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Compelling Affects/Structured Feelings: Remembering 9/11

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Structures of Feeling

Affectivity and the Study of Culture

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DE GRUYTER

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Compelling Affects / Structured Feelings: Remembering 9/11

In New York, near Ground Zero, stands the Tribute WTC Visitor Center, which aims to commemorate the victims and convey accounts of 9/11 and the earlier World Trade Center attack in 1993 through "person to person history." The promise "We will never forget" is prominently displayed on a wall in the exhibition, where you can listen to personal testimonies, see a time-line of the attacks, and view a model of the planned buildings and memorial for the WTC site. A large section of the Visitor Center is devoted to a gift shop selling, as the brochure puts it, "Tribute items" that "allow visitors to take home and remember the Tribute experience." Aside from the remarkable displacement from commemorating the attacks to remembering one's visit to the Visitor Center – privileging the act of remembering and the one who remembers over what or whom it is that is supposed to never be forgotten – it is significant that the shop explicitly ties memory, and, by implication, mourning, to material consumption. In this essay I will explore the expressive function of this consumption, which appears designed to put the memory and mourning of 9/11 on display and certify the presence of what I call *compelling affects*. Remembrance and mourning become tasks that have to be seen to be undertaken in a particular, materialized manner. The form of this materialization, moreover, is not exclusively imposed by political and social institutions, but takes direction from the experience of those regarded as having been most closely and deeply impacted by the attacks. I will argue that this way of configuring memory and mourning constitutes a new "structure of feeling," in Raymond Williams's terms, in which feeling or affect itself becomes a structuring element.

I am by no means the first to notice the intimate link between memory, mourning, and consumption, which extends quite far back. Philippe Ariès notes, for example, how, in the western world, "the trappings of death occupied such a large place in the sensibility of the nineteenth century that they became one of the most valuable and profitable objects of consumption" (Ariès 2008, 597–598). This, however, mainly concerned the commoditization of the care for and ritual disposal of the dead body. Unlike the present sensibility (a term to which I will return later), it did not involve the selling, until years after the fact, of a variety of objects, many of which not traditionally associated with commemoration or mourning, designed to pre-empt forgetting and perpetuate pub-

lic grief.¹ Marita Sturken's *Tourists of History* (2007) presents a detailed exploration of "the consumerism of trauma, fear, and security and the closely woven relationship of loss to tourism and kitsch" that characterized the American response to the Oklahoma City bombing and, more pervasively, 9/11 (Sturken 2007, 4). She explains this consumerism as an expression of a "comfort culture" accompanied by a "politics of affect" that works to depoliticize; by peddling objects that provide reassurance and enable Americans to constitute themselves as victims, a dominantly emotional register is allowed to saturate the public realm while complex political and ethical questions surrounding the events of 9/11 and the American response to it are elided (Sturken 2007, 5). In her article "Putting Mourning to Work: Making Sense of 9/11," Karen J. Engle, too, presents 9/11 souvenirs as means of sustenance that allow people to identify with the event and its dominant patriotic narrative in a narcissistic manner as the objects are melancholically appropriated "through a kind of ingestion" (Engle 2007, 72).

Yet these souvenirs can also be seen in a different way, as serving to *externalize* memory and mourning, since the purchased trinkets signify something not only to the ones who purchase them, but also say something about these purchasers to others. As Sturken notes in passing, 9/11 souvenirs are "a means of *expressing* sorrow at the lives lost [at Ground Zero]" (Sturken 2007, 10, emphasis added). Such expression tends to be taken as presuming a pre-existing emotional condition, yet may also be conceptualized as a performative process that brings into being and certifies, in the eyes of others, that which it enunciates. What I am interested in here is the way expression, as performativity, invokes an audience. In displaying, in material form, the act of sorrowful commemoration, the Tribute items sold in the Visitor Center enable others to verify *that* you remember and grieve, while allowing the practice of memory and mourning to be quantified: presumably, the more (or the more expensive) souvenirs you acquire, the more expansive and lasting your remembering is thought to be. Not buying – and consequently not having any Tribute items on show in your home – is equated to forgetting.

