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Memorial Representation in Amy Waldman's *The Submission* and the Novel as a Counter-Monument

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Abstract

The crisis caused by the 9/11 attacks on the Twin Towers has also shown itself in the fields of art and literature. There are ongoing discussions over the role of the artist/writer after 9/11 and how the events could be best represented. Amy Waldman's novel *The Submission* (2011) narrates America's encounter with its Muslim population after 9/11. Although many 9/11 novels most favored by academics deal with domestic and psychic trauma, Waldman's novel focuses instead on the cultural trauma. This article will compare the reactions to the actual 9/11 memorial design of Michael Arad with the reactions to the memorial design of Mohammad Khan narrated in *The Submission*, to display parallelisms which would bare the novel's political potential to question America's relationship to its past. It will read *The Submission* as a novel that functions as what James E. Young would call a "counter-monument," serving as an anti-solution to the attacks on the Twin Towers; provoking the reader to remember, think and question the past; and rendering them active participants rather than "passive and forgetful" ones for whom the memory work is done by the memorials. In line with Young's concept of the counter-monument, Waldman's novel does not attempt to show American society better than it is, nor does it attempt to provide a closure or a reconciliation regarding 9/11. Instead with its depiction of a fictional memorial debate, it challenges a unified notion of the past forced on Americans and questions the idea of building a memorial that bury events beneath national myths, which attest the novel's function as a counter-monument.

Keywords

Amy Waldman, *The Submission*, 9/11, counter-monument, American identity

Amy Waldman'ın *The Submission* Romanında Anıtsal Temsil ve Bir Karşı Anıt olarak Roman

Öz

11 Eylül 2001'de New York'ta İkiz Kulelere yapılan terör saldırılarının yansımaları edebiyat ve sanat alanlarında da kendini gösterdi. Saldırılar sonrası sanatçının/yazarın rolü ve olayların ortaya konacak eserlerde en iyi nasıl temsil edileceği üzerine gelişen tartışmalar halen sürmektedir. Amy Waldman'ın *The Submission* (2011) romanı Amerika'nın 11 Eylül sonrası Müslüman vatandaşlarıyla karşı karşıya gelişini ele alır. Akademisyenler tarafından en çok övgü alan bu dönem romanları ruhsal travmayı konu ederken, Waldman'ın romanı bunlar yerine kültürel travmaya odaklanır. Bu makale Michael Arad'ın 11 Eylül anıtına gösterilen tepkileri romanın baş karakteri Mohammad Khan'ın kurgusal anıt projesine gösterilen tepkilerle kıyaslayacak ve romanın Amerika'nın geçmişiyle olan ilişkisini sorgulamaya yönelik siyasi olanakları gözler önüne sermek adına bu tepkiler arasındaki benzerliklere dikkat çekecektir. Bunu yaparken, romanı İkiz Kulelere yapılan saldırılara bir çözüm sunmayan; aksine okuyucuları olayları hatırlamaya sevk eden; onları geçmiş hakkında düşündüren ve sorgulatan; onları hatırlama işini kendileri yerine anıtlara yaptıran "pasif" ve "unutkan" bireyler olmaktansa aktif katılımcılar haline getirmeyi hedefleyen; James E. Young'ın "karşı anıt" kavramına uyan bir eser olarak ele alacaktır. Roman, 11 Eylül sonrası Amerikan toplumunu olduğundan daha iyi göstermeye veya olaylara bir sonuç veya uzlaşma sağlamaya çalışmaz. Tam tersine, sunduğu kurmaca anıt tartışması ile, Amerikalılara dayatılan sorgulanmaya kapalı geçmiş anlayışına ve saldırıları ulusal mitlerin altına gömecek bir anıt tercih etme fikrine meydan okuyan bir "karşı anıt" olarak ortaya çıkar.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Amy Waldman, *The Submission*, 11 Eylül saldırıları, karşı anıt, Amerikan kimliği

Published in 2011, Amy Waldman's *The Submission* has won many awards and attracted great attention both from readers and the U.S. media. Among the many 9/11 novels, it is one of the first to provoke a political debate on American ideals. Having grown up in Los Angeles, Amy Waldman started working for *The Times* upon her graduation from Yale. She was in New York during 9/11 and began reporting on the aftermath of the attacks. She was later sent to Russia, Iran, Asia and Afghanistan (Legro). Her experiences overseas gave her the chance to observe how Muslim societies lived their religion. Back in the United States in 2005, she grew interested in the War on Terror. Being a journalist, she views fiction as a genre that "has a lot more room for ambivalence and internal conflict, contradiction," which, she thinks are what "people felt after 9/11 confusion" (Derbyshire). The central question of her novel emerged during a conversation with a friend around the Vietnam War memorial controversy, partly stemming from its designer Maya Lin's Asian American identity. The conversation led her to imagine how America would react to the selection of the 9/11 memorial design of a Muslim architect (Legro). While Waldman was writing the novel, the conflict Waldman imagined came into life in the form of the Ground Zero mosque controversy caused by the building of an Islamic community center and mosque, two blocks away from the Ground Zero. The controversy that surrounded the building up of a Muslim architectural form intended to promote interfaith dialogue provided for her "a more vivid sense" of what she is dealing with (Derbyshire) and convinced her that she was "on to something" (Legro).

