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Introduction

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Memory / Memorial / Performance: Lower Manhattan, 1776 / 2005

D.J. Hopkins and Shelley Orr

[A] Introduction: two walks in the city

Just after 9AM, we left a little hotel on William Street in the middle of New York City's financial district. We walked up narrow streets made to seem even more narrow by the hulking stone buildings that consume the blocks, nearly crowding out the sidewalks. We wound our way single file, hugging the stone along Pine Street, and passed behind the New York Stock Exchange. A couple of blocks later we came upon the property of Trinity Church: an open area with a large, neo-gothic house of worship and a graveyard, whose beautiful, crumbling tombstones are among the oldest objects on public display in Manhattan. The oldest legible gravestones in Manhattan's Trinity Churchyard date to 1681, more than fifteen years before the completion of the church from which the graveyard now takes its name. The eastern edge of Trinity Churchyard abuts Lower Broadway. Enclosed behind an imposing black metal gate, the churchyard struck us as a place — even a time — set apart from the bustle of pedestrians, cabs, and street vendors.

D.J.H. Perhaps the lawyers and stockbrokers who hustle by every day have become accustomed to the weathered gravestones, but these ancient, modest monuments caught my attention, and compelled me to stop and read what I could on surfaces eroded by centuries of weather and pollution. The first stone that I approached read as follows:

*Here Lyes the Bodes of
Sarah Minthorne Wife
of Mangle Minthorne Who*

Departed this Life Oct 9th

1773 Aged 35 years

Though only one among several stones that I read that day, this grave marker in particular fired my imagination. What was the life of a woman like in colonial New York City? And, that question's obvious corollary, what was the death of a colonial woman like? Also: who in their right mind would name their son 'Mangle'? Though I knew nothing about Mangle Minthorne, I imagined Sarah enduring a marriage to an unpleasant man much older than she, a marriage of financial convenience and domestic hardship. (This is what happens when you give your child a name like 'Mangle': hundreds of years later, ignorant pedestrians will assume the worst.) And I wondered why Sarah Minthorne died so young. The question became important to me; certainly it would have been important to Sarah, and perhaps to Mangle as well.

In retrospect, as I recall how I stood transfixed on the sidewalk near Wall Street, it doesn't escape my notice that I was staring through a wrought-iron fence at the centuries-old grave stone of a woman who died at the age of 35. My age, at the time.

And, as I recall this scene after the passage of some time, it doesn't escape my notice that these gravestones may have held gravitational interest because of what we'd come to Lower Manhattan to do: an undertaking that we were avoiding by lingering near Trinity Church and surrogating by spending our tourists' free time at a graveyard.

S.O. We turned north and walked a couple of blocks to Liberty Street, where I was surprised to come upon an open area. Not a park or any other stretch of Manhattan greenspace; this was an open area unlike any other on the island. It was not merely

'open', but rather an absence in the urban terrain: a void space in the grid. On that afternoon walk, without expressly setting out to, I arrived in an area that was familiar to me, a site made ubiquitous from countless representations in televised media; but still, it was an area that I didn't immediately recognize because it was not one known from my own experience, because I don't live in New York. It seems obvious now, but in that moment of cartographic confusion, I was not able to reconcile what I was seeing with what I knew of New York, with my mental map of the city. Slowly, I began to recognize this area from pictures, from the countless photographs and maps and drawings that have propagated wildly on the web, in newspapers, and eventually in bookstores. Only at this moment of realization did I think to read the actual city map that I was carrying, to locate myself cartographically, and to try to reconcile my lived, experienced locatedness with my perceived location on the map. Only then could I reconcile what I was looking at with the many images I'd already seen of Ground Zero.

