

ISSN 1751-8229

Volume Three, Number Three

Representing Terrorism: Reanimating Post-9/11 New York City

Luke John Howie, Monash University.

No cry was heard. Just the silent horror, as one cartoonist portrayed it, showing Edvard Munch's 'The Scream' superimposed on the incredible landscape of the burning towers. Newspapers the following day printed nothing but pictures. And, in all the television coverage, time and time again, not a voiceover, but an image behind all the reports and discussions, as if to show, again and again, to anyone who hadn't seen it yet, that this was real (Edkins, 2002: 243)

The truth is that right after 9/11 I had a pin [of the American flag]. Shortly after 9/11, particularly because we're talking about the Iraq war, that became a substitute for I think true patriotism, which is speaking out on issues that are of importance to our national security ... I decided I won't wear that pin on my chest ... Instead, I'm going to try to tell the American people what I believe will make this country great, and hopefully that will be a testament to my patriotism (Barack Obama, October 2007).

Post-9/11 NYC

The absence of the Twin Towers from the post-9/11 New York City skyline posed a number of dilemmas for the creators and producers of television shows and movies that were 'symbolically' set in New York City after 9/11. Whilst the World Trade Center towers had been destroyed, editors in studio lots in California faced the prospect of the late 2001 ratings season commencing with stock reels of New York City that prominently featured the Towers prior to 9/11. This posed an odd dilemma for the producers of television shows such as *Friends*, *Sex and the City*, and *Spin City*, programs in which the Twin Towers often appeared as a backdrop and a powerful signifier of being in New York City. The response seemed universal – the Twin Towers must be removed from the tele-visual pop-cultural locations. They needed to be purged, exorcised and air-brushed out of the shot. But by airbrushing out the Towers, the producers have purged post-9/11 television of more than just the steel and concrete of the iconic buildings. I suggest that this purging is powerful, a little odd, and deeply symbolic. In order to recover, perhaps some space – and some forgetting, if only temporary – was needed. But I argue that the missing Towers also represented a missing terror, a missing city. It was as though the creators and producers of some post-9/11 television believed that the world's viewers would have no stomach for seeing images of a pre-9/11 New York City – a city that in many respects no longer existed. Perhaps the problem lies in how the destruction of the Twin Towers was witnessed – live on TV, in real-time, as heinous, immediate and real violence. It was ugly, sickening, horrific, terrifying. Yet it was also difficult to look away.

Few representations of New York City in television programs were as intriguing as the representations in post-9/11 episodes of *Friends*. As such, I single out these episodes of *Friends* for special attention. The relationships between 9/11 and programs such as *Family Guy*, *American Dad*, *The Simpsons*, *How I Met Your Mother*, *The West Wing* and *24* are – for the most part – less problematic than the relationships between 9/11 and post-9/11 episodes of *Friends*. I argue that *Friends* should be viewed as a special case and serve as a case study for understanding the meanings and consequences of 9/11 in post-9/11 tele-visual popular culture. As such, in this paper I will explore the representations of trauma, New York City, 9/11, terrorism, popular culture, and fiction and reality in post-9/11 episodes of *Friends*. I argue that terrorism and '9/11' is – paradoxically – both *present* (as part of the narrative backdrop, in set and wardrobe design) and *absent* (ignored, irrelevant, missing, or perhaps forgotten). I suggest that this uncanny presence-absence is a vehicle through which terrorism is

represented (and *re*-represented) in visual cultural and where images of the city are imagined (and *re*-imagined) in a world that can be indefinitely described as 'post-9/11'. I am assisted in this task by the social theory of Slavoj Žižek in particular, but also by the social theory of Zygmunt Bauman, Erich Fromm and others. Žižek's explorations of the meanings of 9/11 and tele-visual popular culture opens a space in which I seek to locate this paper.

Watching Friends after 9/11

Friends introduced the world to six so-called 'coffee house crowd' New Yorkers – Ross, Rachel, Monica, Chandler, Phoebe and Joey (Stevens in Crane & Kauffman, 1994). These six characters soon became pop-cultural icons. Women – and men – during the 1990s would visit hair salons and request 'The Rachel'. Funny-man Chandler introduced the world to the comedic prefix 'Could I be anymore [insert noun/adjective]?'. And womanizer Joey's well known pick-up line – 'how *you* doin'' – became a well-known trope. The creators and producers of *Friends* wanted to capture what it meant to be 20-something in Manhattan's apparently sexually promiscuous café culture and soon the situation-comedy became one of the world's most watched television programs (Zurawik, 2004). Shortly before the commencement of series eight of *Friends*, 19 hijackers seized control of four passenger airplanes and slammed one into each of the Twin Towers in New York City, one into the Pentagon in Washington D.C. and a fourth crashed in a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. It is difficult to overstate the impact of these attacks in New York City and the reverberations felt throughout the world. Surely, what it meant to be a New Yorker had changed forever. Because of this I was surprised that when season eight commenced little had changed in the Manhattan of the eccentric and promiscuous characters in *Friends*. Perhaps it was my subjective position as a student of terrorism and, later, an academic and lecturer that led to my expectation that the changes witnessed in New York's skyline would be reflected in pop-cultural representations of New York City and – by extension – in the ways that New York and terrorism would be represented in our imaginations.

In many respects, however, the consequences of terrorism and 9/11 were absent from the post-9/11 episodes of *Friends*. Yet, despite this absence, 9/11 was not forgotten. It was there – in set design, in wardrobe decisions, in artwork, in tributes. No one spoke about it, no one was grieving, but it had happened – 9/11 had happened. In these ways I suggest that this absence was accompanied by a paradoxical presence – a type of presence-absence. I argue that this presence-absence represents an indecisive

moment in *Friends*. If this was a moment of denial and forgetfulness then it was also a moment of trauma and of what psychoanalysts might call a ‘fetishistic disavowal’ (Žižek, 2008: 45-46). I will explore this point in more detail later in this paper, but for the moment I want to suggest that this disavowal might make it possible to view post-9/11 *Friends* as another in a series of what Žižek (2002a, 2006a) describes as *paranoiac fantasies*. The paranoiac fantasy in post-9/11 *Friends* takes the form of a Manhattan where everyday life continues without fear and anxiety and without terror. Could post-9/11 *Friends* be, as Žižek (2002a: 10) posits, another in a series of consumable products that are deprived of their malignant properties? – ‘coffee without caffeine, cream without fat, beer without alcohol ... virtual sex as sex without sex, the Colin Powell doctrine of warfare without casualties ... as warfare without warfare’. I am tempted to argue that post-9/11 *Friends* sits well in this list of consumables as *New York without the terror* – a city without the insecurity.