The Submission focuses on the memorial crisis in America right after the attacks, resulting from the selection of the memorial garden of a "Muslim" architect among thousands of anonymous submissions to commemorate the victims of the attacks on the Twin Towers. The title refers both to the anonymous submission of Mohammad Khan and his submission to the public, government and media opposition directed against him and his design. In the end of the novel, a Garden of Flags is built to commemorate the 9/11 dead, while Khan builds his design as a pleasure garden for a rich man in India. Twenty years after the memorial debates, Khan is acknowledged as a great American architect. America has corrected her mistake of the past and embraced Khan as an artist and a citizen. The novel does not only show the national conflict caused by the selection of Khan's garden to commemorate the

events, but it also peeks into the individual traumatic experiences of many other American characters from different ethnic, social, political, educational, religious, and professional backgrounds.

This article will compare the reactions to the actual 9/11 memorial design of Michael Arad with the reactions to the memorial design of Mohammad Khan narrated in *The Submission*, to display parallelisms which would bare the novel's political potential to question America's relationship to its past. It will read *The Submission* as a novel that functions as what James Young would call a "counter-monument," serving as an anti-solution to the attacks on the Twin Towers; provoking the reader to remember, think and question the past; rendering them active participants rather than "passive and forgetful" ones for whom the memory work is done by the memorials. In line with Young's concept of the counter-monument, Waldman's novel does not attempt to show American society better than it is, nor does it attempt to provide a closure or a reconciliation regarding 9/11. Instead with its depiction of a fictional memorial debate, it challenges a unified notion of the past forced on Americans and questions the idea of building a memorial that bury events beneath national myths, which attest the novel's function as a counter-monument.

1. Memorialization of 9/11: Actual and Fictional

The crisis caused by the attacks has also shown itself in the fields of art and literature. There are ongoing discussions over the role of the artist/writer after 9/11 and how the events could be best represented. The 9/11 novels most favored by academics deal with domestic and psychic trauma and have mostly been "unconcerned with the broader context and the political consequences of the events" (Baelo-Allué 167). However, a dissatisfaction among literary journalists and critics have also appeared "as to the shortcomings of this emerging fiction" (Baelo-Allué 167). Richard Gray complains about the numb prose, repetition, the sense of déjà vu (132), the domestication of crisis in familiar structures (134), the mere acknowledging of trauma, and the imaginative paralysis when it comes to encounter the "other" (135). He calls for new and different plot structures, deterritorialization (141), new frames for thinking (144), acknowledgment of the contradictions, and an argumentative mediation (147). Michael Rothberg agrees with Gray in that works of literature suffer from failure of imagination, lack of mediation, and domestication of crisis (153). Yet, what he offers is

"a fiction of international relationships and extraterritorial citizenship" because Americans can't grasp the "'prosthetic reach' of the empire in other worlds" (153). For him, authors should "pivot away from the homeland to seek out a centrifugal literature of extraterritoriality," turn to foreign wars and encounters, and help understand how US citizenship looks from the outside (158). Another scholar, Catherine Morley, argues that 9/11 does not have as much impact on American fiction as many critics think it does ("How Do We Write about This?").

The Submission addresses each of these critical remarks by presenting an imaginative plot that would capture the interest of the reader. It has its major character look at America from the outside as an extraterritorial citizen. It wanders around identity issues of the novels prior to 9/11 since not much has changed in the country in terms of the perception of American identity and the identity of the "other." The novel narrates America's encounter with its Muslim population and offers a transcultural approach, which "acknowledges difference and commonality, conversation and silence," which are "crucial to bridge the chiasm between cultures" (Estévez-Saá and Pereira-Ares 276). According to Sonia Baelo-Allué, it is a rare example of "cultural trauma novel" dealing with the post 9/11 America besides the numerous psychic trauma novels (165–172). Arin Keeble favors the novel since it offers "a real panorama of the American society" (171) with its "strongly representative" characters (181), the "post-9/11 conflictedness" it displays, and the "directly political" approach it embraces unlike the many 9/11 novels produced in its time (165–166). Sini Eikonsalo compares the novel to those of DeLillo, Foer, and Updike and claims that it reforms "the tropes, themes, and patterns of the early, canonized 9/11 novels by redirecting the reader's sympathy to new directions, criticizing the atmosphere of doubt and paranoia, dropping the 9/11 attacks, their victims, and the victims' families from their sacred pedestal, introducing a more diverse set of characters, deconstructing stereotypes, and offering more complex identities" (81).

Waldman's novel begins with a discussion of the jury made up of artists, family members of the victims, New York dignitaries and statesman over the two finalist memorial designs of the yet anonymous artists: The Void and The Garden. The jurors name the characteristics of their ideal memorial and the audience they believe the memorial is designed for. Discussions end up with The Garden being selected as the winner.