[A] Pedestrian Performance

This chapter of *Performance and the City* has a multiple agenda. The anecdotal examples with which we have begun roughly define a physical territory for our exploration: just a few blocks on Lower Manhattan. Though the events on which we'll focus are separated by more than two hundred years, they occupy the same discrete topography and traces of the earlier events are available in the present for the astute pedestrian to explore and even produce. Another space that we'll be exploring in this chapter is the discursive territory defined by Michel de Certeau's legendary essay 'Walking in the City'. In addition to offering influential theoretical models for

understanding urban space, de Certeau relies on Manhattan for his primary example, though the Manhattan of his essay has become a historical city, part of New York's urban *palimpsest*.

Despite the prevalent use of writing metaphors (like 'palimpsest') to describe the overlay of history that composes most urban spaces, one of the projects of this chapter is to assert the relevance of *performance* to the experience of the city, and to the production and interpretation of the urban narratives described in de Certeau's essay. For decades, the discourses of urban studies – and interdisciplinary work influenced by those discourses – described cities as 'legible' urban 'texts' whose meanings are transparent and readily available for all to 'read'. More recently, the work of many spatial theorists and self-described postmodern geographers has strived to counter this claim of legibility and to resist the 'monopoly on intelligibility' that Henri Lefebvre has observed is so often conceded to texts and textuality (62). While de Certeau has contributed to this postmodern revaluation of cities from 'down below' rather than 'looking down like a god' from above (92), 'Walking in the City' nevertheless relies on metaphors of writing and urban legibility that themselves deserve revaluation in light of recent critical work in human geography, spatial theory, and performance studies. Our goal is to consider the role of performance in the everyday life of the city's pedestrian inhabitants, and the contributions of performance to urban space and urban memory.

The city need not be conceived as palimpsestic. This writing metaphor implies that the past is largely effaced by the present. Our focus, rather, is on the simultaneity of the urban past in the present, what Edward Casey would call the 'eventmental' dimension of the city (336). Casey's neologism connotes an environment of social activity that

comes to define location, not only in the moment but over time; cumulative meanings accrue in a single location as a result of the history of events that have taken place there. Eventmental meanings are not serially erased and rewritten, but instead these meanings remain and are regularly reproduced.ⁱ

In 2004, we attended a lecture by Daniel Libeskind, the acclaimed architect whose designs for the World Trade Center site won him the largely symbolic title of Master Planner. At the lecture, D.J. had the opportunity to ask Libeskind a question: ‘Given that much of the discussion of the World Trade Center site has focused on its memorial aspects, perhaps you could say something about the relationship between architecture and memory?’ Libeskind replied without any hesitation, as though the answer were self-evident: ‘Architecture and memory are synonymous.’ After a moment, he added: ‘Architecture is *built memory*. Like books.’ We find Libeskind’s response a compelling and poetic formulation. Nevertheless, books need to be read, and buildings alone remember nothing. Into Libeskind’s formulation must be factored the performance of the individual subject in the activation of the memorial function of architecture and the production of memory.

Following Libeskind’s cue, this chapter considers the relationship between built space and memory, especially those architectural spaces built specifically as memorials.

We’ve begun this consideration with two stories. Both stories are rooted in the present, though one will draw us toward the city’s historical past, while the other will compel us to consider the city’s future. However, it was a consideration of the urban present that compelled de Certeau to write this much-quoted passage from his most famous essay:

To be lifted to the summit of the World Trade Center is to be lifted out of the city's grasp. [...] The 1370 foot high tower that serves as a prow for Manhattan continues to construct the fiction that creates readers, makes the complexity of the city readable, and immobilizes its opaque mobility in a transparent text. (92)

As D.J. has observed in an essay on site-specific theatre and mapping, the imagery used in this passage from de Certeau 'relies on what is now an urban afterimage' (282 n15). Post-9/11, 'Walking in the City' serves retroactively as a memorial for the World Trade Center.

