

## **Mourning in Absent Memorials**

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Upon the opening of the National September 11<sup>th</sup> Memorial, 'Reflecting Absence', the *New York Post* published their review under the title "The Healing Begins at Last: grief, relief and rave reviews as 9/11 memorial opens to public"<sup>1</sup> The title is a shocking one, suggesting that no healing has taken place in the ten years since the attack, and even more boldly implying that the monument can offer healing in a way nothing that came before could. The rhetoric of healing surrounding *Reflecting Absence* is atypical, and seems idealistic at best.

Memorial monuments are a response to grief, but none have gone so far as to claim they are actively healing, until recently. When former New York major, Michael Bloomberg, announced the memorial was "for the grieving [individuals] to find a path to healing"<sup>2</sup>, healing was already a keyword for the monument. Through examination of the role historical and contemporary monuments alongside *Reflecting Absence*, I intend to test the validity of the bold claim that this memorial monument plays a role in healing the bereaved.

Memorial monuments were designed to engage with grieving. The Cenotaph, a World War II monument, is the perfect example of a monument designed around grieving. Its minimal decoration and empty innards allow this tomb to be individual for every person or family who was unable to bury their dead. Yet, with visitation from the Queen, Prime Minister and other government officials every year along with its public location in Whitehall, the Cenotaph is also a place for Britain to grieve en mass.

This tradition, in Europe, began with monuments of World War I where "communal commemorative art provided first and foremost a framework for and legitimating of individual and family grief."<sup>3</sup> Grief is central to World War I monuments because it responds to an immense struggle in repatriating a country's dead. Those lost in battles far a field, perhaps buried in mass graves or bombed beyond recognition, were difficult to bring home, and in some cases even to identify as any particular country's casualties. The change in war tactics meant new challenges in repatriation, which could not be met. Despite the challenges, after such traumatic losses "the need to bring the dead home, to put the dead to rest, symbolically or physically, was pervasive."<sup>4</sup> As a result, families back home were tragically unable to bury their loved ones.

The trauma of war combined with the inability to bury the dead creates unexpected complexities in the process of mourning. Studying people who had missing loved ones, Maria Pelento noted that being unable to perform basic rituals such as burial or caring for remains "made it impossible to fulfill the necessary conditions to trigger and maintain the work of mourning".<sup>5</sup> Such rituals have long aided the mourning process, often being considered a requirement; in *Antigone* burial rites are referred to as law of the gods, to be considered above the rule of king and country.

The lack of proper burial that alarmed the survivors of the World Wars still is still a consideration for memorials today.

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<sup>1</sup> Sutherland, Amber and Leonard Greene, "The Healing Begins at Last: grief, relief and rave reviews as 9/11 memorial opens to public" in *New York Post*. Web. 30 Jan 2012. <<http://www.nypost.com>>.

<sup>2</sup> *A Place of Remembrance: Official Book of the National September 11 Memorial*. Allison Blais and Lynn Rasic eds. Washington DC: National Geographic Society, 2011. p 15

<sup>3</sup> Winter, Jay. *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. p 93

<sup>4</sup> Winter, p. 28.

<sup>5</sup> Pelento, Maria Lucila. "Mourning for 'missing' people" in *On Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia"*. Fiorini, Leticia, Thierry Bokanowski, and Sergio Lewkowicz ed. London: International Psychoanalytical Association, 2007. p 60

The concern for the unburied dead is disturbing for the deceased as much as it is for the living, for neither can rest while the spirit is unsettled.<sup>6</sup> For the mourner, there is the difficult task of trying to mourn without traditional rituals performed to help initiate the process. There is also concern for the body of the deceased, often associated with ghost stories, as ghosts are frequently related to improper burial.<sup>7</sup> These issues tormented the families back home as well as survivors. The unburied soldiers became so large an issue that governments had to respond, and did so by placing memorial monuments throughout their countries.