The architect of the winning design, Mohammad Khan's identity is revealed to the reader as the son of Indian immigrants who came to America in the 1960s, who were "almost puritanical in their secularism" (28). Khan eats pork, dates Jews and Catholics, and calls himself an agnostic, if not an atheist (28). Yet once his Muslim identity is revealed, he would be "reinvented by others, so distorted he couldn't recognize himself" (293). He would be asked his thoughts on jihad, whether he loves his country, whether he is a practicing Muslim, whether he has ever been to Afghanistan, and whether he knows any Muslims with terrorist intentions (24-27). People would say he is a,

> Pakistani, Saudi, and Qatari; that he was not an American citizen; that he had donated to organizations backing terrorism; that he had dated half the female architects in New York; that as a Muslim he didn't date at all; that his father ran a shady Islamic charity; that his brother—how badly Mo, as an only child, had wanted a brother!—had started a radical Muslim students' association at his university. He was called, besides decadent, abstinent, deviant, violent, insolent, abhorrent, aberrant, and typical. (126)

Soon Khan begins to feel like a criminal and speaks under the influence of the anti-Islam propaganda everywhere around him. He grows his beard and begins fasting just because he does not want to fit in the "good Muslim" definition of the propagandists (114, 185). The "long unuttered" words "The Kalima," which is "the declaration of faith," escape his lips almost making him laugh (28). His refusal to "discuss the possible meanings of his memorial" makes things worse (125). He has been blamed for having designed "a martyrs' paradise" (116); a "victory garden" for the Islamist terrorism (127); or "an Islamic paradise" (138) on the grounds that he is a Muslim. He does not openly deny the accusations, despite the fact that his design has no such intentions. Eventually, his supporters give up on him one by one. He receives threats of all sorts (123). The novel brings into focus the tendency in some Americans to treat all Muslims as Islamists and all Islamists as potential terrorists. It ends with an interview with Khan, now living in India, by the son of his once ardent supporter, Claire Burwell, and his girlfriend. The readers are informed about the self-correction America has engaged in, acknowledging Khan as a great American architect promoted at the Museum of New Architecture

in New York with a retrospective of his career. "Mohammad Khan, American Architect" was "a tribute to his blaze of work, most of it in the Middle East, India, or China, over the past twenty years" (286). Claire says, she has not even visited the "ugly" Garden of Flags built to commemorate the 9/11 dead in New York instead of Khan's design, yet remains skeptical about Khan's motives even after twenty years. The documentary Claire's son is involved in also interviews Claire, who blames Khan for employing words from Quran in his design, which now serves as a "private pleasure garden of some rich Muslim—a sultan, or emir, or something" (296). Upon being asked by the interviewer to read what the scripture says, Khan reads: "Use your imagination" (298). Claire, the so-called liberal who once supported Khan, is embarrassed to hear this. The ending shows what the memorial crisis has led to in the novel. America has lost a great artist, who now considers himself "a global citizen, American only in name" (286). He defines his community as people like him, "[p]eople who are rational" (194).

As a brief summary of the plot reveals, one of central concerns of the novel is public memory in relationship to the memorialization process. Public memory is "a body of beliefs and ideas about the past that help a public society understand both its past and present, and by implication, its future" (McDowell and Meyer 15). Ideally, it is shaped "in a public sphere in which various parts of social structure exchange views" (Bodner 15). Its focus is not the past but the present where "serious matters" such as "the nature of power and the question of loyalty to both official and vernacular contexts" take place (15). It emerges from "the intersection of official and vernacular cultural expressions," the former being shaped by cultural leaders' and authorities' "dogmatic formalism and the restatement of reality in ideal rather than complete or ambiguous terms" and the latter being "diverse and changing," based on "views of reality derived from firsthand experience … rather than the 'imagined'" (Bodner 13-14).

Terrorism memorials in contemporary America are "among the most heated sites of public feeling" (Doss 119). They embody both the fear and the vulnerability of American people, while, at the same time, "counter[ing] those fears and particular security narratives geared toward national unity and social stability" (Doss 119-120). These sacred sites are the "ideological rallying grounds" of American politicians, making "reproducing national narratives of social stability,

unity and endurance" possible (122). After 9/11, these efforts have been observed to be more intensely implemented, especially to justify the foreign policy decisions made.

Within hours of the attacks, the streets and parks of New York City were filled with temporary memorials created by Americans. In a few days, discussions over what kind of a memorial could represent the experience started. Twenty one days after the attacks, *The New York Times* began to publish memorial proposals of famous artists and architects such as Shirin Nesat, John Baldessori, and Barbara Kruger, who thought a park on the site of the towers would make the best memorial; Richard Meier and James Turrel, who thought new and higher buildings should be built in the place of them; Loise Bourgeois, who thought "a seven-story store column tapped by a star, with the names of the dead chiseled in vertical rows" would make the great 9/11 memorial; and Joel Shapiro, who thought leaving the site in ruins would be "the most effective" way of commemorating the loss (Doss 2). About 5,200 submissions were received in the World Trade Center Site Memorial Competition, managed by the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation in 2003, a number three-times higher than the number of entries submitted for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial competition (Doss 6).