In this passage, de Certeau makes clear that while the view of the city from the top of the World Trade Center produces the city as readable, this apparent readability is a constructed fiction. From the 110th floor, one was, in de Certeau's words, a 'voyeur', seeing the world 'at a distance' (92). Such distance created 'the fiction of knowledge', the product of the urban voyeur's 'lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more' (92). Thus, the phrase 'the text of the city' encapsulates both a fictional understanding of urban legibility and the desire on the part of the viewer to believe that fiction to be true.

For all that they are fictional, such conceptions of the city 'from above' still have narrative force on the lives of those living in the city. Bryan Reynolds and Joseph Fitzpatrick describe this panoptic view as one that imposes the singular knowledge of the modern map onto the diversity of the lived experience of the street (66–7). Stephen Hartnett describes de Certeau's idea of mapping as 'acts of the cartographic imagination' that seek to impose 'the "Truth" claims of the oppressor' (297, 291). But the point of 'Walking in the City' is the disruption of what Foucault calls 'the strict spatial

partitioning' of panopticism (195). De Certeau offers pedestrianism as a kind of writing, a physical activity that intercepts the textuality imposed on the city as a control mechanism. Pedestrianism instead produces alternative spatial stories in opposition to the univocal narratives of Hartnett's menacing 'oppressor'.

Reynolds and Fitzpatrick conclude their study of de Certeau's spatial theories by arguing that the 'spatial stories' of individual pedestrian activity are 'written in the memory instead of the "text" of the city' (80). While we, too, see memory as a key concept in the cognitive mapping of the city, we feel that 'written' is not the most appropriate verb for describing this active, spatial, physical activity.ⁱⁱ And, we wonder: in what ways might such individual, pedestrian activity access the spatial stories of others?

[A] Sacred to the memory

It should go without saying that everything changed on September 11. But perhaps it would be more appropriate to say that everything *could have* changed. For on the morning of September 11th, a Congressional delegation led by Benjamin Franklin and John Adams was given the authority to negotiate an end to the Revolutionary War even before it had begun. Franklin and Adams met with representatives of the Crown. The primary condition set by the commanders of the British invasion force was the repudiation of the Declaration of Independence. The one non-negotiable position assigned to Franklin and Adams was that the Declaration must stand.

It was a short meeting.

On September 15th, 1776, following a brutal sustained bombardment calculated to overwhelm and demoralize the US forces (18th Century 'shock and awe'), the British

landed on Manhattan at Kip's Bay, at approximately the present-day location of 34th Street. Washington's ill-trained militia retreated in disarray toward Harlem. Encountering virtually no resistance, the British took Manhattan in an afternoon. Later that night, a small party of officers went ashore to inform New York City that it was once again under British control. The city would remain occupied until the end of the war.

Less than a week later, on the night of September 21st, a fire broke out in the southwestern part of New York City and quickly spread. Much of the city had been evacuated, and those New Yorkers who remained were hard pressed to control the blaze. The fire began under suspicious circumstances, despite General Washington's explicit orders that New York was not to be razed. Suspicions were reinforced by the discovery that none of the city's fire-fighting equipment was in working order.

The fire spread up the west side of the city, engulfing businesses and residential areas alike in what one contemporary observer called 'a scene of horror great beyond description'. Trinity Church, which had opened its doors in 1697, burnt down in minutes, 'a lofty pyramid of fire', as one eyewitness described it: 'a grand and awful spectacle' (Burroughs and Wallace 241–2). From Trinity churchyard, the fire spread north, in the direction of St. Paul's Chapel. The original Chapel still stands today, at the corner of Church Street and Fulton, immediately adjacent to the north east corner of the World Trade Center site – approximately a mile south of where the British landed. As the fire closed in on St. Paul's, a bucket brigade was set up between the chapel and the Hudson River to the west. The British, who had not yet occupied the city, sent soldiers ashore to assist in fighting the fire. Though the fire claimed twenty to twenty-five percent of the city, few lost their lives and St. Paul's Chapel was preserved. The next day, two hundred

New Yorkers were arrested by the British on suspicion of arson. One man was summarily executed for allegedly shooting a hole in a bucket the night before.

