness. She suffers from middle-age depression, questions her marriage, which she feels is unsatisfactory, worries about her children, and has hesitations about her plans for the rest of her currently lacklustre life. Sometimes even art does not make her feel happy. Her search for meaning in life presupposes the existence of something waiting to be discovered that will fill the void. She states several times that survival has changed her a lot and that knowing Bruno has transformed her life and ideas.

Interestingly, she is sometimes aware of this overlap between the traumas caused by their very different experiences. In one of her inner monologues Şirin says that

The alienation of trauma is like being encrusted all around. With deep awareness, you get to set shallow relationships. A shallowness that becomes more attractive with the things that cannot be shared, like an eye-deceiving beach. Has she

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<sup>394</sup> Kathleen Nader, ‘PTSD Resources for Survivors and Caregivers’, in *Giftfromwithin.org* <<http://www.giftfromwithin.org/html/Guilt-Following-Traumatic-Events.html>> [accessed 20 February 2015]

<sup>395</sup> Jonathan Boulter, *Melancholy and the Archive: Trauma, History and Memory in the Contemporary Novel*, London and New York: Continuum International Publishing, 2011, p. 10.



caught that merciless shallowness in Bruno? The feeling of giving up, breaking off everything at once. An overwhelming sense of devotion and an irresistible need for betrayal.<sup>396</sup>

The reader finds Şirin questioning herself several times. Her inner conflict and helplessness to resolve her own life and memories of the train accident is a constantly recurring issue in her mind. She also explains her own survival case to Bruno and wants him to question it. She sometimes even forces him to remember again and again. By constantly questioning herself, she also wants the male character to remain continuously involved in the traumatic scenes, both in hers and his own. Şirin asks:

And you? After the Twin Towers, could you look at high buildings? Meanwhile she was thinking: I could not get on a train for a long time, even now, on the subway, a moment comes and I immediately get off no matter what the stop is.' [...] No. The event did not alienate me from high buildings, said the man. On the contrary, it has turned out to be a source of melancholia. My passion for skyscrapers increased, I constantly go up and down in skyscrapers, [and] stay there.<sup>397</sup>

Contrary to Şirin's past experience and expectation, Bruno claims that he feels nothing to distance him from high buildings. Despite his inability to overcome a sense of guilt after losing his friend, he approaches high buildings in quite a heroic manner, having at least resolved this part of the survival issue.

Şirin does not stop questioning Bruno. She wants to discover more about him in order to make him become involved in traumas. This intention to make Bruno become more engaged in both his own and Şirin's trauma and several dualities is given via the third person narrator:

Şirin associates the feeling of melancholy that she had difficulty in confessing with the man she created in the narration. As he has faced death, he might find daily life incredible like me, she says. He might find it unreliable. He might find it dream-like. In this sense we resemble each other.<sup>398</sup>

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<sup>396</sup> Kuyaş, p. 63.

<sup>397</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>398</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

It is a widely known fact that for people who suffer from trauma, everyday life may seem meaningless and risky as it may bring some other shocking cataclysm. Still coming to terms with the surprise of having survived, Şirin cannot properly place the present time in her life and reckons that it is the same for Bruno. She imagines his inner life and tries to suppose what his problems and pains must be. She clearly announces that she has time-related problems and lets Bruno feel the same way in her thoughts: 'He also has a side that is outside time. Şirin is like that, she wants to live outside time, and draw beyond history, so great an effect has the train accident had on her. Or maybe she was already that way inclined and became ever increasingly so'.<sup>399</sup> As seen from the frequent repetition of similar feelings, Şirin is frequently reminded of what she has been through.

Interestingly, Şirin is sometimes aware of the outcomes of her traumatic experience but the fact that they are fluctuating may result in certain feelings of giving everything away without looking back. She says:

All traumas alienate you from other people. Your feelings become estranged from you as you grow alienated. Did she feel that aloofness in the person she called Bruno? The impression of breaking up everything anytime. The reality that our deepest feelings cannot be shared. This was the charm of two solitudes.<sup>400</sup>

References to the fact that Şirin has not found anyone closer to her feelings up until Bruno enters her life are repeated in many ways in the early stages of the novel. The complexity of her mind owing to her traumatic experience has ruined several moments in her life, sometimes making her unaware of what is really happening in it, which is also very appropriate in the novel with its frequent switches of narrator, changes in the flow of narrative time and shifts of location.

However, Şirin's habit of combining tragic experiences, alienation and repetitions of traumatic episodes does not last forever. The reader is earlier warned that Şirin will realize

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<sup>399</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

that her love and desire for Bruno will come to an end: ‘After realizing everything has ended on September 11, Şirin wanders around in delusions in the city’.<sup>401</sup> But soon on the same page, the narrative digresses as it returns to treating the experience of survival:

Life does not flash before your eyes when you are about to die said Bruno; on the contrary, there appears a sphere, every bit of which you can touch at the same time, but there are also voids, gaps in it, you see. [...] Şirin is surprised about the similarity of the description. She also felt she had been in a similar bubble when she was in the wreckage.<sup>402</sup>

Owing to the sudden and incoherent change of the narration the reader may not be totally aware that there will eventually be an end to Şirin’s love for Bruno and to her desire to know more about his traumatic story. However, whether or not it is surprising, there comes a moment when Şirin certainly frees herself from adding Bruno to her life and desires. This development is stated in the novel as follows:

An unfinished story looks like a demolished building. The woman tries to understand the dimensions of the wreckage she is in, she looks around, it is just like resolving the fiction of a story (like trying to sort fact from fiction), the woman thought. [...] She needs to find an ending.<sup>403</sup>

After this realization or awakening, Şirin becomes more involved with art, meets her close friends and tries to spend more time with her husband. We are told that ‘the story ends with destruction and rebirth. [...] And trauma is slightly relieved’.<sup>404</sup> Also, the author, in order to show that things have changed for Şirin after a certain point, mentions her ex-lover’s name as B. instead of Bruno.<sup>405</sup> The change in the protagonist’s attitude is underscored by an agreement of Şirin and Laura, one of her close friends, on the situation post-9/11:

They remembered how they met on September 11, 2001, yet both women say the same thing – Americans do not want to think and talk about September 11 anymore, the war changed everything, the situation is different now. We are in an economic crisis. People are hurt differently now.<sup>406</sup>

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<sup>401</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>402</sup> Ibid.

<sup>403</sup> Ibid., p. 175.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid., p. 217.

<sup>405</sup> On pages 184, 206, 214, and 229 there is just B. instead of Bruno.

<sup>406</sup> Kuyuş, p. 181.

Hearing about the recent situation in America from her friend, Şirin feels that her pain is dissipated along with her interest in Bruno. Thus, throughout the end of the novel, the narrative grows less complicated.

There is also another event that has led Şirin to concentrate on her life and aims. The tragic earthquake in 2011 in Van<sup>407</sup> has made Şirin think less about her own traumas and worries and inclined her to help other people. At this point Kuyaş ensures that Şirin reacted to her country's cataclysm much as Bruno did to 9/11 insofar as the earthquake 'responded the necessity of a disaster in her. [...] It saved Şirin from herself (her problems), it gave her a reason'.<sup>408</sup> She feels that, for her, 'there started a new life beyond Ground Zero'.<sup>409</sup> Seeing that there are people who are really in need of help is like an awakening for Şirin. She has not totally erased Bruno from her mind, but has now clarified her awareness of what she likes and wants in her life. Yet, the author prefers to show Şirin's conclusions through her son Rüstem, who is also a type of a hero for her and who says:

I no longer have any more fetishist respect, any admiration for constructions called buildings. It was indeed shattered on September 11, faded after Fukushima, and was totally worn away after Van earthquake. [...] Everything is destined to collapse and to be built again.<sup>410</sup>

Şirin accepts her son's words as her cure and tries to keep the passion in her life. Şirin's healing is like Bruno's conclusion after 9/11. Just as Bruno's ideas about his own life revives after the disaster, the same happens to Şirin. Becoming a volunteer to help people in the Van earthquake awakens her desire to see other survivors and she is revived by the reality of her participation in the aid mission. That is, solidarity and helping out other people has made the beginning of her healing.

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<sup>407</sup> On October 23, 2011, an earthquake with a magnitude of 7.2 hit a city called Van in the eastern part of Turkey. It lasted twenty-five minutes leaving nearly 1,000 deaths and hundreds of injured people.

<sup>408</sup> Kuyaş, p. 198.

<sup>409</sup> Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid., p. 222.

## 8. Conclusion

This chapter presents a broad overview of how the September 11 attacks were seen and portrayed differently in two different countries: the U.S. and Turkey. In her novel *Serbest Düşüş* (*Free Fall*, 2013) Nilüfer Kuyaş, who is one of Turkey's postmodern authors, has charted the course of a protracted trauma that includes 9/11 among other cataclysms. By creating her protagonist Şirin, Kuyaş tries to show how 9/11 is perceived by Turks, and with the character Bruno, she emphasises the difference between American and Turkish reactions to the September 11 attacks. Mostly within the context of individual trauma, the novel presents how one's trauma can intersect with someone else's upon an encounter. In other words, the novel suggests that one's trauma can reappear upon an interaction with someone else with a traumatic background. Lastly, as the analysis of traumascapes are also analysed throughout the characters from different cities, this chapter also draws attention to the importance of city life within the historic and iconic background in addition to the contribution of different perspectives.

## CHAPTER IV

### AMY WALDMAN'S *THE SUBMISSION*:

#### TRAUMA ON A NATIONAL SCALE

The subtlest change in New York is something people don't speak much about but that is in everyone's mind. The city, for the first time in its long history, is destructible. A single flight of planes no bigger than a wedge of geese can quickly end this island fantasy, burn the towers, crumble the bridges, turn the underground passages into lethal chambers, cremate the millions. The intimation of mortality is part of New York now: in the sound of jets overhead, in the black headlines of the latest edition.

All dwellers in cities must live with the stubborn fact of annihilation; in New York the fact is somewhat more concentrated because of the concentration of the city itself, and because, of all targets, New York has a certain clear priority. In the mind of whatever perverted dreamer who might lose the lightning, New York must hold a steady, irresistible charm.

The buildings, as conceived by architects, will be cigar boxes set on end.<sup>411</sup>

#### 1. Introduction

The sudden disappearance of the Twin Towers created a big gap both in the city's outward appearance and in the lives of many people in the aftermath of September 11. Soon after the attacks, there aroused a discussion about what should be done to the site of destruction, which was immediately named "Ground Zero". Besides the political authorities, architects strove to reflect opinions about the necessity of another structure. Now an ex-journalist, Amy Waldman worked in the years after the attacks as a reporter and reflected what she witnessed in the aftermath of the attacks in her very first novel, *The Submission*. Though the author refrains from referring to the attacks in the novel as those of 9/11 so as to liberate the world

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<sup>411</sup> Elwyn Brooks White, 'Here is New York (1949)', reprinted in *Empire City: New York through the Centuries*, ed. by Kenneth T. Jackson and David S. Dunbar (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), pp. 695-711 (p.710).

of imagination, as she recounts in the recorded TV interviews, it is difficult to read the novel without thinking about the 9/11 context. Therefore, the novel is quite an illuminating source in the sense that it provides a fictionalized version of what was experienced in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks mostly in terms of the collective trauma and lost sense of attachment to place upon the unexpected devastation of the Twin Towers that caused psychological emptiness in addition to the physical emptiness in the city's outward aspect.

## 2. The Author and the Novel

Released in 2011, *The Submission* gained reasonable attention from the reading public.<sup>412</sup> In the interviews after the publication of her book, Waldman stated that she did not specifically aim to write a post-9/11 novel as she believed that the sub-genre had already been much exploited and she wanted the readers to feel free of the crushing burden of that day and to become engrossed in the fiction. Yet still, with its frequent references to a supposedly unspecified attack on towers as described or recalled by the characters and clearly referring to 9/11 according to Laura Frost,<sup>413</sup> the book is inevitably classed among examples of literature inspired by the catastrophe. It can be even regarded as an objective guide to help us understand and visualize what happened on that day and in the aftermath. Its implied message is that what happened was indeed a global event that shockingly destroyed people of varying nationalities.

