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VISUAL FRICTIONS

Unlikely cryptfellows: hospitality, difference, and spectrality at the 9/11 Museum

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Abstract

This paper offers a reading of the National September 11 Memorial and Museum to suggest that the encounter with strangers or strangeness is at the core of cultural and commemorative production in the aftermath of a terrorist attack. Specifically, I engage the museum as a text that has significant implications on how we approach the philosophy of hospitality in a time of terror. I argue that the ways in which objects and artifacts exist in relation to one another in the museum act out hospitality in ways that are both unexpected and unintended. For example, while human remains are stored on site, they are only referred to through symbolic art and digital displays that act as a kind of sleight of hand. In particular, I take up the inclusion of a brick from Osama Bin Laden's Abbottabad compound in Pakistan that has been incorporated into the museum in a fashion that is carefully orchestrated and framed. The brick, however, exceeds the frame in which it is permitted to be included in the exhibit; its visuality and materiality defy—and even contradict—the expected narrative of the museum. The brick appears as juxtaposed next to a Navy SEAL uniform and is meant to draw attention toward the distinction between terrorist and national hero, yet as a physical presence in the museum, it retains a sense of both vulnerability and affect as it bears striking resemblance to the bedrock of the towers themselves. Ultimately, I suggest that while the disjunctures between artifacts may seem initially jarring—these are items, after all, that are meant to produce very different material and mediatized effects; they offer a working-through of a hospitality that is crucial to the museum and all culture produced in response to the attacks.



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Keywords: *9/11 Museum; War on Terror; hospitality; Abbottabad brick; materiality; Bin Laden; strangers; violence; aesthetics; difference*

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Opened in May 2014, the National September 11 Memorial and Museum represents a culmination of public mourning and remembrance, research, debate, and recovery in the aftermath of 9/11, and in some way signals the end of the critical phase of the War on Terror (although this war is, to be sure, far from over). The death of Osama Bin Laden, the passing of the 10 years anniversary of the attacks, the opening of the central landmark of memorialization, and the completion of One World Trade Center—which has become the most prominent signifier of the financial revitalization of lower Manhattan—are all notable moments in the culmination of more than a decade of history. The museum also marks out a beginning and perhaps initiates a time when we might start thinking differently about the preoccupation with strangers that continues to dominate social, cultural, and political life. These strangers are, of course, as methodological and philosophical as they are tangible, and this paper seeks to engage with the figure of the stranger beyond conventional markers and representations of cultural, religious, or racial difference. The study of such representations—of the so-called “terrorist other” is well covered by both foundational and contemporary thinkers.¹ Moreover, the dominant narrative of a general “us” (white, American) versus a vague “them” (Eastern or Arab, racially othered) is certainly present in the mainstream rhetoric surrounding the museum’s purpose, plan, and physical displays. I want to read the stranger, however, as a figure of depth, philosophical resonance, and ethical injunction that destabilizes what we think we know about the boundaries of what is strange and familiar, particularly in the space of a museum that, I argue, reverses and collapses such distinctions, rendering the strange familiar—or, at the very least, uncanny—and the familiar strange once more. In other words, the rush to revitalize and commemorate raises important questions for what it means to engage hospitably with known and unknown others, questions that matter even more in what is still a time of terror. Indeed, if there was ever a time for a resurgence of hospitality as we understand it in the philosophical sense—that is, the open and unconditional welcome of whoever or whatever may arrive—the time is now, not only in consideration of the museum’s official opening but also because, as the War on Terror shifts away from Iraq and Afghanistan and toward other nations, it

matters increasingly how we deploy strategies of apprehending others—particularly as those strategies are learned from the visual legacy of the 9/11 attacks. Indeed, not only do the events of 9/11 continue to reverberate as series of images and have developed their own visual iconography—familiar images such as the towers or Osama Bin Laden’s face on a wanted poster that circulate indefinitely, for example—but the War on Terror itself, in many ways, continues to be fueled by a *visual* imagination, hostile to difference.