¹ While this essay uses the way the events of 9/11 are remembered and mourned as a case study, I do not want to imply that the present-day sensibility is confined to or started with these events. In fact, the death of Princess Diana in 1997 is often taken as inaugurating this sensibility and is certainly what brought it to global attention, highlighting in particular the way objects of all kinds had become signs of grief. Although the display of these objects and the outpourings of emotions garnered criticism, including invocations of mass hysteria, they may also be seen as signaling the beginning of a more accepting attitude towards public grief and the use of objects in its expression. See Sandra M. Gilbert's *Death's Door: Modern Dying and the Ways We Grieve* for an account of the way Diana was mourned through "ritual offerings" consisting of anything from flowers and stuffed animals to bottles of wine and food (Gilbert 2006, 275–279).

While Sturken focuses on the status of 9/11 souvenirs as "cultural objects of 'inauthentic' cultural status" or "kitsch memory objects" (Sturken 2008, 75, 76),² I would argue that what is significant is not so much the kind of objects obtained – in fact, the Visitor Center's range is not confined to kitsch, but comprises academic books and highbrow films – as the fact that the purchasing, owning, and, crucially, displaying of any object(s) related to the memorialization of 9/11 has become almost a duty, a requirement in order to (be seen to) remember. Objects no longer aid memory but instantiate it; they are, it is suggested, what makes memory and mourning possible. Thus, a card distributed at the Visitor Center advertising the opportunity to sponsor a cobblestone on the National 9/11 Memorial Plaza implores: "Help pave the way to remembrance and hope" – as if there would be no remembrance (or hope) without a visible, material sign of it.³ Although the cobblestones, "out of respect for the victims," will not carry the names of their sponsors, these names will be "listed along with the locations of their cobblestones at Memorial Plaza kiosks." The cobblestones, then, are thought to both produce remembrance and endorse specific people's participation in it. This differentiates them from more traditional "ritualized objects" that function as "touchstones, material artifacts that can provide some kind of corporeal presence to mediate the absence of a loved one" (Sturken 2004, 312–313). Rather than standing in for the deceased, the cobblestones, like the Tribute items, guarantee and show off the act of remembering, of mourning.

2

For Freud, mourning is "a reaction to the loss of a beloved object" (Freud 2005, 205). What is commemorated in the Tribute WTC Visitor Center is the com-

² Sturken suggests that the nature of these objects as kitsch may lead those who use them to mourn being perceived as "engaging in bad taste," yet proceeds to show that kitsch can be assessed in various ways. Far from only being a sign of a lack of sophistication, it has become part of American comfort culture; because it embodies a "prepackaged sentiment," it does not require complex interpretations and, in addition, it conveys the soothing "message that this sentiment is shared and that it is adequate" (Sturken 2007, 20–23). My point is that, besides a reevaluation of kitsch, the commemoration of 9/11 represents a shift in the relation between memory and mourning and consumption as this consumption becomes conspicuous.

³ The card lists a range of options, moving from the periphery to the center of memorial space: "For a donation of \$100, you can sponsor a cobblestone that will line the Memorial Plaza. A \$500 donation will sponsor a cobblestone for the Memorial Glade, a beautiful and distinguished place for gatherings and ceremonies. A \$1000 donation will sponsor a Memorial paver."

pounded loss of the victims, of the landmark World Trade Center, whose pre-attack image and shape are echoed in many of the objects for sale, and, more symbolically, of a sense of American invulnerability.⁴ However, rather than serving the “reality-testing” that should reveal “that the beloved object no longer exists” or appearing as a projection of the lost object’s persistence in the psyche even after the work of mourning has been completed, the Tribute items, in their very name, invoke the idea of an obligatory and above all ostentatious economic exchange (Freud 2005, 204). According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, “tribute” originally referred to “a tax or impost paid by one prince or state to another in acknowledgement of submission or as the price of peace, security, and protection.” While a tribute may be offered as a token of affection or esteem (which is presumably the sense the Visitor Center brochure seeks to invoke), it is commonly associated with duty and necessity, with something that has to be done and has to be shown to be done. A tribute is per definition public rather than private. While Freud, in “Mourning and Melancholia,” rues the fact that there is as yet no way of “providing an economical characterization of pain,” here the painful emotion of grief is straightforwardly economized (Freud 2005, 204). Grief, which, in relation to 9/11 has moral qualities assigned to it, is *bought* rather than *bought off*; the souvenirs do not so much assuage or make up for a pre-existing pain as attest to the arising of the “proper” feelings it is one’s duty to express, both in public and in one’s home.