It is perhaps in this context that we can best understand recent psychiatric diagnoses of ‘Truman Show syndrome’ where those afflicted come to believe that their world ‘was slightly unreal’ as if they were ‘the eponymous hero in the film *The Truman Show*’ (Fusar-Poli et al., 2008: 168). Žižek (2002a: 13) seems to have predicted this in his conceptualization of *The Truman Show* as ‘the *ultimate* American paranoiac fantasy’ (my emphasis). For Žižek (2002a: 13) ‘The ultimate American paranoiac fantasy is that of an individual living in ... a consumerist paradise, who suddenly starts to suspect that the world he is living in is a fake, a spectacle staged to convince him that he is living in a real world, while all the people around him are in fact actors and extras in a gigantic show’. The ‘underlying experience’ of movies such as *The Truman Show* (1998) is ‘that the late-capitalist consumerist ... paradise is ... in a way *unreal*’. Žižek (2002a: 13) argues that the ‘same ‘derealization’ of the horror went on after the WTC collapse’. The derealization of horror is, I argue, a key feature of post-9/11 episodes of *Friends*. These episodes represented a routine of absence, forgetting, and amnesia. But this amnesia was not total. As Prager (2008: 408) suggests, trauma is sometimes observed as a ‘paradoxical preservation of traumatic pasts into the present’. So whilst in constructing the narrative of post-9/11 *Friends* there were attempts to repress 9/11, the gestures, representations, presences and absences preserve and perhaps pay homage to Manhattan’s traumatic past.

As an avid viewer of *Friends*, I was confronted with these dilemmas after 9/11 as it appeared that the program’s producers and creators had not incorporated the 9/11 attacks into the narrative of series eight. How was I to understand the meaning of *Friends* after 9/11 when the Manhattan that the show depicted no longer existed? Had

the characters repressed the events of 9/11? Were they in denial? Or were they the brave and resilient New Yorkers that could be seen in media images working together in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, sifting through rubble, comforting each other, looking for friends and family? Perhaps post-9/11 episodes of *Friends* were testimony that New York really had changed, that New Yorkers had been united by international terrorism and that the spirit of their communities would be strong and resilient.

It took many weeks for the smoke and debris to settle after 9/11 – but the Manhattan of *Friends* seemed immune. But this fictional Manhattan remained haunted by the specter of 9/11 – the initially hidden representations of 9/11 in the post-9/11 episodes, representations that I will explore later in this paper, are evidence of this haunting. It was as though two parallel worlds – a fictional Manhattan and a real Manhattan – were collapsing into one. As a viewer of *Friends* and a witness of 9/11 in real-time on my television, what I sensed in the post-9/11 episodes was the potential, the likelihood and the danger of 9/11 occurring right in front of my eyes. It was as though I was waiting for the planes to strike. 9/11 in the post-9/11 episodes was – as Bauman might argue – *the iceberg in the city*.

For Bauman (2006: 17) the psyche of Westerners is permanently scarred with what he dubs the ‘Titanic Syndrome’. The ‘Titanic Syndrome’ represents the ‘horror’ of falling through the ‘wafer-thin crust’ of civilization into the icy uncertainty of nothingness (Bauman, 2006: 17). It represents the contours of our forever precarious and vulnerable existences and the threats, risks and dangers that we try not to think about in our day-to-day lives. According to Bauman (2006: 17) the iceberg is ‘silent’, always outside of plain view, always lurking below the surface, and always devastating. But the horror of the Titanic story, according to Bauman (2006: 17), does not come from the iceberg. Rather, the horror comes from the spectacle of the luxurious liner where the catastrophe appears and matters most – it is here that people were killed and the affluent comforts of the leisure liner were driven to the cold and murky depths of the ocean. The horror comes with the *possibility* that at any moment the most relaxed and comfortable surroundings can become the most dangerous place on Earth.

This is what I mean when I say that 9/11 was the iceberg in the city in the post-9/11 episodes of *Friends*. It was a world where the viewer *knows* that 9/11 has occurred, yet there was no evidence of destruction, smoke, death and debris. 9/11 was the seventh friend, even though it did not appear in the credits. In this way I argue that after 9/11 *Friends* can be viewed as a location for reconciling and negotiating divergent and conflicting images of New York City and for understanding the new post-9/11 coordinates of insecurity and precariousness of life in the city. In post-9/11 *Friends*, the

fear, dread and danger were buffed out, glossed over and desperately hidden behind the fiction of the pop-cultural landscape.

Popular Culture and Hidden Meaning

Finding hidden meanings in popular culture is, perhaps, nothing new (of which Freud's Oedipus Complex, and his associated examination of *Oedipus Rex*, is but one example, and see also Žižek, 2001a, 2002b, 2002c, 2006a, 2008). Fromm ([1956] 2008: 141) argued that drama has always played a significant role in the function of everyday life and that humankind craves the opportunity to experience – as participants or in the audience – the 'dramatization of the fundamental problems of human existence' and an '*acting out* of the very same problems which are *thought out* in philosophy and theology' (emphasis in original). Fromm ([1956] 2008: 141-142) added:

What is left of such dramatization of life in modern culture? Almost nothing. Man hardly ever gets out of the realm of man-made conventions and things, and hardly ever breaks through the surface of his routine ... If there is a fire, or a car collision in a big city, scores of people will gather and watch. Millions of people are fascinated daily by reportings of crimes and by detective stories. They religiously go to movies in which crime and passion are the two central themes. All this interest and fascination is not simply an expression of bad taste and sensationalism, *but of a deep longing for a dramatization of ultimate phenomena of human existence*, life and death, crime and punishment, the battle between man and nature (my emphasis).

Fromm's statement as reproduced above should resonate with post-9/11 pop-culture and media audiences. 9/11 was – and continues to be – one of the most tele-visually viewed events in history. These acts of terrorism have had alarming consequences that include war, torture, bigotry and racism, Hollywood movies, counter-culture documentarians, conspiracy theories and a forever changed New York City skyline and city-scape. Amongst these signposts of post-9/11 culture sit the routine and ritualistic aspects of popular tele-visual culture that I argue includes news and current affairs, television series (such as *The West Wing* which explicitly depicted the events of 9/11) and situation comedies (such as *Sex and the City* and *Friends* which did not depict 9/11).