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<sup>412</sup> The novel was listed in these following newspaper's booklists: 'Best of 2011: EW's 10 favourite novels of the year' in *Entertainment Weekly* <<http://www.ew.com/article/2011/12/16/best-novels-of-2011-2>>: 'Notable Fiction of 2011' *The Washington Post*, 9 December 2011 <[http://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/notable-fiction-of-2011/2011/11/02/gIQAMzLfiO\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/notable-fiction-of-2011/2011/11/02/gIQAMzLfiO_story.html)> [accessed 30 April 2015]

<sup>413</sup> Laura Frost, 'Archifictions: Constructing September 11', in *Transatlantic Literature and Culture after 9/11*, ed. by Kristine A. Miller (London & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 198-221 (p. 212).

Additionally, despite the absence of explicit references to 9/11, the use of sayings such as ‘there was no joy on *that day*’,<sup>414</sup> ‘people with a direct connection to *this attack*’,<sup>415</sup> ‘in the wake of the attack’,<sup>416</sup> ‘What are your thoughts on jihad?’,<sup>417</sup> ‘a year after the attack’<sup>418</sup> and all these taking place in New York, shows the obvious allusions to 9/11 and prepares the reader for the idea that he\she is about to read fiction depicting the aftermath of September 11. Another significant point is that just as the people who died on 9/11 differed considerably in nationality and religion, the novel has a wide perspective in dealing with the aftermath of the unnamed disaster that killed thousands of people. It portrays the lives of Americans and non-Americans and people following different religions such as Jews, Christians and Muslims, reminding the reader that what happened has universal dimensions. Therefore, the reader encounters multiple voices and reactions of people residing in the same country yet having different opinions, which was indeed the author’s intention. As she says, ‘there are different emotions, different (class) perspectives’<sup>419</sup> that people feel or witness in the aftermath of the attacks.

As for the question of whether or not her novel should feature in booklists relating to 9/11, Waldman answers that ‘I do not really feel like it is about 9/11 per se; it is about the aftermath, about a lot of questions we, as a country, faced’.<sup>420</sup> In another interview, she adds that she did not mention anything openly about 9/11 because she consciously<sup>421</sup> wanted the reader to read and imagine freely, meaning presumably that she wanted people to conceive the consequences of any assault that came to mind. In another interview where the novel is presented as ‘an alternative history to post 9/11, Waldman says that she ‘wanted to capture

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<sup>414</sup> Amy Waldman, *The Submission* (London: William Heinemann, 2011), p. 5. [Italics are mine]

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>417</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>418</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>419</sup> Amy Waldman, interviewed by Marcia Franklin, 10 October 2012

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8lxzRPnG7vI&spfreload=10>> [accessed 1 May 2015].

<sup>420</sup> Amy Waldman, interviewed by Jeff Glor, 21 December 2011

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xz3H6K-Lba0>> [accessed 1 May 2015].

<sup>421</sup> Amy Waldman, interviewed by Marcia Franklin.



the diverse group of people and issues<sup>422</sup> that emerged in the aftermath of 9/11. Having published the novel on the tenth anniversary of the attacks and compared it with the novels written earlier than hers, Waldman says she has taken ‘a longer view, sort of stepping back and looking at what has happened to the country in the coming years’.<sup>423</sup>

The novel is also an important piece of literary work in the sense that it allows the reader to develop a broad view of the relationship between literature and architecture. In her analysis of the emergence and development of literature after 9/11, Laura Frost asserts that there is interconnectedness between the two. She states:

There were significant correspondences between literature’s and architecture’s approaches to September 11. Both fields wrestled with abstraction versus figuration, with direct versus elliptical treatment of the events, with finding the right tone [...], and with the question of whether a certain period of time needed to elapse before one might produce an adequate aesthetic response to historical trauma.<sup>424</sup>

Though not much time has passed between the attacks and the release of *The Submission*, after reading Waldman’s novel one can easily end up weighing the effect of places on people in the aftermath of disasters and admiring how neatly it is treated in this novel. Regardless of the fact that the novel deals with other such major themes as the importance of nationalism, religion and otherness, that of the connection between space, trauma and architecture can be easily distinguished.

Set in Manhattan, the novel opens with a portrayal of trauma and grief in the aftermath of a massive attack and it gradually shifts the attention to a jury of New Yorkers who are assigned to select a memorial for the victims of the attack. After a tough selection process, the jury finally decides on the Garden project that belongs to a Muslim architect named Mohammed Khan. Although the selection has not been an easy process for the jury, the situation becomes even more complex with the announcement of Mohammed Khan as the

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<sup>422</sup> Ibid.

<sup>423</sup> Ibid.

<sup>424</sup> Frost, p. 200.

winner of the blind competition. The declaration greatly heightens the tension within the jury, and this long process of whether or not the committee should publicly announce that the Muslim architect's design would be chosen is the main topic of discussion in the novel. Other than the story of her protagonist, Mo Khan, Waldman also narrates that of two other characters: Sean, whose brother died in the buildings during the rescue work,<sup>425</sup> and Asma, an illegal Bangladeshi resident in Manhattan whose husband, a cleaner at the buildings, died after the attack. Left with her little son alone in Manhattan and with very little knowledge of the English language, she faces hardship in the city. She becomes a public figure at the open discussion about the Garden memorial with her supportive thoughts about Khan's design and in an appalling turn of events is later killed by an unknown assassin.

The fact that there is a variety of cases gathered around the plot of a memorial allows the novel to host several discussions, a point which the author also confirms when she says 'The novel has a lot of different themes'.<sup>426</sup> From the interviews with the author so far, we gather that Waldman feels she has gained a wider perspective regarding the aftermath of September 11 after having stayed in Afghanistan and Pakistan for her job in the years following the attacks. Although she says 'she did not interview actual people' in those countries, she observed and imagined the situation of her country (after 9/11) thanks to her experience as an ex-reporter.

Waldman informs her readers that the seeds of her novel go back to her talk (in 2003) with a friend about the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial designed by Maya Lin.<sup>427</sup> Applying the once-controversial idea of the South-Asian architect's design for the Vietnam War monument to the real 9/11 Memorial Design Competition in 2003 in the light of the big debate about the presence of Muslim communities in the West that was then current,

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<sup>425</sup> More information will be given about Sean in the following pages.

<sup>426</sup> Amy Waldman, interviewed by Marcia Franklin.

<sup>427</sup> Referring to this talk with a friend, Waldman relates in one of the interviews that after the anonymous competition for the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial, 'some people thought Maya Lin was not appropriate.' Amy Waldman, interviewed by Marcia Franklin.

especially in the US, the author contemplates ‘what would have happened if a Muslim designed the 9/11 memorial?’<sup>428</sup> And she adds that the discussion surrounding the proposed Ground Zero Mosque a year before her novel was published confirmed her view that it would play out in the way that she imagined.

Having developed that idea over time through her increased knowledge and experience, the author has written a novel that is obviously open to a wide range of reactions. Proceeding from the author’s explanation that there are a lot of different themes in the novel, this chapter of the thesis will explore the importance of memorials in terms of the spatial values they possess in a country. Referring to the arguments about the selection of the winning memorial design, the aim is to display and discuss the spatial dimension of architecture, especially memorials and gardens, in the light of Foucault’s text ‘Des Espaces Autres’ (1984) and taking account of the architectural response to the September 11 attacks that have been generally recognized as having caused national trauma.

### **3. The City and the World Trade Center Before and After 9/11**

When one considers how the sudden disappearance of the World Trade Center gave rise to all kinds of rhetoric and trauma, it seems legitimate to infer from the foregoing discussion that there is a mutual interplay between the individual and the city. As individuals are constantly in contact with their environment, and especially their surrounding buildings/structures (and certain iconic objects that define a city), they gradually and naturally gain a sense of attachment to place. The links between people and places are interdependent because individuals are in constant interaction with their surrounding environment. Objects and individuals exist in an evolving relationship even when people are unaware of it. The perception of the link between the city and the individual takes its source

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<sup>428</sup> Amy Waldman, interviewed by Marcia Franklin

from things that might seem insignificant yet which set values and leave impressions on individuals that over time prove to be profound. Walter Benjamin explains this process as one of appropriation or quasi-ownership in an architectural setting:

Buildings are appropriated in a twofold manner: by use and by perception — or rather, by touch and sight. Such appropriation cannot be understood in terms of the attentive concentration of a tourist before a famous building. On the tactile side there is no counterpart to contemplation on the optical side. Tactile appropriation is accomplished not so much by attention as by habit. As regards architecture, habit determines to a large extent even optical perception. The latter, too, occurs much less through rapt attention than by noticing the object in incidental fashion. [...] For the tasks which face the human apparatus of perception at the turning points of history cannot be solved by optical means, that is, by contemplation, alone. They are mastered gradually by habit, under the guidance of tactile appropriation.<sup>429</sup>

For Benjamin, structures transfer emotional attachments. This process is achieved over time and through habit as well as through the contribution of memory. Without lived experience, which can equally well be called ‘use’, the necessary compilation of memories through habitual familiarity cannot take place; there is a need for the physical presence of the individual in the specific environment for the process of appropriation to occur.

In applying Benjamin’s approach in his article focusing on the relationship between identity and architecture after 9/11, Neil Leach echoes Benjamin’s view that

These appropriations are reinforced by habit. Here memory plays a crucial role. Over a period of time the sensory impulses leave their mark, traces of their reception. These traces are themselves not forgotten, but constitute a type of archive of memorized sensory experiences that constitute our background horizon of experience.<sup>430</sup>

Therefore, the effect and importance of time becomes inseparable from remembered places as together they form what is called experience, thus forming a sense of space. Thus, the individual’s sense of ownership of public or communal space within or immediately outside

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<sup>429</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. by Harry Zohn (London: Fontana, 1992), p. 233.

<sup>430</sup> Neil Leach, ‘9/11’, *Diacritics*, 33.3/4 (2003), 75-92 (p. 79).

particular buildings results from prolonged familiarity with them, in other words from an extensive store of memories.

In the case of cities, while the individual contributes to the creation and development of the city with its urban sprawl, s/he possesses a place within it that initially does not seem to mean much. Outlining a similar approach to that of Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau with regard to the formation of urban society, Elizabeth Grosz states:

Humans make cities. Cities are reflections, projections, or expressions of human endeavour. On such views, bodies are usually subordinated to and seen as merely a “tool” of subjectivity, self-given consciousness. The city is a product not simply of the muscles and energy of the body, but of the conceptual and reflective possibilities of consciousness itself.<sup>431</sup>

The city plays a big role in societal development in the sense that it presents a body-like mission in its presentation of architecture. It provides the space that architecture completes by its presence. The city plays a big role in societal development by affording individuals a range of public or communal architectural sites, which they may collectively wish to appropriate, as if it were its mission to weld them into a single body of citizens. Paul Ricouer notes these and other implications of the difference in scale between building-related and urban space:

The city also gives rise to more complex passions than does the house, inasmuch as it offers a space for displacement, gathering, and taking a distance. There we may feel astray, rootless, lost, while its public spaces, its named spaces invite commemorations and ritualized gatherings.<sup>432</sup>

The city inevitably exists and acquires its distinctive character owing to the presence and contribution of the individuals who inhabit it. In a quasi-reciprocal process the activities of the individual city-dweller contribute to his or her subjective impressions of the city. Over time that subjectivity helps the individual to gain experience and knowledge as s/he starts to

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<sup>431</sup> Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, Time and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 105.

<sup>432</sup> Paul Ricouer, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 151.

become familiar with the urban environment either as a growing child or a newcomer. To quote Tuan:

Human beings not only discern geometric patterns in nature and create abstract spaces in the mind, they also try to embody their feelings, images, and thoughts in tangible material. The result is sculptural and architectural space, and on a large scale, the planned city. Progress here is from inchoate feelings for space and fleeting discernments of it in nature to their public and material reification.<sup>433</sup>

Tuan here draws a line from the general to the specific by highlighting the move from space to place. His framing of this spatial transition hints at the personal awareness raised during the transition period. The feeling of place may not happen very easily; it may even take long years, yet gradually one ‘becomes a subconscious of knowing’.<sup>434</sup> Normally in the case of urban experience, the self needs time to feel a sense of belonging to a city. However, urban awareness and knowledge can also be achieved without high concentration or cognizance on the part of the individual amid the bustle of city life.