The destruction of a significant part of the built structures in Lower Manhattan – which, in 1776, constituted *all* of New York City – left a lasting impression on the nascent nation. The citizens of New York chose to commemorate those who died in the conflict, and chose to do so at the site of the most notable edifice lost in that great conflagration. In the same churchyard where Sarah Minthorne was laid to rest, a massive object now towers above her gravestone. [Fig. 1] The text of that object reads:

Sacred to the memory of
those brave and good men who died
Whilst imprisoned in this City for their devotion to the
Cause of AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE

A large and forbidding architectural structure, the monument in Trinity Churchyard nevertheless seems to have an anxiety complex. Insisting on its sacred status, on the braveness and goodness of those it represents, and on the in-all-capitals significance of ‘AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE’, the monument is resolutely self-contained. It presents a *monolithic* narrative: a single story, told in stone. The monument provides everything that an observer needs to know: not only information, but interpretation; not only data, but ideology. This is how we define a monument, and we offer this understanding of the monument in contrast to the function and uses of the memorial.

The historian Pierre Nora has theorized the relationship between memory and history in an essay that has served as the touchstone of many studies, including Joseph Roach’s *Cities of the Dead* and Diana Taylor’s *The Archive and the Repertoire*. Nora

focuses his study on what he calls *lieux de mémoire*, or ‘sites of memory’. As Nora defines them, *lieux de mémoire* are hybrid forms, sites that are ‘created by a play of memory and history’ (19). In her reading of Nora, Taylor claims that *lieux de mémoire* anchor historical meaning purely in archival form (21–22), but Nora himself insists that such sites also rely on a *performance* component. Although Nora concedes that *lieux* are ‘fundamentally [material] *remains*’, these *lieux* are activated by, in Nora’s word, a ‘ritual’ performed by the visitor to the site (12). It is only through this amalgam of representation and performance that modernity’s sites of memory can offer, again in Nora’s words, ‘an unlimited repertoire of what might need to be recalled’ (13). Much as Sarah Minthorne’s grave provided D.J. with an opportunity to reflect on the life and death of a woman who lived nearly 250 years ago, that same site provided him with an opportunity to reflect on his own life and experiences. His visit allowed him to gauge, simultaneously, the historical distance and the surprising proximity between Sarah and himself. But as well, Sarah Minthorne’s grave marker was also the catalyst for the reflection on social memory and urban space in Lower Manhattan that led to this chapter. Thus, as a site of memory, her private grave marker also offered us access to public and political discourses.ⁱⁱⁱ For another visitor, ‘what might need to be recalled’ could be different, could produce alternative connections between that visitor and Sarah’s simple grave marker.

Absent the spatial hybridity that activates such sites, a monument is an object of history: an inert architectural archive of pre-interpreted information. And this is the condition in which we find the monument to American Independence. In relation to its predigested history, we do nothing. We might view the monument and accept its

message. Or, perhaps we might resist. Either way, monuments do not require our participation: their static meaning precedes the visitor.

This is the basis of our distinction between monument and memorial: though neither Nora nor de Certeau uses the word, performance is fundamental to the operations of *lieux de mémoire* and to the transgressive, disruptive pedestrian practices that de Certeau advocates.

[A] Please understand

Experiencing Ground Zero in the context of Lower Manhattan, walking the perimeter of the site, produced (not surprisingly) a radically different sense of this place from that which we had gleaned from our early obsession with the television news and our subsequent reading on the subject. There was fencing all around the North, East, and Southern boundaries. Part of the Northern and Southern sections of the perimeter were composed of enclosed walkways with small windows periodically cut into the wooden enclosure, typical of construction areas. At certain points those covered walkways were elevated and clearly served as thoroughfares for people to get to and from work, via the newly reconstructed PATH train service from the WTC to Jersey. The Western boundary was also fenced off, even though the aptly named West Street is a busy thoroughfare that does not easily allow pedestrians to walk along it.