Erika Doss, in her book *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America*, reads the minimalistic style of contemporary terrorism memorials in America, including Reflecting Absence—the 9/11 memorial commemorating the Americans who died in the attacks on the Twin Towers—intent on reflecting and containing the fear felt by Americans (Doss 123). For her, the minimalism employed,

> manipulates normal understandings of space and time in order to evoke trauma's dissociative effects of fear and anxiety. Towering monoliths, angled walls, recessed forms, reflective surfaces, and gridded units strewn throughout enormously scaled sites lend these memorials their purposely disconcerting impressions. Pits, voids and an aesthetic of "absence" further their destabilizing sensibility: tensions between their overwhelming spatiality and their simultaneous emphasis on intimate experience heighten their anxious affective conditions …. Likewise, such memorials rely on refined materials such as granite, marble and bronze rather than the ignoble materials

> more typically employed in 1960s' minimalist tropes of disruption, experientiality, and radical transformation. (Doss 146)

Doss further thinks the fear and anxiety evoked in terrorism memorials point to an American innocence and victimization, which naturalizes the support in American militarism (153). From this point of view, the people lost to the attacks are considered to be sacrifices made by Americans, that rid citizens from sin and trauma (Marvin and Ingle), preventing them from contemplating on the reasons and consequences of the attacks.

Despite what Doss thinks about the functions of minimalist terrorism memorials including Michael Arad's Reflecting Absence, Arad's memorial has also been criticized by many Americans for failing to address the sacrifices made by Americans. As the varying perceptions presented reveal, Americans were divided in their expectations from the World Trade Center site memorial. Some asked for healing; others wanted a display of American strength; still others expected it to better represent the pain and suffering. It has been criticized for being anti-war, since, as historian Kristin Haas puts it, "it wasn't celebratory, that it made fighting and dying in an American war seem tragic" ("Here Is How a Controversial Work of Art Healed America"). People who think like Haas, likened the memorial to Maya Lin's Vietnam War Memorial, which Lin herself defined as a memorial that does not glorify the war even if it glorifies the lost ones ("Here Is How A Controversial Work of Art Healed America").

Reflecting Absence has been criticized for the way it looks too. Former New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, described the memorial as a sight "more than any [American] can bear," except for the trees and the water (Leopold). Others thought the site was too barren (Mandell). Arad was paired with a landscape architect named Peter Walker and a revision for the inclusion of a lush garden of trees and plantings came within weeks (Mandell).

The memorial has not made 9/11 families happy either. Many disliked the fact that it took too long to complete the memorial. Others criticized it for "selecting prettiness" over "relevance and not respecting the wishes of the families of the victims" (Hurley). Some families thought the names of the emergency workers such as

firefighters should be placed separately from those of other victims (Mandell). The mother of a firefighter died on 9/11, Joan Molinaro, describes *Reflecting Absence* as "empty, void of honor, truth, emotion and dignity" (Hurley). Clare Hurley, a journalist, claimed that families "deserve a full and open accounting for the events that took loved ones' lives and caused ongoing trauma" and that the current memorial "remain[s] a large, uncomfortable void, like an irritated wound that won't heal," and has "unintentionally" become the "fitting emblem of the failure to adequately account for the terror attacks of September 11, 2001." She blamed officials for coming up with a not-good-enough memorial for the sake of producing a "closure" to the events as quickly as possible (Hurley).

Critics like R. R. Reno think the memorial portrays the American to be weak. For Reno, the memorial "downplay[s] [American] citizenship and accentuate[s] [Americans'] shared, naked humanity" ("The Failed 9/11 Memorial"). He thinks the "faceless international style of architecture" and the lack of national symbolism renders the memorial with "no public meaning" (Reno). Moreover, the memorial has "nothing to dissent from—and nothing to consent to," merely inviting Americans "to contemplate the annihilating abyss of death, a sad, inevitable destiny" (Reno). He thinks the names listed on the walls of the pools "atomizes rather than individualizes" the lost ones, "severing the personal from the patriotic rather than rejoining them," suppressing the fact that the lost Americans "died as citizens and residents of a global superpower." He blames the American contemporary elite for their "tolerant," "sensitive to differences," and "inclusive" stance which displays Americans as "passive subjects" (Reno).

As the negative reactions to Michael Arad's Reflecting Absence show, the language of patriotism is central to public memory in the United States because "it has the capacity to mediate both vernacular loyalties to local and familiar places and official realities to national and imagined structures" (Bodner 14-15). Many Americans expect from the memorial a reinvigoration of mythical national values (such as individualism, equality, democracy, progress) and affirmation of the strength celebrated in American national identity, the implemented political decisions, ideologies and a unified notion of the past and the present. The ideal 9/11 memorial, for many Americans, does not provoke questions and criticism; would ignore differences and assume

fixed meanings. Such observations are also validated in the fictional coverage of a memorial debate in Waldman's *The Submission*. The description of Mohammad Khan's garden design in the beginning of the novel, is reminiscent of Arad's:

> The concept was simple: a walled, rectangular garden guided by rigorous geometry. At the center would be a raised pavilion meant for contemplation. Two broad, perpendicular canals quartered the six-acre space. Pathways within each quadrant imposed a grid on the trees, both living and steel, that were studded in orchard-like rows. A white perimeter wall, twenty-seven feet high, enclosed the entire space. The victims would be listed on the wall's interior, their names patterned to mimic the geometric cladding of the destroyed buildings. The steel trees reincarnated the buildings even more literally: they would be made from their salvaged scraps. Four drawings showed the Garden across the seasons …. A snow shroud over the ground; leafless living trees gone to pewter; cast-steel trees glinting with the rose light of late afternoon; the onyx surfaces of the canals shining like crossed swords. Black letters scored on the white wall. (4)