Writing in 1980, de Certeau mentions the difference between space and place while ‘seeing Manhattan from the 110<sup>th</sup> floor of the World Trade Center’.<sup>435</sup> When he descends from the 110th floor of the WTC into the streets, he observes the footsteps of the people in the city. The ‘walkers’, for him, are part of what he calls a walking circle; they achieve this association without being aware of it and that is why each pedestrian is seen as ‘neither author nor spectator’.<sup>436</sup> Though they do fill and congest the city space, this crowd formation indeed happens without the individual being aware of it. And it is at this point that space becomes ‘a practiced place’.<sup>437</sup> In the same text, he defines the World Trade Center

as a gigantic rhetoric of excess in both expenditure and production. [...] To be lifted to the summit of the World Trade Center is to be lifted out of the city’s grasp. One’s body is no longer clasped by the streets that turn and return it

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<sup>433</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), p. 17.

<sup>434</sup> Ibid, p. 184

<sup>435</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), p. 91.

<sup>436</sup> Ibid, p. 93.

<sup>437</sup> Ibid, p. 117.

according to anonymous law; nor is it possessed, whether as player or played, by the rumble of so many differences and by the nervousness of New York traffic.<sup>438</sup>

From de Certau's equivocal comment about the Twin Towers, it is possible to deduce that the fall happened in the place where they felt privileged at being very close to the sky (as if that were possible) and in an unforgettable setting. Yet, with the fall of the grand, iconic buildings together with the demise of the thousands of people who worked there, the survivors' sense of the WTC being a distinct place disappeared when they saw that they could also have fallen to their death there. Pamela Thurschwell hints at this mental process when she writes:

On the one hand we are never really the tower, we are always the small vulnerable person in the tower; on the other hand it turns out the tower is vulnerable too; in fact towers fall as well as people.<sup>439</sup>

If people were asked about the meaning of the Twin Towers in 2000 and now, there would doubtlessly be huge differences in their answers. Whereas they once represented 'American power, the importance of capitalism, phallic masculinity',<sup>440</sup> they are today remembered as the site where nearly three thousand people lost their lives in September 2001. The zone of the ruins known as Ground Zero holds great significance particularly for New Yorkers who witnessed the event or lost someone dear to them. Though before 9/11 the towers already had great symbolic as well as financial importance, their destruction intensified and increased the powerful symbolism ascribed to them. Similarly, in his article about World Trade Center before and after the attacks, Michael Lewis clearly explains the change in the city at the time when the buildings were present and after they disappeared:

It is now clear that the World Trade Center towers occupied a far greater position in the physical and psychological landscape of New York than anyone realized.

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<sup>438</sup> Ibid, pp. 91-2.

<sup>439</sup> Pamela Thurschwell, 'Forecasting Falls: Icarus from Freud to Auden to 9/11' *Oxford Literary Review*, 30:2 (2008), 201-33 (p. 219).

<sup>440</sup> Tim Cresswell, 'Place', in *Booksite.elsevier.com*

<<http://booksite.elsevier.com/brochures/hugy/SampleContent/Place.pdf>> [accessed 28 October 2014]

They have now become what much of the world could plainly see (and which New Yorkers could only belatedly see): the city's most conspicuous and symbolically freighted civic monument.<sup>441</sup>

Although Lewis's article was published within a week after the attacks, it stands as an informative piece of writing that helps the reader to have an easier understanding of how the city has been altered by the loss of the iconic buildings. The reasons for this change become apparent if one again considers the differences between space and place:

Space signifies a field of practice or area in which a group or organization (such as a state) operates, held together in popular consciousness by a map-image and narrative or story that represents it as a meaningful whole. Place represents the encounter of people with other people and things in space. It refers to how everyday life is inscribed in space and takes on meaning for specified groups of people and organizations.[...] Places tend to be localized when associated with the familiar, with being "at home." But they can also be larger areas, depending upon patterns of activities. Network connections, and the projection of feelings of attachment, comfort, and belonging.<sup>442</sup>

The loss of the iconic towers is reflected both in real life and fiction as an event that caused a great change in both the outward appearance and inner feel of Manhattan. In one of the (real-life) stories in *110 Stories*, the degree of attachment to the towers is expressed as follows by a witness who saw the aerial assault happen from his flat:

Those twin towers were my landscape, my navigational points, my night lights. I write staring out the window, depending on the fixedness of the landscape to give me the security to allow my thoughts to wander, my imagination to unfold. Now, I am afraid to look out the window, afraid of what I might see.<sup>443</sup>

Art Spiegelman is one of the millions of witnesses who has expressed similar feelings of disorientation, adding that 'those towers had been our taken-for-granted neighbours, always picture-postcard visible a mile south of our front stoop'.<sup>444</sup> People in New York were indeed

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<sup>441</sup> Michael J. Lewis, 'Before & After; In a Changing Skyline, A Sudden, Glaring Void' in *The New York Times*, 16 September 2001, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/16/weekinreview/before-after-in-a-changing-skyline-a-sudden-glaring-void.html>> [accessed 20 May 2015]

<sup>442</sup> John A. Agnew and Jonathan M. Smith, *American Space, American Place: Geographies of the Contemporary United States* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), p. 5.

<sup>443</sup> A. M. Homes, 'We All Saw It, or the View from Home', in *110 Stories: New York Writes After September 11*, by Ulrich Baer (New York: New York University Press, 2002), pp. 151-53 (p. 151).

<sup>444</sup> Art Spiegelman, 'Re: Covers' in *110 Stories: New York Writes after September 11*, ed. by Ulrich Baer (New York: New York University Press, 2002), pp. 284-[2]86 (p. 284).



always attached to the Twin Towers, but the degree of the attachment increased as sharper awareness associated them with the heroic efforts to save fellow-citizens initially at a local level but then throughout the nation.<sup>445</sup>

In the aftermath of the attacks the consequences were varied because whenever routine is disturbed and the familiar appearance of any given space is altered, problems ensue, occurring in the psyche as much as in the physical world:

In the aftermath of September 11, the transmission of traumatic feelings through aesthetic means — as it occurred, for instance, through the televised coverage of the World Trade Center collapse — conferred victim status to the nation as a whole. This view of trauma was one of many factors in the development of a new national myth, one that drew from therapeutic discourse to suggest that prior to the attacks, the United States was itself a fully constituted whole until it endured an unexpected and unidirectional assault from outside which spun it into chaos, a chaos it could only recover from by restoring its integral — and identical — wholeness.<sup>446</sup>

While empathy with the suffering of others, particularly those of our own nationality, is a natural human trait, Steve Pile extends this notion, stating that ‘a sense of a solid shared world and a stable sense of ourselves within that world is seen to be essential for our psychic and physical survival’. He further comments that ‘it is the shared public geographies which transcend objective reality’.<sup>447</sup> Therefore, once the individual is presented with the atmosphere of settled city life, habitual experience gradually and naturally turns into attachment to one’s surroundings including buildings and structures.

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<sup>445</sup> This development will be discussed more broadly in the following pages.

<sup>446</sup> Rachel Greenwald Smith, *Affect and American Literature in the Age of Neoliberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 64.

<sup>447</sup> Steve Pile and Michael Keith, ‘Introduction Part I: The Politics of Place’, in *Place and the Politics of Identity*, ed. Steve Pile & Michael Keith (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 1-21 (p. 12).

#### 4. Memorial Sites and the Country

According to the *Oxford Dictionary*, a memorial is ‘a statue or structure established to remind people of a person or event’.<sup>448</sup> It serves to commemorate, i.e., to cite Merriam-Webster, ‘to do something special in order to remember and honor (an important event or person from the past)’.<sup>449</sup> Therefore, contribution of memory is essential as it guides us to understand the past in terms of politics, culture and social life. Here, inevitably, the reminder of the past also contributes to people’s understanding of contemporary politics, culture and social life.

In his study of collective trauma, Neil Smelser explores the depths of trauma experienced nationwide. He stresses that the gravity of any tragic incident intensifies the impression that it leaves on individuals and citizens generally. He states:

In the case of a collective trauma, there is often an interest in representing the trauma as indelible (a national shame, a permanent scar, etc.), and if this representation is successfully established, the memory does in fact take on the characteristics of indelibility and unshakeability.<sup>450</sup>

Smelser’s explanation underlines people’s need to preserve the memory of a past disaster throughout their lifetime and sometimes well beyond it (e.g. the annual Civil War Gettysburg re-enactment in the USA or the centenary of the Titanic disaster). He states that memorials are a part of this way of thinking, yet at times their presence may seem not more than a token if dutiful acknowledgement of a past event that is fast fading from everyday consciousness as life goes on. He states:

A memorial to an event, it has been pointed out, has elements of both reactions: to memorialize is to force a memory on us by the conspicuous and continuous physical presence of a monument; at the same time a memorial also conveys the

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<sup>448</sup> <<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/memorial>> [accessed 17 May 2015]

<sup>449</sup> <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/commemorate>> [accessed 17 May 2015]

<sup>450</sup> Neil J. Smelser, ‘Psychological and Cultural Trauma’ in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, ed. by J. Alexander and others (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), pp. 31-59 (p. 42).

message that now we have paid our respects to a trauma, we are now justified in forgetting about it.<sup>451</sup>

Though memorials are generally intended to ensure permanent commemoration, for Smelser it is also possible that some may favour their installation as a convenient form of catharsis, which absolves them from further, more personal commemoration. As Julian Bonder has somewhat provocatively observed,

Since the 1980s, Western societies have developed a fascination with memory. In its many forms, memory has become a marker of global culture: in historiography, psychoanalysis, visual and performing arts, and media — and particularly in urban studies, public art, landscape design and architecture. The pursuit of memory is evident in the way real and mystic pasts are re-presented, remembered, or forgotten, marking contemporary politics and global culture.<sup>452</sup>

It may have been the inseparable link between psychic wounds, trauma and memory that, in the Western world especially, gradually led to the idea of memorial building. There are several examples of memorials after incidents that have left their marks in history. To name but a few of those commissioned since 1800, the World War I and II memorials in Washington DC, the Berlin Holocaust Memorial, the Lincoln Memorial, and the Arc de Triomphe in Paris are probably among the most well-known and frequently visited.

In the case of memorials throughout America, it is worth noting that memorials have contributed hugely to the shaping of the country since 1776:

Memorials have long played central roles in shaping and defining understandings of America: the Washington Monument, Statue of Liberty, Lincoln Memorial, USS Arizona Memorial, Gateway Arch, Vietnam Veterans Memorial are all symbolic markers of the nation. For Americans, the touristic experience of visiting them [...] is a primary means of learning about and becoming an emotionally engaged member of the nation. American memorials help to create and celebrate an imaginary national citizen: the representative American, the “good citizen that all American citizens aspire to become”. [...] Many American memorials are sites of reformation and transformation: spaces

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<sup>451</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>452</sup> Julian Bonder, ‘On Memory, Trauma, Public Space, Monuments, and Memorials’, *Places: Forum of Design for the Public Realm*, 21.1 (2009), pp. 62-69 (p. 62).

and places where history and identity are frequently reconsidered in order to cultivate, or revive citizen identification with an inconstant nation.<sup>453</sup>

In accordance with the views of Erika Doss cited above, then, it is not very surprising that soon after the attacks there were discussions about what should be done on the site where the World Trade Center tower blocks used to stand. The enactment of different small-scale rituals as an interim measure showed that something creative had to be done in order to heal the nation psychologically and to help the mourners, who were mostly inhabitants of Manhattan. One of the very earliest suggestions came from American art critic Deborah Solomon. In her article, she immediately advocates the construction of a new edifice on Ground Zero in order to fill the void because sooner or later people will instinctively need it: 'Building is not just a matter of office space and revenue. It is also a basic human impulse, a means for imagining an ordered universe'.<sup>454</sup> She adds that the situation that was experienced in (Lower) Manhattan can be considered 'as a clash between the solid and the void, between new buildings and no buildings, between a desire to reach into the future and an opposing desire to mourn, to recall, to hold a vigil that never ends'.<sup>455</sup> Having introduced the importance and necessity of a structure in the city, she appeals for common sense and presents the wide range of people's opinions (especially those of the artistic community living in Tribeca, many of whom witnessed the attacks). Some people wanted a park, others wanted a bigger trade centre than before or simply nothing to be built. In addition to these, one person, a sculptor, wanted a memorial to be built in the void left by the twin towers.

Solomon's article simultaneously elaborates and modifies an embryonic sketch-proposal for the memorial by Louise Bourgeois, who believed that 'the people who suffered at the hands of this catastrophe must be remembered by name. The memorial should be a list

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<sup>453</sup> Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), p. 56.

