Health, Risk & Society

Seen, seared and sealed: Trauma and the visual presentation of September 11

Jennifer Pollard[a]

[a] Photography Department, London College of Communication, London, UK

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Seen, seared and sealed: Trauma and the visual presentation of September 11

Jennifer Pollard*

Photography Department, London College of Communication, London, UK

This article begins by questioning the ubiquity of the use of the word 'trauma' in reference to the terrorist attacks of September 11. The experiences of the many millions of indirect witnesses of the attacks, via broadcast media and photography, could be said to involve a particular kind of trauma; one that presents fundamental problems for the existing field of trauma theory. This is an unprecedented kind of distanced or 'by proxy' trauma that would not have been possible under earlier technological conditions: explosive and shocking images were repeated again and again, with such arresting immediacy that normal processes of seeing and understanding were disrupted. As language struggled to keep up, many testified that words seemed inadequate to express or explain this event, while images somehow came closer. This has led to attempts to grasp and understand it by trying to see and see again; returning to photographs that might help navigate a path back through the tangled web of elusive visual memories and halting words. The work of both Freud and Lacan is used here as a basis to re-examine trauma's structural nature, and the ways in which the apparent dichotomy between words and images affects the discussion of such an overwhelmingly visual event. It has been argued that the structure of traumatic experience is analogous to that of the production of a photograph. This article examines how useful this theory might be when applied to an event that, as well as being defined as traumatic, can also be called one of the most photographed events in history.

Keywords: risk; trauma; photography; terrorism; psychoanalysis; media

Introduction

On 13 September 2001, a *San Francisco Chronicle* editorial attempted to sum up the state of America's national psyche in the wake of the worst terrorist attack it had ever faced:

> This week's frontal assault on America is a collective trauma unlike any other in any of our lifetimes ... We need to acknowledge our trauma. We need to treat this emotional wound. We owe it to the victims, we owe it to ourselves as we look for the resiliency to reconstitute our everyday lives after a jolt of unprecedented madness. Retaliation must not be the extent of our attempt at catharsis. (San Francisco Chronicle 2001)

The widespread and unquestioned use of the word 'trauma' in the description of the atrocity of September 11 in the mainstream American news media is symptomatic of

---

*Email: j.pollard@lcc.arts.ac.uk

what has been called a 'post-traumatic turn' in psychoanalytic and sociological discourse in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries[1]. This phrase describes the turning point by which psychotherapy has come to supersede psychoanalysis as a cultural phenomenon of theoretical and even political interest, beginning, it is argued, around 1980, when Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder was codified as an officially recognised psychological disorder (Jarzombek in Saltzman and Rosenberg 2006, p. 250)[2]. Following this moment, trauma studies became a recognised academic discipline, and trauma (and psychotherapy) became a cultural discourse within the humanities, rather than just a scientific one. The background to the many news headlines describing September 11 as a traumatic event was the founding of new academic programs in trauma studies across America, providing a language with which to talk about such catastrophic events in the press and elsewhere (Jarzombek in Saltzman and Rosenberg, p. 251)[3]. Rather than being the preserve of those in the psychoanalytical sciences, trauma is now a matter of broad (even 'popular') cultural concern. So much so in fact that some within the field have criticised the casual public over-use of the term, and America's 'overpsychologized condition' (Jarzombek in Saltzman and Rosenberg, p. 266).

Rooted in the field of visual culture studies, and drawing upon a conception of psychoanalysis that can be called socio-cultural (rather than scientific or clinical), this article considers theoretical questions about this event's visual representation and reception. The primary source material by which this reception is assessed is a sampling of American newspapers dated the week of the attacks[4]. These have been studied with particular attention to articles in which the use of images is mentioned, and they are used here in support of suggested new ways of evaluating and discussing the experience of trauma in a collective, technologically mediated public sphere. In this context, the condition of trauma will be carefully examined, as a factor that greatly complicates, and is complicated by, the 'historicising ideologies' and political apparatuses involved in the visual representation of September 11. Psychoanalysis will be used as a framework to consider the unprecedented nature of the attacks' visual dissemination around the world, with a particular focus on the perceived dichotomy between images and words[5]. This is attempted in the spirit of Dominick LaCapra's (and others, such as Jacqueline Rose's) project of widening the territory of psychoanalysis from individual clinical practice to history, in a kind of psychoanalysis of history, and/or of society. Freud himself devoted a considerable period to the analysis of groups and their behaviour, crowd psychology, and collective values such as nationhood and guilt[6]. However, this does not seem to have stretched beyond general analysis of 'group psychology' to the diagnosis of particular psychological problems or conditions within the group. This is LaCapra's point of departure. Rather than adhering to ideas of therapeutic psychoanalytic practice, or even to the idea of working through as a 'cure', he attempts in his work (chiefly concerned with representations of the Holocaust) to take psychoanalysis 'in more ethical and political directions' (LaCapra 2001, p. 143)[7]:

> I am intent on showing why psychoanalysis is misunderstood as merely a psychology of the individual, and its basic concepts are overly reduced when they are confined to a clinical context, however important the latter may be. In addition, certain key psychoanalytic concepts (such as transference, denial, resistance, repression, acting-out, and working-through) are crucial in the attempt to elucidate the relation between cultures that come into contact as well as between the present (including the analyst) and the past (LaCapra 1994, p. 9).

LaCapra's characterisation of the historian as psychoanalyst has met with accusations of psychological reductionism (the labelling of socio-political phenomena by reference to a presumed common substream or essence of the psyche) and hastiness. One critic, Kerwin Lee Klein (2000), identifies LaCapra's work as part of a wave of scholarship concerned with memory in historical discourse which seems to make somewhat uncritical assumptions about so-called collective or cultural memory and which is guilty of 'carelessly applying psychoneurotic jargon to groups'. On the other hand, however, the application of the principles of psychoanalysis to an essentialist psychology of the individual seems just as reductive. Psychoanalysis is founded on a social relation, that between analyst and analysand, and excepting the careless or generalising use which Klein rightly points out, it is surely flexible enough in its fundamentally social and relational observations to be usefully applicable to the kinds of groups with which LaCapra is concerned, albeit in a less presumptive way[8].

For Freud, whose work forms the basis of all subsequent trauma theory, beginning with his training at l'Hôpital Pitié-Salpêtrière in Paris from October 1885 to February 1886, the central factors in the experience and aftermath of trauma are memory, repetition and belatedness[9]. His early insights, which have become the central puzzle of trauma theory discourse in recent decades, concern the process by which a traumatic experience disrupts the normal 'flow' of memory and cognition. These are experiences of which, he writes, 'no memory can as a rule be recovered', and which 'were not understood at the time but which were *subsequently* understood and interpreted' (Freud 1958, p. 37). Jean LaPlanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis (1973, p. 465) have subsequently defined trauma as 'an influx of excitations that is excessive by the standards of the subject's tolerance and capacity to master such excitations and work them out psychically'. This means that for the subject, rather than being able to integrate memories of the traumatic incident into the normal narrative history as they would other kinds of memory, the traumatic memory is inaccessible and un-integrated, yet can recur or reappear beyond their control. Some memories, LaPlanche and Pontalis indicate, are simply 'too big' or too far beyond the understanding of the subject to be integrated properly, so these experiences are abnormally 'stored' within the subject's psyche in such a way that they can only be recovered belatedly[10]. LaPlanche and Pontalis (1973, p. 166) also point to the original Greek derivation of the term 'trauma', from the word meaning to pierce or to wound, going on to say that: 'in adopting the term, psycho-analysis carries three ideas implicit in it over on the psychical level: the idea of a violent shock, the idea of a wound and the idea of consequences affecting the whole organisation'. Developing this concept of a 'psychic injury', the psychologist Judith Lewis Herman (1997, p. 33) provides a practical clinical definition:

> Unlike commonplace misfortunes, traumatic events generally involve threats to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence and death. They confront human beings with the extremities of helplessness and terror, and evoke the responses of catastrophe. According to the Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry, the common denominator of psychological trauma is a feeling of 'intense fear, helplessness, loss of control, and threat of annihilation'.