Embodying the minimalist style that can be found in the actual 9/11 memorial in New York, his garden is described by Khan as one being inspired from the garden traditions from all over the world including an Afghan garden which would not be revealed by Khan until the end of the novel (267), out of fear on his side that it would be misinterpreted:

> To me, the wall framing the garden, the wall with the names, is an allegory for the way grief frames the aftermath of this tragedy. Life goes on, the spirit rejuvenates—this is what the garden represents. But whereas the garden grows, and evolves, and changes with the seasons, the wall around it changes not at all. It is as eternal, as unalterable, as our mourning …. The design's influences are many, from Japanese gardens, which use structures, like the pavilion in this design, as anchors through the seasons …. modern artists and architects like Mondrian and Mies van der Rohe, to the gardens we now call Islamic (215-217).

In the case of Khan, his refusal to "discuss the possible meanings of his memorial" after talking about the partly Islamic influence on his design makes things worse (125). He does not openly reject having designed a "a martyrs' paradise" (116) or a "victory garden" for the Islamist terrorism (127), or "an Islamic paradise" (138), despite the fact that he has not. The idea of an architect building a "victory garden" for the terrorists is reminiscent of the public reaction to the winner of the 2005 Flight 93 National Memorial Design Competition, entitled "Crescent of Embrace" by Paul Murdoch Architects. It is a memorial in Stonycreek Township designed for the 40 people who died aboard the hijacked airplane. The original design had a crescent-shaped pathway lined with red mapple trees, which would be likened to the Islamic crescent by some. Eventually, it was modified into a plain circle to rid it from the debates around promotion of Islamic terrorism. Reminiscent also of the controversy around the Ground Zero Mosque, negative reactions to Khan's design came from media correspondents, Muslim groups, and even family members.

Lou Sarge, New York's popular right-wing radio host adds the tagline "I Slam Islam" to his show, and advocates singling out Muslims for searches at airports upon the announcement of the winning design (40-41). Debbie Dawson, the leader of Save America from Islam (SAFI) blames Muslims for dhimmitude and defends the headscarf pulling cases started by Sean Gallagher—the brother of a firefighter who died while fulfilling his duty at the World Trade Center on 9/11—because he doesn't want a memorial built by a Muslim (153). Dawson defends the physical attacks on Muslim women "as an act of liberation" by Americans for the sake of Muslim women who, she believes, are forced to wear the hijab (170). Alyssa Spiers, a journalist, is encouraged by his new editor to "tell people what to think" (105), as a result of which she types out in her column "The problem with Islam is Islam" (106). She also blames Claire Burwell, then a supporter of Khan, as a public figure who is "sleeping with the enemy" (109).

As the debates heat up, two anti-Khan groups, Save America from Islam (SAFI) and the Memorial Defense Committee (MDC), join forces. Upon seeing that the hostile attitudes towards Muslims have been growing, the member of an Islamic group named Muslim American Coordinating Council (MACC), Tariq, targets the defiant attitude of Khan, saying he will "have blood on [his] hands," if he keeps on behaving the way he does (196).

Khan's Father, Salman, also criticizes his son for "drawing attention to [himself], to . . . all Muslims in America—in a way that could be dangerous" (195). Informing Khan about the security guard needed for the mosque he attends, he confesses that he feels he should pay for the guard, being partly responsible for the behavior of his son (194). Khan defends his deeds by asserting that "sometimes America has to be pushed—it has to be reminded of what it is," implying that the country has been failing to keep her promises of individualism, equality, democracy (195).

Those who expect a conventional memorial from Khan also criticize his design. For Ariana Montagu, the aesthetician of the memorial jury, it is "too beautiful" (4). Gardens, for her, are "fetishes of the European bourgeoisie," and thus, not American "vernacular," nor "lineage" (5). She defines the memorial proper as a "national symbol, a historic signifier, a way to make sure anyone who visits—no matter how attenuated their link in time or geography to the attack—understands how it felt, what it meant" (5). The Void, the second option for the memorial design, on the other hand, is strictly disliked by Claire Burwell, the liberal New York elite and wife of a victim of the attacks, since it "mimicked the Vietnam Veterans Memorial" (4). Still, the design she supports is conventional in function. She thinks the memorial should first serve the victim families. It should be a site of healing, a place where "the widows, their children, anyone—could stumble on joy" (5).

All the jurors know they should be quick in decision, since "the longer that space stayed clear, the more it would become a symbol of defeat, of surrender, something for 'them,' whoever they were, to mock" (8). The "blank" was "embarrassing" to many and so it should be filled right away (8). For Paul Rubin, the chairman and the historian, the memorial should have the purpose of "taming" the Americans—"the traumatized victim," the "charged-up avenger," the "queasy voyeur" and others (13).