According to Sturken, it is kitsch that “dictates particular kinds of sentimental responses and emotional registers,” producing not only an exclusion of the political but also a circumscription within the realm of affect (Sturken 2007, 21). I would argue that this ability to dictate or compel is not restricted to kitsch, but characterizes the memory and mourning of 9/11 (and perhaps even the current sensibility of memory and mourning in general), in its requirement of ostentatious materialization, as a whole. Against the notion that mourning should be discrete, which Arfès considers the corollary of the twentieth-century denial of death,⁵ it is

4 In *Precarious Life*, Judith Butler asserts that 9/11 marked “the loss of the prerogative, only and always, to be the one who transgresses the sovereign boundaries of other states, but never to be in the position of having one’s own boundaries transgressed” (Butler 2006, 39).

5 Arfès notes how, under this view, “mourning is an extension of modesty” and “the obstinate bereaved is mercilessly excluded as if he were insane” (Arfès 2008, 572). Jean Baudrillard, in 1976, similarly writes that “death, like mourning, has become obscene and awkward, and it is good taste to hide it, since it can offend the well-being of others” (Baudrillard 2006, 182). It could, of course, be argued that the display of mourning through objects is still a form of hiding, albeit in plain sight, as what is exhibited may not be raw grief but rather the acceptable *shape* of mourning. Even so, the requirement that mourning take shape, in public and for an extended period, represents a notable change.

now supposed to be shown in the form of public displays of emotion that converge on public displays of objects, such as the makeshift shrines, by now completely formalized in their show of spontaneity, that inevitably pop up after celebrity deaths or deaths deemed particularly tragic. Non-expressive, non-materialized reactions to the experienced loss are increasingly conceived of as anomalous or even reprehensible, as is demonstrated, for instance, by the accusations of coldness leveled against the Royal Family in the wake of Princess Diana’s death (portrayed in Stephen Frears’s 2006 film *The Queen*) and the case of the British missing girl Madeleine McCann, where a perceived lack of emotionality on the part of her parents – and particularly her mother – caused tabloid media outrage and turned them into suspects (see Yabroff 2007).

In this context, the Tribute items sold at the Visitor Center point to what I want to call the *spectacularization of mourning*, intimating that it is no longer something that predominantly goes on inside individuals or in the private sphere of the family – with traditional mourning dress signifying precisely a state of separation from everyday society – but something to be performed for others to enable its verification and evaluation. The “spectacle” in spectacularization, then, refers specifically to the element of ostentation; to the way memory and mourning are compelled, through its materialization, to attract recognition as attention and approval. Spectacularized mourning, materialized in mementos, operates in a mode of simulation in Baudrillard’s sense, leaving us unable to tell what came first: the sense of grief or the objects designed to display, and thereby confirm, this affect.⁶ Where Sara Ahmed, in “Happy Objects,” argues that objects accumulate affective value, which is “sticky,” as they circulate among people, the Tribute items sold in the Visitor Center come invested with a fixed, normative affective mix of sadness, fear, anguish, indignation, and righteousness that functions somewhat like a Teflon layer, making it difficult for anything else to stick to them (Ahmed 2010, 29). These items, moreover, are not things I can evaluate as good or bad, but things that evaluate *me* (and my decision to buy or not to buy or to display or not to display them) in moral terms, in relation to the imperative to “never forget.”