Developing this idea, Liza Saltzman and Eric Rosenberg (2006, p. 51) emphasise the fact that trauma brings with it a profound questioning of human relationships, experience and identity, and creates 'a state of existential crisis'. It destroys the

subject's assumptions about 'the safety of the world, the positive value of the self, and the meaningful order of creation'. This definition is their starting point for an application of the principles of trauma to cultural questions about visuality, and particularly art. Basing the present discussion on Herman's more clinical, therapeutic sense of the term, where trauma can basically be called a metaphorical wound or blow to the psyche, but focussing subsequently on what Saltzman and Rosenberg call an 'existential crisis' and destruction of 'meaningful order' for either an individual or for a wider society's sense of identity, the aim is to consider the specific nature, structure, causes and cultural out-workings of trauma in the atrocity of September 11. The first step, it seems, is to consider the subject: who was traumatised?[11]

If the vast majority of the American population was not directly exposed to the trauma of this event (particularly given the invisibility of bodies or actual human destruction in its media coverage), can we really say that they were traumatised at all, or just shaken and scared? For some trauma theorists, including Saltzman and Rosenberg, it is self-evident and accepted that September 11 counts as a traumatic experience for the civilian population. But what evidence is there for basing a discussion on any kind of collective or 'community trauma', and how might this differ from individual trauma? Sociologist Kai Erikson, who has studied the traumatising effects of natural, accidental and criminal atrocities on community groups, defines collective or community trauma by extending the metaphor of bodily wounds or 'blows' to the tissues of social life:

> One can speak of traumatised communities as something distinct from assemblies of traumatised persons. Sometimes the tissues of community can be damaged in much the same way as the tissues of the mind and body ... but even when that does not happen, traumatic wounds inflicted on individuals can combine to create a mood, an ethos – a group culture, almost – that is different from (and more than) the sum of the private wounds that make it up. Trauma, that is, has a social dimension ... trauma shared can serve as a source of communality in the same way that common languages and common backgrounds can. There is a spiritual kinship there, a sense of identity, even when feelings of affection are deadened and the ability to care numbed (Erikson in Caruth 1995, pp. 183, 168)[12].

This 'spiritual kinship' or communal 'sense of identity' was an undeniable part of America's response to its shared tragedies in New York and Washington, DC; the unmistakable surge of patriotism and the apparent 'spiritual kinship' evoked by the proliferation of shrine-type memorials and impromptu gatherings of prayer and reflection far beyond the attack sites amply attest to this. By way of an explanation, Erikson also identifies how collective trauma can be experienced vicariously by those not directly involved in an event, through broadcast media. His words, though predating September 2001, apply to it particularly well:

> Events of local origins can have consequences that reach across huge distances – as was the case, say, at Chernobyl. And it is also true in the sense that news of it is broadcast so quickly and so widely that it becomes a moment in everyone's history, a datum in everyone's store of knowledge (Erikson in Caruth 1995, p. 191).

I suggest that the immediacy of the broadcast coverage of these attacks, and the elements of it that were genuinely unprecedented in the history of television journalism, create a new kind of traumatic experience that challenges the categories and boundaries within which trauma theory has previously been working. For now,

however, if we accept the criteria and the definitions outlined above, the American public's experience of September 11 can be called trauma. These are: psychic injury involving threat to life and bodily integrity, terror, helplessness, fear, threat of annihilation or a state of existential crisis, extended to apply to the group dynamics described by Erikson, and further, to indirect witnessing via broadcast media. While I recognise the problems attached to using a term like 'the people of the United States' or 'the American public' in a general way, I believe that the phenomena at stake are widespread enough to apply to a carefully observed response, without denying or ignoring minority points of view[13]. On 11 September 2002, the front page of the *New York Times* included the headline, 'A single grief knits together a vast country'. The wider question here concerns some of the ways in which that mourning, witnessing and recovery has been attempted. First, though, it is important to look more closely at the nature of the trauma itself. Developing the metaphor of the blow or wound, the first priority is to ask exactly how it was inflicted.

Complicating the issue of community trauma somewhat, Dominick LaCapra discusses the potential pitfalls of talking about 'second-hand' trauma, or that which has not been experienced directly, in the same terms as if one has been directly affected. His warning problematises the discussion of September 11 as a 'national' or 'community trauma':

> A difficulty arises when the virtual experience involved in empathy gives way to vicarious victim-hood, and empathy with the victim seems to become an identity . . . With respect to historical trauma and its representation, the distinction between victims, perpetrators and bystanders is crucial. 'Victim' is not a psychological category. It is, in variable ways, a social, political, and ethical category. Victims of certain events will in all likelihood be traumatised by them, and not being traumatised would itself call for explanation. But not everyone traumatised by events is a victim. (LaCapra 2001, pp. 47, 79)

For most television viewers of the attacks (and later, viewers of innumerable still images), there was no direct exposure to or witnessing of death, as not even the live television footage broadcast during the attack showed any human destruction other than indistinct victims falling from the towers, at a distance[14]. The task then became one of bearing witness to the fact that the event happened, and the second-hand knowledge that many people died. Yet, very soon, this important distinction identified by LaCapra, between victim (or 'vicarious victim') and bystander, began to disintegrate, recalling Erikson's description of how a traumatic event of this kind can become, by way of broadcast media, a 'a moment in everyone's history', or 'a datum in everyone's store of knowledge'. In fact, when, beginning on 13 September of that week, newspaper journalists began attempting to analyse the psychological fallout and trauma resulting from the attacks, most wrote about it in terms of the shock of lost security and safety, suggesting that in this, there was no less trauma for those watching from the opposite side of the country than for those in Manhattan. The following three excerpts from the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *Chicago Tribune* illustrate how the direct trauma suffered by those present at the scene became dwarfed in comparison to this different, more widespread effect:

> It makes *no difference* if no one we knew could possibly have been hurt in New York: the sense of danger permeated every house, every neighbourhood in the country. We were all hurt, in one way or the other. (Lara 2001, emphasis added)

> Everything has changed. There was a more innocent time, little more than 48 hours ago, when this phrase was hyperbole . . . Our national psyche changed the instant terrorists crashed the first of four planes that killed thousands Tuesday, deepening our sense of

> vulnerability and altering our relationship to the world in ways we don't fully understand. (Rose 2001)

> When the smoke cleared from the collapsed world trade centre towers, everything had changed. It was as if someone had yanked a cord and the walls of America fell away. Suddenly, we understood the unimaginable truth: we are as naked and vulnerable as any country. Our security, with its military might and vast network of intelligence agents, is as illusory as a Hollywood set. (Ryan 2001)

In the light of LaCapra's point, this widespread reaction indicates that, while it may be feasible to refer to these witnesses as traumatised it is important to resist calling them victims. It is certainly not true to say that the same 'sense of danger permeated every house' in America on that day (though this journalist's expression is perhaps understandable). This is the kind of error against which LaCapra warns; that by which the experience of direct victims of trauma is assumed by an indirect witness, or, as he puts it, 'empathy with the victim seems to become an identity' (LaCapra 2001, p. 47). But the possibility of different *kinds* of trauma, introduced by Erikson, for example, allows us to see the statements of the journalists above as representing a community traumatised in its own right. This trauma is not merely the 'second-hand' assimilation of the experience of those at ground zero, it is its own kind of terror. It may indeed be fair to say, as in the *Chicago Tribune*, that the 'national psyche changed' on that day, and that America's relationship to the world was altered in ways that it did not fully understand. These characteristics; the threat of annihilation, existential crisis, and the destruction of a subject's assumptions about 'the safety of the world, the positive value of the self, and the meaningful order of creation', indicate that, though this is, formally, a different kind of trauma than that of an individual or a direct witness of horrific death itself, according to the definitions of Herman, Erikson, Saltzman and Rosenberg, it is trauma nonetheless[15].