Perhaps this is why post-9/11 episodes of *Friends* seemed so odd to me. There was not – on the surface – a culture of remembering in these episodes. The effect of this was a kind of *representation and image of terrorism in reverse*. Instead of the flaming Twin Towers, the Towers were simply no longer there – gone but not destroyed.

Where once, Fromm ([1956] 2008: 141-142) argued, drama featured the cathartic playing out of fear, anxiety, love and desire through 'high artistic and metaphysical' expression, drama soon found expression in 'crude' social trends, routines and rituals and produced no 'cathartic effect' at all. Certainly, there was little in the way of a post-9/11 catharsis in *Friends*. Where had the 'absolute event' (Baudrillard, 2002: 4) of 9/11 vanished too? Why was it purged? Could this be what Baudrillard (2002) was talking about when he described 9/11 as a non-event?

Trauma and Representations of New York City and Terrorism

During and following 9/11 millions of people became overnight television and news media junkies. According to Hirst (2003: 10), CNN's 24-hour news channel regularly attracted between 600000 and 800000 viewers during peak viewing periods prior to 9/11. Following the attacks CNN's news broadcast regularly attracted three million viewers during peak hours. However, as Hirst (2003: 10-11) argues:

If ratings are any indication, though, most Americans are about as interested in their devolving international conflict [in Afghanistan] as they've traditionally been in the ballot box, remaining resolutely glued to sitcoms like *Friends* (which regularly pulls in over 30 million viewers).

Interest in *Friends* had waned in the series that had aired just prior to 9/11. Series eight – which began airing shortly after 9/11 – saw the sitcom experience renewed popularity. As Szymanek (2004) argues, 'It was right around 9/11 that it [*Friends*] entered its 8th season and it was once again cool to be a fan, but also comforting and even healing in the face of tragedy to know they've been here all the time'. It was through *Friends* – this Manhattan-based sitcom – that the trauma in Manhattan on 9/11 could be managed and perhaps one day suppressed, denied or forgotten. Or, if this proved to be too ambitious, *Friends* could be a place for the healing to begin.

Most explorations of the social and cultural meanings of trauma have tended to focus on the immediate physical and emotional consequences of traumatic events – how people have lived with physical injury and emotional scarring, how sites of trauma have been forever infused with a traumatic gloss, how we act out in the face of trauma and anxiety, and how images of trauma can haunt us and continue to inflict damage and casualties long after the disaster has passed (Sztompka, 2000; Waitzkin & Magaña, 1997; Alexander et al., 2000; Alexander et al., 2004; Herman, 1992; Caruth, 1995, 1996; Neal, 1998; Roth, 1995; Tumarkin, 2005; Žižek, 2001b, 2002b, 2006b; and, to some

extent, Barthes, 1978: 28-31 and his account of the traumatic image). Amongst this literature, the physical and psychological consequences of trauma are rightly privileged. Through the physical and psychological change it sparks, trauma has often been viewed as *cathartic*. I am particularly interested in how traumatic events – especially terrorism – are incorporated into social and cultural narratives. When series eight of *Friends* began such a social and cultural narrative was lacking. If this was the end of the story perhaps there would be no need for this paper – it was, after all, a fictional Manhattan that the characters in *Friends* inhabited and, in time, I would have been comfortable viewing *Friends* knowing that 9/11 had been purged. I could have concluded that in the fictional world of *Friends* there was no 9/11, no death and destruction, and no trauma.

However, it was at this point that I became aware that the social and cultural accounts of trauma that emphasized the catharsis of trauma were inadequate to describe what was happening in post-9/11 *Friends*. Barthes (1978: 28-31) in his account of the traumatic image, for example, explored what it means to witness the *real* event as an image – in some respects Barthes highlighted the problem of authenticity in experiencing trauma in images. Similar dilemmas have been tackled by Žižek (2002a; 2008) and Baudrillard (2002). But these accounts rely on real images of violence and horror for understanding trauma. But what if the trauma is not readily visible even when witnesses know it is there? How should we understand the images of post-9/11 New York City that confronted the viewer of post-9/11 episodes of *Friends* when 9/11 had been purged – airbrushed out of the shot before a traumatic reaction could be generated?

Žižek (2008: 45-46) argues that ‘forgetting’ plays an important role in any attempt to understand traumatic violence. He considers how witnesses can go about their lives after watching spectacular violence:

Would the watcher be able to continue going on as usual? Yes, but only if he or she were able to somehow forget – in an act which suspended symbolic efficiency – what had been witnessed. This forgetting entails a gesture of what is called *fetishist disavowal*: ‘I know, but I don’t want to know that I know, so I don’t know’. I know it, but I refuse to fully assume the consequences of this knowledge, so that I can continue acting as if I don’t know it (my emphasis) (Žižek, 2008: 45-46).

Such *fetishistic disavowal* was played out again and again in the post-9/11 episodes of *Friends*. It was played out so quickly and subtly that for many viewers of *Friends* it would have surely gone unnoticed. But it was there – *terrorism* and 9/11 was there. It

was captured represented and animated, and then re-represented and re-animated in the Manhattan of Ross, Rachel, Monica, Chandler, Phoebe and Joey⁰.

As such, the 9/11 terrorist attacks were not simply repressed, denied or forgotten in post-9/11 episodes of *Friends*. Whilst the characters were not covered in soot, ash and dust, and none had been rendered hospitalized or homeless, 9/11 was still represented in particular ways in the narratives of post-9/11 *Friends*. It appeared as a changed storyline in an early episode of series eight, as artwork in *Central Perk* café, as messages on a whiteboard attached to the front door of Chandler and Joey's apartment, and as clothing worn by Joey and Rachel. The trauma of 9/11 was visible in the backgrounds, wardrobe and artifacts of post-9/11 *Friends*. I argue that this contradictory presence and absence of 9/11 in post-9/11 *Friends* is evidence of a traumatic reaction – a reaction perhaps shared by all witnesses of terrorism both near and far from terrorisms' *flashpoint* (see Howie, 2009: 5).