AFFECT AND AESTHETICS: THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

The initial experience of the museum is certainly different from a visit to the surface memorial as the names etched into the granite walls begin to reanimate once one walks through the doors of the bright entry pavilion.² Yet, it is the first moments underground that suggest the museum is defined by a provocative and haunting discourse of hospitality—one that can be interrogated in many of the museum’s visual exhibits. Joining the crowd wandering toward the main exhibition space, one registers that this mass of people is shuffling deeper into what essentially remains a crypt. Indeed, in both the public and political expressions of mourning following 9/11, the site is often referred to as a cemetery, burial ground, or final resting place. As former mayor Rudolph Giuliani argues in his editorial for the anniversary edition of *Time* in September 2002, “Ground zero is a cemetery. It is the last resting place for loved ones whose bodies were not recovered and whose remains are still within that hallowed ground.”³ Yet, the museum is also a place of deep abstraction, as the digital and symbolic displays often come to substitute for their material referent. The museum crypt is an especially fraught place of burial, particularly because the space was not intentionally created to house the remains of victims; instead, it was carved out in the very process of their demise. The crypt, in fact, was what killed them. Yet, it is in this crypt where hospitality makes its two most significant gestures, through the cordoning off of human remains that refuse to go unnoticed and in the unlikely placement of artifacts that are displayed in an extraordinarily out-of-place fashion.

Surely the museum has a rigorous screening process for the items it includes and emphasizes a

very particular narrative of events, often at the expense of other narratives. This central narrative of commemoration, while presented objectively, is beholden, of course, to the tenuous relationship between memory, personal and historical perception, selective representation, and forgetfulness.⁴ In other words, narrative, while presented as objective and historically accurate, can be wildly imaginative and swayed by both intentional and unconscious factors. This is particularly the case with visual narratives, whose “truths” are translated once more from text, speech, or firsthand experience—a hermeneutical chain that has, since antiquity, been an unstable and slippery cycle of interpretation. What then of these visual displays themselves—the strange passages, curious absences, odd juxtapositions, and artifacts that seem generally out of place, either in the structural flow of the museum or in their detachments from the bodies that once gave them animation? In other words, where in the museum might we read other incidences of invitation or exclusion, things that seem foreign or odd, and find “guests” that show up uninvited and unannounced and defy coherent interpretation? I invoke the spectral here to refer to ghostly figures of haunting, unhomeliness, exception, invisibility, curiosity, and phantasm, especially when these figures appear outside of expectation, outside of material presence, and who operate thus as social figures and not simply as gothic terrors. They appear in traces rather than in whole and are often both undefined and uninvited. As Patrice Ladwig elaborates, “ghosts can here be understood as strangers to the realm of the living who through the crossing of an ontological boundary intrude into a world to which they usually do not belong.”⁵ Thus, in their deconstructive efforts, ghosts become both the invited and uninvited guests in the process of making and unmaking meaning. Where then do we find these spectral artifacts that meld, attract, or repel? And what can be made of objects that appear similar in shape, structure, and design but that come with vastly irreconcilable histories? As a crypt, the 9/11 museum inadvertently engages with remains and remnant objects that administrators and politicians would likely prefer to keep buried, even while they stand on obvious display. One such artifact—a single brick from Osama Bin Laden’s Abbottabad compound—reflects precisely this mingling of the spectral and the tangible and, in so doing, offers

a sustained preoccupation with a discourse of hospitality at the museum site. The brick is placed alongside a Navy SEAL uniform and is intended to be a symbol of both those responsible for the attacks and ultimately America’s victory over them; unintentionally, however, it offers much more.