Once the name of the architect is revealed to be Mohammad Khan, jurors reveal their shock in ways that are not even politically correct. Some think it is the case of "Maya Lin all over again" (17), reminding the readers of the negative reactions received by the artist of the Vietnam War Veterans' Memorial which is now seen as a prototype of many American memorials today (but considered to be a "black

gash of shame" by many who saw it either as a monument with an anti-war statement, or as one designed by an Asian-American if not a Vietnamese). Some of the jurors hope Khan could just be a Muslim name and that he could also be a Jew which would be preferred (17). Others hope he is not "the practicing kind" (17). Only the retired University President Leo and Claire think it is legitimate for a Muslim architect to build the memorial. For Claire, it could even be considered as an opportunity to send a "good message," one that could present America as a democratic and egalitarian country (18). The reaction that comes from the jury, representing a microcosm of the country, would soon parallel the reactions of the American people. As the reactions reveal, the Americans that people the novel expect a memorial that harbors national symbols like the 50-foot-high flagpole added to Maya Lin's memorial design despite her objections. Moreover, it should be celebratory; provide a closure to the event; and provoke no controversy. As the reactions to both Arad's real life memorial and Khan's fictional one show, both memorials are viewed as controversial ones.

2. The Novel as a Counter-Monumental Space

September 11 terrorist attacks marked a turning point in American social life and politics. The attacks caused a dramatic change in American concerns about safety and vigilance. Following the events, conservative political attitudes rose in popularity. Swept by a feeling of insecurity, Americans' trust in government was heightened. Facing the unknown and unpredictable threat of terrorism made Americans embrace their national identities for a feeling of belonging and protection. The post 9/11 rhetoric of American politicians attempted to homogenize American culture, employing ethno-symbolism in it. They "link[ed] history to destiny through exemplary heroes and authentic tales" (Smith 35). They turned to the definitions of the "other" as the "terrorist" or the "savage" in order to reconstruct American national identity. The national identity invoked by the politicians "created the political environment that allowed post-9/11 U.S. foreign policy . . . to be carried out" (Schonberg 2). In an atmosphere like this, conventional memorials which intend to unite, console and praise Americans were sought after by many. Yet, such memorials have their disadvantages too.

According to James E. Young, a professor and the chair of the Department of Judaic and Near Eastern Studies at the University of

Massachusetts, an advisor to many war and Holocaust memorials, and a 9/11 memorial juror, traditional monuments "seal memory off from awareness altogether" and "only displace memory." Young thinks monuments and memorials "do our memory work for us," and "we become that much more forgetful" ("Memory and Counter-Memory"). Andreas Huyssen, in his study of monuments in the post-modern age, holds the mass memory production and consumption responsible for the lack of contemplation and study of the past (11). Young further claims that conventional monuments/memorials "may actually spring from an opposite and equal desire to forget" the events they are supposed to remind by putting national myths and explanations to the forefront ("Memory and Counter-Memory"). 9/11 memorialization also attempt to deal with the trauma suffered "to justify the ideology of American innocence, exceptionalism, moral clarity and pre-emptive action," without concentrating on the reasons for and consequences of the attacks (Baelo-Allué 167).

Such an attempt is also made in *The Submission* by building the Garden of Flags to replace Khan's memorial design. Although the novel does not say much about the characteristics or the reception of the garden, it is understood that no controversy has taken place with regards to it, probably because of the fact that the national symbol of the American flag has achieved satisfying Americans with its symbolic affirmation and celebration of American innocence, exceptionalism, and moral clarity. It is built as a correction to Khan's controversial memorial and promises the closure Khan's garden lacks for the memorial debates. Still, for Claire Burwell, it is "as ugly as the whole process" (295). By the end of the novel, she summarizes the ultimate purpose of erecting conventional monuments in these words: "it's almost like we fight over what we can't settle in real life through these symbols" (295).

New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg's rhetorical question directed at Americans who were fighting against the "Ground Zero Mosque" in 2010 comments also on the fear of Americans in Waldman's novel about Khan's memorial design. "If we are so afraid of something like this, what does it say about us?" Bloomberg asks (Luria, "Opposition to 'Ground Zero Mosque'"). The fear is obviously related to the American values and identity which are shaken by the attacks and are not supposed to be questioned especially at times like 9/11. As Bloomberg's question suggests, and David B. Allison puts

it, monuments and memorials "say more about . . . the erectors than they do about history itself" (4). In both the case of the "Ground Zero Mosque" and of Khan's memorial design, the fear and opposition stems from the insecurity felt after the attacks as well as the sought for relief scapegoating the "other" would bring.

According to David B. Allison, "[c]ontroversial monuments and memorials only remain controversial when [the] community is balkanized and divided by ideology" (204). The community of the novel is, likewise, balkanized and divided by ideology. For Allison, overcoming the controversy depends on dialogue and empathy, which the characters in the novel fail to achieve (204). In other words, the Americans of the novel, need to be "ready to reinterpret, recontextualize, remove, or re-create the challenging past when [they] open [their] ears to listen and [their] hearts to transformation" which they obviously fail at (Allison 204).