Andreas Huyssen has famously referred to our contemporary “culture of memory,” where “total recall seems to be the goal” and commemoration proceeds

6 The fact that the affect is produced through and as simulation does not make it any less actual. As Baudrillard explains in *Simulacra and Simulation*, “simulating is not pretending: ‘Whoever fakes an illness can simply stay in bed and make everyone believe he is ill. Whoever simulates an illness produces in himself some of the symptoms (littré). Therefore, pretending, or dissimulating, leaves the principle of reality intact: the difference is always clear, it is simply masked, whereas simulation threatens the difference between the ‘true’ and the ‘false,’ the ‘real’ and the ‘imaginary’” (Baudrillard 2006, 3).

through obsessive monumentalization, musealization and commodification (Huyssen 2000, 25). In the case of 9/11, the commodification impulse is reinforced by the fact that what is being remembered was itself a site of commerce, of *trade*, a status that has also heavily impacted decisions on the future of Ground Zero, now, at least in part, considered “sacred ground” (Sturken 2007, 314). According to Huyssen, the “turn towards memory,” which began in the 1980s, is accompanied by an intense fear of forgetting that can only be counteracted by what he calls “survival strategies of public and private memorialization” (Huyssen 2000, 28). But what if the fear of forgetting turns into a prohibition, or survival strategies into rigid obligations – as when displaying the American flag after 9/11 ceased to represent a choice and became an expectation? I want to suggest that the ongoing spectacularized remembrance of 9/11 shows how memory and mourning can become *compelling*: enforced, constraining, but also rousing strong interest and fascination. Here, the affective intersects with the normative, constituting a visceral interpellation particularly difficult to refuse or subvert.

In the case of 9/11, which unfolded on a personal level but also on the levels of the city, the nation, and the globe, the aspect of compulsion is mediated by degrees of distance to the event. Those furthest away have considerably more freedom with regard to whether and how to remember and mourn than those closer to it. However, the ones considered closest, with direct experience of the attacks or having suffered personal loss, are given more lee-way, on the grounds of their ability to claim an “authentic” response, than those at middle-distance. What is particularly noticeable, and characteristic of the current sensibility, is the way the traditional separation between private and public memory and mourning has become blurred. The public realm – or better, “the public” – now appears to impose a demand on those personally bereaved to participate in displays of grief. After Princess Diana’s death, for instance, Queen Elizabeth II was compelled to not only organize a state funeral (going against official policy), but also to attend it and partake of the people’s mood of affective ostentation. Similarly, it has become

7 For E. Ann Kaplan, the flags indicated at once a problematic “newly engaged patriotism” and a “way to indicate empathy for those who had lost relatives and friends, and a shared trauma about the shock to the United States” (Kaplan 2005, 9). Whereas Kaplan seems to assume that the flags were flown and displayed voluntarily, the so-called tie-pin scandal that erupted in 2007 when Barack Obama appeared without the flag on his lapels (see Durrant) and the way some Arab-Americans displayed American flags after 9/11 to “provide protection against harassment and discrimination” (see Zeleny 2009) show a considerable degree of social compulsion was involved. A similar obligation to show that one is remembering in the “right,” societally endorsed, manner has become noticeable in the UK in relation to the wearing of poppies for Remembrance Day (see White 2000).

almost unacceptable for relatives of victims of global events like 9/11 or murders receiving media attention to refuse to put their mourning on show or at least provide photographs or videos of the deceased to help satisfy the drive for spectacularization. At the same time, private grief has come to inhabit public mourning, as the families of the dead tend to be seen as entitled to a special say in how the memory of the fatal event should be materialized in the public sphere. This became manifest in the close involvement of 9/11 victims’ relatives in the lengthy debates about the building plans for Ground Zero and in recent discussions about the planned displays for the National September 11 Memorial Museum.⁸