Perhaps, as Žižek (2001b: 32) argues, trauma always evades clear recollection or remembering and therefore cannot be adequately incorporated into the symbolic narratives of everyday life in *Friends*:

“trauma” designates a shocking encounter which, precisely, DISTURBS this immersion into one's life-world, a violent intrusion of something which doesn't fit in ... Man is not simply overwhelmed by the impact of the traumatic encounter ... but is able ... to counteract its destabilizing impact by spinning out intricate symbolic cobwebs (Žižek, 2001: 47).

Maybe this is why the writers and producers of *Friends* could find only a limited role – a role restricted to background imagery and set and wardrobe design – for the trauma of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in their continuing narratives of the lives of six supposedly typical people living in Manhattan. But, for the most part, it would seem that the most significant event in the history of New York's most tele-visually hyperknown borough had little role in the idyllic lives of Ross, Rachel, Monica, Chandler, Phoebe and Joey in the 'traumascape' of Manhattan (see Tumarkin, 2005: 23-53). Maybe ignorance is bliss.

Indeed, Toby Miller (2002; 2007) suggests that 'Being Ignorant' was an important part of living in Manhattan. He argued that cosmopolitan New Yorkers could not have been further removed from the violence that raged throughout the rest of the world or the terrible vengeance exacted by the United States military following the attacks. According to Miller (2002), 9/11 was so significant because of the 'high premium immediately set on the lives of Manhattan residents and the rarefied discussion of how to commemorate the high-altitude towers'. After 9/11, Manhattan could no longer be viewed as just a cultural, financial, fashionable and sexual metropolis – we are now only

too aware that it is also a terrorist target. Perhaps even a site for violent blowback. Native-American academic Ward Churchill (2003) takes this argument a step further. He argues that the workers in the Twin Towers were natural and legitimate targets of international terrorism.

True enough, they were civilians of a sort. But innocent? Gimme a break. They formed a technocratic corps at the heart of America's global financial empire ... the "mighty engine of profit" to which the military dimensions of U.S. policy has always been enslaved – and they did so both willingly and knowingly (Churchill, 2003).

Zygmunt Bauman (2006: 97) similarly argues that:

It was the actions of the United States together with its various satellites, like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization, that [quoting Arundhati Roy] 'promoted subsidiary developments, dangerous sub-products such as nationalism, religious fanaticism, fascism, and of course terrorism, advancing marching step in step with the neoliberal project of globalization'¹.

This opens an alarming Pandora's Box. Could it be that the characters in *Friends* were the natural and legitimate targets of international terrorism? If they were, then perhaps so were Carrie, Miranda, Samantha and Charlotte and all the crew from the Manhattan depicted in *Sex and the City* (Star, 1998). Much like their fellow New Yorkers – those six friends spending their days drinking coffee at *Central Perk* – the Manhattan of the women of *Sex and the City* was not subject to the trauma of 9/11. It seemed that Carrie and co. were not only immune to New York City's high crime, gang violence and – for the most part – a host of sexually transmitted diseases, but also from 'the other star of the show', post-9/11 Manhattan (Whittington, n.d.).

Some Perspective

Perhaps I need to regain some perspective. Perhaps I have ignored a more simple explanation for 9/11's presence-absence in the post-9/11 storyline of *Friends*. After all, *Friends*, unlike *Sex and the City*, was not performed or filmed in New York City. It was filmed in Studio City, California. The set was a simulation of a café and an apartment in Manhattan. Perhaps this was why the writers and producers of *Friends* could not envision a post-9/11 Manhattan café culture. The New York City of *Friends* is, both literally and figuratively, an 'Imaginary New York' (Zurawik, 2004):

The New York City within which *Friends* was set is an imaginary place in the American psyche where some of our most powerful mythologies intersect. One of the most resonant myths features New York as a place where young people who might not feel comfortable in their home towns can find community and blossom, just like these sitcom characters (Zurawik, 2004).

The imaginary dimensions of the New York City in *Friends* means that the program was deeply absent and alienated from Manhattan, right down to the fictitious coffee house constructed out of images from coffee houses in Greenwich Village. *Friends* was an idyllic simulation of Manhattan (see Baudrillard, 1994).

I argue that the presence-absence of 9/11 in *Friends* mirrors the presence-absence of the Twin Towers – their disappearance still casts a large shadow over the streets of New York. The gaping hole in the ground at Ground Zero is a scar of sorts – albeit one embodied by an absence – on the New York skyline. In some respects, it is difficult to sustain the argument that the Twin Towers no longer exist. It may be that the Twin Towers are more visible, present and well-known now that they are gone.

A Comment on Methodology and Method

I am tempted to describe the analysis of *Friends* that I undertake in this chapter as a *narrative analysis*. A narrative analysis, in some conceptions, always has something to do with ‘words’. The analysis that I undertake here, however, has less to do with ‘words’ than images, symbols and *absences* of words. According to Lee et al. (2004: 39), ‘Narrative is a universal genre of both oral language and written texts’. In such a view the analysis in this paper could not really be said to constitute ‘narrative’ analysis. Yet, Riessman’s (1993: 1) understanding of ‘narrative’ provides a way of expanding on narrower definitions. She argued that narrative analysis ‘takes as its object’ the ‘story’. Indeed, I suggest that words do not structure narratives as much as human life is already ‘narratively structured’ (Freeman, 2004: 63).

As such, I argue that the analysis that I undertake in this chapter is a form of narrative analysis, albeit one based on images, symbols and the absences of words. I am inspired in this endeavour by Elizabeth Grosz (2001: 57):

A text, whether book, paper, film, painting, or building, can be thought of as a kind of *thief in the night*. Furtive, clandestine, and always complex, it steals ideas from all around, from its own milieu and history, and better still from its outside, and disseminates them elsewhere. It is not only a conduit for the circulation of

ideas, as knowledges or truths, but a passage or point of transition from one (social) stratum or space to another (my emphasis) (Grosz, 2001: 57).