<sup>454</sup> Deborah Solomon, 'Art/Architecture; From the Rubble, Ideas of Rebirth', *The New York Times*, 30 September 2001, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/30/arts/art-architecture-from-the-rubble-ideas-for-rebirth.html>> [accessed 23 February 2014]

<sup>455</sup> *Ibid.*

of the victim's names; names beautifully hand-carved into stone'.<sup>456</sup> In the same spirit, there were also quite a lot of sensitive newspaper articles about what should be done on the Ground Zero site. The then mayor of New York City, 'Rudy' (Rudolph) Giuliani also brought up the matter of the necessity of a non-mercenary memorial at Ground Zero. In his farewell speech in December, 2001, he declared:

I really believe we shouldn't think about this site out there, right behind us, right here, as a site for economic development. [...] We should think about a soaring, monumental, beautiful memorial that just draws millions of people here that just want to see it. We have to be able to create something here that enshrines this forever and that allows people to build on it and grow from it. And it's not going to happen if we just think about it in a very narrow way. [...] You'll have all the economic development you want, and you can do the office space in a lot of different places. [...] This place has to become a place in which when anybody comes here immediately they are going to feel the great power and strength and emotion of what it means to be American.<sup>457</sup>

Giuliani's statement focuses on the importance both of not forgetting the event and of learning from it as its memory is perpetuated. While he mentions that the place would be a site of commemoration, it should (and inevitably would) also embody national values so that, standing there, New Yorkers and other visiting Americans could find solace and, if possible, a means to recuperation. In response to the suggestion that a (bigger) trade centre should be built on the site, he expresses the view that financial concerns should not preoccupy the country at a time of national mourning, though his implied anticipation that people will surge to the site nevertheless hints at some potential benefits for the local economy.

In the debate about what should succeed the Twin Towers, there were some who believed that there should be a memorial on the site inspired by parallel examples in world history. Philippe de Montebello, Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, suggested

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<sup>456</sup> Ibid.

<sup>457</sup> Diane Cardwell, 'In Final Address Giuliani Envisions Soaring Memorial', *The New York Times*, 28 December 2001, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/12/28/nyregion/28GIUL.html?pagewanted=1>> [accessed 12 December 2014]

that, as in Berlin and Hiroshima, the (9/11) memorial should ‘convert [...] ruins into monuments’.<sup>458</sup> Nor was he alone in mentioning the Peace Memorial in Hiroshima, thereby raising the question of the role of historicity and supranational humanitarianism in the design of memorials.

Memorials help the unfortunate eye-witness of a cataclysm to overcome possible ongoing mental conditions (paranoia, acathexis, etc.) due to his / her past experience. Whether or not there are public controversies or disagreements over their form or other architectural considerations, memorials are probably one of the most usual forms of commemoration. As for the question of what a memorial is and how should it be presented, there seem to be no rules, yet some scholars have at least already defined what its function should be:

As events and circumstances unveil in the present, a memorial’s destiny is to recall the past and provide conditions for new responses in the future. As our psycho-political and ethical companions, memorials should help us consider trauma and rethink and reactualize the past. They should encourage critical consciousness, committed memory-work, and the possibility of engaging with the world through transformative practices.<sup>459</sup>

Erroneously claiming that memorials constitute a (relatively) ‘new field of study’, Lisa M. Moore is another American who posits that ‘the current interest in memory and memorialization is typically traced back to World War II and the Holocaust’,<sup>460</sup> adding judiciously that

Sites of former atrocity can be reclaimed through memorialization to serve multiple purposes: they can occupy a private sacred space for mourning as a form of symbolic reparations or justice for survivors; they can fulfil didactic ends, teaching the preventative lessons of “never again” to future generations; and, they can create group cohesion (or division) and serve as a nation building mechanism in the aftermath of conflict.<sup>461</sup>

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<sup>458</sup> ‘Save the Facades’, <<http://www.savethefacades.com/articles.htm>> [accessed 12 December 2014]

<sup>459</sup> ‘Site Selection Process for Memorial Park & Garden in Honor of Crash Victims’ <<http://dgs.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dgs/publication/attachments/Site%20Selection%20Process%20of%20Memorial%20Park%20and%20Garden%20Presentation%206-28-12.pdf>> [accessed 10 April 2015]

<sup>460</sup> Lisa M. Moore, ‘(Re)covering the Past, Remembering Trauma: The Politics of Commemoration at Sites of Atrocity’, *Journal of Public & International Affairs*, 20 (2009), 47-64 (p. 49).

<sup>461</sup> *Ibid.*, p.51.

Obviously, trauma is another factor that can play a very big role in the content of a memorial when it marks a catastrophe. It is there because it represents what was once experienced, be it suffering or celebration, normally by all or a large part of the public. When it marks a catastrophe, its presence makes the once damaged community more aware of history as the traumatized mind may not have been aware of events at the time or in their immediate aftermath. In an article that deals with the ‘indexicality’ of trauma and spatiality, Patrizia Violi argues that

These places maintain a real spatial contiguity with the trauma itself; indeed, they are the very places where the traumatic events in question have occurred, and the demonstration of such continuity is an essential part of their inherent and constructed meaning.<sup>462</sup>

In accordance with this view, Susannah Radstone suggests that what happened after September 11 2001 has had certain influences on the texture of (American) society and that this happened without the citizens being aware of it. She says:

To speak of September 11 in the context of trauma prompts analyses of the hidden wounds etched on cultural memory by these attacks. But trauma proposes a passive, “acted-on” victim or culture whose wounds become the focus. According to trauma theory, the impact of catastrophic events blocks free association, that creative process through which experience, memory, and fantasy are woven into the texture of a life— or a culture.<sup>463</sup>

Soon after the attacks, a large number of psychologists published articles claiming that what the American nation had been through would result in trauma, either in the immediate aftermath or in the long term. Reviewing the situation retrospectively in 2008, John A. Updegraff and others comment:

The attacks of 9/11 provided an unusual opportunity to examine the predictors and long-term consequences of meaning-making among individuals coping with a collective social upheaval. Although a vast majority of Americans were not

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<sup>462</sup> Patrizia Violi, ‘Trauma Site Museums and Politics of Memory’, *Theory, Culture & Society*, 29.1 (2012), 36-75 (p. 39).

<sup>463</sup> Susannah Radstone, ‘The War of the Fathers: Trauma, Fantasy and September 11’, in *Trauma at Home: After 9/11*, ed. by Judith Greenberg, pp. 117-23 (p. 118).

directly exposed to the attacks, the largely symbolic threats that the attacks represented (unpredictability, possibility of war and future terrorist attacks, loss of security, threats to the “American way of life”); all challenged fundamental assumptions most Americans held about both national and personal invulnerability.<sup>464</sup>

After the attacks, the belief prevailed that ‘history was transformed on September 11, 2001’,<sup>465</sup> and several people were convinced that nothing would be the same from that day on. The sudden absence of the World Trade Center created a void not only where the towers stood but also in a lot of people’s psyche. This sense of emptiness also explains why there were so many things such as letters, teddy bears, flowers, pictures, paintings, etc. that people immediately put around Ground Zero. These were like small, personal memorials or ‘temporary memorials’, as Erika Doss calls them. In the early days the need to build something immediately no matter how small or how dubious its aesthetic value was the chief priority for many Americans. As Doss notes:

Just a few months after 9/11, several New York architects [...] designed a public viewing platform at the edge of Ground Zero, a temporary wooden stage where up to three hundred people at a time could survey the ruins of the World Trade Center.<sup>466</sup>

In keeping with this development, according to David Dunlap, there was an area within the site known as ‘Memorial Park’ since September 11, 2002. It is reported that in its early days it was a space designed by an architectural firm and a ‘temporary morgue that has become a permanent shrine of its own’.<sup>467</sup> Though it was already a sacred space, this area gradually evolved into a space of commemoration, showing the intention and desire of local people to mourn because, to cite Christine Ferer, ‘in the minds of 9/11 families, it’s not only sacred

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<sup>464</sup> John A. Updegraff and others, ‘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 (2008), 709-22 (p. 711).

<sup>465</sup> Marita Sturken, ‘The Aesthetics of Absence: Rebuilding Ground Zero’, *American Ethnologist*, 31. 3 (2004), pp. 311-25 (p. 312).

<sup>466</sup> Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania*, p. 51.

<sup>467</sup> David W. Dunlap, ‘Renovating a Sacred Place, Where the 9/11 Remains Wait’, in *The New York Times*, 29 August 2006, <[http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/29/nyregion/29morgue.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/29/nyregion/29morgue.html?_r=0)> [accessed 20 January 2015].



space, it's going to be the final resting place of their loved ones'.<sup>468</sup> According to Dunlap's 2008 article, the human remains in this area would be 'transferred to the ground zero memorial' for the world not 'to forget that "the heart of the memorial is the human remains"'.<sup>469</sup> With the memories of the loved ones in the minds of relatives and the general public, the area turned out to be a place of commemoration full of meanings to be translated in due course to a permanent memorial site. Prior to the opening of the Ground Zero Memorial, the local residents were certainly not excluded from the idea of commemoration. Ground Zero was invested with their collective, first-hand memories and with what remained of their prolonged trauma. Thinking about this (later transferred) memorial and similar ones, great or small, around Ground Zero, Marita Sturken comments:

The narratives and meanings produced at Ground Zero matter at the local level precisely because they have impacted in profound ways the redesign of an enormous area of a densely populated city and because they reveal the problematic relationship between urban design and the commercial interests that govern a metropolis such as New York.<sup>470</sup>

There was also the idea of creating new meaning by ensuring that any reconstruction would both be an improvement on the former WTC and encapsulate the collective experience of 9/11. This controversially reconstructed edifice on Ground Zero contains several layers of significance considering its past as one of the most important iconic buildings and trade centres in the world with people from different nationalities.

Furthermore, numerous other memorials have been erected following the attacks. One can encounter many of them not just in lower Manhattan but in several states of the country. By August 2011, Ella Zhang summarized the situation as follows for CNBC:

During the decade-long period of healing [...] there are some 700 recorded memorials in the U.S. and more are underway or planned. Most of them are in New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Connecticut, home to the majority

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<sup>468</sup> Ibid.

<sup>469</sup> Ibid.

<sup>470</sup> Marita Sturken, *Tourists of Memory: Memory, Kitsch and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 168

of the victims. Others are hundreds of miles away, such as one in North Dakota. The memorials vary widely in size, design, and cost. Some are public, others private. Some mark the event, others the people who perished. The memorials convey a variety of emotions and ideas, from loss to hope, in both concrete and symbolic ways. Some mark the life and character of an individual, others the values and ideals of the nation. Remnants of the World Trade Center towers — typically steel girders — have been incorporated into many of the memorials. Some 1,100 pieces have been made available for that purpose.<sup>471</sup>

Seeing that there are serious efforts to continue the work of commemoration, it could be argued that the nation still needs the scar to heal, so total was and is the void created by the disappearance of the towers.

#### **4. *The Submission and Collective Trauma***

The discussion of a memorial following the attacks arose not long after the events. There were many articles and public discussions about what to do next. As can be seen from the previous explanations, the aims and objectives of memorial projects are manifold. Though it is obvious that memorials can be erected following a tragic event in order to help heal the community and nation, the building process does not happen so easily, especially in the planning stage. Naturally, every individual can have his or her own ideas about what a memorial in his/her own city should comprise, a situation which, given the almost infinite range of opinions, makes compromise difficult. Lisa Benton Short sums up the inevitable nature of this situation as follows:

Memorials are intended, if not explicitly then implicitly, to stimulate debate. The debate often revolves around the interpretation of history, the meaning of an event or person, and how that meaning should be conveyed in the built form.<sup>472</sup>

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<sup>471</sup> Ella Zhang, 'September 11 Memorials across America', on CNBC, 29 August 2011, <<http://www.cnbc.com/id/44006075/page/1>> [accessed 30 February 2015].

<sup>472</sup> Lisa Benton Short, 'Politics, Public Space and Memorials: The Brawl on the Mall', *Urban Geography*, 27.4 (2013), 297-329 (p. 300).