Memorial monuments started to become increasingly popular, drawing private grief into the community. In every intention these “were built as places where people could mourn. And *be seen* to mourn.” (my emphasis)<sup>8</sup> While something as private a grief is oddly situated in the public eye, it has increasingly become a requirement for governments in Europe and America to not only legitimate grief, but to insist upon it. The recent increasing number of memorials in America has been described as *memorial mania*, based on the belief that a plethora of memorials have led to tension and confusion about where to draw the line in memorializing.<sup>9</sup>

It is in this atmosphere of memorial mania that *Reflecting Absence* was commissioned and built (Figure 1). The monument is distinct in that it rejects the traditional iconography of a solid monument, instead focusing on two voids created by the footprints of the Twin Towers where the wreckage has been cleared from the bedrock up. The footprints have been filled with two-tiered reflecting pools, filled by a perpetual waterfall along the outer edges, with a hollow at the centre of the second pool. The footprints are lined by a list of names, and trees surround the footprints, but nothing blocks the space where the towers once stood.

While it has a counter-monument design, this memorial monument closely follows the tradition set by those of the World Wars because it too tries to create a space where people can mourn when they are unable to bury their dead. While many bodies were found in the rubble of the Twin Towers, there were still missing among the destruction. The edges of the footprints have been surrounded by carefully arranged list of names lost in the 9/11 attacks, including the first response team. This offers a commemorative space for every victim, as well as naming those who were never found, offering a site for the bereaved.

*Reflecting Absence* was built with this need for a grieving space in mind. It is a space of commemoration, traditional to the memorial monument of the World Wars. In the foreword of *A Place of Remembrance: Official Book of the National September 11 Memorial*, Bloomberg declares “The memorial will be forever a solemn place of reflection and remembrance; we owe that to all those who lost loved ones on 9/11.”<sup>10</sup> The language of owing something to the bereaved shows how crucial consideration of the bereaved was in designing the monument

The monument’s aims are high; Bloomberg goes on to insist “the National September 11 Memorial is for the here and now – for the grieving to find a path to healing”, making a bold claim that the memorial will do more than commemorate, it will ultimately help *heal*. Healing loss is an incredibly difficult and complicated path, the progress of which is almost entirely in the hands of the bereaved. Healing runs counter to traditional monument, which in its permanence refuses to let go, instead emphasizing and revitalizing a traumatic event. Though *Reflecting Absence* focuses on the missing towers rather than creating something new out of the usual enduring marble, the monument still solidifies the ruins of the towers in a permanent wound.

In its design, *Reflecting Absence* emphasises a permanent trauma, much like the Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial in Washington, D.C. (Figure 2). The Vietnam Veteran’s memorial uses the black reflective surface to create a void, a symbolic open wound. The iconographic cut of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial made visible the deep divisions of America that came from the Vietnam War: the division between veterans and society, between the government and the people, the splitting effect the trauma of war had on those who fought it, and the division between the living and the dead.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Rickels, Laurence A. *Aberrations of Mourning*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011. p 10

<sup>7</sup> This appears in W. Hartenau’s ‘Die Resurrection Co.’, where the deceased make calls to the undertaker about the care of their graves, and is common in pop-culture, with the disturbance of a burial ground resulting in horrors in *Poltergeist*.

<sup>8</sup> Winter, Jay p. 93

<sup>9</sup> Doss, Erika *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> *A Place of Remembrance: Official Book of the National September 11 Memorial*, p. 15

<sup>11</sup> Parr, Adrian. *Deluze and Memorial Culture: Desire, Singular Memory and the Politics of Trauma*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008. p. 65-66

In the case of *Reflecting Absence*, one did not need to make a cut into the landscape, for the evidence of destruction was already there. The dents made in the lives of Americans are present, the two wounds more exposed than ever once the rubble was removed from the collapsed square. The damage is great, as they cut deep into the surface, hitting the heart of the land. Without the wound, there is no need to heal; and without that relationship, trauma is postponed and ignored instead of treated.<sup>12</sup> It is essential to highlight these wounds in the path to healing, however both memorials make permanent the physical cut into the land, visually denying any gradual healing. Part of this is inherent in their monumental nature. Monuments are heavily engaged in memory; particularly in what is known as secondary remembering:

Secondary remembering is a two-fold activity. First, it involves the *retrieval* of items not now in conscious mind...A second aspect of the basic action of secondary remembering is found in *revival* ... a resuscitation of previously experienced objects, events, and circumstances.<sup>13</sup>

The monument's revival of events and circumstances is difficult, because both are elusive; they flow with time and are designed to escape memory. Every monument attempts to do this differently, but in both the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial and *Reflecting Absence* part of what they *resuscitate* is the trauma of the event by keeping open the wound.