I argue that the post-9/11 episodes of *Friends* – the sitcom that was filmed in Los Angeles, symbolically set in New York City, and incorporated 9/11 narratives without discussion, talk and words – embody such a ‘thief in the night’. In this way, *Friends* is not a ‘repository of knowledges or truths’ or a space where information is stored, but rather a ‘process of scattering thoughts; scrambling terms, concepts, and practices; forging linkages; becoming a form of action’ (Grosz, 2001: 57-58). Grosz (1995: 105) has explored at length the meaning of the body in the traumatic everydayness of the city-scape where ‘The city is a product not simply of the muscles and energy of the body, but of the conceptual and reflective possibilities of consciousness itself’. Grosz’s work – when used alongside the work of Žižek and other social theorists, as I have done in this paper – can be seen here to open a space for accounts of 9/11, New York City and Manhattan and the ‘War on Terror’ that are imagined, fictional, anxiety-induced, virtual, hyperreal, corporeal, real, or visible and perhaps even absent.

To explore the 9/11 narratives in *Friends* I watched the full ten seasons from beginning to end over several weeks in early 2008 and reviewed some episodes additional times as I searched for more specific information. I observed the differences in how images of New York City were used in series eight, nine and ten – the post-9/11 episodes – when compared to the first seven series. As I watched I took detailed notes and watched the insightful bonus features that accompany each series on DVD. I paid particular attention to the backgrounds and sets and the stock footage of New York City in the opening and closing credits and in transitions between scenes. I set out to document how the 9/11 terrorist attacks and post-9/11 New York City were incorporated into the post-9/11 episodes of *Friends*.

Fragments of 9/11 in *Friends*

When I watched post-9/11 episodes of *Friends* in this way I began to see 9/11 as playing a significant role. An example of this can be found in the use of stock footage of New York City in both the pre- and post-9/11 episodes. In series one through seven, the images of New York City in the opening credits and scene transitions routinely featured the Twin Towers from various angles ranging from a broad and distant view of the New York skyline to an up-close, almost street level view. Occasionally the Twin Towers could be seen in the background of images of the apartment block where Rachel, Monica, Chandler and Joey (but not Ross and Phoebe – they lived elsewhere in

Manhattan) lived. The first thing that the audiences of post-9/11 episodes witnessed with the commencement of series eight was a different set of stock footage of images of New York City used in the opening credits and in transitions between scenes. In series eight, nine and ten there were no images of the Twin Towers in any of the skyline images of New York. This may not seem remarkable at first glance, but when one considers that the images of New York used in *Friends* were likely drawn from generic reels of stock footage, finding images of the Manhattan skyline that did not feature the Twin Towers may have been difficult. Certainly the number of available images would have been significantly reduced. The producers of *Sex and the City* similarly expunged all images and references to the Twin Towers from the show. In the early episodes of series eight of *Friends* there were also a number of broad and abstract references to 9/11, American culture and New Yorker identity. Importantly, the creators of *Friends* signaled a new signpost in post-9/11 television by dedicating the first episode of series eight – ‘The One After “I Do”’ – ‘to the people of New York City’ (Crane & Kauffman, 2001). This was quickly followed by a changed storyline for episode three of series eight – ‘The One Where Rachel Tells’. As Monica and Chandler left for their honeymoon the script originally called for Chandler to make an inappropriate remark about a bomb in the airport (TV.com, 2008). Not funny in a post-9/11 world.

There were two key spaces in the background set of *Friends* that were used to pay tribute to the people of New York and the United States in the first post-9/11 series. The first of these spaces was the wall behind the famous couch where the *Friends* crew sat in their favourite coffee house – *Central Perk*. The artwork on this wall was changed every two or three episodes (Crane & Kauffman, 1994). After 9/11 this artwork sometimes depicted American flags, images of ‘Uncle Sam’, and caricatures of the Statue of Liberty. In the pre-9/11 series the viewer was more likely to see artwork featuring mundane images of animals, flowers and murals of shapes and colour. The second space was a whiteboard that hung on the front door of Joey and Chandler’s apartment. The whiteboard was used throughout the *Friends* series for notes, images, and messages. After 9/11 this space was used to pay tribute to New Yorkers and their emergency services. The following table depicts how these spaces were used in series eight of *Friends*. Also depicted in this table are miscellaneous representations of 9/11 and post-9/11 New York City in this series.

Episode	Air date	Whiteboard	Artwork in Central Perk	Miscellaneous references
1	27-Sep-01	- (not visible)	- (not visible)	Episode dedicated to the people of New York City
2	4-Oct-01	-	Painting of fruit	-
3	11-Oct-01	Sketch of Empire State Building	-	Changed storyline – Chandler's "bomb joke"
4	18-Oct-01	I ♥ New York	-	-
5	25-Oct-01	Sketch of mushroom	Painting of fruit	-
6	1-Nov-01	-	- (distorted)	"FDNY" t-shirt - Joey
7	8-Nov-01	Sketch of robots	Painting of chair	-
8	15-Nov-01	Sketch of US flag on moon	Painting of Statue of Liberty/Flag	*American flag near fridge
9	22-Nov-01	The phrase - "One New York, 1 People"	-	*American flag near fridge
10	6-Dec-01	The acronym "FDNY"	Painting of Statue of Liberty/Flag	*American flag near fridge
11	13-Dec-01	Sketch of bird and flowers	Christmas wreath	"FDNY" t-shirt - Rachel
12	10-Jan-02	Sketch of Sun/Moon hybrid	Painting of white flower	"Capt. Billy Burke" t-shirt
13	17-Jan-02	Sketch of a train	An American flag	*American flag near fridge
14	31-Jan-02	Sketch of a hockey-goalie	Abstract painting of a bulldog	*American flag near fridge
15	7-Feb-02	Sketch of a motorcycle	Valentine's Day wreath	*American flag near fridge
16	28-Feb-02	face	Painting of a cow	*American flag near fridge
17	7-Mar-02	-	Painting of the Statue of Liberty	*American flag near fridge
18	28-Mar-02	-	-	*American flag near fridge
19	4-Apr-02	-	Painting of "Uncle Sam"	*American flag near fridge
20	25-Apr-02	- (distorted)	-	*American flag near fridge
21	2-May-02	-	Painting of "Uncle Sam"	*American flag near fridge
22	9-May-02	-	Painting of "Uncle Sam"	*American flag near fridge
23	16-May-02	-	-	*American flag near fridge
24	16-May-02	-	-	*American flag near fridge

**Table 1: The Whiteboard, Artwork in *Central Perk* and miscellaneous representations of 9/11, terrorism and New York City in post-9/11 *Friends*.
(* permanent in post 9/11 episodes from episode eight of series eight until the program's conclusion after ten seasons).**