The quotation shows the high-impossibility of achieving common agreement within the city or community about a memorial. In addition to the difficulty of overcoming the tragedy or trauma resulting from what has happened in order to make a balanced, objective value judgement, subjectivity is also liable to intrude in the business of commenting on history in a concrete, aesthetic way. It could be inferred that the resulting memorial structure is in the end a product of an artificial synthesis of widely diverse ideas: 'it exists because a particular society says an object, event, person or place is valuable enough to ensure that it is passed along to the next generation'.<sup>473</sup> Memorials deal with the future as much as they are concerned with marking past incidents. Hence, the building of places of memory means creating ever-living spaces. As the sites of memory are united with the milieu and are embodied within individuals' daily lives, they have the capacity to affect social memory as well as the texture of urban life. Since they are involved in such an interaction with their surroundings and city life, Short observes that it is not possible to exclude the effects of 'culture, location, class, power, religion, gender and even sexual orientation [...] for what is considered to be worthy of preserving as heritage. Because national identity, and memory are socially constructed, they are also inherently contested'.<sup>474</sup> Therefore, with the unavoidable inclusion of a multiplicity of elements in a memorial, it is unfair to expect the citizens and local residents to remain neutral.

Despite the fact that *The Submission* is classed as fiction, there are quite a few points that evoke the real situation in the aftermath of September 11 with regard to depictions of the site of destruction, the range of victims in terms of their nationality, social class and religion, references to the demolished structure as 'buildings' (recalling the Twin Towers), discussions about what kind of memorial should be built and especially the insistence on the

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<sup>473</sup> Ibid

<sup>474</sup> Ibid.

names of victims, the sense of loss following the disappearance of familiar and much-loved landmarks, and the ongoing language of individual and, especially, collective trauma.

In *The Submission*, the reader feels the extent of grief that the nation has been through in the post-9/11 decade. By comparison with the other novels studied in this thesis, Waldman gives fewer places to flashbacks or characters' nightmares, yet it is understood that the suffering endured has affected the majority of the public. Therefore, what some of the characters, especially Claire, Sean and Asma, have been through cannot be identified as anything other than trauma.

In particular, the portrayal of the situation of one member of the jury, Paul Rubin, reminds the reader of the traumatic content of the novel while it also bears resemblances to the situation of many people both in reality and in works of post-9/11 fiction. From its opening pages the novel depicts the trauma victims' realization that the seemingly unreal horror to which they were exposed did indeed happen:

The trauma, for Paul, had come later, when he watched the replay, pledged allegiance to the devastation. You couldn't call yourself an American if you hadn't, in solidarity, watched your fellow Americans being pulverized, yet what kind of American did watching create? A traumatized victim? A charged-up avenger? A queasy voyeur? Paul, and he suspected many Americans, harbored all of these protagonists. The memorial was meant to tame them.<sup>475</sup>

The third-person narrator informs the reader that Paul believes there is a relationship between trauma and memorials. He trusts that the new commemorative structure will help those people who are experiencing difficulty in their need to figure out what really has happened and whether this incident has changed their identity or not. Thus, though he may be aware that it does not offer a complete means to recovery, Paul seems to be in favour of the idea of a memorial that will soothe many people who are currently suffering. Seeing a physical embodiment of commemoration will at least make them face their memories and reality. Similarly, in a wider perspective and from an aesthetic point of view, Julian Bonder admits

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<sup>475</sup> Waldman, p. 13.

that ‘neither art nor architecture can compensate for public trauma or mass murder. What artistic and architectural practices can do is to establish a dialogical relation with those events and help frame the process toward understanding’.<sup>476</sup> Memorials, then, are visual manifestations that help individuals and citizens to become reconciled to their past. Just as residents in Manhattan urged for a memorial on the Ground Zero site, as has been stated previously, so Waldman handles the same issue. The characters in *The Submission*, like their real-life counterparts, want the presence of a memorial in order to be continuously reminded of the incident so as to accept it and leave a mark in history. Most of those jury members who in the novel are against the Garden project think that it is not an appropriate memorial, which in their view should be ‘a national symbol, an historic signifier, a way to make sure anyone who visits – no matter how attenuated their link in time or geography to the attack – understands how it felt, what it meant’.<sup>477</sup>

In reanalysing Cathy Caruth’s writing, Julian Bonder comments that in the link between memorials and trauma, ‘traumatic suffering creates a need for a new kind of witnessing — what Caruth called the witnessing of impossibility, the impossibility of comprehending the trauma’.<sup>478</sup> With the evoking of trauma in the novel, Waldman, in a sense, gives information about the psychological atmosphere across the USA. In the following pages, the so-called site of destruction is mentioned by one of the characters, Sean, who lost his firefighter brother in the attacks and has difficulty both in overcoming the loss and in seeing the unrecognizable site of destruction. Sean reimagines the pain and difficulty that his brother experienced in the rescue work while at the same time he himself was there with the hope of saving his sibling:

There were no buildings, no roads, only burning dunes of debris. [...] Every time he put out a hand to take or to give, another was there, waiting. With time came

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<sup>476</sup> Julian Bonder, ‘On Memory, Trauma, Public Space, Monuments, and Memorials’, *Places: Forum of Design for the Public Realm*, 21.1 (2009), 62-69 (p. 65).

<sup>477</sup> Waldman, p. 5.

<sup>478</sup> Bonder, p. 65.

a mappable order: the remains here, the personal effects there, the demolished cars beyond [...]. Returning to Brooklyn each night was like coming home from war [...]. The dust he brought home was holy — he shook out his shoes and his shirt over newspapers to save it.<sup>479</sup>

The detailed description of the site both praises the heroic work, especially of the firefighters, and records the unpleasant grey tone of the debris area. Waldman's allusion to firefighters inevitably recalls what indeed happened on 9/11 and seems to suggest an authorial intention to highlight the intensification of nationalism after the attacks. The very word 'firemen' indeed evokes ideas of nationalism, especially because of Thomas Franklin's iconic photo titled *Raising the Flag at Ground Zero*<sup>480</sup> which appeared in *The Record* (Bergen County, NJ) on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2001. Therefore, Waldman has not sought to avoid addressing the nationalist dimension of reactions to the events; indeed her references to trauma implicitly endorse the nationalist message. Thus, in common with the observations of many psychologists, Waldman once again highlights the psychologically disturbing experience of America in general and the residents of Manhattan in particular.

Through the characters Paul and Sean, Waldman draws the image of individuals who are indeed suffering a belated trauma. While Paul is struggling to find the correct words for what many people have suffered, Sean cannot erase the images of those days from his mind. Seemingly, despite their different ideas about the memorial design, these two characters share in common a changed view of themselves and the kind of American that they previously thought they were as they each appreciate that 'meaning collapsed with the towers'.<sup>481</sup> The way in which the author voices their ideas reveals that their individual forms of trauma are reflected nationwide and have been felt collectively so that U.S. citizens have become more suspicious and each individual carries different worries. Like Waldman, some

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<sup>479</sup> Waldman, p. 55.

<sup>480</sup> 'About the Photo', in *Ground Zero Spirit* <<http://www.groundzerospirit.org/about.asp>> [accessed 18 June 2015].

<sup>481</sup> Herbert Muschamp, 'Art/Architecture; Filling the Void: A Chance to Soar', in *The New York Times*, 30 September 2001, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/30/arts/art-architecture-filling-the-void-a-chance-to-soar.html>> [accessed 5 February 2015].

psychologists in America have expressed concerns about the condition of survivors. Here, stated on the tenth anniversary of the events, are some of the responses of psychologists, historians and sociologists in answer to the question ‘Has 9/11 altered the American psyche (by comparison with the assassination of J. F. Kennedy)?’:

Unlike the past national traumas of historical significance, the collective fear that 9/11 has given rise to remains palpable. (Brian A. Monahan, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Marywood University, DE)

The definition of post-traumatic stress disorder requires you to watch somebody else trapped in a life-threatening situation. Which, of course, millions did on TV. And the images of the smoking towers have left memories that will not fade. The mass and scope of this tragedy is just too big to get over quickly and has already left a huge impact that will remain for several generations. It has become part of who we are as Americans today. It’s part of our memory, part of what we feel, part of our DNA. And so 10 years later, we really are experiencing PTSD on a national scale. (Prashant Gajwani, Associate Professor of Psychiatry, University of Texas)

Looking back in 50 years, we’ll actually see 9/11 as a major turning point, a permanent change in the American sense of self. (Ethan Katz, Assistant Professor of History, McMicken College, Cincinnati, OH)<sup>482</sup>

The above observations by scholars from different disciplines show that Waldman has well represented the widespread incidence of cases, which convey similar ideas about the relatively recent situation in the United States. Also, most of the comments stated here and on the Healthday website mentioning the after-effects of September 11 define them as collective trauma.

Another scene in the novel that openly informs the reader about the extensive repercussions of that day happens when the US Muslim architect Mo(hammed) Khan is questioned at the airport security. Though the architect does not express his feelings to the officers, Waldman explains that they are no different from the deep emotions felt by other characters during the tragedy. The conversation between Mo and the officers is rendered by

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<sup>482</sup> All three experts are cited in the article by Alan Mozes, ‘9/11 Left Permanent Scars on the American Psyche’, in *Healthday*, 11 September 2011, <<http://consumer.healthday.com/mental-health-information-25/psychology-and-mental-health-news-566/9-11-left-permanent-scars-on-the-american-psyche-656551.html>> [accessed 17 March 2015]

Waldman as follows, with her impressionistic but objective commentary providing sympathetic insight into the Muslim's mind and actions during the assault:

“Where were you during the attack?”

“Here. Los Angeles.” Naked beneath the sheets in his hotel room, the attack a collage of sound – panicky sirens, fissuring broadcasters’ voices, rescue helicopters pureeing the air, the muffle and crush of implosion — from his hotel clock radio. Only when the buildings were gone did he think to turn on the television.

“Here,” he said again. [...] Working and longing for New York.<sup>483</sup>

Though away from the site of destruction, Waldman draws her character as someone who wants to be there. Despite the opposition towards the architect voiced by his fellow-citizens, the author includes him in the spirit of solidarity that is dominant in the country. Accordingly, he wants to contribute to the nation using his skills and intellect as a successful American architect. Hence, besides his shock at what has happened, he has, we clearly infer, experienced self-realization in terms of a sense of place for the destroyed towers and of their value:

What was it he was trying to see? He had been indifferent to the buildings when they stood, preferring more fluid forms to their stark brutality, their self-conscious monumentalism. [...] Now he wanted to fix their image, their worth, their place. [...] It was nostalgia he felt for them. A skyline was a collaboration, if an inadvertent one, between generations, seeming no less natural than a mountain range that had shuddered up from the earth. This new gap in space reversed time.<sup>484</sup>

As an architect whose social role is to understand and feel what a structure means and what kind of sensations it evokes, Mo reveals his ideas about the site of destruction. After the disappearance of the buildings, he realizes that they were indispensable contributions to New York and were indeed unifying symbols of the city. However, now that they are appallingly absent, he wants to help people to overcome this huge void with his project, which he defines as a ‘simple concept’:

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<sup>483</sup> Waldman, p. 25.

<sup>484</sup> Ibid., p. 29.



A walled, rectangular garden guided by rigorous geometry. At the center would be a raised pavilion meant for contemplation. Two broad, perpendicular canals quartered the six-acre space. Pathways within each quadrant imposed a grid on the trees, both living and steel, that were studded in orchard-like rows. A white parameter wall, twenty-seven feet high, enclosed the space. The victims would be listed on the wall's interior, their names patterned to mimic the geometric cladding of the destroyed buildings. The steel trees reincarnated the buildings even more literally: they would be made from their salvaged scraps.<sup>485</sup>

The descriptions show that Mo Khan includes dense geometric patterns in his memorial design. His use of the steel trees probably symbolizes firmness and indestructability of the material while also reminding people that, while the demolished towers were indeed conceived for future generations, the trees would now stay to symbolize their immortal memory as they connect the underground and the above ground. In addition, they stand there as grand commemorative objects incorporating fragments of the buildings.

Just as the arguments about the names on the memorial appeared in reality after the design proposals by Lin, Arad and Walker had been submitted, Waldman's novel does not shrink from detailing in fiction the complex niceties of such matters. Obviously, this seems to be one of the important issues upon which Waldman wants to focus the reader's attention. In spite of the other matters such as nationalistic values and religious diversities, Waldman initially chooses to focus on names. The first words of the novel are "The names," Claire said, "What about the names?"<sup>486</sup> Claire Burwell's mention of the names is significant because she is the woman who has lost her husband in the attacks and is one of the jury members who is at times caught short by the trauma of her loss in addition to the heavy responsibility of raising her children alone. Claire believes that art is a means of processing trauma. She reacts to the words of Ariana, one of the jury members, to the effect that "In the right memorial, the names won't be the source of the emotion", by retorting that "They will for me," and Claire tries to make other people understand what she has been going through. Following Claire's response, the third-person narrator adds that 'They'd all lost, of

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<sup>485</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>486</sup> Waldman, p. 3.

course — lost the sense that their nation was invulnerable; lost the city's most recognizable icons; maybe lost friends or acquaintances. But only she had lost her husband'.<sup>487</sup> In the discussions about the memorial, Claire generally has common sense. Though she is absolutely devastated after losing her husband, she suggests that the jury members should try to be objective while she also implies that they need to empathize with her as well as with others like her.