This revitalization of trauma can also be seen in *Reflecting Absence's* relationship with ruins. The footprints are as much a part of the ruins of the twin towers as the rubble held in the museum beneath the monument, and both are used in this context as individual objects providing evidence. "The survival of objects from the past provides the factual basis for interpretation and the creation of historical narrative" solidifying the event in their history for the person viewing the objects.<sup>14</sup> The ruins, in this instance, function as objects much in the same way that the replicated sign from the entry of Auschwitz functions in the US Holocaust Memorial, providing evidence to secure the trauma in reality.

By using ruins as evidence objects, the trauma is made to exist in our space –the space of the viewer – forcing together the traumatic and the everyday. We are then encouraged to experience the trauma, even if we are far removed from it. Gene Ray notes the double trauma of objects such as these when examining the photograph of a watch that survived the Hiroshima bombing. He sees the watch as evidence of the cultural trauma of bombing, and the individual trauma of death: "after the initial association of the watch with Hiroshima, the viewer realises that the object also evokes the destruction of one life in particular – that of the individual who was wearing the watch."<sup>15</sup> There is a traumatic moment in realization of an individual death, which in a small way relays the trauma of individual suffering to the masses.

In the context of a memorial monument, the ruins solidify the reality of the loss in order to activate a memory of something future generations will not have experienced. This secondary memory allows us relive the trauma, or to live it for the first time, in our minds. The viewer has the choice of how to respond to this trauma, but unlike viewing images of a traumatic event where the viewer is separated from the incident and can overcome it, the ruins of *Reflecting Absence* collapse distance. Christopher Woodward makes this point in *In Ruins* when discussing Frauenkirche, the Church of Our Lady in Dresden. It was the only thing not rebuilt after the bombings in WWII, but when Berlin Wall came down the city rebuilt it because "they did not want their children's growth – or their own old age – to be stunted by the dark shadow of history."<sup>16</sup> This shows the potentially crippling effect ruins can have on generations after an event, by resuscitating pain of a time long past.

The ruins in *Reflecting Absence* give endurance to the loss a monument commemorates. The memory and grief of 9/11 is still fresh, but the memorial is designed to exist 'forever', and have a poignancy that will remain for 'future generations'.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>12</sup> This thinking was the very basis for Freud's talking cure: that one should find and expose suppressed pain in order to move forward and truly heal.

<sup>13</sup> Casey, Edward S. *Remembering: A phenomenological Study*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987. p. 51

<sup>14</sup> Ochsner, Jeffrey Karl. "Understanding the Holocaust through the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum" in *Journal of Architectural Education* 48.4 (May 1995). p. 240-249. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1425386>. p. 240

<sup>15</sup> Ray, Gene. "From Trauma and the Sublime to Radical Critique" in *Third Text* 23.2 (March 2009). p 144

<sup>16</sup> Woodward, Christopher. *In Ruins*. London: Vintage, 2002. p. 210

<sup>17</sup> While these are not the words of the mission statement, they are those, as previously quoted, in the foreword of *A Place of Remembrance: Official Book of the National September 11 Memorial*.

The ruins of the towers – particularly the footprints – will be used in the future to conjure the memory of something the visitors did not witness. They make real the loss by proving it happened, but the footprints also show the magnitude of that loss. The scale of the footprints in combination with grand skyscrapers surrounding the memorial, encourage a future visitor to imagine the enormity of such a tower collapsing.

*Reflecting Absence's* incorporation of ruins activates secondary memory and preserves the trauma of a great loss. The narrative aspects of the monument heighten the trauma of the event further. To set-up a comparison: the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial originally had an anti-narrative design, making it extra-temporal in the hopes of monumentalizing trauma in general, despite the specific names on the wall (this was changed when the government stepped in to include a bronze statue). Yet *Reflecting Absence* could not avoid including the specifics of a space and time because of its location. The footprints of the towers, the crux of the monument, make it impossible to separate the memorial monument from the event it commemorates. It holds tightly to the traditions of a monument in reviving a specific event of the past rather than a general reflection of trauma, which the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial intended.