In a further passage that fits very well into the sampling of press quotations above, the *Chicago Tribune's* Patrick T. Reardon (2001) gives a crucial, if almost too-obvious clue as to how this kind of vicarious, second-hand, national trauma took root:

> Robert Scott, a Los Angeles-based psychologist and an expert in the field of trauma and disaster psychology, said, 'You don't have to be there and you don't have to know someone there to feel the impact of this penetration into our safety and security'. Indeed, he said, there is vicarious trauma that many Americans are likely to suffer *from having watched* Tuesday's events and from recognizing how much less safe they are than they thought. (Reardon 2001, emphasis added)

As Erikson and LaCapra both attest, there is an obvious difference between the trauma of victims and that of witnesses. In the case of the 'public trauma' of September 11, the traumatic experience comes, for the most part, as the result of *witnessing* from the images that have been *seen*. However while seeing was obviously part of the trauma for those direct witnesses at ground zero, it came, in their case, with a real threat to their bodily safety and material surroundings, and was thus different from the distanced, indirect witnessing of the vast majority via broadcast media: this 'distanced trauma', involving primarily visually-orientated experience and not embodied threat or danger, is the kind at stake here. Saltzman and Rosenberg (2006, pp. xi–xii) sum up the essential factors in one of the central debates for trauma theory in recent years (and its Freudian basis); that surrounding trauma's elusive and mysterious visual character:

we are convinced of the centrality of pictures, of the visual, or, more specifically, artistic production and practice, to such negotiations. The formulation of trauma as a discourse is predicated upon metaphors of visuality and image as unavoidable carriers of the unrepresentable. From primal scene to flashback to screen memory to the dream, much of the language deployed to speak trauma's character is emphatically, if not exclusively, visual. It may even be argued that the very form taken by trauma as a phenomenon is only, however asymptomatically or not, understood as or when pictured. The inability to frame trauma in and of itself lends the form almost naturally to a process of visualization as expiation.

In the wake of September 11, many people within the United States seemed to gravitate towards photographs of what happened, collecting them and focussing on them as a way of coming to terms with the shocking and unsettling facts. Collections in diverse forms, from amateur memorial photo gallery websites, to vast photographic archives such as the *Here is New York* project, as well as the countless photographic magazine and newspaper supplements, appeared to fill a very important role in response to the shock and bewilderment that followed[16]. Images were a highly significant aspect of this event. It has been suggested, in fact, that the event was itself an image; its power being primarily in its symbolic value, as a spectacular statement, designed to cause maximum damage by the fear induced in its being *seen* by millions, as well as in its material and human destruction[17]. This brings us, however, to consider the place of trauma, and of this particular event, in the much older debate surrounding the perceived fundamental dichotomy between words and images. One amateur memorial website creator says of his September 11 online gallery: 'I will never be able to describe September 11 as fully as these pictures. And yet, for as powerful and moving as these pictures are, they will never be able to describe the experience nor tell the complete story of those who were there' (www.crowleyonline.com/911). This sentiment is typical of that expressed in many such websites; the tension between the feeling that images are inadequate to tell the story of what happened, but that they are more adequate than words. So images, predominantly photographs, are the medium used in countless different attempts to come to terms with the attacks and to express the memory of what it was like to watch them unfold on television and to 'be there' in time, if not in space. To begin to interrogate this claim: of the photograph's superior power of expression in response to trauma, and its rightful displacement of words, it is helpful to return to the work of Freud and Lacan.

In his development of Freud's foundational work on the subject of trauma, Jacques Lacan makes significant departures that might suggest a distinction between the two thinkers, based on the dichotomy between words and images. On the one hand, Freud can be understood, in his 1899 work 'Screen Memories', for example, to argue that representation, specifically in the form of associated 'mnemic images', provides a key to remembering something that is important but absent (or 'omitted', displaced by the mnemic image)[18]. Through effective analysis, representation can thus, albeit indirectly, act as the initial pointer that alerts the subject (or the analyst) to the originating cause of a trauma and, through facing it, allow its assimilation as part of the process of remembering and 'working through' (Freud 1958). In this way, the correct handling of images retained in the psyche can be understood (in this early stage of Freud's thought, at least) as a positive part of recovery. A similar principle can be observed in Freud's famous analysis of the so-called 'Wolf Man' (Freud 1957). In this case, the centrality of images is made particularly concrete as the

patient records his remembered dream-image by later producing actual pictures. For Freud, it is this dream-image that provides the key to uncovering the cause of the patient's neurosis. It can be argued that for Freud, the unconscious is associated primarily with non-linguistic, spatial phenomena, consisting of memory traces from the experiences and traumas of early childhood[19]. Sean Homer (2005, p. 68) describes the Freudian unconscious as 'a realm without syntax or grammar; a realm without temporality or contradiction'[20].

For Lacan, however, representation and trauma can be read as mutually exclusive, because trauma, as the *tuché* or missed encounter with the real, is totally elusive and impossible to grasp through representation[21]. Instead, it repeats. As art historian and critic Hal Foster puts it in his application of Lacanian theory to the screen-print work of Andy Warhol: 'Lacan defines the traumatic as a missed encounter with the real. As missed, the real cannot be represented; it can only be repeated, indeed it *must* be repeated' (Foster 1996, p. 132). However, it would obviously be a simplistic mistake to see Freud and Lacan as polar opposites to one another in this regard: Freud asserting that the unconscious is constituted by images, and that images are the only keys to recovery from trauma, and Lacan proposing a linguistic key instead. While Lacan's fundamental privileging of the role of language (as any signifying system that is based on differential relations) in the unconscious is quite clear (Lacan 1977, p. 147, Homer 2005, p. 69), Freud's attitude to images is much more ambiguous. As the pioneer of the 'talking cure' there can be no doubt that Freud saw words as the fundamental tools of his work: 'nothing', he said in 1916, 'takes place in a psychoanalytic treatment but an exchange of words' (Freud 1991b). However he does seem to place much more of an emphasis, albeit a wary and qualified one, on the recollection of visual phenomena, which he calls 'visual memory-traces', than his successor (Freud 2002, p. 13)[22]. Investigating Freud's complex attitude to the visual, Peter Benson (1994) points out that, for Freud, the only moment in which the visual takes centre stage in the development of the psyche is in the area of sexual difference. For Lacan, it is the sight of a child's own body that is foundational and most significant in the formation of the ego; for Freud, the most significant visual moment is the primal scene and the child's first sight of the female sexual organ. Other than that, Benson argues, Freud downplays the visual and images, seeming wary of their power. Even when he deals with the interpretation of dreams, 'his interpretations dwell and move largely in the linguistic register, across puns and metaphors, working primarily with the verbal residue of dreams (their recounted description) rather than with their intensely visual apprehension' (Benson 1994, p. 104)[23]. This could be seen as an indication that for Freud, while the unconscious is not itself constituted by representation, representation is a highly significant element of it, with which Freud himself seems somewhat uncomfortable; preferring to dwell on its linguistic character.

Following Freud's theory of memory and belatedness, and constructing a metaphorical scheme to describe it, Ulrich Baer (professor of German and Comparative Literature with particular interest in theories and history of photography) has examined the affinity between the nature of traumatic experience and that of photography. He quotes Freud's attempt to describe the nature of childhood trauma:

> The strongest compulsive influence arises from impressions . . . at a time when [the child's] psychical apparatus [is] not yet completely receptive. [This] fact cannot be doubted; but it is so puzzling that we may make it more comprehensible by comparing it

with a photographic exposure which can be developed after any interval of time and transformed into a picture. (Freud 1939 cited in Baer 2002, p. 25)

Using the starting point of Freud's observation, Baer draws the conclusion that, as in the taking of a photograph, the traumatic event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time of its occurrence, but only belatedly in its repeated possession (or 'developing') by the one who experiences it. Thus, he says, photography, considered as a structural analogy, can provide special access to these 'unremembered' but unforgettable experiences:

> Because trauma blocks routine mental processes from converting an experience into memory or forgetting, it parallels the defining structure of photography, which also traps an event during its occurrence while blocking its transformation into memory. ..The fact that traumatic experiences recur and that they attain meaning only at and through this belated repetition – like negatives that harbour an image until they are printed and emerge from the developing vats – does not invalidate their realness but should compel us to reconsider the relations between memory and reality. (Baer 2002, pp. 9–10)

Baer's development of Freud's thought focuses on this striking parallel between those moments arrested mechanically by photography and those arrested experientially by the traumatised psyche, as moments that bypass normal cognition and memory. In his early writings, Freud did use the metaphor of the camera, explaining the unconscious as the place where bits of memory are stored until they are developed into conscious memories[24]. He later qualifies this metaphor in a way that is indicative of his ambiguous attitude to images and his unease with the notion of the visual (Baer 2002, p. 9)[25]. However, it remains true that Freud's embracing and subsequent disavowal of the camera metaphor raises the question of the strange and unsettling relationship between photography and trauma, highlighting the very sensitive nature of the condition. Baer says that trauma occupies a space *between* the visual and the verbal, and is 'a disorder of memory and time' (Baer 2002, p. 9). Even Freud seems confused by the mystery of trauma's capturing, not fully in images, but not in words either. Baer's discussion of Freud and photography centres around Freud's experience working with hysterics under Jean Martin Charcot at l'Hôpital Pitié-Salpêtrière, where attempts were made to 'capture' the effects of trauma in photographs, formed a key component of Charcot's research[26]. The study of hysterical symptoms, which Freud and Josef Breuer liken, in their *Studies on Hysteria* (1991, p. 14), to 'a pictographic script which has become intelligible after the discovery of a few bilingual inscriptions', can, as previously noted, be seen as the foundation of Freud's subsequent understanding of trauma. This emphasis on picturing or representation, both in the contemporary understanding of the nature of hysteria itself and in the photographic method of its observation, at this early stage in his training is surely significant for the later development of Freud's theory[27].