James E. Young thinks, an ideal monument should "challenge the world's realities, not affirm them" ("Memory and Counter-Memory"). He thinks artists should avoid "the didactic logic of monuments—their demagogical rigidity and certainty of history" which, "reduces viewers to passive spectators" and which, he thinks, are "associated with fascism itself" ("Memory and Counter-Memory"). For Young, "finished" monuments "complete memory" and "draw a bottom line to history," so that it will not bother people any more ("Memory and Counter-Memory"). Over monuments which are heroic, self-aggrandizing, and which celebrate national ideals and triumphs, he favors those that are "antiheroic" and "ironic" that mark the "national ambivalence and uncertainty" of its time ("Memory and Counter-Memory").

Young names monuments that are "brazen," "painfully self-conscious" and "conceived to challenge the very premises of their being" "counter-monuments" ("The Counter-Monument" 271). The artists of these monuments enact "a critique of 'memory places' already formulated by cultural and art historians" (271). The counter-monument "forces the memorial to disperse—not gather—memory" (294). It negates "the illusion of permanence traditionally fostered in the monument" and "mocks the traditional monument's certainty of history, while "scorn[ing] what Nietzsche has called 'monumental history'"—his "petrified versions of history that bury the living" ("The Counter-Monument" 295; Nietzsche 17). Such monuments

"challenge the very premise of the monument" ("Memory and Counter-Memory"). They begin to "come to life, to grow, shrink, or change form," as a result of which "the monument may become threatening" ("The Counter-Monument" 284). Such a monument is "[n]o longer at the mercy of the viewer's will" and has a "will of its own" (284). The counter-monument's relationship to its recipients is also an active one. It invites viewers to commemorate themselves (279). It "recognizes and affirms that the life of memory exists primarily . . . . in the ongoing exchange between people and their historical markers and finally, in the concrete actions we take in light of a memorialized past" (296).

Young's example to elaborate on his concept of the counter-monument is Harburg Monument against Fascism in Hamburg-Harburg by Jochen Gerz (1986). Installed in a busy public square, the monument calls citizens and visitors to engrave their names, messages, opinions, commentaries on it with the metal pencils provided. The text panel on it reads:

> We invite the citizens of Harburg, and visitors to the town, to add their names here to ours. In doing so we commit ourselves to remain vigilant. As more and more names cover this 12 meter tall lead column, it will gradually be lowered into the ground. One day it will have disappeared completely, and the site of the Hamburg monument against fascism will be empty. In the end it is only we ourselves who can rise up against injustice. ("Monument against Fascism")

The monument progressively descended into the ground seven times between the years 1986 and 1993 and was eventually sunk completely into the ground. Today, it is only a lead plaque on the ground with a display of the photographs of the earlier stages of its existence. According to Walter Grasskamp, the monument in Hamburg-Harburg is "perhaps the first memorial in history that does not want to be better than the society by which it is erected" ("Monument against Fascism"). It represents the real people embodied in the writings on it such as names, pro- and anti-fascist slogans and sentences like "Erich loves Kirsten," which make it an artwork of collective authorship, creating bonds and alliances between people. It displays the vernacular expressions untouched by the official ones.

Young also gives the example of artist Horst Hoheisel's negative-

form monument in Kassel, which propose an "anti-solution" to the memorial competition. Hoheisel has blown up the Brandenburg Gate and sprinkled the remains over the site to memorialize a destroyed people by his destroyed monument ("Memory and Counter-Memory"). Another example Young offers from Hoheisel is the Aschrott Fountain in Kassel's City Hall Square which was destroyed by English bombers during the Second World War. Hoheisel thought the reconstruction of the fountain would make people forget about the war that caused its destruction. Therefore, he proposed a monument which places a mirror image of the old fountain, "sunk beneath the old place in order to rescue the history of this place as a wound and as an open question, to penetrate the consciousness of the Kassel citizens so that such things never happen again" ("Memory and Counter-Memory").

Although the actual memorial of Arad and the fictional memorial design of Khan highlight the emptiness and loss, and encourage public bonding, neither of the two can be considered to be counter-monuments. Yet, Waldman's novel achieves to do what a counter-monument does by encouraging Americans to question the country's failed promises of individualism, equality and democracy by focusing on the memorial debates surrounding Khan's design and by provoking the readers to actively remember the actual events after 9/11 (195). What the Harburg Monument does by commemorating people the way they are parallels what Amy Waldman's *The Submission* does by presenting characters who are depicted the way they are: having identity problems, seeing in stereotypes, needing consolation and confirmation so much that they cannot take responsibility for dealing with the reasons and consequences of the event being memorialized. Besides Khan's identity crisis revealed earlier, other major and minor characters also have problems with their identities even before 9/11.

Paul Joseph Rubin, the chairman of the jury, who once asked Khan to change his name in order to be more acceptable in the eyes of Americans, has had a similar experience of rejection by the society due to his ethnic background. His great-grandfather was named Rubinsky but he changes his name to Rubin in order to "self-improve" as a Russian Jewish architect (66). Upon having learnt about his younger son Samuel's homosexuality, he tries to "convince himself both that homosexuality was immutable and that he, as the father was not to blame" (67). He also replaces his Muslim driver Sami with a Russian driver after the attacks, because of his lack of trust or his concern for

how having a Muslim driver would make him seen by others (13). Regarding the memorial debates, he wants Khan to "drop out" (136), despite the fact that he realizes that his respect for Mo is rising (139). His attitude in each of these cases show that he is concerned with how others view him and whether other's perception of him would risk his hardly gained position in the society.