UNLIKELY CRYPTFELLOWS

To find the Abbottabad brick, visitors walk through the “Center Passage,” into Foundation Hall. The hall is a curious and cavernous space with only a few exhibition materials and is situated between the preserved slurry wall and the excavated North Tower—of which the original bedrock support columns are still visible. At the entrance to Foundation Hall, visitors pass by the mangled wreckage of the Ladder 3 fire engine and the steel beam from Flight 11’s point of impact, at which point the material immediately gives way to the mediatized in the form of four digital screens and a recording studio inviting written and verbal personal messages. This thread—material to digital and back to material—continues to be the most prominent feature in Foundation Hall. The “last column,” a 30-foot section of steel beam, acts as a “symbol of resilience” and tribute to rescue workers and became the last portion of the tower to be removed from the excavation site.⁶ Preserved now in the museum, the last column stands alongside interactive features such as recorded testimony from rescue workers, touch screens that provide close-up images of the inscriptions, and posters affixed to the column itself. At the end of Foundation Hall is an interactive timeline that uses a complex algorithm to search news reports from all over the world that contain material related to 9/11. The entire hall is permeated by the strange relationship between tangible and digital worlds—perhaps befitting of an event that was, in many ways, mediatized before materialized, yet curious nonetheless. This relationship is strange because it is oddly characterized by a simultaneous disparity and interdependency between the material and the mediatized and is continually disrupting the visitors’ expectations of how the events of 9/11 should and can be remembered. In places where one might expect to find a tangible artifact, for example, in the case of human remains, such elements are referred to symbolically and represented via artistic installation or digitalized in a photographic

wall but never actually shown. In most cases, moreover, the digital and material seem to work together and do not initially appear to offer a contradictory narrative of the events and their mourning. The attempt here is to establish a unified and continuous narrative—using different media to tell what is meant to be the same story. Yet object, material, digital, or otherwise often do far more than the work they are intended for. For example, in the case of the timeline projected on the wall, the aesthetic element of light, mathematical algorithms, and computer technology work together to produce what the original items (newspapers and magazine) cannot in the space of the museum. Yet, it is what is next to this virtual timeline that is the most curious addition to Foundation Hall and a complete rupture with the careful balance between the virtual and the tangible. It is a display that represents not only a physical history but also acts as a conduit for a provocative spectrality. To be sure, there are elements of spectrality in a number of the museum's displays, particularly those that offer a virtual experience of 9/11 and its aftermath, yet it is the final display in Foundation Hall that seems to surpass even the digital in its presentation of an object that is no much more than its material presence.

Within Foundation Hall, the brick from Bin Laden's compound is —encased in glass, and is among a handful of small artifacts in the room that is mostly meant to showcase large artifacts such as the last column. While the brick is certainly part of the larger narrative of 9/11, it seems out of place in a space so heavily invested in emotional commemoration and the personal narratives of victims and rescue workers. There are exhibits detailing the rise of Al Qaeda, the timelines of each hijacking, and history of the War on Terror, yet they are all located elsewhere, part of the historical exhibition, predominantly digital, and, as such, the materiality of the brick stands out in stark contrast to the overwhelmingly somber, commemorative, and deeply personal Foundation Hall displays. Where the integration of digital and tangible elements elsewhere in the museum provides a way for visitors to continually reflect and engage in their movement through various exhibits, here, it is jarring. The brick, one of only a few materials not originally excavated from the site, interrupts the careful and thoughtful flow of a visitor experience that is otherwise meticulously orchestrated. Moreover,

the brick, in its location and in its similarity to other artifacts in the museum, surpasses its own materiality and even exceeds the possibility of its digitization.