The PATH train station was the source of the second most surprising aspect of our visit to the site: to realize that train service was active. Ground Zero was in use, despite its apparent barrenness. Given all the discussion and planning for this place, we were surprised by the dormant look of the site: oddly uneven levels of gravelly ground

overgrown with large weeds covered whole acres of the site. We didn't know what to expect or what we would see, but throughout the time that we spent there, we were conscious of the perishable nature of our visit. This was a site in transition. Of course, the site no longer looks as it did in the Fall of 2005. We were conscious of the state of flux of the place as we reflected on the events that happened there and thought about the structures to come.

The Eastern edge of Ground Zero might be considered the 'public face' of the site. An information kiosk for the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation was placed near the entrance to the PATH station, and a flagpole was prominently located about 20 feet inside the fenced off area. The place clearly had become a site of pilgrimage, though when we visited it was only marginally able to accommodate visitors. Perhaps the lawyers and stockbrokers who hustle by every day had become accustomed to the vast construction site where rubble was cleared at a glacial pace, though, as pilgrims ourselves, we were thinking more about the thousands still interred on the site. Tourists, like us, could stop and linger without blocking the flow of pedestrian traffic. Many clearly did stop and congregate here. Some visitors had left mementos, had written on the metal poles of the fence in black marker, and still more stood quietly, had their photos taken, stared out at the site.

Though there are some informational placards on display, one could not get any significant information about the events of September 11 at this makeshift viewing platform. A few relatively small placards placed sparsely on the fencing provided tidbits of information on the history of the neighborhood. Perhaps those who placed the placards – each of which offered one or two nuggets of information, like a point along a timeline –

were attempting to put this place into a historical context, to create a longer history that stretched back before the events of 2001. We did not see any of the people there dutifully starting at one point and reading each of the placards in order. People were visiting, perhaps paying their respects, perhaps seeing for themselves what the site was like. They did not seem to be coming to be educated or informed or instructed in what their experience of this place should be. As we stood reading one placard, a man who appeared to be homeless came alongside us and looked out at the massive pit; after a moment he said, 'It's already become a metaphor', then walked away.

On the viewing platform, an official-looking sign was placed at regular intervals along the fence, admonishing visitors to the site: 'Please understand that all articles must be removed.' This directive clearly suggested that in the course of paying their respects, visitors to the site had left sentimental tokens that subsequently were taken away or cleaned up by official staff. We see coded in the sign's polite entreaty to its audience two main ideas: 1) an attempt to create the impression that under the umbrella of 'security', any extraneous items must be removed from the area for the common good; and, 2) an attempt to create a unified experience of the site. The message implies that personal, individual expressions of sentiment must be controlled and contained for the good of all who visit the site. Of course, no one wants anyone to be hurt, and there is substance to security concerns, as the site itself is a reminder. But the continual removal of flowers, votives, paper, and other mementos suggests that potential disruptions to the visual narrative of the space pose a threat all their own. The sign implies that the experience of visitors should be uniform, that their experience will be scripted, controlled, and

contained. This desire to script and limit the experience of the visitor is also on display in the latest plans for the 9/11 memorial.

[A] Reflecting Absence

Nicolai Ouroussoff's 19 June 2005 *New York Times* article, entitled 'For the Ground Zero Memorial, Death by Committee', notes that 'The designers have essentially been asked to create both a memorial and a grave site – a public monument and a location for private mourning.' The dual function of the memorial demands different kinds of spaces and different kinds of performance on the part of the visitor. The public/private tension that Ouroussoff outlines is an important part of the complex task facing the designers. Michael Arad's original winning design seemed weighted in favor of the private, individual visitor creating her or his own experience, allowing for the visitor's own memories to be called up, allowing for the visitor to decide the course and duration of a visit to the memorial. More recent interventions have shifted the focus onto the public aspect of the monument, and onto providing an official experience and interpretation of the events that took place on the site. The focus on these public, monumental aspects reduces the opportunities for the visitor to perform a personal experience of this twenty-first century *lieu de mémoire*.