Many of the references to 9/11 were sporadic, occasional and more likely the result of idiosyncratic wardrobe and set design decisions rather than narrative planning. But they were there for all viewers to see. At times the changing artwork in the background of scenes filmed in *Central Perk* depicted images of American culture – Uncle Sam, the Statue of Liberty, and American flags. The whiteboard at one point contained the doodled words ‘One New York. 1 People’. At another point the whiteboard contained the letters ‘FDNY’ (Fire Department, New York). On three separate occasions in series eight characters could be seen wearing FDNY t-shirts. Another post-9/11 change could be seen in a poster behind the fridge in Joey and Chandler’s apartment. For several seasons the space behind their fridge had been filled with a cartoonish map of Manhattan. Eight episodes into series eight this image was replaced by an American flag. What this had to do with post-9/11 New York is unclear. But Hirst (2003: 10) writes of being in Los Angeles immediately following 9/11:

The US flag is everywhere, sold in its thousands by those guys at intersections who clean your windscreens whether you like it or not. It hangs from private verandahs and office windows, and it’s stuck to the bonnets and boots of countless Chevvies, Hondas and Beemers.

Hirst (2003: 10) argues that for some this flag-waving was part of the grieving process, but for others, it represented a dark hostility towards the world outside of the US. This dark hostility was embodied by bumper-stickers and t-shirts that were fused and linked to images of the US flag – ‘IT’S BUTT-KICKING TIME’; ‘DON’T FUCK WITH US. WE FUCK BACK’. This may be evidence of a post-9/11 world where a lust for nationalistic symbolism and the desire to stake one’s devotion to the symbolic tribalization of nationhood could take hold as a renewed devotion to ‘blood’ and ‘soil’ (see Fromm, [1956] 2008: 47-48 and see Greenwald, 2004; Schechter, 2004).

It is not clear which wielding of the flag was present in post-9/11 episodes of *Friends*. But perhaps the post-9/11 appearance of a permanent American flag in *Friends* can shed light on the controversy surrounding Barack Obama’s failure to don an American flag lapel pin in the early stages of the 2007/2008 Presidential election campaign. Barack Obama moved against this political routine early in his Presidential campaign because he believed that the American flag had become a substitute for ‘true patriotism’ (Obama in Associated Press, 2007). In a statement from his campaign offices it was declared ‘We all revere the flag, but Senator Obama believes that being a patriot is about more than a symbol’ (Associated Press, 2007).

Locating 9/11 in *Friends*

The visible presence-absence of 9/11 in *Friends* – represented by artwork, notes on whiteboards, clothing and American flags – finds an unstable footing in the time and space coordinates of the post-9/11 episodes. The producers and directors of *Friends* had always attempted to keep the program's schedule, as much as possible, in line with 'real' world chronology. For example, series eight began airing on September 27, 2001. The Halloween episode aired to correspond with the 'real world' Halloween. The Thanksgiving episode corresponded with Thanksgiving and the Christmas episode aired shortly before the show went off air over Christmas before returning in January. In February the Valentines Day episode was aired. As much as possible, the show's producers tried to tie the chronological narrative of *Friends* with a real world chronological narrative. Naturally this narrative was constantly broken by the beginning and end of the US ratings seasons. So whilst the audience can imagine that when the season starts the temporality of the in-world narrative corresponds roughly with the temporal conditions outside of the world of *Friends*, at some point during the between-season breaks this chronology becomes incongruent. How is the viewer to understand the day before the first post-9/11 series begins? The last episode of series seven featured Chandler's and Monica's wedding. According to the *Friends* temporal narrative the first episode of series eight is the next day despite series seven ending in May and series eight beginning in September, shortly after 9/11. As such, the lives of the characters in *Friends* at the beginning of series eight corresponded with a 'real' world period of mourning, horror and anxiety for large numbers of television audiences.

Why is this even important? I suggest it is important because it represents a crucial antagonism that is produced in most television programs that depict routine and everyday life. It is an antagonism of time and space. Is not 9/11 as an event of the same order? Massive and horrific terrorist attacks occurred in New York City on September 11, 2001 but it was – and is – viewed across multiple configurations of time and space even as it was occurring. But where did 9/11 go in the fictional narrative of *Friends*? It was not, after all, totally absent. There were t-shirts, paintings and etch-a-sketch doodles – all are testament to perhaps the most significant event in the lives of these six New Yorkers. The building where Monica, Rachel, Chandler and Joey live is a building in Manhattan located on the corner of Bedford and Grove – or at least that is the building where the producers would have the audience believe that they live. The Bedford-Grove intersection is a *real* intersection in Manhattan. As such, 9/11 would have caused more than a slight interruption to the everyday lives of these six friends.

Perhaps if the show was to reach for a deeper reality, one of the characters could have died. Chandler would have been a likely candidate as he worked in a tall office building for a major international firm. Perhaps Ross – a Professor of Paleontology at New York University – was having breakfast with NYU colleagues at the time the planes struck, and perhaps these colleagues watched the events unfold on television together. Social theorist Toby Miller was an NYU Professor when 9/11 occurred – perhaps these NYU colleagues were having coffee together (perhaps at *Central Perk*) when they heard an explosion and smoke filled the Manhattan sky. Of course I can easily shake myself out of this fantasy – *Friends* was, *in reality*, filmed in Studio City, California.

But here is my dilemma. Every time I snap back to reality and remember that *Friends* is fiction no matter how real it seems something else shunts me out of this reality and absorbs me back into the fictitious world of these ‘everyday’ New Yorkers. It was filmed in a studio in California no matter how well the show’s creators simulate Manhattan. So why acknowledge 9/11 at all? Should viewers interpret the 9/11 references in post-9/11 episodes of *Friends* as a wholly Californian tribute? Perhaps the links to a post-9/11 time and space are not really there. Images of American flags, Uncle Sam, and the Statue of Liberty are routine features of life in America (despite the appearance of an American flag in series one to seven being a rare occurrence). Yet, there was one representation of 9/11 that could not be denied when in episode twelve of series eight – titled ‘The One Where Joey Dates Rachel’ – Joey casually lounges around his apartment wearing a t-shirt with the words ‘Capt. Billy Burke’ on the chest.