Rendered spectral in its representation of death and role as a signifier for retributive justice, the brick also calls up significant and likely unintentional similarities that are particularly compelling in a museum narrative that seeks to establish a common identity among visitors that is easily distinguishable from 9/11 perpetrators. The museum presumes that the brick comes to stand for a difference with which no visitor will identify. The brick can only arrive at the museum as an other/hostile who is invited into the space conditionally and only in its capacity to stand as a marker of murderous and irredeemable difference. What is the museum asking of us who visit then? To align ourselves as victims and unite in grief, memorialization, and, ultimately, victory? Indeed, the circumstances and commentary surrounding this particular brick—one of thousands to fall from the compound—present it as a historical artifact but also as a spoil of war. Part of the brick's curious placement is due to its value as a testament to vengeance and revenge; it is an enduring reminder of the combined efforts of the CIA and the SEAL team and a symbol of justice served. In this way, the brick breaks from the narrative of memorialization and resembles, much more closely, the rhetoric of revenge and retribution that characterized so many of the cultural responses to Bin Laden's death.⁷ By doing this, the symbolism of the brick inadvertently links the museum with a project of revenge, even if this is not its expressed purpose, and suggests that the attacks need to be not only remembered but also perpetually avenged. What is also significant are the ways in which the brick's placement and context draw attention to a revenge that can only be enacted through violent means. Bin Laden's death is represented here not in the form of an obituary, a birth and death date, or images of his burial; rather, it is represented as a death that was specifically carried out as a targeted killing and in direct retaliation for the 9/11 attacks. The disruption between the carefully crafted memorial narrative and the visual reminder of a black ops assassination is likely not intended to elicit a sense of contradiction in the visitor, yet the brick ruptures the dominant narrative of

events and gestures toward another set of unintended consequences.

Indeed, the brick is most certainly a symbol of revenge but it is not contained by that symbolism either. In other words, it is much more than the revenge that it signifies, and more than the narrative made possible through its final display location. Moreover, it is its jarring integration into Foundation Hall that raises significant questions about what it means to open one's home, memory, or self-hospitably to the other. What, for example, are the implications of accepting an artifact as a symbol of difference, yet one that whose materiality is painstakingly well kept? For instance, before the arrival of the museum visitor; before the integration of written context, audio commentary, and glass casing; and prior to being set alongside a Navy SEAL uniform, a brick arrives at the gate of the crypt. Like all artifacts arriving at the museum, it is treated carefully, possibly handled with gloves so as not to disturb its fragile state of decomposition. At once an object of abjection, slated for demolition, and one of celebration, this artifact is meticulously preserved, even protected. It is an oddly generous, we might even say hospitable, welcoming of an artifact that was intended for destruction and carelessly chiseled with little regard for its conservation. Stripped of context and down to its irreducible singularity, then, the brick announces something besides its affiliation with terrorism—something else entirely—that may not eliminate but certainly exposes the conditional hospitality leveled upon it. Furthermore, it calls on visitors to recognize the scene by which they will be interpellated, and that has already been determined, calling into question Foundation Hall's emphasis on a shared narrative of events, and, more crucially, a shared vulnerability to attack. The display attempts to assuage difference by asking visitors to participate in a collective identity that is not directly victimized but closely and somewhat arbitrarily (and historically⁸) aligned, yet simultaneously preserves the difference of the brick.

A TALE OF BRICK AND BEDROCK

At first glance, it appears like any other brick, although lighter in color than a traditional red brick. Its edges are not perfectly squared and the color of the natural rock from which it was excavated shows through. It is stamped with an indistinguishable

imprint and several indented marks can be seen, perhaps from the destruction of the compound or from the chisel used to separate it from other bricks. On its own, it appears innocuous and unthreatening. Importantly, the brick is not from the top of the three-story compound but, rather, a piece of its fortified foundation.⁹ It operates as far more than evidence of a successful mission; it also inadvertently raises provocative questions—questions that cannot be contained by attempts to digitize the display—about the nature of remnant objects which function in often-unintended ways. What are the accidental effects, for example, of including an artifact that is also from a place of ruin—an item that, if positioned without its context, could easily be mistaken for a chiseled piece of bedrock from one of the towers? Indeed, the brick shares an eerie material affinity with the excavated support columns of the towers that are on display throughout the museum.

Similar in color and composition, the “box column remnants” lie at intervals around both the North and South Tower excavations. As the anchors for the steel beams that supported the towers, these remnants have been cut in such a way that the grooves in the surface resemble the chisel marks on the Abbottabad brick. Moreover, much like the brick from Bin Laden's compound, the box column remnants are support structures, excavated from the foundation of the towers. They are, like the foundation bricks in Abbottabad, what anchored the towers in place and, just as the foundational bedrock at Ground Zero is not simply inanimate rock, neither is the brick. Both carry meaning far deeper than their physical composition and function, and it is their curious placement in such proximity that allows us to think about a hospitality to difference precisely through their similarities. There are compelling comparisons to be made between the brick and the tower bedrock. Both are stone, both are preserved for eternity (presumably), and yet both represent vulnerable buildings and bodies. Moreover, neither was intended to be excavated and put on display in this fashion, and the exhibition of geological material seems more appropriate for a natural history museum than a memorial one. Curiously then, in their similarities, the brick and the bedrock are both figures of difference; they are both out of place and not entirely at home in this space, even if part of the original structure.