The memorial design that was submitted by Michael Arad in 2003 and selected by a distinguished panel several months later was simple. In this design, entitled 'Reflecting Absence', the footprints of the World Trade Center towers were preserved as reflecting pools set in a largely open plaza, populated by just a few pine trees. At the edge of one side of the plaza, a wide ramp allowed visitors to descend to a lower level where they

could see the water and light cascading down from the reflecting pools above. [Fig. 2] Visitors could also read the names of those who died there. After going around both of the pools on this lower level, one could ascend again to the surface via another ramp, on the opposite end of the plaza. Arad's design also incorporated a Memorial Center building that would shield the plaza and pools from busy West Street, and provide a place for exhibits.

Arad's design was approved by the selection committee. However, even before the winning design was announced, the committee insisted on some significant modifications to Arad's design. The committee recommended that Arad incorporate the work of a landscape architect; Arad chose to work with Peter Walker. After Walker joined the team, Arad's open plaza became filled with deciduous trees. [Fig. 3] The committee noted that the trees in the plaza would emphasize the reaffirmation of life for visitors. In this adjustment, we see a desire to dictate the experience of the visitor. The openness of the plaza in the original design granted visitors a role in creating their own response to the memorial. This official imposition on the initial design began to close up the possible responses to the 'absence' of the memorial. The serenity and simplicity of the open area did not provide a built-in response. Arad's design, coupled with Walker's bucolic park, was well received. But the addition of the park was only the first step in the occupation of the open territories of Arad's design.

Since the announcement by the selection committee, there have been a number of changes made to the plans, and myriad considerations to incorporate. But as Ouroussoff makes clear in his article, the varied constituents represented by members of the Memorial Center Advisory Committee all have different agendas and needs. To give just

one example: a group representing New York City firefighters and their families had posted a website (now defunct) on which they argued against Arad's plan for an alphabetical listing of the names of all those who died in the World Trade Center. The authors of the site argued vigorously that firefighters, police officers, and other responders to the attack should be listed separately from those working in or passing through the towers. Otherwise, the website argued, visitors to 'Reflecting Absence' would not be able to tell the 'victims' from the 'heroes'. Notably, we found this website by Googling the phrase, 'sacred to the memory': the authors of the site borrowed text from and specifically referred to the Trinity Churchyard monument to American Independence.

Ouroussoff argues that Michael Arad's design for the memorial was losing an important function in the revisions that the development company's architects were making. As Ouroussoff puts it: '[A]fter two and a half years of tinkering, the city is likely to end up with a memorial geared to tourists with short attention spans rather than to the serious contemplation of human loss.' He asserts that the latest plans 'will allow visitors to file in and out quickly and avoid the stroll around the memorial pools altogether, undermining Mr. Arad's original intent.' For Ouroussoff: 'the approach brings to mind [a] drive-through funeral parlor.' Focus has shifted away from visitors' access to and exploration of the memorial toward plans that emphasize the museum-like function of the adjacent Memorial Center. It seems as though the absence that was to be the conceptual focus of the memorial design has been quickly and anxiously filled.

Indeed, the Memorial Center seems to be on a path toward inundation. The Mission Statement of the Memorial (viewable at the Lower Manhattan Development

Corporation web site) prioritizes the recognition of ‘each individual who was a victim of the attacks’. The impulse to control a visitor’s experience of the memorial ‘springs from natural anxieties about forgetting’ (Ouroussoff). However, the effect of this impulse changes the focus of the site from the attention that Arad paid to the individual performance of each pedestrian, who was intended to reflect on absence (a practice suggested in Arad’s title for the memorial); instead, focus is placed on the edificial content of the official displays. By filling the void of the World Trade Center memorial with a series of displays and artifacts, the revised plans risk crowding out space for individual interpretation of the site by asserting a clearly defined narrative of the events of 9/11, a narrative told from a particular perspective. There will soon be little absence and less room for reflection.