Given Baer's photographic metaphor that attempts to shed light on the mystery of trauma's structure and character, what happens when there is, in an event like September 11, such a strong connection between the witnessing and experience of the trauma and the practice of photography itself? Baer describes his work on trauma and photography as being outside of both historicist and formalist analysis: it is, he claims, not concerned primarily with the politicisation of the context or viewing of the image itself, nor with its formal qualities, but with something else entirely. In addition to the photography of hysteria, he discusses the work of contemporary

American photographer Mikael Levin, and a set of slides taken between 1942 and 1945 by a Nazi official in the Łódź ghetto, not analysing the historical narrative contexts in which these different images are set, but treating them as objects which 'isolate experiences that remained apart from lived reality at the time of their occurrence' (Baer 2002, p. 9). Baer uses these photographs not as tools in recovering the past but as illustrations of 'the constitutive breakdown of context' staged by both traumatic experience and the taking of a photograph (Baer 2002, p. 11).

In a discussion of the picturing of September 11, Baer's theory is useful only if we remember to separate carefully the form and process of photography from its content and subject. Postmodern theory has, he reminds us, often displaced attention from the photographic image to its extra-pictorial dimensions, which is important and can be productive, but can also miss the remaining fact that images are fascinating because they are images. It is easy to bypass a photograph's inherent, often unsettling effects when we seek to use it merely as a document or a tool for the recovery of the past, or simply as an illustration of a particular narrative. It is useful to study 'extra-pictorial looking', but crucial not to overlook the experience generated by the picture. This is difficult; it is the eternal problem (we could say, art history and visual culture studies' defining problem) of talking about pictures using words. The territory of trauma theory being, as Baer puts it, somewhere between words and pictures, can thus be very useful in this impasse. He suggests that it can testify to, if not really explain, 'what assails the self from within without constituting a proper experience' (Baer 2002, p. 12).

Freud (1958, p. 150) states that the reason why repressed traumatic memories do not go away without successful psychoanalysis is that what cannot be properly remembered cannot be left behind. The neurotic repeats instead of remembering: 'the patient does not *remember* anything of what he has forgotten and repressed, but *acts it out*. He reproduces it not as a memory but as an action; he *repeats* it'. Freud calls this the repetition-compulsion. Repetition (or acting out) is the avoidance of working through; it is the avoidance or unwillingness to remember. With familiar experiences, memory integration happens naturally. But experiences that are particularly extraordinary, frightening or traumatic, while having intense psychic impact, become, as we have seen above, unintelligible. These un-integrated memories cause problems, or symptoms, later, often in the form of repetitive behaviour. Behind the compulsion to repeat is an urgent need to master the trauma: repeating it so as to better learn to cope with it the 'next time'. It is a means to an end; the repetition is carried out to create retrospective anxiety. The painful memory is relived again and again until a retrospective 'defence' has been built up. Freud explains:

> The greater the resistance, the more extensively will acting out (repetition) replace remembering…The patient brings out of the armoury of the past the weapons with which he defends himself against the progress of the treatment – weapons which we must wrest from him one by one. (Freud 1958, p. 151)

Working through, on the other hand, is the clarification and integration into the fabric of the mind of that which was previously warded off by the repetition process. It is remembering as catharsis. How can we compare the compulsion to look at images of, for example, the September 11 attacks, with the unwillingness to remember, or with the avoidance of working through? Endless volumes of information, repetition of disturbing imagery, determination to see and accept

horror, are precisely what many people seemed to crave and gravitate towards in the aftermath of September 11[28]. One New Yorker writes:

> On September 11 and in the days that followed, I didn't know what to do with myself. I was filled with so much sorrow, so many mixed emotions. I started taking pictures because I felt the need to document what was going on. But a part of me also wanted to experience the events more, to feel things more deeply in order to reach a level of acceptance and understanding. I am hoping that the images will help me sort through it all in time. (Suchman Zeolla 2001 cited in Feldschuh 2002)

In the context of a so-called 'overpsychologised' culture, many people seemed almost obsessed with facing, looking, remembering and 'working through' their emotions, raising the question of how thoroughly or successfully this can be achieved through repeated looking at photographs. As Baer explains, the structural analogy of the photographic process can help us to understand the behaviour of traumatic memory, but photographs themselves do not help us towards the constructive remembering of traumatic events. Despite the enduring compulsion to try to make sense of photographs, to place them within narrative sequences, or to use them as tools to help recover and organise memories, they still allow us to understand the nature of trauma more than they allow us to understand narrative history (Baer 2002, p. 6). Thus, if we collect, focus, fixate and rely on them in this way, our relationships with photographs have more in common with Freud's process of 'acting out' or repetition than 'working through' or real remembering. This is doubly exacerbated by the factor of material repetition: the seemingly endless reappearance of (largely, the same or similar) photographs and moving images in the media in the days, weeks and even years following the attacks. Just as for many bewildered children who watched the repeated television footage, the event did seem to happen again and again, to more and more buildings across the city, the photographic images continually repeat, and so the trauma is perpetuated. In *The Return of the Real* (Foster 1996, p. 29), Hal Foster recalls Jean LaPlanche's observation that 'it always takes two traumas to make a trauma'[29]. The originating traumatic event remains misremembered and elusive without the belated context of its 'recoding' (or, in Baer's model, developing).

However, repetition is not the same as remembering. There is a sense in which the repetition of moving and still images aided understanding and helped witnesses to come to terms with the enormity of what they had seen: when the first plane hit the north tower at 8.46am, onlookers thought it was a horrifying mistake. When the second plane hit the south tower at 9.03am, the truth was confirmed that this was a deliberate act of terrorism: no accident could have happened twice in exactly this same way. It could be argued that, in this sense, the repetition verified the true character of the situation. As Saltzman and Rosenberg put it, 'built into the event was the very logic of a necessary repetition through which an understanding of that first act became intelligible' (2006, p. 273). Nevertheless, we could argue it was this initial repetition that allowed not only understanding but also trauma to 'sink in', rooting it into witnesses' consciousness in its improbable and horrifying truth. As one reporter put it on 12 September, 'the repeated sight [of the explosion & collapse of the towers]...is now sealed in the national memory bank' (Carman 2001). Another, in an article entitled 'terrorists have riddled us all with fear', said, 'we will never be the same again...[the sight of the second plane hitting is] an image forever seared onto our memories' (Ryan 2001). In a sense, the image, seen and then

repeated ('seared' and 'sealed'), *is* the trauma, and with each repeated viewing the trauma is 'acted out' again and again, so it could not possibly be the cure.

For Lacan (1977, p. 148), language is central to his formulation of the symbolic order: 'language and its structure', he writes, 'exist prior to the moment at which each subject at a certain point in his mental development makes his entry into it'. The symbolic consists of systems of signifiers, which form networks to which we have little conscious access but which govern our lives completely. They organise our world, the very texture of which is symbolic. The most prominent of these symbolic systems, for Lacan, is language. As he suggests, the unconscious is structured like a language, and is thus constituted by a series of chains of signifying elements; it follows that, for Lacan, when the unconscious is confronted with a traumatic experience, that experience is fixed in a signifying chain that manifests itself as a symptom:

> The double-triggered mechanism of metaphor is the very mechanism by which the symptom, in the analytic sense, is determined. Between the enigmatic signifier of the sexual trauma and the term that is substituted for it in an actual signifying chain there passes the spark that fixes in a symptom the signification inaccessible to the conscious subject in which that symptom may be resolved – a symptom being a metaphor in which flesh or function is taken as a signifying element. (Lacan 1977, p. 166)

If the symptom has a structural relation to a linguistic metaphor, it is through this language that the patient (or the witness of trauma) communicates their experience (or 'the patient cries out through his symptom', as Lacan [1977] puts it, p. 167[30]) and so the linguistic chain must be deciphered for an alleviation of the symptom to take place; 'the symptom resolves itself entirely in an analysis of language, because the symptom is itself structured like a language' (Lacan 1977, p. 59).