The placement of the brick in Foundation Hall could possibly stand as a reminder of by whom and how the 9/11 attacks were perpetrated. Significantly, it stands in juxtaposition to the digitalized historical displays that recount the rise of Al Qaeda. As a historical artifact, the brick might better serve as a point of victory and celebration as part of this historical narrative that dichotomizes the bravery of the SEAL team and resilience of counterterrorism intelligence against the threat of global terror. Yet, why is the brick remembered in Foundation Hall—in an area so invested in tribute? Incredibly, while many visitors can turn around and walk back through the Foundation Hall the way they came, it is also possible to walk from the display of the brick, around the perimeter of the North Tower back to the center passage between the two towers. There is only one possible route around this excavation area and, after the brick, the dedicated walkway follows the angles of the former tower (alongside box column remnants) around to the large art installation, *Trying to Remember the Color of the Sky That Morning*, by Spencer Finch,¹⁰ that obscures the on-site repository and medical office for the storage and identification of 9/11 human remains. There are, in short, no additional exhibits between the brick and the repository adding to the peculiar and unexpected positioning of the brick on the far side of Foundation Hall. The repository and the brick, in other words, are literally next to one another; they are neighbors in this space and they share it as most unlikely cryptfellows. The brick's location in Foundation Hall, rather than in the history of Al Qaeda and as a stranger alongside established victims, is so crucial, and, while it is surely not the intended function, the location of the brick positions it not as history to be told but as a trace to be remembered. It is, if both its original location and final resting place are any indication, foundational to the ways in which we come to think about ourselves in relation to strangers.

Almost everything about the Abbottabad brick seems out of place; its resemblance to the excavated bedrock, ordination in regards to the repository wall, and its affiliation with perpetrator rather than victim in an exhibition hall (with this solitary exception) dedicated to meaningful tribute. The proximity between the brick and the remains of 9/11 victims, not to mention the resemblance between the brick and the bedrock, are particularly strange

scenarios in a museum that seeks, on every occasion, to highlight the difference between victim and perpetrator. Yet, what would it mean to view these objects as visual impetus to think of the destruction of the towers and the victims who died there as similar to the destruction of Osama Bin Laden's compound and his death? Conversely, what can be made of this inadvertent, or perhaps careless, juxtaposition of artifacts within Foundation Hall that actually aims to prevent such an unthinkable equivalence and how do we think through this similarity in order to maintain a difference that does not level the ethical demands of each? It is possible to test the conventions, possibilities, and limits of hospitality without dissolving completely the difference between brick and bedrock. By some force of theoretical alchemy we might try to meld the two together; they would, by all material appearances, be indistinguishable and there is certainly something provocatively productive in thinking through a would-be object¹¹ whose material remains are ambiguous. Yet, despite the important ethical questions raised by similitude—the ways in which they both represent a kind of structural and corporeal vulnerability, for instance—such questions need not detract from the singularity of each and their unique demands. If these objects appear similar, that must not eliminate their differences. To see both as representative of loss, in other words, is not to hold those losses in equity. Both are differentially complex. Indeed, the victims of the 9/11 attacks, whose remains are stored behind the repository wall, are unidentified yet easily mourned. Osama Bin Laden, on the contrary, is strategically located, forensically identified, and yet nearly impossible to mourn. Thus, the utility of thinking through difference lies not in rendering these artifacts, bodies, or losses equal but, rather, in leveraging a comparison—an effect produced by the ordering and display of the 9/11 Museum—in order to think through the complexities of hospitality more comprehensively and trace its prevalence more than its solution across a number of complicated terrains, including a terrain of spectrality that cannot be untethered from discussions of hospitality in remnant objects.