3

What does all this mean in terms of the wider realm of affect theory at stake in this volume? My uptake of Ariès’ term “sensibility” to denote the specific way in which memory and mourning, as affective acts, are configured in the wake of 9/11 has been deliberate, prompted by its resonance with Jacques Rancière’s “distribution of the sensible,” indicating the way what is considered sensible (perceptible and intelligible) within a particular society, in all dimensions of experience, including that of affect, relies on a particular pre-ordering that renders everything that falls outside its parameters irrelevant, illegitimate or imperceptible. Such pre-ordering is a necessary condition; no recourse is offered to the “real,” “authentic” or non-distributed, only to re-distribution.⁹ “Sensibility,” when read through Rancière, affirms how affect – which it invokes in its reference to the capacity to feel, to be affected – cannot be placed outside of socially established and enforced divisions

8 The involvement of family members in the discussions about Ground Zero is detailed in Paul Goldberger’s *Up from Zero: Politics, Architecture, and the Rebuilding of New York* (2005). Significantly, his remark that “a great many of the family members, understandably enough, believed that they had a justifiable right, or even an obligation, to have a major say in the future of the site” invokes entitlement as well as compulsion (Goldberger 2005:46). Goldberger also points to tensions between different relatives’ organizations, as families of rescue workers and families of office workers did not share the same interests and, when it came to the listing of victims’ names on the memorial, disagreed about how the names should be arranged and whether some should be more visible than others (through the addition of shields and emblems for rescue workers). The spectacularization of memory and mourning, it seems, is liable, precisely because of its emphasis on materialization, to produce a hierarchization of both the dead and the ones who mourn them.

9 Thus, when Ariès argues that the pre-eighteenth-century sensibility with regard to death and mourning “might, because of its extreme age and stability, be compared to a state of nature,” weight should be given to the fact that he presents this as a supposition that yields, moreover, no more than a comparison with the natural (Ariès 2008, 581).

but has to be seen as entangled in them. This point, of course, is also made by Williams, invoking the same linguistic stem, in his definition of “structure of feeling” as “a particular quality of social experience and relationship, historically distinct from other particular qualities, which gives the *sense* of a generation or an epoch” (Williams 1978, 131, emphasis added). However, whereas Williams rejects the often employed separation between the social as consisting of fixed forms and the personal as “this, here, now, alive, active, ‘subjective’” as misconstruing the way culture and society work, his account nevertheless maintains a rigid distinction between practical consciousness and official consciousness, with the first seen as direct (as-yet-unformalized) experience (128). Furthermore, the phrase “structures of feeling” is explained as feelings that are (in the process of being) structured; the possibility of feeling – as “characteristic elements of impulse, restraint, and tone; specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships” (132) – actually being that which structures or formalizes stays unacknowledged.

In the remainder of this essay, I want to suggest that the entanglement of official and practical consciousness in the spectacularization of the memory and mourning of 9/11, and in particular the way valued appeals to feeling as precisely distinct from crystallized worldviews and ideologies help shape this spectacularization, destabilizes some influential assumptions about affect.

The commemoration of 9/11 appears to exemplify the tendency Williams perceives, and condemns, towards the “immediate and regular conversion of experience into finished products” (128). Thus, the fact that talk of a fixed, materialized site of recollection began almost immediately after the event leads Sturken to speak of “the rush to memorialization” (Sturken 2004, 321). However, the emphasis on a quick move to “formed wholes” was not accompanied by the usual relegation of everything unformed to the disparaged realm of the personal and subjective (Williams 128). In fact, the drive for fixity was channeled through the personal as the feelings and wishes of those who lost loved ones or were directly involved in the events became central in cementing its form. Williams’s association of “the undeniable experience of the present” with “all that is present and moving” (128) is diluted as “moving” comes to signify “emotionally affecting” more than “in motion.” In this case, therefore, the “basic error” of reducing “the social to fixed forms” cannot so exclusively or so easily be assigned to a “procedural mode” founded on the exclusion of “the specificity of present being, the inalienably physical” (Williams 1978, 128–129).