This idea of ridding the body of symptoms through language was Freud's; he discovered that identifying the disturbing event that caused a symptom and talking about it, alleviated the symptom. But trauma, by its nature, is an 'affront to understanding'; its essence belonging to the order of the real, it lies outside of the symbolic order, of all that we can name, understand, or easily describe using language. Hence, survivors of traumatic events tend to be reluctant or even unable to translate their experience into speech. This principle is well recognised by late twentieth-century theorists of trauma like Judith Lewis Herman (1997, p. 2), who ascribes it not only to direct survivors or victims, but to witnesses:

> Witnesses as well as victims are subject to the dialectic of trauma. It is difficult for an observer to remain clear headed and calm, to see more than a few fragments of the picture at one time, to retain all the pieces, and to fit them together. It is even more difficult to find a language that conveys fully and persuasively what one has seen.

Another recurring theme of the newspaper coverage of the attacks from around the US in the week following September 11 was precisely this: the force of pictures and the failure of words. On 12 September, the *New York Times* said, 'mere words were inadequate vessels to contain the sense of shock and horror that people felt' (Apple 2001). And on 13 September:

> Language failed this week. 'Beyond comprehension', 'beyond our worst imaginings', 'beyond belief' – these were the phrases heard again and again in the last two days. As people struggled to describe the events of Tuesday morning, they reached for metaphors and analogies that might capture the horror of what they had seen ... words felt

devalued and inadequate ... Inevitably, many witnesses and television commentators turned to film analogies to describe what they had seen. (Katukani 2001)

Also in the *New York Times* on 12 September, Caryn James (2001) gave her analysis of President Bush's immediate response to the attacks, giving special and distinctive weight to its visual and verbal dimensions. Her article begins with an already typical account of the defining nature of the day's pictures:

> [Rather than words] In this visual era, the incredible live images, replayed throughout the day until their reality sunk in, defined the events ... The [TV] images were terrifying to watch, yet the coverage was strangely reassuring simply because it existed with such immediacy, even when detailed information was scarce.

She goes on to describe the president's first television appearance of the day, at 9.30am, surrounded by the Florida schoolchildren with whom he had been reading when he first learned of the attack, as the 'least comforting moments in the day'. It was, however, 'more reassuring than the taped statement later from the Air Force base in Louisiana'. The reason for this, she says, is that 'the audio was not working when some networks first played the tape, creating the impression that things were not under control as much as he said'. Without the coherent and meaningful words required by the nation at that moment, the image of a silent, worried president did more to distress than to comfort. But more distressing still, according to James, were the moments when the president himself was not only silent, but invisible, leaving citizens to form their own troubling mental images to fill in the gaps:

> Through the day, some of the most harrowing reports told viewers what they did not know: where the president was. The unseen image of Mr Bush meeting with advisers 'in a bunker' was almost as chilling as the violence onscreen.

Like other reporters, James argues that the president's 8.30pm Oval Office speech was inadequate, 'but what mattered was that he was visible, live from the Oval Office, offering a sense of stability and a sense of a future'.

The article ends with a summary that 'the day's coverage had already shown that words had less impact than live pictures in this tragedy'. Again, here is the same tension that would later be widely expressed; that while pictures are inadequate to represent what happened; they are more expressive than words. With the use of memorial websites and archival collections, this refers to the attempt to memorialise and mourn, but here, James tells us that the same is true not only of the retrospective attempt at emotional recovery, but also of the immediate attempt to see and understand the reality of what has just occurred, to 'get to grips with it' in the first moments. Further, though, the less obvious point of James' article seems to be that both words *and* images were essential. When one or both was missing, or when they were inappropriately proportioned, the result was distress and disruption in the process of understanding and recovery.

Before much time had passed, it became clear to some that, unlike previous atrocities for which a single, iconic image came to stand, the huge number of photographs of this event (so many similar but slightly different images) meant that September 11 would not be so easily summed up. On 16 September, Christopher Knight of the *Los Angeles Times* gives his thoughts on the absence of such an 'icon' with impressive clarity, considering the chaos still surrounding the subject at the time of his writing. Central to his conclusion is the relationship between words and

pictures, and the distinctiveness of the September 11 'image-event' in its disruption of this relationship, due largely to its immediate media representation:

> The absence of such a picture [an iconic image, standing for the whole event] is the result of a disruption in continuity. Typically, words precede the creation of iconic images. A story is told, then a picture forms. What is an icon, after all, but art's equivalent of the word made flesh? But the word comes first. Icons illustrate existing faith and doctrine, which is often inchoate until the picture comes along and suddenly sorts out the disarray. Then, a gathering critical mass of people sees the image and collectively knows, 'That's it!'... Perhaps that remains possible here, since the inchoate still characterises so much of this ongoing event. But there's a hitch: In the terrorist assault this week, the typical sequence was reversed. Pictures proceeded language. The stories were being told simultaneously with the arrival of the image flood – and in many cases only by the pictures themselves. We stared at them in an inescapable condition of disbelief, as language sputtered and words struggled to keep up... And, for now at least, [the lack of an icon] might not be such a bad thing. For icons also simplify. They're a visual form of cliché. The story that erupted last week is complex, and established doctrines need re-examination and revision. It may just be too soon for icons yet. (Knight 2001)

The most prescient point here concerns the unprecedented immediacy of the visual representation and dissemination of the event. While the indication is that the very first stages of the 'image flood' occurred via television, accompanied by 'sputtering' and 'struggling' commentary, it is from among the subsequent deluge of still, silent, photographs that 'an iconic image' might emerge (although it is not clear, when Knight refers to 'pictures', whether he means moving footage or still images, or whether they are interchangeable). Beyond the basic point concerning the visual immediacy of September 11, Knight takes the further step of analysing the consequences of this immediacy for our usual way of 'taking in' information through words and pictures, suggesting that these two forms have a usual 'protocol' or temporal succession on which our understanding depends. The nature of traumatic experiences, as we have seen, is that they are characteristically *dis-integrated* from any kind of narrative flow. This leads us, in looking at any of the many hundreds of photographs taken in lower Manhattan on that day, to confront, in Baer's words (2002, p. 6), 'photography's tremendous potential to capture such experiences without integrating them into a mitigating context'. In this case, the disjointed and temporally-isolated nature of the traumatic experience is matched and exacerbated by the temporally-isolated nature of the photographed moment. When the pictures of something so far outside our frame of reference come before the words that explain it (as the images of the attacks appeared immediately to television viewers in advance of any verbal information, which emerged slowly), not only do we struggle to place it within our immediate symbolic frame of reference, but the wider frame of reference by which we identify 'icons' breaks down too. This 'protocol' of assimilation was recognised decades ago by Susan Sontag (1979, p. 19), who took it as given that 'the contribution of photography always follows the naming of the event'. Furthermore, she goes on, 'without a politics, photographs of the slaughter-bench of history will most likely be experienced as, simply, unreal or as a demoralizing emotional blow'[31]. The word cannot be 'made flesh' if the flesh comes first. Nor can the flesh perform the function of the word. To return to Lacan's notion that 'the symptom is a metaphor' (Lacan 1977, p. 175), it seems a similar malfunction has occurred, for which the use of words, talking, explaining and imbuing a systematic (if inadequate) logic, is the only remedy.