No matter the time and distance from the traumatic event, *Reflecting Absence* will continually recall the narrative of that day. Not only in the use of the footprints, and the memory that is embedded in that physical location, but it even the trees are chosen because they will change color in early September, and in the memorial museum beneath the site. The narrative of events is deeply engaged with this particular memorial, cementing this event in the past, present and future; it shall not be forgotten. This refusal to let go could harm the mourning process, perpetually opening a wound that is trying to close.

In consideration of those who have lost someone in the 9/11 attacks, the monument's insistence on the event brings up harrowing memories. While the creation of the memorial had active involvement of families of those killed in the attacks throughout the design process, that involvement helped to solidify the lost individuals.<sup>18</sup> The title 'Reflecting Absences' evokes the lost individuals just as much, if not more so, than the lost symbol of New York City. In the words of Karen Engleson, "The memorial encourages us to remember that we do not see all these absences, and it provides a space where the drive to identify can be relinquished in the face of absolute loss."<sup>19</sup> The compounded loss of the monument highlights the traumatic experience and pain of loss that these families are trying to release. Evoking this loss hinders the healing of the bereft because the recycling of painful memories can impede mourning.

Healthy completion of mourning requires the bereaved to release the lost love object through gradual detachment of the emotional poignancy from various memories, concluding when "a particular mode of forgetting then emerges: one remembers, but without the lacerating grief that memories caused at first."<sup>20</sup> A memorial monument that heals would fit into this kind of remembering, where the significance of memory is balanced with reduced emotional excitement.

However, based on what we have seen so far, *Reflecting Absence* encourages us to take the pain of the traumatic event into ourselves, something Freud called *melancholia*. Melancholia occurs when the mourner is unable to separate the lost love object (the deceased individual in this case) from their ego, leading to a perpetual state of mourning where the bereaved cannot separate from the pain of loss. Instead of detaching from the painful feelings, or letting go of their grief, the individual turns the pain in to his or herself, resulting in depression and self-hatred.<sup>21</sup>

Melancholia is avoidable in monuments that are able to value the reactivated memory while externalizing or neutralizing suffering. Ironically, one way a monument can do this is simply by having a physical presence. Psychologist Vamik Volkan was the first to notice the value of a monument as a 'linking object', an object with which one becomes attached as a way to connect with the deceased.

<sup>18</sup> Individuals who had lost loved ones played an essential part in arranging the names around the memorial, though various groups played a part in ensuring the feelings of victim's families were heard. The main group involved heavily in the memorial and museum was The Families Advisory Council, composed entirely of victim's relatives

<sup>19</sup> Engle, Karen *Seeing Ghosts: 9/11 and the Visual Imagination* Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009. p. 50.

<sup>20</sup> Pelento, p. 57

<sup>21</sup> Freud, Sigmund. Shaun Whiteside, trans. "Mourning and Melancholia" in *On murder, Mourning and Melancholia*. London: Penguin Books, 2005. p. 204

Volkan noted the importance of monuments in the grieving process in communities, suggesting that “Sometimes a monument as a shared linking object externally absorbs unfinished elements of incomplete mourning and helps the group to adjust to its current situation without re-experiencing the impact of the past trauma and its disturbing emotions.”<sup>22</sup> Under the conditions where a monument is thought of as a linking object, the monument externalizes the constant, cyclical pain of melancholia.

For Volkan, a monument can serve as a way to detach from these painful feelings, projecting them onto the object of the memorial and associating that object with the deceased, rather than the mourner’s ego. When this happens, externalization of the melancholic feelings moves the bereaved back into a traditional route of mourning, where a linking object replaces the love object. This can still cause problems, as the bereft may not wish to let go of the linking object, but they are more likely to let go when they have externalized loss because they no longer experience the recycling of traumatic emotions that they had as a melancholic.

*Reflecting Absences* initially seems like an exception as a monument because of its ephemeral nature. Volkan insisted that linking objects be concrete; so a monument, to be a linking object, must be physically able to stand in for the individual. Linking objects are a subset of the transitional object, which originates in early childhood as a mother replacement, a soothing mechanism for the young infant. In transitional objects, the object taken up by the child has physical similarities to the mother’s breast – soft, warm etc. – where for Volkan, the linking object did not need these traits, but rather something which represents the dead to the bereaved through being imbued in some way with the deceased’s presence or affection.<sup>23</sup> *Reflecting Absence* is conspicuously missing a physicality; the footprints might be considered as an object, but they emphasize the absence of an object. Even the museum is underground in order to ensure a feeling of total absence about the space.