Captain Billy Burke has become a well-known heroic figure of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Burke was a firefighter who perished in the Twin Towers when they collapsed. When Tower Two collapsed Captain Burke was on the 27th floor of Tower One. Captain Burke ordered his colleagues out of the Tower but remained in the burning building with Ed Beya, a quadriplegic man, and the man’s *friend*, Abe Zelmanowitz. These three people remained together, refusing to leave each other’s side, as Tower One fell to the Manhattan streets below the World Trade Center (Burke in Sumner, 2007; CNN, 2002).

I argue that the reference to Billy Burke in post-9/11 *Friends* works to shatter the very fabric of reality in the fictional world of Ross, Rachel, Monica, Chandler, Phoebe and Joey. If all the gestures and representations of 9/11 in series eight could be chalked up to my situatedness, or perhaps my paranoia, the invoking and reanimating of the story of Billy Burke provided particularly compelling evidence that I am not jumping at shadows (at least not on this occasion). No longer can I say that the 9/11 references were more a product of idiosyncratic set and wardrobe decisions. This t-shirt would have been difficult to find, perhaps specially ordered and made or perhaps it was sent by

Captain Burke's colleagues for use in one of America's most popular sitcoms. Regardless of how the t-shirt found its way into post-9/11 *Friends*, it represented something quite different to a presence-absence. The t-shirt symbolically placed *Friends* in a post-9/11 world. It was real and, therefore, now, so was 9/11.

Conclusion: When it Hasn't Been Your Day, Week, Month or Even Your Year

Friends never really occupied a subversive political, social and cultural space. The program was perhaps designed to appeal to a mass audience and has regularly been aired on major US and global networks in so-called "prime-time" time slots. It remained one of the highest rating television shows in the US and Australia for most of its 10 years on air. But unlike its comedic counterpart *The Simpsons* and the cartoonish antics of Homer and Bart, *Friends* rarely attempted to politically subvert, fracture social and cultural boundaries, or engage in targeted social commentary (a space that even the light-treading *Family Ties* explored!).

In many respects it could be argued that the creators of *Friends* did not incorporate 9/11 into the program's narrative, but I argue that they did acknowledge the events of 9/11 through a variety of representations and gestures and by generating a paradoxical presence-absence for the 9/11 terrorist attacks. These representations and gestures were expressed through the use of American flags, images of the Statue of Liberty, images of Uncle Sam, FDNY t-shirts and the reference to Captain Billy Burke. I argue that these artifacts represent problematic *antagonisms of reality* in the narratives of the fictional Manhattan depicted in *Friends*. Certainly as a fictional television program it did not have to be *real*, so perhaps there is no dilemma. Then why choose a 'real' apartment block for the friends to live in? Why employ various cultural icons representing New York and Manhattan? Why pay tribute to Captain Billy Burke? These questions are not easily explained away by an appeal to an unproblematic reality. As Zurawik (2004) argues: 'As much as the series has been criticized for its lack of social reality in terms of diversity, cost of living, crime and gridlock, it was that very *lack of reality* ... that gave it a second life after 9/11. This was a New York where people loved each other and made babies, not a New York where hate-filled zealots crashed planes into towers' (my emphasis).

This 'lack of reality' is fertile ground into which Žižek's social theory should be integrated. I argue that Žižek can help me understand why the consequences of terrorism and 9/11 were absent from the post-9/11 episodes of *Friends* but not forgotten.

I argue that this presence-absence represents a moment of denial, forgetfulness and trauma – what I argue to be a ‘fetishistic disavowal’ (Žižek, 2008: 45-46). *We know but we don’t want to know, so we pretend that we do not know*. As such, post-9/11 *Friends* takes its rightful place among the many products that are deprived of their malignant properties – the New York in post-9/11 *Friends* represents *New York without the terror* and, therefore, *New York City without its New Yorkness*. In this way, post-9/11 *Friends* joins *The Truman Show* (1998) as ‘the *ultimate* American paranoid fantasy’ (my emphasis) (Žižek, 2002a: 13). I suggest that the ‘underlying experience’ of *Friends* is that post-9/11 New York City is, in a way, *unreal*.

Or perhaps I should once again shunt myself back to reality and adjust my perspective. Perhaps *Friends* represents a New York City where people can again be ignorant. New York City may be an idyllic and glamorous setting for popular culture, but in a post-9/11 world it is a terrorist target. I argue that the post-9/11 episodes of *Friends* could also be viewed as a vain attempt at normalizing what was a catastrophic event that has induced deep anxieties in affluent city-dwelling witnesses. The Manhattan of Ross, Rachel, Monica, Chandler, Phoebe and Joey was a paranoid one. They feigned business as usual as the world collapsed around them – and we watched. Post-9/11 *Friends* was a symbolic location where the ills of the world were suspended – if only for half-an-hour per week. Despite this (or perhaps because of this), grim reality haunted the *Friends* set in Studio City, California. No longer was the Manhattan of *Friends* a place where the apparently promiscuous café-culture came to play, it was also a terrorist target. But hey, ‘Your mother warned you there’d be days like these’ (Rembrandts, ‘I’ll Be There For You’ – theme music to *Friends*).

References

- Alexander, J., Eyerman, R. and Giesen, B. (2004), *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Alexander, J., Eyerman, R., Giesen, B., Smelser, N. and Sztrompka, P. (2000), *Cultural Trauma*, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Associated Press (2007), 'Barack Obama Stops Wearing American Flag Lapel Pin', *Fox News*, October 4, available at http://www.foxnews.com/printer_friendly_story/0.3566.299439.00.html, accessed on November 11, 2008.
- Barthes, R. (1978), *Image – Music – Text*, Hill and Wang, New York.
- Baudrillard, J. (1994), *Simulacra and Simulation*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Baudrillard, J. (2002), *The Spirit of Terrorism and Requiem for the Twin Towers*, Verso, London.
- Bauman, Z. (2006), *Liquid Fear*, Polity, Cambridge.
- Caruth, C. (ed) (1995), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.
- Caruth, C. (1996), *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.
- Churchill, W. (2003), "Some People Push Back": On the Justice of Roosting Chickens', available at <http://www.kersplebedeb.com/mystuff/s11/churchill.html>, accessed on July 3, 2008.
- CNN (2002), 'September 11 – A Memorial', *CNN.com*, available at <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2001/memorial/people/2144.html>, accessed on 10 July, 2008.
- Crane, D. and Kauffman, M. (Creators) (1994), *Friends* [television series 1994-2004], NBC, United States, series 1-10 and DVD bonus disks.
- Edkins, J. (2002), 'Forget Trauma? Response to September 11', *International Relations*, Vol. 16, No. 2, pp. 243-256.
- Freeman, M. (2004), 'Data are Everywhere: Narrative Criticism in the Literature of Experience', pp. 63-81, in C. Daiute and C. Lightfoot (eds), *Narrative Analysis: Studying the Development of Individuals in Society*, Sage, Thousand Oaks.
- Fromm, E. ([1958] 2008), *The Sane Society*, Routledge, London.
- Fusar-Poli, P., Howes, O., Valmaggia, L. and McGuire, P. (2008), 'Truman' Signs and Vulnerability to Psychosis', *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol. 193, pp. 168.