Like the sign posted at the World Trade Center site, the plans for the memorial address the visitor with a tacit plea: ‘Please understand’. Such a memorial would admonish the visitor to uncritically accept the pre-determined meanings of its implied narrative. In so doing, the memorial-by-committee proposes to eliminate performance, memory, and invention, and to substitute in their place representation, official history, and closure. Though, in this case, another word for ‘closure’ might be ‘submission’.

[A] The Archive and the Monument

If the emphasis of Reflecting Absence were on the performance of the visitor in relation to a memorial (what Nora would describe as a ‘ritual’ relationship) rather than on information or official narrative, then visitors could have a much greater role in creating their own narratives. The creation of meaning would more clearly rest with the individual

visitor / pedestrian / performer.

Performance is generally regarded as ephemeral. As Peggy Phelan has defined it, ‘Performance [...] becomes itself through disappearance’ (146). In her essay ‘Performance Remains’, Rebecca Schneider observes that Phelan’s conception of performance articulates the popular conception; performance is generally ‘given to be as antithetical to memory as it is to the archive’ (102). Schneider’s recent work explores the connection between archival space and built space, and the role that performance plays in each. Schneider concludes that performance should be regarded not as that which disappears, but as a practice marked by ‘messy and eruptive *reappearance*’ (103). This theoretical reconception of performance as given to reappear is essential to a re-estimation of de Certeau.

Though de Certeau himself limits his word choice to textual language, we contend that the activity of walking in the city has only a metaphorical relation to the terms ‘writing’ and ‘reading’. Hartnett argues that textuality, for de Certeau, is ‘an ethics of reading and writing’ (286). This formulation, while poetic, offers a rather reductive summation of de Certeau’s concept of pedestrianism. The textuality imposed from the panoptic perspective of the 110th floor of the World Trade Center is disrupted not by a putative writerly form of walking, but by the physical performance of urban pedestrians. The fictional text of the city is adapted, appropriated, improvised upon, innovated, and / or disregarded through pedestrian performance in much the way that a dramatic text is treated in theatrical performance: not as simply an iteration of a text, but as in and of itself productive of new meaning.^{iv}

Such performances engage with a city’s past not through archival texts but

through urban memory and performance. Pedestrians can step into the paths walked by others, whose micro-narratives have long since ended; pedestrian performance can access overlapping urban traumas, though separated by centuries, in ways not necessarily given by archival history. Memorials rely on this kind of pedestrian performance, respond to the unspecified narratives produced by the individual subjects' visits to *lieux de mémoire*. This pedestrian production of memory differs from the pedestrian's experience of monuments, which rely on the logic of the archive. Archival logic can provide a consistency that cannot be reproduced by the 'messy and eruptive' operations of performance (Schneider, 'Performance Remains' 102); but the corollary to such consistency is a tendency toward monolithic, univocal narrativity.

[A] Memorial Performance

In the chapter that she contributes to this volume, Schneider argues that civic monuments require pedestrian interaction:

[D]oes an equation of performance with disappearance ignore the ways in which the seeming disappearing or banal 'living' detail props the edificial, monumental remain? The way, that is, that the monument and the (live, banal, ordinary) passerby are deeply entangled in a mutually constitutive relationship. (PAGE NUMBER NEEDED)

Schneider's theory of monumentality offers a valuable perspective on developments at Ground Zero. To put our position in Schneider's terms: a memorial is constructed with this 'mutually constitutive relationship' in mind; a monument is constructed in denial of

any relationship between the official structure and the pedestrian visitor (Schneider's 'passerby').