However, should we consider the names surrounding the towers’ footprints as the linking objects, *Reflecting Absence* can fit the healing role of linking object. In planning the memorial, a great deal of time and consideration was put into the arrangement of names around the two footprints to create a commemorative space: “the names truly became a memorial, as had been envisioned by so many from the beginning. Visitors bow their heads to read the names in a natural gesture of reverence.”<sup>24</sup>

The names are commemorative in this instance, and the significance of names in memorial monuments has precedence. The Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial was built because veteran Jan Scruggs, upon seeing a dream of his dead comrades, “resolved that their names would not be forgotten.”<sup>25</sup> In his mind, the men’s names were the central to the memorial. When the bereft visited monuments of World War I “Touching war memorials, and in particular, touching the names of those who died, is an important part of the rituals of separation which surround them.”<sup>26</sup> The importance of touching names of the deceased solidifies their object nature in this context. The act of coming to see the name of the dead, combined with the natural *gesture of reverence* inherent in the design suggest the possibility for the list of names, or an individual name, to serve as a linking object in *Reflecting Absence*.

In order to serve as a linking object the names would have to have a connection with the individual. Volkan specifically notes that linking objects must be identified with the deceased and be emotionally poignant enough to stand in for the individual. As expression of individuality and identity, names are natural linking objects. In *Totem and Taboo* Freud noted that among the Guaycuru of Paraguay, the chief would give out new names to the tribe after a death, a sign of how important a name is as the very definition of an individual.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Volkan, Vamik D “Not letting go: from individual perennial mourners to societies with entitlement ideologies” in *On Freud’s “Mourning and Melancholia”*. Fiorini, Leticia, Thierry Bokanowski, and Sergio Lewkowicz ed. London: International Psychoanalytical Association, 2007. p 105

<sup>23</sup> In ‘More on Linking Objects’ (1979) Volkan explained linking objects: “for mourners, linking objects essentially become what they represent. Unconsciously these linking objects, or protosymbols, are an “actual” meeting place between the mourner and the dead.” (p. 1)

<sup>24</sup> *A Place of Remembrance: Official Book of the National September 11 Memorial*, p 186

<sup>25</sup> Iversen, Margaret. *Beyond Pleasure: Freud, Lacan, Barthes*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007. p 95. Scruggs was the veteran who pioneered the fundraising and design call for submissions for the VVM.

<sup>26</sup> Winter, Jay p113.

<sup>27</sup> Because the tribe had been changed by the death, their new names would reflect this change. Indeed the name is incredibly important for many tribes and seen as almost a part of the individual

A name bears personal weight and when etched into a monument can become an object, tangible and isolated to a single location. It seems reasonable, then, that *Reflecting Absence* could fit into Volkan's scenario of memorials as linking objects to aid the process of mourning.

*Reflecting Absence* also offers the potential to be healing in its relationship with traditional mourning rites. Lawrence Rickels asserts that the monument is part of the traditional trappings of mourning, much like having a gravestone: "The inner-topography of the lost object must be reassembled outside the mourner in the form of funerary rites and monuments addressed to the idealized dead. Otherwise, live burial in some internal vault must result for both the living and the dead"<sup>28</sup>. The origin of monuments as tombs lends itself to this suggestion.

It is important than to consider that, at its heart, "grief is a process of realization, of 'making real' the fact of loss."<sup>29</sup> We have already seen how the ruins of the Twin Towers act as evidence to solidify the traumatic attack and loss as real. Another part of realizing loss is, as Rickels suggests, burial.<sup>30</sup> It is the downward trajectory of *Reflecting Absence* that plays a key role here. It was an insistence that the area of the towers remain free of construction or disruption "From Bedrock to Infinity"<sup>31</sup> to preserve it as a sacred space of loss. The result is two footprints that open down into the earth, well below the traditional 'six feet under' where we bury the dead. The site does evoke a grave plot, with the names etched along the outside of a great hole in the ground, much like the image of a headstone above a plot. The position of the footprints as graves would allow for the site to be a burial ground.