A 2012 *New York Times* article by Patricia Cohen recounts the controversies surrounding the planned displays for the National September 11 Memorial Museum. These controversies center on whether images of the perpetrators should be included in the exhibits (with memory and mourning now so tightly linked to materialization, any conspicuous presence of their portraits or belongings would

imply that they, too, are being commemorated¹⁰), whether it is appropriate for the museum to contain remains of unidentified victims and, if so, who should be able to see and have access to these remains¹¹; to what extent victims’ families should have a say in these matters; and how the museum (which names itself as also a memorial) can achieve the contradictory task of attending both to the fixation of the event in the past and its affective negotiation in the present. These controversies appear to invoke the type of tension Williams argues frequently exists between “received interpretation” and “practical experience,” a division that may not be equivalent to that wrongly installed between the social and the personal, yet is nevertheless taken to correlate with fixity versus emergence or becoming.

Although it is true that the events of 9/11 have not yet solidified into a stable formation (not least because of the persistence of conspiracy theories), the way its repercussions are lived can be seen as departing from Williams’s binaries by having received interpretation depend on practical experience, which manifests a tendency towards “fixed, finite, receding forms” conceivably stronger – more compelling – than that found in the institutions normally associated with the relegation of the present to the past. Thus, the director of the 9/11 museum, Alice Greenwald, cannot avoid consulting and appeasing those whose claim to practical experience – to living the event with more actuality, a greater affective immersion, than others – yields a high degree of formalization and entrenched, enforcing ideas of “proper” mourning and remembering. While no consensus exists among all victims’ relatives, the influence of the most active members of this group, which is substantial, tends less towards keeping the event’s meaning in process in a living present than towards fixing it in an eternal, tragic and threatening present like the man falling from one of the towers in the infamous photograph taken by Richard Drew. While the event is thus no longer made to recede into the past, it is still frozen into a definite form. Instead of practical experience being “taken to be private, idiosyncratic, and even isolating,” it becomes a measure for the social, guiding the public handling of the event’s commemoration, while at the same time inuring itself from criticism on the ground of its status as standing apart from conscious, formulated belief (Williams 1978, 132). In this way, the opposition between the processes of practical experience and the forms of received interpretation – between the reduction that can happen to third persons but not first persons, and between majority

10 In the end, this effect was countered by shrinking the photographs to 2 by 1½ inches to reduce their ability to attract attention, attaching FBI evidence stickers to them to clearly place them in a different category from photographs of victims, and exhibiting them on a slanted board in an alcove so they can only be seen from above and thus looked down upon (see Cohen 2012).

11 See also Hartocollis 2011.

and minority generations – upon which Williams's discussion of structures of feeling relies are destabilized.

Despite emphasizing the *structured* nature of the feeling he is referring to and pointing to their social aspect and specific hierarchies, Williams nevertheless suggests that "what is actually being lived, and not only what it is thought is being lived," escapes codification because it is situated "at the very edge of semantic availability" (131, 134). However, the Bakhtinian reading he invites through his comparison of structures of feeling to linguistic styles, which Bakhtin calls speech genres, would stress that all human experience and practice, including that of minority generations, is subject, a priori, to social conditioning and generic strictures, making absolute distinctions in degree of fixity between "meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt" and "formal or systematic beliefs" questionable (Williams 1978, 132).¹² As Bourdieu's theory of *habitus* has also shown, the fact that certain values and feelings remain unarticulated and implicit does not make them any less stable or determinate. In some cases, norms that escape consciousness may act more powerfully to fix social behavior than official ones, precisely because their enactment is perceived as unmediated experience that escapes semantic denotation and cognition.¹³

My skepticism about some of the more celebratory forms of affect theory derives from this point. Undoubtedly, there is much that bypasses knowledge and it is certainly useful to think about the "intensities" and "resonances" passing between bodies, and between bodies and other elements of the world, or about "the very passages or variations between these intensities and resonances themselves" – especially in terms of how they may produce "capacities to act and be acted upon" (Seigworth and Gregg 2010, 1). Yet such "vital forces" cannot be thought of as in essence more flexible than established worldviews, ideologies or class outlooks, let alone as autonomous energies that bypass all mediation, discursivity or signification (1). If they did, how could they ever be apprehended or mobilized in a meaningful way? The association of affect, as "infinitely connectable, impersonal, and contagious belongings to *this world*" (2), with emanci-

12 In "The Problem of Speech Genres," Bakhtin writes: "In essence, language, or functional, styles are nothing other than generic styles for certain spheres of human activity and communication. Each sphere has and applies its own genres that correspond to its own specific conditions" (Bakhtin 1986, 64). Speech genres, which may be extended to genres of feeling, differ in degree of fixity, but this difference is not related to the distinction between actual and mediated experience Williams appears to maintain.