Linked to the sequential relationship of words and pictures, another temporal or sequential factor in the 'behaviour' of traumatic memory, as we have seen in Baer's account (and others), is that of belatedness. Saltzman and Rosenberg, again, provide a useful summary:

> Trauma . . . in its classic formation . . . remains dependent on an economy of belatedness that is the psychic space in which the overwhelming might be held. It is in the possibility of such a space that representation can emerge as some kind of version of the traumatic. Without representation, in all its deferral, trauma implies an absolute form that we would never know. In other words, the naming of trauma would be denied, and loss would be beyond management. In its instance of portrayal, 9/11 collapsed the difference between event and its representation, implying the evisceration of adaptation to the circumstances of trauma by way of the very visual culture that accounted for it in the first place. (2006, p. 272)

Contrary to possible conclusions reached so far, the suggestion here is that it is in representation, or picturing, that the only key to traumatic memory lies. It is only through images that we can hope to 'return' in a productive way to any traumatic experience, as the subject's visual memory in the traumatic moment malfunctions and become inaccessible. In other words, our visual memory of an experience cannot help us, but pictures of it can, providing the visual recall that we need, from an external source. This seems to be a more complex way of suggesting, as we have earlier, that the trauma of September 11 *was* essentially in its representation or its picturing. It was in many ways a symbolic, spectacular, and image-centred event. But, arguably, this is a misleading view of the nature of representation. It may be through representation that the necessary shards of traumatic experience with which to begin a recovery process can be retrieved; it may even be, more specifically, via the model of photography as Baer suggests. But just as the key to Baer's model is, as it were, form rather than content, so the idea of particular pictures or concrete representational objects as the way to recovery, is misleading. To their credit, Saltzman and Rosenberg are not guilty, here, of quite such simplistic logic. Their point, rather, concerns the 'economy of belatedness' that defines trauma's structure, and the unprecedented disruption of this economy that took place in the media representation of September 11. Because the traumatising event was depicted immediately and repeatedly, it was severed from the belated, on which the 'normal' assimilation of the traumatic depends. The endless television replays and repeated photographs destroyed the possibility of interior integration or processing. Because of the way in which September 11 was represented, it was not *represented* at all, and thus the trauma cannot be properly integrated by its witnesses. In other words, rather than being *re*presented, it was simply repeatedly *presented*.

Paul Virilio, too, has identified this absence of representation in the event in favour of presentation, going further by not only identifying this distinctive factor of the September 11 attacks, but in saying that this event in fact heralds the end of representation in modern real-time televised media. He calls the event an iconoclastic phenomenon, on two levels. First, in the iconoclasm of representation; the attack was on the World Trade Centre as a symbol, representative of capitalism. Second, though, he says that there was an iconoclasm of *presentation*, manifest in the constant worldwide replay of the attacks:

> We were not informed, we were frozen in front of a single message generalized on a world-wide scale. This tele-presence in reality is an iconoclasm of real presence, because we only saw one thing. Everyone knows that we need two eyes in order to see anything

in relief and make a choice. Anyone who aims a gun knows this. In that case, we only had one eye, a 'big optic' on the global scale. This single big optic. Solitary vision is an iconoclasm of presentation. (Virilio in Lotringer and Virilio 2005, p. 26)

Virilio claims that this signals the end of representation, giving way to perpetual presentation. The press and the media no longer give representations of things, they no longer *re*port or *re*present; they simply present what is (apparently) there, in live coverage, real time, reality TV, and web-cams. He calls this a 'pollution of distances', because presentation which bypasses representation constitutes a loss of distance. This loss corresponds with the collapse of Saltzman and Rosenberg's 'economy of belatedness'; it is in the very repetition (though *re*petition may be the wrong word) of the image that the trauma is perpetuated, and through which the hope of successful assimilation or recovery is also collapsed. The very work of witnessing, as they put it, turns into the experience of trauma, as opposed to its mode of therapy (Saltzman and Rosenberg 2006, p. 272). The continual presentation of the image becomes perpetually 'the overwhelming and unavoidable instant of occurrence' (Saltzman and Rosenberg 2006, p. 257).

But there is a further problem. For Freud, 'acting out' is not a conscious activity, and its destructive effects are overpowered by the stronger compulsion to repeat. In this same way, nationwide (and even world-wide) witnesses of the September 11 attacks acted on a compulsion to return again and again to the pictures without words, experiencing them (as in the acting-out process) not as further trauma, but as cathartic and somehow restorative. As the *Chicago Tribune* reported on the day:

> ABC at one point Tuesday offered an image of New Yorkers in Manhattan's Times Square, safely away from the point of attack on the island, standing in awed, respectful silence, looking up at the giant TV screens broadcasting network coverage. As the network's Diane Sawyer pointed out, the people were unable to hear what was being said, but the pictures were enough. (Johnston 2001)

Newspaper reports like this indicate that, like the witnesses or survivors of other traumatic events, the public in New York and, in a different way, those far beyond in the rest of America, underwent a traumatising process which destabilised their sense of security and reality, and their relation to the rest of the world[32]. It also indicates that the disruption of visual memory was a constitutive part of this process. Added to this memory disruption (which could, in trauma theory terms, be called conventional), the 'pollution of distances' occasioned by its immediate, repetitive and predominantly visual media dissemination deepened and complicated it as a memory. It introduced a problem of levels in the classification of communal trauma; and of attributing damage to a psychological subject whose 'psyche' is not an individual mind or even that of a clearly defined group of victims, but a new entity linked very closely to a technological mode of presentation that does not obey even the enigmatic spatial or temporal 'rules' that trauma theory has managed in recent years to identify. What *can* be confirmed with regard to the nature of America's trauma in this case are the following points: that it was firmly based in the visual; falling outside of any symbolic order of understanding or articulation; that it was commonly perceived as 'unspeakable', and, as I have suggested, evokes the order of the Lacanian 'real'; that its integral and then subsequent repetition was key to both the understanding and the further traumatising of its viewers; and finally, that the trauma caused has as much to do with national security and status for the wider population as with the death or bereavement of members of the immediate New

York or Washington communities[33]. These conclusions raise further questions about the aftermath, and the attempts, both individual and corporate, at recovery from this trauma. Most relevant to this argument, these attempts include diverse uses and re-uses of the huge body of photographic images produced on that day, in commercial, private, state and vernacular projects of collection and display (such as the memorial websites previously mentioned). Given the highly distinctive, visually rooted and complex nature of the immediate 'traumatising process' that has been examined here, the issues this raises for the United States, over and above those faced in the course of recovery from 'normal' traumas; emotionally, socially, and in terms of civic responsibility and response, demand further study.

Notes

1. PTSD is mentioned in several major American newspaper reports in the days following the September 11 attacks, citing psychiatric and psychology professionals and 'experts'. Unlike many of the journalists themselves, most of these emphasise a sense of perspective, saying that anxiety in early stages is normal. One, Dr Rachel Yehuda, encourages a 'wait and see' attitude to the attacks' psychological effects, saying, 'circle your calendar for October. We're really not post-traumatic yet' (Goode 2001). To the author's knowledge, the most extensive discussion of collective trauma with specific reference to visual phenomena surrounding the September 11 attacks comes from Zelizer and Allan (2002).
2. Freud, of course, had been studying and formulating a theory of traumatic neurosis at the time of the First World War. For an analysis of post-war trauma in German society (including considerations of collective trauma) incorporating Freud's theories, see Paul Fox (2006). This is just one example of the huge literature on Freud's conception of trauma, which is further addressed below. The larger piece of work from which this article is taken locates it within a framework of Foucault's notion of the discursive circulation of power. In particular, Foucault's theory of power seems aptly to account for a society whose systems of influence and control are represented and epitomised by the circulation, apparatus, ubiquity and individuating power of the world wide web. It is this point that opens up much shared ground between this research and the field of Foucauldian governmentality and risk: the world wide web, and other apparatuses by which visual representations of 9/11 circulate, are implicated in the 'very sophisticated structure in which individuals can be integrated, under one condition: that this individuality would be shaped in a new form, and submitted to a set of very specific patterns' (Foucault 1980, p. 334). Further, Foucault states that, 'this form of power cannot be exercised without knowing the inside of people's minds, without exploring their souls, without making them reveal their innermost secrets. It implies a knowledge of the conscience and an ability to direct it' (Foucault 1980, p. 333). Thus a Foucauldian conception of 'the art of government' (Foucault 1991, p. 89) can also account for the collective psychological phenomena examined here.
3. Since the Vietnam War, the fields of psychiatry, psychoanalysis and sociology have taken renewed interest in trauma. In 1985, the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ITSS) was formed. In 1989 the US Congress created an umbrella organisation, the National Center for PTSD, to co-ordinate research. State and government agencies set up outreach counselling programs, and self-help groups proliferated. An important factor in this trend, it seems, was the raised profile of the Holocaust during the 1970s. Later, in 1995, the Oklahoma bombing happened at such a time that trauma studies research could come into play in an unprecedented way, analysing and treating a whole community of traumatised civilians. Consequently, understanding of the issues of trauma and PTSD expanded in cultural discourse and in the media around this time (Saltzman and Rosenberg 2006).
4. These are: *The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times, The Chicago Tribune, The Washington Post, The San Francisco Chronicle*, and, for contrast, the London *Times*, all from 11/12 September (in some time zones, it there was not time to issue an edition after

the attacks on the 11, in which case I begin with their first mention of the event on the 12) until the 15 September 2001.