The disagreement on the design of the Memorial in *The Submission* has common points with the one in real life over the winning design for the 9/11 Memorial by the architects Michael Arad and Peter Walker. Arad explains that his idea was to create a constant sense of absence, an inexplicable sense.<sup>488</sup> He further explains his aim and idea on the memorial as follows:

The surface of the memorial plaza is punctuated by the linear rhythms of rows of deciduous trees, forming informal clusters, clearings and groves. This surface consists of a composition of stone pavers, plantings and low ground cover. Through its annual cycle of rebirth, the living park extends and deepens the experience of the memorial. Surrounding the pools on bronze parapets are the names. The enormity of this space and the multitude of names underscore the vast scope of the destruction. Standing there at the water's edge, looking at a pool of water that is flowing away into an abyss, a visitor to the site can sense that what is beyond this parapet edge is inaccessible. The memorial plaza is designed to be a mediating space; it belongs both to the city and to the memorial. Located at street level to allow for its integration into the fabric of the city, the plaza encourages the use of this space by New Yorkers on a daily basis. The memorial grounds will not be isolated from the rest of the city; they will be a living part of it.<sup>489</sup>

Arad's explanation of the memorial suggests that his design aims at an everyday remembrance of that crucial day not just for people who lost an acquaintance in the attacks but also for the whole community. One's first impression is that the design gives special importance to names. It is as if they have priority in the project, as they will be situated in

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<sup>487</sup> Ibid.

<sup>488</sup> Michael Arad, 'Reflecting Absence', *Places*, 21.1 (2009), 41-51 (p. 42).

<sup>489</sup> World Trade Center Site Memorial Competition, <<http://www.wtcsitememorial.org/fin7.html>> [1 May 2015].

the heart of the previously devastated site. By nesting the memorial in the heart of the city with the names of all the victims on the walls, the designers have made it a place of everyday commemoration. As Lindsay Tuggle reflects:

The 9/11 Memorial, *Reflecting Absence*, alludes to the lingering trauma surrounding anonymous remains. Arad's [...] understanding of the towers' ghostly footprints recalls Freud's assertion that melancholia 'behaves like an open wound' that seeks to fill itself in the absence. As a memorial to the dead that doubles as a tourist attraction (including an on-site museum), the 9/11 Memorial mimics the magnetic void of melancholia on a national scale. [...] [It] inscribes the national wound into the landscape, while interring the unknown dead at bedrock between the footprints.<sup>490</sup>

However, as has already been stated, this real selection process was also difficult. The disagreements were not just about aesthetic matters. The families of the victims obviously had widely differing ideas, expectations and emotions about the subject:

Controversy erupted even before the results of the competition were announced in January 2004. Issues of naming were especially contentious; plans to randomly list the names of 9/11 victims on the walls of the pools were angrily challenged by those who felt that rescue workers, or "First Responders," should be accorded separate, special status, and by still others who insisted that victims be distinguished according to kinship and company affiliation.<sup>491</sup>

The process of deciding about a memorial is obviously fraught with difficulty as may be seen from real situations and is here reflected in fictional form. As an ex-reporter who has knowledge about the controversies so far at least surrounding the Vietnam Veterans' and Ground Zero Memorials, Waldman has used such a debate as the core setting of her novel. For this reason, it is also worth mentioning what happened previously with regard to Maya Lin's memorial design.

In her submission for the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Maya Lin states her original conception as follows:

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<sup>490</sup> Lindsay Tuggle, 'Unburied Trauma and the Exhumation of History: An American Genealogy', in *Trauma and Public Memory*, ed. by Jane Goodall and Christopher Lee (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 131- 47 (p. 132).

<sup>491</sup> Erika Doss, 'Remembering 9/11: Memorials and Cultural Memory', *OAH Magazine of History*, 25.3 (2011), 27-30 (p. 28).

Walking through this park-like area, the memorial appears as a rift in the earth – a long, polished black stone wall, emerging from and receding into the earth. Approaching the memorial, the ground slopes gently downward, and the low walls emerging on either side, growing out of the earth, extend and converge at a point below and ahead. Walking into the grassy site contained by the walls of this memorial we can barely make out the carved names upon the memorial’s walls. These names, seemingly infinite in number, convey the sense of overwhelming numbers, while unifying those individuals into a whole. For this memorial is meant not as a monument to the individual, but rather as a memorial to the men and women who died during this war, as a whole.<sup>492</sup>

The controversies that Maya Lin experienced were ignited both by her Asian heritage (though she is an American citizen) and by the way she designed the memorial. Marla Hochman relates how she had to struggle for a long time to make it understood that her plan ‘was not designed to be a political statement; rather it was meant to provide a quiet, private place for people to confront their anguish and sorrow’.<sup>493</sup> After the acceptance of her design in Washington D.C. in 1982, years later in what may arguably be seen as an ironic twist of fate, Lin was on the committee for the Ground Zero Memorial.

An excerpt from the Memorial Jury’s January 2004 statement on the selection of the design, in which Maya Lin took part, reads as follows:

“Reflecting Absence” has made the voids left by the destruction the primary symbols of our loss. By allowing absence to speak for itself, the designers have made the power of these empty footprints the memorial. At its core, this memorial is anchored deeply in the actual events it commemorates — connecting us to the towers’ destruction, and more important, to all the lives lost on that day.<sup>494</sup>

Thus, the name of the 9/11 Memorial, Reflecting Absence touches on the psychic wound due to the memories of the past. In particular, the footprints and their frequently emphasized national implications for citizens are in accordance with her explanation:

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<sup>492</sup> ‘Maya Lin’s Original Proposal’, in *Vietnam Veterans Memorials Fund*, <<http://www.vvmf.org/maya-lin-design-submission>> [accessed 15 March 2015].

<sup>493</sup> Marla Hochman, ‘Maya Lin, Vietnam Memorial’, in *Green Museum* <<http://greenmuseum.org/c/aen/Issues/lin.php>> [accessed 3 March 2015].

<sup>494</sup> World Trade Center Site Memorial Competition.

Throughout history, the body has been perceived as a receptacle of memory, from the memory of bodily movement, such as walking, to the memory of past events in physical scars, to the memory of one's genetic history in every cell.<sup>495</sup>

As also highlighted by Sturken, memorials awaken people's awareness by connecting them to the past, present and future. They provide a site where one can be reminded not only of the tangible wound but also of the historical and psychological wound. All the explanations and examples about memorials so far, either in real life or in Waldman's work of fiction, lead one towards considering the ramifications of trauma within the extent of memorial spaces.

### **5. The Garden as a Memorial and Heterotopia**

In addition to the evocation of traumatic incidents in the novel and its portrayal of individuals' widely diverging cultural backgrounds, in its focus on memorials there is also a sense of spatiality. As the previous quotation from Sturken's *Tangled Memories* suggests, the body, memory, and psyche all act together in a combination which in the end forms spaces where feelings such as happiness, grief, sorrow are stored and which most of the time manifest themselves in buildings:

Place memory encapsulates the human ability to connect with both the built and natural environments that are entwined in the cultural landscapes. It is the key to the power of historic places to help citizens define their public pasts: places trigger memories for insiders, who have shared a common past, and at the same time places often can represent shared pasts to outsiders who might be interested in knowing about them in the present.<sup>496</sup>

What the reader sees in *The Submission* is that 'traumatic events can seriously destabilize the movement of urban life'.<sup>497</sup>

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<sup>495</sup> Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories* (California: University of California Press, 1997), p. 12.

<sup>496</sup> Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as History* (London: The MIT Press, 1995), p.46.

<sup>497</sup> Adrian Parr, *Deleuze and Memorial Culture: Desire, Singular Memory and the Politics of Trauma* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), p. 129.

The space set aside for contemplation, the recollection of victims' names on the interior wall and the use of steel trees are in their different ways appropriate to the aim of commemoration as well as being a contribution to a marker of an historic event. While in real life the names remind people of the WTC, they also bring more meanings to the once huge business space with their legacy of personal memories. It is at this point that Foucault's notion of heterotopia comes to mind with its 'power to juxtapose in a single real place several spaces, several emplacements that are in themselves incompatible'.<sup>498</sup> In addition to that, as the memorial in the novel is a Garden, it also has initially the potential to bring 'superimposed meanings'<sup>499</sup> as Foucault suggests. For instance, while some people who enter the garden space may feel sadness, they can at the same time experience anger, feelings of revenge or on the contrary even dream of peace. Moreover, echoing the real-life development on Ground Zero noted above, with the steel trees and a raised pavilion meant for contemplation, it becomes a rather 'sacred' space that might remind one of Foucault explaining this sacredness by reference to the 'traditional garden of the Persians was a sacred space that was supposed to bring together inside its rectangle four parts representing the four parts of the world, like a navel of the world'.<sup>500</sup> The following ideas of some of the novel's characters and the word 'navel' set somehow a relationship because the word implies the importance that the characters ascribe to the memorial. As a national symbol, they probably want it to be the centre of attention so that the cataclysmic day is engraved in people's memories:

— 'The Garden, will be a place where we — where the widows, their children, anyone — can stumble on joy.' (Claire, 5)

— 'A memorial isn't a graveyard. it's a national symbol, an historic signifier, a way to make sure anyone who visits — no matter how attenuated their link in time or geography to the attack — understands how it felt, what it meant. [...]

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<sup>498</sup> Foucault, Michel, 'Of Other Spaces', trans. by Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics*, 16.1 (1986), 22–27. Reprinted in 'Of Other Spaces', in *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society*, ed. by Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Caeter (New York: Routledge, 2008), 13-30 (p. ).

<sup>499</sup> *Ibid.*, p.19.

<sup>500</sup> *Ibid.*

The Garden speaks to a longing we have for healing. It's a very nature impulse, but maybe not our most sophisticated one. [...] And it is too soft. Designed to please the same Americans who love impressionism.' (Ariana, 5 and 8)  
 — 'A ruined garden within the walls would be so powerful as a work of art, would answer any worries about erasing the hard memories.' (Maria, 9)

The characters' expectations from the Garden memorial varies, but the idea that it should serve to heal is the most common one, and they imply that the memorial zone should be a place where different people come together and feel what was once experienced and remember the day throughout their lives.

Mo Khan's planning a Garden project for a memorial probably has links to his background. Even though he is a non-practising Muslim, his childhood must have exerted some influence over him. In the novel, the majority of the characters take him to be a Muslim even if he is portrayed as an agnostic (28) and therefore his design is called as an Islamic garden (115, 182,189). Considering the Garden memorial's plan given previously, one can again see similarities between the Garden and Foucault's explanation of the third principle of heterotopia with its uniting feature that 'the garden is a rug where the whole world comes to accomplish its symbolic perfection [...] and a sort of blissful and universalizing heterotopia'.<sup>501</sup> Khan's explanations and feelings match the concept of heterotopia as a uniting space that transcends difference and creates an atmosphere to think about the day of the attacks and commemorate the victims.

## 6. Conclusion

As a rich treatment of the aftermath of an unnamed attack, Waldman's novel is nevertheless unable to be read without contextual awareness of the atmosphere that prevailed in autumn 2001 and of post-9/11 fiction. The novel provides various perspectives that prompt the reader to think about the attacks with a plot that deals largely with the disputatious discussions

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<sup>501</sup> Foucault, Michel, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 20.

following the results of a memorial competition. As the memorial has connections with architecture, history and psychology, trauma, space and heterotopia serve as indispensable terms to be explored. Around the theme of a memorial design, the novel presents the idea that what America experienced was indeed a global event causing deep psychological scars. By observing and making use of her experiences, Waldman manages to make a connection between the plan of a memorial site and trauma, in addition to drawing clear lines of traumascapes. The multivocality of the idea of the Garden memorial structure, which can be explained by Foucault's term of heterotopia, adds to the understanding of the event's transnational dimension.