13 According to Bourdieu, "agents conceal, even from themselves, the true nature of their practical mastery as learned ignorance (*docta ignorantia*), that is, a mode of practical knowledge that does not contain knowledge of its own principles" (Bourdieu 1999, 102).

patory potential is especially troubling in the context of postindustrial capitalism and neoliberalism, which, as Patricia Clough points out, take notions of "openness, emergence, and creativity" as their object, extracting value from them and rendering indeterminacy as precarity rather than freedom (Clough 2010, 224). Ben Anderson, furthermore, cautions that while affect is "not simply available to be smoothly shaped, normalized, and instrumentalized at will," the "conjunction of affects and power" needs to be taken into account (Anderson 2010, 182, 183). He notes that in the present moment, as I have also argued here with regard to the memory and mourning of 9/11, a particular form of this conjunction is prevalent in which the "excess of affect is [...] not so much regulated as induced, not so much prohibited as solicited" (168).

I have suggested that the post-9/11 sensibility of memory and mourning is characterized by a transformation of practical consciousness itself, which, although insistent on keeping the event present in the first person, as evident in the emphasis on "person to person history," simultaneously seeks to reify it into a coherent, controlled account. This is why the unidentified, unassigned, and necessarily impure remains are so troublesome, and why the most controversial architectural designs for Ground Zero incorporated a lasting sense of fragmentation. As Sturken notes, "the design proposal that failed most spectacularly on the sensitivity scale was Peter Eisenman's proposal for an office building complex that was designed to look as if it was in a state of perpetual collapse" Sturken 2004, 320). While she considers this design "strangely inappropriate" and thus *insensitive*, I would see it as *insensible*. It does not make sense within the reigning distribution of the sensible, yet is by no means inherently unfeeling or incapable of expressing grief. Within the controlled account or finished product that is being proposed, which is grounded in practical consciousness (the experience of victims' families or Lower Manhattan residents being invoked at every turn as providing an infallible moral compass), affect operates as a compelling force that itself performs a structuring, as, for example, in the constitution and maintenance of the threat-environment Brian Massumi describes in "The Future Birth of the Affective Fact" or, more concretely, in the controversy surrounding the plans for the so-called "Ground Zero Mosque," which was neither a mosque nor located at Ground Zero.¹⁴ Ultimately, then, the spectacularization and commodification of memory and mourning do not constitute a departure from practical experience, a corruption of what would be truly personal and directly lived, but remain rooted

14 See <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/p/par51/index.html>. Although relatives of 9/11 victims were found on both sides of the debate about what was officially called "Park51" and would house a Muslim community center, what matters here is the way their opinions were seen as particularly difficult to ignore.

in practical experience reconstituted as received interpretation, putting in question the binary opposition maintained by Williams and any consideration of affect as escaping or exceeding discourse.¹⁵ In a way, it could be argued that affect has itself become a discourse. The Tribute WTC Visitor Center, with which I began this essay, embodies this discursivity, or, in Williams's terms, the officialization of practical consciousness, in having been established by the September 11th Families' Association, presented not as a dynamic, living community of mourners, but codified and institutionalized as a "501(C)3 non-profit corporation."¹⁶

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¹⁵ Seigworth and Gregg are particularly hostile to discourse, implying that, unlike affect, it is not able to "touch," "move" or "mobilize" (Seigworth and Gregg 2010, 24). This argument, and the related one that sees discourse ignoring the bodily dimension of being, relies on an equation between discourse and language that is refuted by, among others, the work of Michel Foucault and Judith Butler.

¹⁶ See <http://www.tributewtc.org>.