5. Inasmuch as this article examines how the crisis of September 11 altered the normal protocols of public communication, it has direct relevance to theories of risk communication and uncertainty (Beck 1992, Giddens 1999). However, being primarily a theoretical exploration of the issues, the practical conclusions and considerations normally associated with these fields are not part of its scope. A central aim of this article is to open up debate that would include such practical implications.

6. See Freud 1991a and Nye 1975. Both Freud and Nye base their studies of group psychology on the foundational work of Gustave LeBon.

7. This is of course also consistent with the work of psychologists such as Judith Lewis Herman, who seems to see no conceptual or practical problem in applying her clinical analysis to social, historical or even national subjects.

8. The relation of psychoanalysis to historical social issues is the subject of intense debate. See *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society*, the journal of the international Association for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society, and also Andreas Huyssen (2001).

9. See Freud and Breuer (1991) and also Freud (1991b).

10. For some of the vast secondary literature on (or based on) Freud's theories of trauma, see Judith Lewis Herman (1997), Cathy Caruth (1995) and Saltzman and Rosenberg (2006).

11. The term 'subject' is used in the psychoanalytical sense, as employed in LaPlanche and Pontalis' definition of trauma (1973).

12. See also Erikson (1994).

13. These 'minority points of view' include not only criticism within the United States to George W. Bush's government (perhaps no longer a minority at all), but also those who believe that the officially-endorsed account of what happened in New York and Washington on 11 September 2001 is incomplete or deliberately deceitful. See www.911truth.org, and the 2005 film *Loose Change*.

14. The most well-documented of these is the so-called 'Falling Man', a photograph taken by Richard Drew, and the subject of a film by Tom Junod (*9/11: The Falling Man* 2006). This case is particularly interesting because, while its suppression and almost complete invisibility in the media (it was printed on one front page and then quickly hidden from view) indicate its incompatibility with the dominant narratives already appearing in the media, it seems to have been selected from the others on Drew's roll of film because of the subject's apparent stoicism and dignity in that split second; his elegant and graceful 'pose' is much easier to look at, and conforms to the 'redemptive narrative' of the event much more easily than any other image of death on the day.

15. While providing evidence of a kind of trauma on the one hand, it can be argued that these excerpts (and others cited here) actually demonstrate the operation of the 'post-traumatic turn' discussed in the opening paragraphs above. Working through a variety of public institutions including newspapers, the professional 'discourse' of psychotherapy is certainly in operation here, in a manner that is concurrent with Foucauldian notions of governmentality and discursive power circulation. These are taken to be compatible views that warrant further comparison and exploration.

16. Two examples of such amateur photographic memorial websites can be found at http://crowleyonline.com/911/default.htm;http://www.stangbangers.com/September_11,_2001.htm. Details of the *Here is New York* archive are at http://hereisnewyork.org and in George *et al.* (2002). See also Michael Feldschuh (2002). Detailed analyses of these and other September 11-related photographic collections.

17. See for example Terry Smith (2006, pp. 1–2). In this work, Smith places the attacks within what he calls the 'iconomy': the 'symbolic exchanges between people, things, ideas, interest groups, and cultures that take predominantly visual form'.

18. The reference to omission is from Freud (1962a, p. 306). The term 'mnemic symbols' is used slightly earlier in Freud and Breuer (1991, p. 37). Both of these works appear quite early in Freud's career, and his understanding of trauma continued to develop, particularly in the context of the First World War and his clinical work with victims of so-called 'war neurosis'. The most significant work in this regard is perhaps *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (Freud 1990), in which he introduces the concept of the 'compulsion to repeat'.

19. Throughout Freud's 'Screen Memories' (1962a), for example, memories are described in terms of 'scenes', 'impressions' and 'reproducible mnemic images'.

20. In *Studies on Hysteria*, Breuer offers a caveat: 'all our thinking tends to be accompanied and aided by spatial ideas, and we talk in spatial metaphors. Thus when we speak of ideas which are found in the region of clear consciousness and of unconscious ones which never enter the full light of self-consciousness, we almost inevitably form pictures of a tree with its trunk in daylight and its roots in darkness, or of a building with its dark underground cellars. If, however, we constantly bear in mind that all such spatial relations are metaphorical and do not allow ourselves to be misled into supposing that these relations are literally present in the brain, we may nevertheless speak of a conscious and a subconscious. But only on this condition' (Freud and Breuer 1991, p. 307).

21. In Lacan's words, 'the function of the *tuché*, of the real as encounter – the encounter in so far as it may be missed, in so far as it is essentially the missed encounter – first presented itself in the history of psycho-analysis in a form that was in itself already enough to arouse our attention, that of the trauma' (Lacan 1994, p. 55). Elsewhere, he states that 'the double-triggered mechanism of metaphor is the very mechanism by which the symptom, in the analytic sense, is determined. Between the enigmatic signifier of the sexual trauma and the term that is substituted for it in an actual signifying chain there passes the spark that fixes in a symptom the signification inaccessible to the conscious subject in which that symptom may be resolved – a symptom being a metaphor in which flesh or function is taken as a signifying element' (Lacan 1977, p. 166). For further references to trauma within the various and complex scope of his work see Lacan 1977, p. 46, Lacan 1993, pp. 12–13, 169–170, Lacan 1994, pp. 51–55.

22. Freud 2002, p. 13. This is also evidenced in his other work, such as 'The Uncanny', (1957b), in which vision and the eyes are heavily emphasised.

23. On dreams, Freud ambiguously writes, 'if we reflect that the means of representation in dreams are principally visual images and not words, we shall see that it is even more appropriate to compare dreams with a system of writing than with a language. In fact the interpretation of dreams is completely analogous to the decipherment of an ancient pictographic script such as Egyptian hieroglyphics' (Freud 1964, p. 177). To this, Lacan responds, 'this passage is clear enough. The apparent flagrant contradiction that you can draw from it on the basis of Freud's remark that dreams are expressed in images rather than otherwise is restored and resituated as soon as he shows the sort of images in question – namely, images that occur in writing' (Lacan 1993, p. 247).

24. An important discussion of Freud's use of the camera metaphor can be found in Geoffrey Batchen (1997, p. 187).

25. This also is discussed by Batchen (1997).

26. For a evaluation of the importance of these photographs within Charcot's work, see Heath (1992, pp. 52, 53: 'so dear to Charcot in his endeavour to bring hysteria into the order of medicine, to define a clinical *picture*'), and Lomas (2000, pp. 87–88: 'the primacy of vision in Charcot's diagnostic method, its ocularcentrism, meant the hysterical woman was effectively denied a voice').

27. See Foster 1993, p. 49, Sadoff 1998, Freud 1962a. For a discussion of Freud's apparent rejection of Charcot's image-centered approach in his subsequent development of psychoanalysis, see Heath (1992, p. 53).

28. See for example George *et al.* (2002) and Feldschuh (2002).

29. Foster elucidates this formulation by referring to the originating traumatic incident as the shock: '*Shock* may exist in the world, but *trauma* develops only in the subject...for a shock to be turned into a trauma, it must be recoded by a later event: this is what Freud meant by deferred action' (Foster 1996, p. 264).

30. Other instances of Lacan's reference to the symptom as signifier 1998 (p. 320) and 1977 (pp. 10, 51).

31. See also Walter Benjamin's discussion (1980, p. 215) of the significance of captions accompanying news photographs, and also Benjamin 1992.