## CONCLUSION

Since 9/11, quite a few novels have been published about the day of the attacks and their aftermath, and they have been widely studied. While most of these studies focus on the traumatic side of the events, there are very few studies that centre on the traumatic spaces in the aftermath of the catastrophe. This thesis aims at extending the field by examining the spatial dimension of post-9/11 trauma fiction.

In this framework, the terms trauma, space and place are initially studied separately for the purpose of presenting the terms to the reader. For a deeper focus, traumatic spaces in the novels written after 9/11 are analysed. In particular, three novels, two of which are by two American authors and the other by a Turkish author, have been selected for analysis. The inclusion of the Turkish novel is aimed at offering a different perspective to this research in addition to highlighting the contribution of a Turkish woman author to the post-9/11 novel genre.

Throughout the exploration of trauma-related spaces in the three novels that match up with the experience of post-9/11 trauma in real life, space is emphasized as being always in a constant process that records trauma, which happens both through the intrusion of the past and through the distorted vision of the present. Inflected by traumatic visions, reality becomes arrested by a sense of repetitiveness both in the selected novels and in the lives of some people who suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder following the attacks. Throughout this literary analysis, such cases show the striking recurrence of flashbacks with illusory transplanted spaces cutting through everyday reality.

After the introduction defining the theoretical framework, methodology, objectives and the novels used in this thesis, there follow four main chapters. While the first chapter presents the theoretical part of this study, the following three chapters provide case studies.

The first chapter primarily introduces the development of trauma studies throughout history in addition to the works of pioneering scholars that have made significant contributions to contemporary studies in the field. The works by those scholars working after the 1980s have enabled contemporary thinkers to develop a better critical understanding of literary works that treat the theme of trauma. The chapter further reflects research in spatial studies by discussing the terms space, place, heterotopia and non-place as used by leading philosophers and anthropologists. There then follows an examination of how trauma and space intersect depending on the idea that categories of space dominate our psychic experience. Space is understood as a category that generates identity as it intersects with different aspects of experience. This intersection of space theory and trauma becomes the core of this study. Within the context of this determination, narratives of trauma are presented to prepare the analysis of the post-9/11 novel.

The second chapter analyses Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Road* as a first case study. It broadly discusses the relationship between post-apocalyptic anxieties in the novel with reference to the similar ideas that appeared in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. The novel presents the trauma experienced in a post-apocalyptic landscape in which almost all the possible reconnections of any one individual with the past have been erased, resulting in a lost sense of place for the disorientated residents who have experienced life both in the pre- and post-apocalyptic era. Being in such a landscape not only results in the creation of permanent traumatic spaces but also results in little expectations of hope. This novel shows that hope can nevertheless be revived by the presence of a child character that symbolizes innocence and, most of the time, optimism that the road will finally lead the few survivors to a better life. As the road they walk along presents a long journey that provides several intersections, the novel also suggests that there may be other routes that offer potential rescue from traumatic spaces.

The second novel studied is by the Turkish author Nilüfer Kuyaş and entitled *Serbest Düşüş*. After an introductory overview of the history of the Turkish novel, and more specifically of trauma novels in Turkish, this third chapter focuses on the presentation of the individual trauma of a Turkish protagonist whose path intersects with that of an American man who has witnessed the 9/11 attacks. The novel is important owing to the references to the attacks both from the double viewpoint of a Turkish protagonist as well as an American character. With this novel, the way in which the 9/11 attacks and their aftermath were witnessed from Istanbul is presented. The novel also contributes to the post-9/11 novel genre from a different country, examining how a past traumatic experience can re-emerge upon meeting someone with an unrelated traumatic background. In addition, though in a rather fragmented way, the novel shows how it is possible for an individual to emerge from the traumatic world s/he inhabits by listening to people's accounts of other massive trauma-laden catastrophes and by witnessing those cataclysms from afar.

The last novel analysed in this thesis is *The Submission* by Amy Waldman. Within the context of an argument about an American Muslim's proposal in a competition to design a garden memorial after an unnamed attack in New York, the novel offers several insights thanks to the plurality of voices in a country that has experienced a global catastrophe leaving long-term traumatic scars. It presents the collective dimensions of trauma experienced in the country in addition to highlighting the importance of the city life and individual experience. The analysis not only shows the traumatized texture of city life but also draws attention to the significance and difficulty of memorial building in a city due to the differing subjective connotations of symbols in the memorial site.

To sum up, around all these discussions, *The Submission* successfully covers the content and discussion points of *The Road* and *Serbest Düşüş*. Just as the long road in McCarthy's novel implies the chance of a better life at some point throughout the way, and Kuyaş's protagonist that seeks for undefined gateways through other people's traumas, the

garden within a memorial context may offer new spaces different from all the chaos and catastrophes in the outer world. Besides, as trees in the garden are rooted, they also symbolize the long-lasting aspect of the serene space. Therefore, the idea of building a garden memorial may serve as the soothing agent with its possibility that allows for the entrance of hope, offering the characters a transition from *traumascapes* to *hopescapes*.

**APPENDIX I**

**INTERVIEW WITH NİLÜFER KUYAŞ IN TURKISH**

**BETÜL ATEŞÇİ KOÇAK'S QUESTIONS ON E-MAIL,**

**SENT ON 10/10/2014, PLUS**

**NİLÜFER KUYAŞ'S ANSWERS ON E-MAIL,**

**RECEIVED ON 17/10/2014**

**Betül Ateşçi Koçak:** 9/11'in sizin üzerinizdeki etkisinden biraz bahsedebilir misiniz?

**Nilüfer Kuyaş:** 9/11 bir eşikti, oradan başka bir dünyaya geçtik. Çok büyük ve çok cüretli bir terör eylemiydi. Karşımdakine bir an için de olsa diz çöktürten bir eylem. Bana, artık her şey mümkün, her şey olabilir duygusu verdi. İnsanların her tür yıkımı göze alabileceğini anladım. Dünya benim için güvenli bir yer olmaktan çıktı. Saldırıya uğrayıp ölümlerle burun buruna gelen ve kıl payı kurtulan birisi gibi, sürekli arkamı kollayarak yaşamaya başladım. Benim için bir endişe çağı başladı. Zaten endişeye çok yatkın bir insanım. Kişisel travmalarım, dünyadaki karmaşa ve travmalar örtüştü. İnsanlığın karanlık tarafının galebe çaldığı bir döneme girdiğimizi hissettim ve bunun karşısında duyduğum kırılanklıkla bir şekilde yüzleşmek ihtiyacı doğdu.

**Betül Ateşçi Koçak:** Neden 9/11'i ele aldınız romanınızda? 11 Eylül sonrası Türk romanlarında bunun çok az işlenmiş olmasının etkisi var mı?

**Nilüfer Kuyaş:** Türk romanında az veya çok işlenmişliği gibi bir şey hiç aklımdan bile geçmedi. Bir yüzeysel nedeni, o yıllarda yoğun şekilde güncel Amerikan edebiyatı okuyor olmamdı belki. Ama daha derin bir neden arayacak olursak, ki mutlaka derin bir nedeni olduğunu da sanmıyorum ama, ille arayacak olursak, romandaki kadınla

erkeğin benzer bir deneyimi yaşamış kişiler olmasını istedim; Şirin ve Bruno, ölümlerinin burun buruna gelmiş insanlar. Paylaştıkları bu ortak yan onları bir araya getiriyor aslında. Ölümle bu şekilde yakın temasın yarattığı derin bir iz var. Hayata başka insanlar gibi güvenle bakamıyorsunuz. Her şeyin bir anda yok olabileceği farkındalığı insanı yalnızlaştıran bir şey. Gerçi 9/11'den sonra, bütün insanlık için daha kolektif bir ruh haline dönüştü denebilir, ama gene de, kendiniz bizzat yaşadığımız zaman, başkaları bu duyguya aynı kuvvetle empati gösteremez, bu kadar endişeyi pek kolay paylaşamazlar sizinle. Post Travmatik Distress Sendromu gerçekten çok yalnızlaştırıcı bir şey. Allah korusun, tıpkı fizik sakatlık gibi, kalıcı bir yanı var.

**Betül Ateşçi Koçak:** Don DeLillo'nun *Falling Man* romanının sizde bıraktığı etki nedir?

Bundan başka etkilendiğiniz romanlar var mı 9/11'e dair?

**Nilüfer Kuyaş:** Don DeLillo'nun romanını aslında beklediğim kadar etkileyici bulmadım.

Onun *Underworld* romanında çok daha başarılı travma anlatımları var. The Angel Esmeralda mucizesi, Bronx'taki yıkım ve şiddet, çok daha etkileyici işlenmişti bence. Ama *Falling Man* hem ulusal hem küresel bir felakete bir yazarın tepkisi yahut cevabı olarak ilginçti, güzeldi. Bence aşırı erken yazılmıştı, daha yara çok tazeysen, dolayısıyla perspektif tam oturmamıştı. Ahlaki görev gibi yazılmış bir romandı. Fakat o muazzam ölçekte bir felaketi hakkını vererek romanlaştırmak neredeyse imkansız bence. Daha dolaylı anlatımlar o yüzden bazen daha etkili olabiliyor. Beni etkileyen başka 9/11 romanlarına gelince. Thomas Pynchon'un *Bleeding Edge* romanını sevmiştim; Pynchon zaten komplo teorileri, felaketler, apokaliptik düzeyde savrulmalar, distopya, kargaşa gibi şeylerin yazarı; o sembolik açıdan güzel ele almıştı olayı. Claire Messud'un *İmparatorun Çocukları* da iyi bir örnekti. Bunlar hep sosyal bir panorama çizmeye çalışan romanlar tabii, ben daha küçük ölçeklere meraklıyım. O açıdan John Updike'in *Terrorist* romanını da beğenmiştim, haksızlık edildi o romana, gençlerin radikalize oluşunu hayli erken ve hayli hassas bir bakışla ele alıyordu bence.

Başka 9/11 roman örnekleri okuduğumu hatırlamıyorum, galiba hepsi bu kadar. Benim olayı romanımda kullanma nedenim biraz da buna bağlı, bu romanların hepsi olayı Amerika'yla ilgili, ulusal bir konu olarak ele alıyorlar, hâlbuki bence bütün dünyayı ilgilendiren ve etkileyen bir olaydı o, evrensel bir simgeydi, küresel bir travmaydı, sadece bir Amerikan simgesi değildi. Bütün büyük trajediler evrensel bence. Japonya'daki Fukuşima depremi ve tsunami de öyleydi. Şu anda Suriye ve Irak'ta süren savaş da öyle. Bütün insanlığın nerede olduğunu yansıtıyor. Sadece Amerika'yı değil bütün dünyayı ilgilendiren bir sorun.

**Betül Ateşçi Koçak:** Richard Drew tarafından çekilen 'Falling Man' adli ikonik 11 Eylül fotoğrafıyla romanınızın başlığı arasında bir bağlantı kurabilir miyiz?

**Nilüfer Kuyaş:** Evet böyle bir bağlantı kurulabilir. Umutsuzluğun resmi demişti Amerikalı bir din adamı o fotoğraf için. Bir dönem romanın kapağında ona benzer bir görüntü mü kullansam diye düşündüm. Sonra vazgeçtim, çünkü roman doğrudan 9/11'le ilgili değil. Şöyle açmaya çalışayım: Aslında o fotoğrafta görülen şey o kadar korkunç ki, empati kurmamız bile mümkün değil, sadece dehşete düşebiliyoruz. O açıdan 9/11 olayının hiç bir ölçüye vurulamaz boyuttaki dehşetini yansıtıyor. Ama aynı zamanda eşsiz bir şekilde de belgeliyor o anı, o yeri, o travmayı.

**Betül Ateşçi Koçak:** Lisans öğreniminizi Boston'da tamamladınız. New York'a gider miydiniz o dönemlerde? Saldırıları sonrasında da gittiniz mi? New York'un o dönemlerde ve (saldırıları) sonrasında sizde bıraktığı etkiyi biraz anlatabilir misiniz?