It also offers itself as a gravesite to the families of victims. They have a specific allocation of passes for family members, to ensure they are always allowed to come to mourn. Their visit will include their own special reception area for privacy and respect as well as being given the specific location of the names of their lost loved one. They are allowed to bring flowers and keepsakes to place on the monument, just as one would when visiting a cemetery. The open grave imagery gives the chance for each individual to come and, mentally or symbolically, bury their dead. Indeed, the footprints seem suitably large as an open grave for so many lost. The metaphorical act of burial in these gaping footprints would solidify the death, as well as showing respect and care for the deceased.<sup>32</sup>

While we can see the validity of *Reflecting Absence* as participating in healing, I would like to note that the visual grave is left open as a reminder, now and future, of the loss that was incurred that day. We have already seen how this keeps alive the trauma and yet can also offer a space to bury the dead. In light of this conflict, the open grave is a good allegory for what *Reflecting Absence* does. It tries to heal by offering a place to position one's loss and pain, while also reactivating the initial trauma to insist that no one should forget. It seems an impossible task to hold open a wound and heal it all at once. But that is, in effect, the work of mourning. Mourning, too, tries to detach the synapses of emotion surrounding the lost love object while not trying to forget it, which would simply be repression. In the end, the work of mourning will result with successfully when one has the memory, still dear, but without the ferocity of emotions. That is exactly the balance *Reflecting Absence* attempts to strike.

While it may have seemed bold to consider the monument to be inherently healing, Bloomberg was right in saying that it offers a way to heal. In examining *Reflecting Absence*, we see how memorials can offer potential for healing alongside evoking past trauma. This memorial is unique from most because of its use of absence. The traditional monument is a solid object, where *Reflecting Absence* is more of a ruin, yet this only serves to heighten the focus on loss. It is the balance of trauma and loss that brings out the healing aspects of the memorial, offering a way to externalize grief and mentally bury those who could not be found.

<sup>28</sup> Rickels, Laurence A. *Aberrations of Mourning*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press) 2011. p. 7

<sup>29</sup> "Helping the Bereaved – I. Bereavement Support: History and Evaluation" in *Bereavement: Studies of Grief in Adult Life*, fourth edition. Colin Murray Parkes and Holly G. Prigerson eds. New York: Routledge, 2010. p. 205

<sup>30</sup> It is important to emphasize the actuality of death because without this realisation the bereaved can become stuck in the belief that their loss is temporary.

<sup>31</sup> Davidson, Justin "Memorial: Affecting Remembrance or Adornment for Real Estate? A review", in *New York Magazine* online. <<http://nymag.com/news/9-11/10th-anniversary/9-11-memorial/>>. 14 February 2012.

<sup>32</sup> Freud has a great deal to say on this matter in *Totem and Taboo* (1940), asserting that one feels guilty about the death of a loved one because of an inherent desire to kill. He asserts that burial helps to alleviate this guilt, helping one alleviate the pain of loss.

The healing quality of monuments in general is a point of debate, but if a monument such as *Reflecting Absence* – which draws heavily on the narrative, evidence and location to incite trauma – can be a source of healing, than surely this can apply to all monuments. Every monument can engage in the same basic healing elements that *Reflecting Absence* does, suggesting there is something inherent in the creation of monuments that has the capacity to heal.

In this light, monuments can be opened to entirely different kinds of questions and considerations. For example, the political aspects of monuments have long been debated, but rarely in the context of healing. If a monument is healing, than does the completion of a monument denote the end of a healing process or the birth of it? The potential for healing adds to the discussion of how monuments function in society and why they continue to be built.

And so it becomes clear that *Reflecting Absences*, though on its face a monument that points to a traumatic episode refusing to let the pain go unrealized, does offer a place *for the grieving to find a path to healing*. If this monument, so entrenched in a specific trauma, can aid mourning, than it becomes reasonable to argue that any memorial monument can be healing. This relationship between healing and the monument is a complex and interesting one, which offers the potential for greater insight into the continued creation of monuments and the role they play in society.

**Figure 1: Reflecting Absence, New York City, USA. (Wall Street Journal Online)**



**Figure 2: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington D.C., USA ([visitingdc.com](http://visitingdc.com))**

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