HOSPITALITY AND THE GHOST OF TRAUMAS PAST

To travel beneath the surface of the memorial and into the literal crypt of 9/11 trauma is to discover

that the memorial and museum are powerfully, intimately, and irrevocably concerned with the relationship between the digital and the material, both of which have effects that linger long after the visit and exceed the borders given to them. We might call these effects, which bend the tangible and digital into one another, *spectral* effects. To be sure, the museum is intensely preoccupied with matters of haunting and, more specifically, the figure of the ghost. The site is permeated by a sense of strangeness, not only in the more eerie or macabre rhetoric of a sacred burial ground but also in less obvious figures of dust, sacrament, invisibility, and virtuality. The site itself, as built *into* the ground in uncharacteristic contrast to the surrounding cityscape, plays on notions of what is visible and what is hidden and prompts queries into what lingers, or even perhaps haunts, below the surface of things. Beyond Giuliani's designation of Ground Zero as a "cemetery," one notorious example of how the entire space is rendered spectral is the "Tribute in Light" memorial which dominated the New York skyline from March 11 until April 13, 2002, to mark the 6-month anniversary of the attacks. Shooting powerful beams of light up from the tower's footprints and into the sky, this temporary memorial was referred to as the "Phantom Towers" and the two beams have been described by Julian LaVerdiere, one of the artists involved as "ghost limbs [that] we can feel . . . even though they're not there anymore."¹²

The ghost becomes such a crucial figure for hospitality then not only because it appears as an invited guest in the space and archive of the museum but also because hospitality is not based on invitation at all but on *visitation*. The museum can certainly limit its scope of invitation through a variety of practical and discursive practices, but it cannot limit the visitation(s) that the ambiguity of spectral objects make possible. It would seem that the most provocative figures of hospitality are the ones that show up despite the attempts to banish them, to render them invisible, or contain them within entirely digital or material frameworks. These ghosts return as virtual specters or trace phantoms in remnant objects such as bricks and are never fully exorcised in order to pose serious questions about how we encounter strangers after 9/11. If hospitality is concerned especially with what or who does not belong, then the museum and memorial provide ample evidence of things

"out of place": obscene images of falling bodies, eerie artifacts, human remains, disembodied objects and voices, and the faces of the perpetrators. These are the revenants of the museum—the things that are not invited into the official narratives of memorialization but that "come back precisely because [they] have been buried or concealed" much like memory.¹³ Thus, in their deconstructive efforts, these artifacts become both the invited and uninvited guests in the process of making and unmaking meaning. As spectral figures demonstrative of the impossibility of absolute ideological suppression, they deconstruct the very processes that seek to annihilate them. In short, they challenge what we know and understand about the world, whether they are summoned or not.

At stake in the welcoming (back) of uninvited ghosts to the World Trade Center site is the possibility that such ghosts arrive not only to teach us something about hospitality but also to demand that we exercise such hospitality before we know what the consequences might be and regardless of where we might be. And like the ghost, the Abbottabad brick becomes the unannounced, unexpected, and uninvited stranger *par excellence* who defies all attempts to render it familiar or predict its arrival. Derrida defines this arrival of the stranger as

[a]waiting without horizon of the wait, awaiting what one does not expect yet or any longer, hospitality without reserve, welcoming salutation accorded in advance to the absolute surprise of the arrivant from whom or from which one will not ask anything in return and who or which will not be asked to commit to the domestic contracts of any welcoming power.¹⁴