**Nilüfer Kuyaş:** Evet, Boston'da üniversite okurken New York'a çok sık giderdim, sonradan da birkaç kez gittim, ama 9/11 sonrasında, son on yılda hiç gitmedim. Hatta 2012'de New York'taki kasırga sırasında bir arkadaşım oradaydı, romana son anda kasırgayı da koymayı düşündüm, Şirin kızını merak ediyor gibi, fakat sonradan vazgeçtim, çok fazla olacaktı. Size tuhaf gelecek bir şeyi itiraf edeyim, ben New York'u pek sevmem. O yağınla gökdelen bana daha ilk gördüğümde, eskiden yok olmuş tuhaf bir uygarlığın

mezar taşları gibi görünmüştü, yıllar önce de yazmışım bunu; Fazla reklamı yapılmış bir yer, ama kültürel açıdan önemli bir merkez olduğu elbette su götürmez, fakat ben Boston'u daima daha çok sevdim, daha insani ölçekte buldum. New York'a açıkçası eğlenmeye giderdik, çılgın partiler olurdu. New York'un beni en çok etkileyen tarafı tiyatrosudur, ama müzikaller değil, off Broadway kast ediyorum, deneyselliği, tiyatro birikimi. Hollywood nasıl sinemayla özdeşse New York da tiyatroyla özdeş benim için, azıcık Londra gibi.

**Betül Ateşçi Koçak:** Dünyanın farklı ülkelerinde yaşanan felaketlere değiniyorsunuz; Şirin'in Fransa'da yaşadığı tren kazası, Rüstem Tokyo'dayken yaşanan deprem, 9/11 ile New York ve sonrasında Van depremi... Neden farklı yerlere değinmek istediniz? Felaketler, travma ve mekan arasındaki bağın önemi sizce bu şekilde daha mı iyi yansıtılıyor?

**Nilüfer Kuyaş:** Evet, tam dediğiniz gibi, travma ve mekan arasındaki ilişki böyle daha iyi yansıtıldığı için bir çok felakete değiniyorum romanda. Fakat bunun biraz daha derin bir nedeni var, bağlantılı olarak. Dünyanın hiçbir yeri bir başka yerinden daha güvenli değil, bir kere. Bunu vurgulamak istedim. İster doğal afetler olsun ister insan yapısı trajediler, savaş veya saldırı, genelde çok daha kırılmanız, deminki sorulardan birinde söylediğim gibi, sanki bir travma çağındayız. Bunu vurgulamaktı asıl istediğim. Şirin o düzeyde bir kırılmalık yaşıyor çünkü.

**Betül Ateşçi Koçak:** Romanda anlatıcı sürekli olarak 3'u hatırlatıyor: 'Bu anlatıda her şeyden üç tane olacak...' şeklinde tekrarlar var. Üçün önemi nedir? Geleneksel Türk hikâye anlatımında gördüğümüz Gökten Üç Elma Düştü ile bir bağlantısı var mı acaba?

**Nilüfer Kuyaş:** Üç rakamı masalarda çok kullanılan bir motif ve arzuyu simgeliyor diye biliyorum. Kendi narsist egomuza yaptığımız yatırım ve ego ile arzularımız üzerinden dünyayla, başkalarıyla kurduğumuz ilişkilerde bir tür sen, ben ve o tipi bir üçe ayırma,



paylaştırma, payını verme simgesi. İki kişinin veya herhangi iki varlığın arasındaki ilişkiden bir üçüncü varlık doğuyor, bir tür “aura” da diyebiliriz buna. Mesela travma mekanlarında belli bir aura var, iyileşme mekanlarında farklı bir aura var, her insanın ayrı bir aura’sı var, her ilişkinin de aura’sı var. Üç rakamı ilişkileri yani arzuyu temsil ediyor. Serbest Düşüş de sonuçta arzunun yıkıcılığı üzerine bir roman. Yerinde veya zamanında yaşanmayan, ölçsüz olan her arzu tehlikeli ve yıkıcı. 11 Eylül de bir intikam alma yahut cezalandırma arzusunun yıkıcılığıydı sonuçta. Şirin’in de gecikmiş, bastırılmış arzuları patlama yapınca, neredeyse bütün hayatı elden gider gibi oluyor. Gökten hep üç elma düşse keşke. Şimdilerde korkunç şeyler düşüyor sanki!!

**APPENDIX II**

**INTERVIEW WITH NİLÜFER KUYAŞ IN ENGLISH<sup>502</sup>**

**BETÜL ATEŞÇİ KOÇAK'S QUESTIONS ON E-MAIL,**

**SENT ON 10/10/2014, PLUS**

**NİLÜFER KUYAŞ'S ANSWERS ON E-MAIL,**

**RECEIVED ON 17/10/2014**

**Betül Ateşçi Koçak:** Could you tell me a little bit about the effect of 9/11 on you?

**Nilüfer Kuyaş:** 9/11 was a gateway, we passed to another world after it. It was a very big and daring terrorist action. A kneeling-down event even for a moment for the other. It gave me a feeling that anything is possible and anything could happen. I understood that mankind can take risk of every kind of destruction. The world is no longer a safe place for me. Like someone who had a close brush to death and had a near miss to it, I started to live watching my back. I am already a very vulnerable person. My individual traumas overlapped with the world's chaos and traumas. I felt like we have entered an era that the dark side of humanity prevailed and there arose a kind of necessity to face the vulnerability I have felt.

**Betül Ateşçi Koçak:** Why did you deal with 9/11 in your novel? Is it because of the fact that it has been dealt less in Turkish novels post 9/11?

**Nilüfer Kuyaş:** I did not even think whether it was dealt with in Turkish novel or not. One superficial reason might be that I was reading American literature those days. If we really need to find a reason, [...], I wanted both the woman and man to have lived the

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<sup>502</sup> My own translation.

same experience; Şirin and Bruno are people who both had a close brush with death. This common point makes them come together. There is the deep wound of facing death so close. You cannot look at life confidently as others do. The realization that everything can disappear at any moment is something that alienates one. Post-traumatic stress disorder is quite an alienating case. It has [might have] a lasting effect just like the physical disability. It is also something that makes one more rigid, almost merciless. Anger stays with the person who experiences serious trauma because there remains a pain that you cannot fully cure. There is not an institution where you can contemplate the victimization you have been exposed to nor is there a place that you can find relief. 9/11 may have been the most devastating example of this. Then you become a little pitiless. With pitiless, I mean living without giving much importance to the feelings, both for yourself and for the others; like following a midway; not allowing too much concussions; Bruno is such a man. I think today's youth exactly try to live that way, they abstain from psychological concussions, 9/11 was a 'side slip', for this reason, it well frames the sensitive protection route. Because I empathized and made sense of 9/11 event in emotional level in such a way, I included it in my novel. An incomprehensible event, it pushes the limits of the mind, that is, in a sense, it is like a negative symbol of a life that is aimed to live at reasonable levels. It is like a philosophy that tells you to keep away from pain and enjoy joy in a restrained manner. Sirin's capture by extreme passion out of the blue creates a 9/11-like-destructive-threat.' I think in this novel, I wanted big tragedies, big awareness and excitement causing events. I wanted a background that equals to the storms and destructions in Sirin's soul. We escape from feelings but when we live with full of feelings, we are at a time that it comes at a grand scale: The Age of Trauma.

**Betül Ateşçi Koçak:** How did Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* affect you? Are there any other post- 9/11 novels other than this that has influenced you?

**Nilüfer Kuyaş:** I did not find Don DeLillo's novel as impressive as I thought. There are more successful narratives of trauma in his novel *Underground*. In my opinion, the miracle of Angel Esmeralda, violence and destruction in Bronx were dealt more successfully. But *Falling Man* was interesting and good, as a reaction or response of an author to a global disaster. For me, it was written extremely early when the psychological wound was so fresh. Therefore, there was not a proper perspective. It was written as if it were a moral duty. Yet, it is almost impossible to novelize a disaster at such a grand scale. That's why more implicated narratives might be more effective. Thomas Pynchon's *Bleeding Edge* is another 9/11 novel that I liked; Pynchon is indeed an author of conspiracy theories, disasters, concussions at an apocalyptic level, dystopia and chaos; he symbolically dealt with the event in a smart way. Claire Messud's *The Emperor's Children* is also a good example. These are all novels that draw a social panorama indeed; I am interested in smaller-scale novels. For this reason I also liked John Updike's *Terrorist*. Injustice done to this novel, it dealt with the radicalization of the youth in such an early yet sensitive way. I do not remember any other 9/11 novel; I think that's all. The reason why I included 9/11 is a little related to that, all these novels deal with America, they cover a global event but I think 9/11 was a universal event that affected the whole world. It was a global symbol, global trauma; not just an American symbol. All grand tragedies are collective, in my opinion. Fukushima earthquake and tsunami were such examples. The war in Syria and Iraq now is the same. It shows where all the humanity is. It is not just America's but the whole world's problem.

**Betül Ateşçi Koçak:** Is it possible to make a connection between Richard Drew's iconic photo titled 'Falling Man' and the title of your novel?

**Nilüfer Kuyaş:** Yes, there can be such a relation. An American reverend said it was the photo of despair. For a while I thought of using a similar image for the book cover but

then I changed my mind because the novel is not directly about 9/11. To explain it more, what one sees in this photo is so frightening that it is even impossible for one to empathize; you are just appalled. For this reason, it tells about 9/11's immeasurable dimension of horror. Yet it also documents that moment, place and trauma in a unique way. Trauma is not that horrific in my novel but it has an effect at the same level to 9/11 because the things that happen in our inner lives have similarities with the horridness in that photo as you are alone in a place where intelligence does not count. Falling, in this sense, is a layered symbol— you lose height, you descend and all the things that protect you disappear, nothing remains to hold. Şirin cannot say she is young and beautiful any more, it is also difficult for her to say she is successful; she is not quite so, though she says she is loved (by her husband), she is again not so sure, in the end she is infatuated with Bruno and when he is gone, she goes into a decline. Of course, in that photo, there is no coming back. Despair is certain. But in my novel, there is a coming back in the end. Like Baumgartner's pressing the button, it is a miracle. Hopelessness does not leave itself to hope but nevertheless to a possibility of living.

**Betül Ateşçi Koçak:** You finished your undergraduate degree in Boston. Did you use to go to New York those days? Did you go there after the attacks? Could you please tell about the differences of the city then and after the attacks?

**Nilüfer Kuyaş:** Yes, I often went to New York when I was a university student in Boston, I went a few times later on but since 9/11, I did not go there. Also, a friend of mine was there in 2012 hurricane in New York, in the last minute I thought of adding her as well, as if Şirin is worrying about her daughter but I did not do it later on, it was going to be too much. You may find it strange, but I do not like New York a lot. From the moment I first saw lots of skyscrapers, it seemed like the cemetery of a civilization that was lost many years ago, I wrote about it several years ago as well. It is an over-advertised

[city], yet it is an undeniable fact that it is the center of cultural means but I have always liked Boston more, I find it more humanistic there. We used to go there for fun, there were great parties. The thing that attracted me most about New York was theatres, but not musicals, I mean off-Broadway, experimental theatre. For me, just like Hollywood is identified with cinema, New York is the same for me in theatre, it is a little bit like London.

**Betül Ateşçi Koçak:** You mention disasters in different countries around the world; the train accident Şirin experienced in France, the earthquake in Tokyo when Rüstem was there, 9/11 and New York and then the earthquake in Van. Why did you want such variety? Do you think the relationship between cataclysms, trauma and place are better articulated that way?

**Nilüfer Kuyaş:** Yes, there is certainly an increasing awareness and vulnerability. Now even natural disasters seem to us as if they were man-made. Or the world has started to get affected by people's trauma! We are in a time when earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, accidents and plagues cause deeper effects, and created bigger fears. May be vulnerability due to ecocide has a role in this, indeed I am almost sure of it because I feel so.

**Betül Ateşçi Koçak:** In the novel the narrator frequently reminds the reader of number three. There are repetitions like: 'In this narration everything will happen three times..' What is the importance of number three? Is there any relation between it and 'three apples fall from the sky' in traditional Turkish story-telling?

**Nilüfer Kuyaş:** As far as I know, the number three is an often-used motive in tales and it symbolizes desire. Via the investment we do for our narcissist ego and our desires, and the relationship we have with other people, it is the symbol of sharing, a kind of sharing such as you, I and s/he. From the relationship between the two, there arises a third being, we can name it as an 'aura'. For instance, there is a certain aura in trauma places,

a different one in survivals, and each person and each relation have their own auras.  
[...] September 11 was in the end a subversion of a desire of revenge or castigating.  
And when Şirin's suppressed desires burst out, it feels as if her whole life is lost. If  
only three apples fell from the sky. Terrifying things are falling today!

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