At its most effective, most open to polyvocal significations, Reflecting Absence offers an opportunity to create a heterotopic space, one that provides a reservoir of, in Una Chaudhuri's words, the 'signifying power and political potential of *specific places*' (5). But the monolithic narratives advanced by its committee members threaten to turn the memorial into a monument. Monuments are utopian, and, as Foucault argues, a utopia is an impossible 'placeless place' that admits only one grand narrative to which all residents of that utopia must adhere (24). But a monument that insists on one story cannot actualize its utopian fantasy in the emplaced places of Lower Manhattan: someone will always arrive to contradict the story it has to tell. Unlike a memorial – which we posit as a site open to the independent, individual re-remembering of those other than the memorial's framers – a monument posits a singular history. In the face of narrative monumentality, visitors may not offer their own histories as 'right', a condition that makes a monument vulnerable to being declared 'wrong'.

In an essay on de Certeau's heterological views of cultural borders, Richard Terdiman concludes that monovocal discourses are self-defeating. 'We need others for many reasons', Terdiman says:

The sorts of ties that bind human individuals and groups are deepened and complicated [...] as a result of the combined opportunity and necessity of extending the grasp of our knowledge through authentically honoring the knowledge of others. (19)

A de Certeautian approach to Ground Zero would posit a space organized by principles of

‘heterology’, de Certeau’s term for a way of thinking about and conceiving of others without appropriating their identities for our own identity formation. And though we often think of others in terms of race, gender, religion, nationality, and geography, the otherness that concerns de Certeau is a narrative otherness.^v Arad’s original design made room for the visitor to create an independent narrative. To reflect on absence is a clear directive to the visitor, but one that invites a diversity of responses. Not only can one reflect on the absent buildings and on those New Yorkers now absent, but also on the experiences that the visitor has had and the experiences of others.

On the day that we visited Ground Zero, an enormous fallen sycamore tree dominated the west courtyard of St. Paul’s Chapel. The tree is credited with taking the brunt of the impact from the fall of the east tower of the World Trade Center, thus preserving St. Paul’s Chapel from significant damage on 9/11. As documented in a *New York Times* article, sculptor Steve Tobin was charged with creating a minutely detailed reproduction of the fallen tree in bronze. This massive sculpture was installed, not at St. Paul’s, where the tree fell, but a few blocks south, in Trinity Churchyard, where it became the first completed permanent memorial to 9/11.

The changes to the World Trade Center memorial are indicative of what Schneider refers to as ‘archival culture’: Schneider points out that ‘[t]he Greek root of the word “archive” refers to the Archon’s house’, thus the idea of a storehouse of information implies ‘the architecture of a particular social power over memory’ (‘Performance Remains’ 103). The monument to American Independence in Trinity Churchyard struggles anxiously to assert its architectural force to convince the visitor that the colonial men who died in the occupation of New York City were more important to the idea of

American Independence than was Sarah Minthorne, over whose tombstone the monument towers. Similarly, the committees reframing the World Trade Center memorial are struggling to assert their control over the memories that will be ‘housed’ at the site. Their insistence that the monument represent a singular, official history all but guarantees that, though the monument may be an archive of 9/11-related information, it will not provide its visitors with the opportunity to produce their own relationships with the past. Thus, ironically, it may be that one of the few things the memorial will *not* house is memory.

ⁱ For more on the way that ‘performance remains’, see Rebecca Schneider’s chapter in this volume.

ⁱⁱ For a consideration of cognitive mapping, Frederic Jameson, site-specific performance, and urban space see Hopkins, ‘Mapping the Placeless Place’.

ⁱⁱⁱ Thanks to Kim Solga for this productive insight.

^{iv} See W.B. Worthen’s discussion of the relationship between text and performance in ‘Drama, Performativity, and Performance’.

^v See Terdiman, 408 – 15; see also de Certeau, *Heterologies*.