Derrida's definition is even more apt when reading the presence of a brick at the memorial and museum site, as a specter who not only comes uninvited but arrives before the notion of awaiting such an arrival ever enters the imagination. It is a ghost that is always waiting, existing perpetually on a threshold between here and there, life and death. Indeed, the brick forces us to confront important questions, among them: is the ghost a welcome guest, a hostile threat, or perhaps both? Indeed, in addition to challenging the borders of what we know or expect, the brick also confronts questions of being and reality that are integral to a deeper understanding of (and intervention in) post-9/11

culture. The spectrality of remnant objects is crucial to working through these questions. Moreover, these are questions that only increase in consequence as we move further away from September 11, 2001, the date, and toward a notion of 9/11 as a defining cultural milieu—one whose meaning reverberates and recurs endlessly. As a moment, the event shapes and haunts the present, even (and especially) as the completion of the museum and official missions of the “War on Terror” have been scaled back yet at the same time renewed, especially in Iraq and Syria, with a different yet familiar enemy. The deeply material yet simultaneously ghostly figure of the brick reminds us that this past is not dissociated from even the more philosophical questions about others and strangers. The ghosts can teach us about how we respond to and read the culture of 9/11, and it is something intimately and provocatively invested in relations of hospitality.

The September 11 Memorial and Museum is a compelling text through which to think through remnant objects and artifacts “out of place” in order to conceptualize the significance of hospitality for how the event of 9/11 and its aftermath are remembered, commemorated, and taught. Yet, the brick and other “ghostly” objects do more than pose critical questions about politics and culture; they are also decidedly ethical figures—signs of alterity that makes significant demands. Despite the attempt to exorcise ghosts from the memorial site or, at the very least, force them to conform to acceptable positions as harbingers or protectors of nationalist culture and ideology, the ghost is a figure that resists such containment and, if accepted under conditions of absolute hospitality, can teach us much about how we encounter strangers and strangeness in a post-9/11 world. Moreover, such ghosts return to teach us something about the past, a past we may not be familiar with and thus demands an openness to the kinds of memories that ghosts may bring along that challenge not only the enduring and decidedly exceptional narrative of 9/11 but also other global instances of violence and inequity as well. Perhaps, it is the ghost that opens this gate for us and interrogates our openness to alternative histories, living and dead, elided in the service of a narrative of 9/11 memorialization that, however official, remains incomplete. Indeed, as Avery Gordon argues, “the ghost cannot be simply

tracked back to an individual loss or trauma. The ghost has its own desires.”¹⁵ Gordon’s recognition is crucial in the context of memorialization and the individualization of diverse desires for the museum and memorial. We must ask of our memorials, in other words, what the ghosts—guests or hostiles, tangible or digital—might want and offer a hospitality to history that accounts for those omissions.

The September 11 Memorial and Museum, through its conjuring of some ghosts and exorcism of others, reveals not only the complexity but also the absolute necessity of hospitality toward what is most odd about commemorating trauma. Ultimately, it is the strange artifacts such as the Abbottabad brick that reveal that the event of 9/11 is not in any rigorous sense finished. The contradictory placement of artifacts at Ground Zero pose ethical as well as ontological questions about how we mourn a traumatic event and what that mourning might mean in terms of how we incorporate or disavow remnants, or revenants, be they the return or residue of memory, artifacts, or the living dead that are buried in the crypt-like foundations of the museum and aspirated as dust into the lungs of New Yorkers. While its initial associations may be of hearth and home, hospitality is always, first and foremost, a haunting—and it is a haunting brought on by mourning which makes the processes of memorialization at Ground Zero an ideal site upon which to practice an ethic of unconditional welcome to whomever, whatever (ghosts, guests, bricks or bedrock, strangers or hostiles, digitalized or materialized) might turn up, for even in that extreme risk there is something to be learned that transcends the scene of the museum and makes tangible the possibilities of hospitality across the complex topographies of social and cultural life after 9/11. As Jodey Castricano elaborates, “[t]o learn to live with ghosts is to rethink ourselves through the dead or, rather, through the return of the dead (in us) and thus through haunting.”¹⁶ This living with, as a kind of living through and for, is not about tolerance, nor is it about charity. It is not about welcoming the stranger in, as a kind of benevolent extension of the privilege of the host but, rather, about an unreserved welcome to a figure from whom we require nothing but who nonetheless comes with much to offer.