- Giroux, H. (2006), *Beyond the Spectacle of Terrorism: Global Uncertainty and the Challenge of the New Media*, Paradigm Publishers, Boulder.
- Greenwald, R. (2004), *Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism*, Carolina Productions, Columbia, South Carolina.
- Grosz, E. (1995), *Space, Time and Perversion: The Politics of Bodies* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin).
- Grosz, E. (2001), *Architecture From the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space*, Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Herman, J. (1992), *Trauma and Recovery*, Basic Books, New York.
- Hirst, R. (2003), *Willie's Bar & Grill: A Rock 'n' Roll Tour of North America in the Age of Terror*, Sydney: Picador.
- Howie, L. (forthcoming - 2009), *Terrorism, the Worker, and the City*, Ashgate/Gower, Surrey.
- Lee, C., Rosenfeld, E., Mendenhall, R., Rivers, A. and Tynes, B. (2004), 'Cultural Modeling as a Frame for Narrative Analysis', pp. 39-62, in C. Daiute and C. Lightfoot (eds), *Narrative Analysis: Studying the Development of Individuals in Society*, Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Miller, T. (2002), 'Being Ignorant, Living in Manhattan', available at www.portalcomunicacion.com/bcn2002/n_eng/contents/11/miller.pdf, accessed on February 1, 2007.
- Miller, T. (2007), *Cultural Citizenship: Cosmopolitanism, Consumerism, and Television in a Neoliberal Age*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Neal, A. (1998), *National Trauma and Collective Memory*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk.
- Prager, J. (2008), 'Healing from History: Psychoanalytic Considerations on Traumatic Pasts and Social Repair', *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 11, No. 3, pp. 405-420.
- Rembrandts (no date), 'I'll Be There For You', theme music to *Friends*, lyrics available at <http://www.lyricsondemand.com/onehitwonders/illbethereforyoulyrics.html>, accessed on 8 July, 2008.
- Riessman, C. (1993), *Narrative Analysis*, Newbury Park: Sage.
- Roth, M. (1995), *Memory, Trauma and the Construction of History*, Columbia University Press, New York.
- Roy, A. (2004), 'L'Empire n'est pas invulnérable', *Manière de Voir*, no. 75, June-July, pp. 63-66.
- Schechter, D. (2004), *WMD: Weapons of Mass Deception*, [documentary] Cinema Libre, Canoga Park, California.

Star, D. (Creators) (1998), *Sex and the City* [television series 1998-2004], HBO, United States.

Sztrompka, P. (2000), 'Cultural Trauma: The Other Face of Social Change', *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 3, No. 4, pp. 449-466.

Sumner, T. (2007), 'Capt. Burke Died on 9/11 at the Hands of 'Enemy Combatants'', *9/11 Families for a Safe & Strong America*, available at <http://www.911familiesforamerica.org/?p=341>, accessed on July 10, 2008.

Szymanek, L. (2004), '"Friends" Not Forever in Television', *Lumino Magazine*, April 15, available at <http://www.luminomagazine.com/mw/content/view/921/4>, accessed on July 7, 2008.

Tumarkin, M. (2005), *Traumascapes: The Power and Fate of Places Transformed by Tragedy*, Carlton: Melbourne University Press.

TV.com (2008), 'The One Where Rachel Tells...', *TV.com*, available at <http://www.tv.com/friends/the-one-where-rachel-tells.../episode/73775/summary.html>, accessed on May 4, 2008.

Waitzkin, H. and Magaña, H. (1997), 'The Black Box in Somatization: Unexplained Physical Symptoms, Culture, and Narratives of Trauma', *Social Science and Medicine*, Vol. 45, No. 6, pp. 811-825.

Whittington, L. (no date), 'Sex and the City – The Final Season', *Culturevulture.net: Choices for the Cognoscenti*, available at <http://www.culturevulture.net/Television/SexandtheCity.htm>, accessed on July 8, 2008.

Žižek, S. (2001a), *Enjoy Your Symptom! Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and Out*, 2nd edn, New York: Routledge.

Žižek, S. (2001b), *On Belief*, London: Routledge.

Žižek, S. (2002a), *Welcome to the Desert of the Real! Five Essays on September 11 and Related Dates*, London: Verso.

Žižek, S. (ed) (2002b), *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Lacan (But Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock)*, London: Verso.

Žižek, S. (2002c), 'The Matrix: Or, Two Sides of Perversion', in W. Irwin (ed), *The Matrix and Philosophy: Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, Chicago: Open Court, pp. 240-266.

Žižek, S. (2006a), *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema: Parts 1, 2, 3*, A Lone Star, Mischief Films, Amoeba Film Production.

Žižek, S. (2006b), *The Parallax View*, Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Žižek, S. (2008), *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*, Picador, New York.

Zurawik, D. (2004), 'Era of Smiles Fading Away', *Baltimore Sun*, May 2, available at www.baltimoresun.com/entertainment/tv/bal-as.friends02may02.0.1061507.story, accessed on July 7, 2008.

⁰ I argue that this same fetishistic disavowal is apparent in post-9/11 M. Night Shyamalan movies. Notably, Žižek (2008) explores the meaning of Shyamalan's *The Village* (2004) in a similar context. This film is centered on life in a paranoid and gated community. I suggest that this paranoia can be similarly viewed in post-9/11 episodes of *Friends*.

¹ Bauman quotes here from Roy, A. (2004), 'L'Empire n'est pas invulnérable', *Manière de Voir*, no. 75, June-July, pp. 63-66.