32. While the ideas offered here may have relevance to other high-profile traumatic events internationally, such as the Tsunami of 2004, there are fundamental differences. Taking the example of the Tsunami as 'experienced' by Western media audiences, these would include the 'otherness' of the predominantly South-Asian victims, the fact that it was a

natural disaster and therefore not so easily implicated in issues of international relations or nationalist identity politics, the fact that relatively few photographs were taken, none of which seemed to emerge definitively as representative 'icons', and finally, that while a large part of the 9/11 story rested on just how shocking, unexpected and 'movie-' or 'dream-like' it was, images of such destruction and suffering in a majority-world context were easier for Western audiences to process and recognise, and therefore the psychological effects were different.

33. Lacan writes that, 'the real is without fissure. What I teach you ... is that we have no means of apprehending this real – on any level and not only on that of knowledge – except via the go-between of the symbolic'. I take this to mean that any use of a symbolic system such as language, being merely a 'go-between', can only fall short in attempting to articulate or capture the real. This 'unspeakability' can therefore be said to associate certain aspects of the experience of September 11 with the order of the real (Lacan 1998, p. 97).

References

Apple, R.W., 2001. A creeping horror. *New York Times*, 12 September, p. A1.

Baer, U., 2002. *Spectral evidence: The photography of trauma*. London: MIT Press.

Batchen, G., 1997. *Burning with desire: The conception of photography*. London: MIT Press.

Beck, U., 1992. *Risk society: Towards a new modernity*. London: Sage.

Benjamin, W., 1980. A short history of photography. *In*: A. Trachtenberg, ed. *Classic essays on photography*. Stoney Creek, CT: Leete's Island Books.

Benjamin, W., 1992. *Illuminations* (trans. Harry Zohn). London: Fontana.

Benson, P., 1994. Freud and the visual. *Representations*, 45, 101–116.

Carman, J., 2001. Mesmerizing scenes of hell. *San Francisco Chronicle*, 12 September, p. E1.

Caruth, C. ed., 1995. *Trauma: Explorations in memory*. London: The John Hopkins University Press.

Erikson, K., 1994. *A new species of trouble: Explorations in disaster, trauma and community*. New York: Norton.

Feldschuh, M., ed. 2002. *The September 11 photo project*. New York: Harper Collins.

Foster, H., 1993. *Compulsive beauty*. London: MIT Press.

Foster, H., 1996. *The return of the real: The avant-garde at the end of the century*. London: MIT Press.

Foucault, M., 1980. *Power/knowledge* (ed. C. Gordon). London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Foucault, M., 1991. Governmentality (trans. R. Braidotti). *In*: G. Burchell, C. Gordon, and P. Miller, eds. *The Foucault effect: Studies in governmentality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 87–104.

Fox, P., 2006. Confronting postwar shame in Weimar Germany: Trauma, heroism and the war art of Otto Dix. *Oxford Art Journal*, 29 (2), 247–267.

Freud, S., 1957a. From the history of an infantile neurosis. *In*: J. Strachey, ed. & trans. *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*, *Vol. 18*. London: Hogarth Press.

Freud, S., 1957b. The uncanny. *In*: J. Strachey, ed. & trans. *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*, *Vol. 18*. London: Hogarth Press.

Freud, S., 1958. Remembering, repeating and working through. *In*: J. Strachey, ed. & trans. *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*, *Vol. 18*. London: Hogarth Press.

Freud, S., 1962a. Screen memories. *In*: J. Strachey, ed. & trans. *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*, *Vol. 3*. London: Hogarth Press.

Freud, S., 1964. The claims of psycho-analysis to scientific interest. *In*: J. Strachey, ed. & trans. *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*, *Vol. 13*. London: Hogarth Press.

Freud, S., 1990. *Beyond the pleasure principle* (trans. J. Strachey). London: W.W. Norton.

Freud, S., 1991a. *Civilization, society and religion: Group psychology, civilization and its discontents and other works*. London: Penguin.

Freud, S., 1991b. *Introductory lectures on psychoanalysis* (trans. J. Strachey). London: Penguin.

Freud, S., 2002. *The psychopathology of everyday life* (trans. A. Bell). London: Penguin.

Freud, S. and Breuer, J., 1991. *Studies on hysteria* (trans. J. Strachey). London: Penguin.

George, A.R., et al., eds., 2002. *Here is New York: A democracy of photographs*. Zurich: Scalo.

Giddens, A., 1999. Risk and responsibility. *Modern Law Review*, 62 (1), 1–10.

Goode, E., 2001. Trauma, felt directly or not, takes a psychic toll. *New York Times*, 13 September, p. A2.

Heath, S., 1992. *The sexual subject: A screen reader in sexuality*. London: Routledge.

Herman, J.L., 1997. *Trauma and recovery: The aftermath of violence from domestic abuse to political terror*. New York: Basic Books.

Homer, S., 2005. *Jacques Lacan*. London: Routledge.

Huyssen, A., 2001. Present pasts: Media, politics, amnesia. *In*: A. Appadurai, ed. *Globalization*. Durham: Duke University Press, 56–76.

James, C., 2001. Live images make viewers witnesses to horror. *New York Times*, 12 September, p. A25.

Jarzombek, M., 2006. *In*: L. Saltzman and E. Rosenberg, eds., *Trauma and visuality in modernity*. Lebanon, NH: Dartmouth College Press.

Johnston, S., 2001. Attack on TV was surreal. *Chicago Tribune*, 11 September, p. 21.

Katukani, M., 2001. Struggling to find words for a horror beyond words. *New York Times*, 13 September, p. E1.

Klein, K.L., 2000. On the emergence of memory in historical discourse. *Representations*, 69, 127–150.

Knight, C., 2001. Elusive and illusionary: A single, iconic image has not emerged from coverage of last week's attack. *Los Angeles Times*, 16 September, pp. A6–A7.

Lacan, J., 1977. *Écrits: A selection* (trans. A. Sheridan). New York: Norton.

Lacan, J., 1993. *The seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book III, 1955–1965: The psychoses* (trans. R. Grigg). London: Routledge.

Lacan, J., 1994. *The four fundamental concepts of psycho-analysis*. London: Penguin.

Lacan, J., 1998. *Seminar book II: The ego in Freud's theory and in the technique of psychoanalysis* (ed. J. Miller). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

LaCapra, D., 1994. *Representing the Holocaust: History, theory, trauma*. London: Cornell University Press.

LaCapra, D., 2001. *Writing history, writing trauma*. London: The John Hopkins University Press.

Lara, A., 2001. The day the world changed. *San Francisco Chronicle*, 12 September, p. E8.

LaPlanche, J. and Pontalis, J.B., 1973. *The language of psychoanalysis* (trans. D. Nicholson). London: The Hogarth Press.

Lomas, D., 2000. *The haunted self: Surrealism, psychoanalysis*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Loose change, 2005. Film. Directed by Avery, D., USA: Independent.

Lotringer, S. and Virilio, P., 2005. *The accident of art*. New York: Semiotext(e).

Nye, R.A., 1975. *The origins of crowd psychology: Gustave LeBon and the crisis of mass democracy in the Third Republic*. London: Sage.

Reardon, P.T., 2001. Fear: 'What makes anybody safe anywhere?' *Chicago Tribune*, 12 September, p. 18.

Rose, B., 2001. Technology provides lifeline during disaster. *Chicago Tribune*, 13 September, p. 1.

Ryan, J., 2001. Terrorists have riddled us all with fear. *San Francisco Chronicle*, 12 September, p. 2.

Sadoff, D.F., 1998. *Sciences of the flesh: Representing body and subject in psychoanalysis*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Saltzman, L. and Rosenberg, E., eds., 2006. *Trauma and visuality in modernity*. Lebanon, NH: Dartmouth College Press.

San Francisco Chronicle, 2001. Time out to deal with trauma. *San Francisco Chronicle*, 13 September, p. A24.

Smith, T., 2006. *The architecture of aftermath*. London: University of Chicago Press.

Sontag, S., 1979. *On photography*. London: Penguin.

Zelizer, B. and Allan, S., eds., 2002. *Journalism after September 11*. London: Routledge.

9/11: *The Falling Man*, 2006. Film. Directed by A. Singer. USA: Darlow Smithson Productions.