Notes

1. See Edward Said's *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978); Sam Keen's *Faces of the Enemy* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1986); Mahmood Mamdani's *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim* (New York: Three Leaves, 2004); and Sherene Razack's *Casting Out* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008) for a representative approach to the topic.
2. This article is based on observations and research conducted during a visit to the 9/11 Museum on October 17, 2014.
3. Rudolph Giuliani, "Getting it right at Ground Zero," *Time*, September 9, 2002, N.p.
4. See Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009).
5. Patrice Ladwig, "Visitors from Hell: Transformative Hospitality to Ghosts in a Lao Buddhist Festival," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 18 (2012): S90–102.
6. "The Last Column: A Symbol of Resilience," *National September 11 Memorial and Museum* (2014).
7. The rhetoric of revenge was prominent following the news of Bin Laden's death on May 2, 2011. The *New York Post* employed this discourse emphatically on its front page with a bold "GOT HIM" in block letters and beneath that: "Vengeance at last! US nails the bastard." *Newsweek* used a white and red image of Bin Laden with the title "Mission Accomplished" for its May 16, 2011 cover, and the Seattle weekly magazine *The Stranger* highlighted the old adage of "an eye for an eye" in the week of May 4–10, 2011, by depicting Bin Laden much like a black and white tower against the blue backdrop of the sky, a lone bullet approaching from his left side bearing resemblance to an airplane flying much too low. Even President Barack Obama employed the language of revenge when, on television and announcing Bin Laden death to the world, he proclaimed "Justice has been done" (quoted in Macon Phillips, "Osama Bin Laden Dead," *The White House Blog*, May 2, 2011).
8. There is precedent for this type of memorialization as a shared or vicarious victimization. Indeed, it echoes a refrain of historical suffering that is not experienced in vain alongside the promise to "never forget"—a phrase saved for the very worst of collective traumas, including the Holocaust and Pearl Harbor. In the case of 9/11, such calls to remembrance not only risk reinforcing rhetoric of American exceptionalism but they also initiate a dominant American public into a shared sense of present (vis-à-vis historical-traumatic) collective identity.
9. Alex Drakakis, "Brick from Compound Where Bin Laden Was Killed Enters Museum Collection," *The Memo Blog*, October 25, 2014.
10. Sarah Cascone, "Spencer Finch Immortalizes Crystalline Blue Sky at the 9/11 Museum," *Art Net*, May 15, 2014. Finch's piece is created from 2,983 hand painted sheets of Italian paper—the number of total victims from the 1993 and 2001 attacks. Visitors take in the sheer volume of the installation, the poignancy of the Virgil quote incorporated into its design—"No day shall erase you from the memory of time"—and the diversity of cool tones that represent the imagination of New Yorkers looking at the sky that September morning. Meant to represent the lives lost on 9/11, these individual panels of paper offer a symbolic gesture toward the museum site as a final resting place. What is not immediately obvious (and, for some, never known) is what is behind the wall: an actual crypt that houses the dead. Stored since 2001 in a Manhattan medical examiner's office, the as-yet unidentified human remains of 9/11 victims were transferred on May 10, 2014, in a ceremonial procession to the 9/11 Museum—their "final resting place."
11. This possibility is not simply imaginative as the museum does contain an object precisely of this sort. Part of the historical exhibition includes a large section of the former towers known simply as "the composite." The composite is a 15-ton section of compressed granite, steel, and other material which fused together during the collapse of the buildings. Scientific analysis has proven that there are no biological remains present in the composite, yet while no human DNA has been found in the composite, officials do admit that comprehensive testing is difficult. It is, after all, composed of four or five floors and includes pieces of paper with discernable human writing that, despite the lack of official DNA, offer "trace" remains of human contact and industry.
12. In Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Kodak Moments, Flashbulb Memories: Reflections on 9/11," *The Drama Review* 47, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 11–48.
13. Richard Kearney, *Strangers Gods and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 142.
14. Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (New York: Routledge Classics, 2006), 81–2.
15. Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 183.
16. Jodey Castricano, *Cryptomimesis* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2001), 19.