Claire Burwell, the liberal 9/11 wife, also suffers the pressure expectations has put on her. Readers learn about her marriage to Cal and how she has let him support her financially. He has convinced Claire to quit her job to become a stay-at-home mom, and has robbed her off of her self-sufficiency. Eventually, she feels like "the social secretary for a four-year-old" (29). The novel narrates how she has found the "Claire file" her husband has kept in his study that contains the receipts for the expenses he has made for her together with her letters and pictures—regular and nude, which make her feel objectified (33). Being a part of the memorial committee makes her feel like a useful individual again. Still, Claire is depicted to be under the influence and control of Cal and his ideals even after his death, and under the influence and control of the post-9/11 American society as she gives up on Khan's design after being blamed for "sleeping with the enemy" (109).

Sean Gallagher, the public persona of the Memorial Support Committee, who represents the opposing voices of victim families to Khan's design, comes from an Islamophobic family. For his mother, "Islam is violent. It believed killing innocent people was acceptable. It didn't like women. It didn't like other religions. It was as hateful as nausea . . . . The problem with Islam is Islam" (106). Sean has lost his brother Patrick to the attacks and always feels being compared to and not favored as much by his family as his heroic firefighter brother has been. Before the terrorist attacks he drinks; has a failed marriage; and works as a handyman—facts that make him feel inferior to others. The attacks make him a public figure and, for the first time in his life, he feels himself as valuable as Patrick in the eyes of his mother. Now that he fits in the definition of heroism for the first time, he embraces the mission he works toward: ridding America from Muslims. Yet, he gives up on this mission upon witnessing the killing of a Muslim woman from Bangladesh named Asma Anwar, who has been determined to make the voice of the illegal immigrants heard, claiming her husband Inam's and other unacknowledged victims' rights to have their names carved on the walls of the memorial.

Another Muslim character of the novel is Laila Fathi, a young Iranian American lawyer who is helping out Asma. She works with the Muslim American Coordinating Council and becomes Mo's personal spokesperson. She is a secular Muslim like Khan, yet, unlike Khan who boldly grows a beard in order to play with the "assumptions about his religiosity," she does not wear a headscarf for the sake of having a favorable public image in America (114). Although she is aware of the fact that she is considered as a "lesser American" by the society, she still tries to be included (80).

In addition to the problems of identity these characters have faced, some Muslim characters in the novel also suffer from intolerance within the group. Laila Fathi is criticized by some American Muslims for not wearing a hijab, which they believe makes her a lesser Muslim (104). Some members of The Muslim American Coordinating Council do not want to help Khan because he calls himself secular (102). Others want him to withdraw his submission because they think he draws attention to the Muslim community in the negative sense (194). Still others do not recognize Asma as part of the community because she is an illegal immigrant. Looking at the depictions of these Muslim characters, it is possible to see that many Muslims are outcasts not only from the non-Muslim community, but also from the Muslim one.

By depicting her characters individually with references to their unique pasts, Waldman breaks the stereotypes of the Muslim, the liberal American, the conservative American, the legal and the illegal immigrant. She also brings forth the lack of knowledge Americans have about the groups they view as the "other" and the vulnerabilities that determine her characters' attitude during the memorial crisis.

Although the reader views Khan as an "innocent victim" in the beginning of the novel, he is also depicted as a "dangerous fanatic" by others later in the novel, both of which have been popular Muslim stereotypes (Morey and Yaqin 143). However, Khan proves to be neither a victim nor a victimizer as the novel ends, being individualized through the actions he takes and the decisions he makes. Claire, being a wealthy liberal women who is well-educated, supports Khan in the first place, yet having faced public antagonism, she slowly withdraws her support. Conversely, Sean Gallagher has been harshly against Khan's memorial in the first place, being a poor conservative with less of an education, yet, he begins to question his cause of fighting against

Khan, and after he reevaluates the headscarf-pulling phenomena he has started. Standing in the opposite ends, one being a liberal and the other a conservative, the two characters defy being read as stereotypical characters thanks to the individualized aspects of their characterization. Waldman, as Sini Eikonsalo puts it, has created these stereotypes "only to deconstruct them and thus show that people cannot be categorized by a single feature" (81).

Another Muslim character, Asma does not fit in the silent Muslim woman stereotype. Unable to speak English, she is determined to make the voice of the illegal immigrants heard. Appearing in public protests and the famous talk-show of Oprah Winfrey, she articulates her support for Khan and her claim of being an American. Zahira, the well-educated Muslim woman character of the novel, whose scarf is tugged by Sean Gallagher because he doesn't want a memorial built by a Muslim (153), does not fit in the passive Muslim woman stereotype either. She advocates Muslim women and their freedom of choice for wearing the hijab. Sean is impressed with her intellect and apologizes from her in the novel, beginning to question whether he has been wrong.

All the characters mentioned above suffer from discrimination of some sort and are excluded because of their class, gender, profession, religion or residential status. Yet, the exclusionary attitude is neither new nor is it peculiar to times of crisis. Waldman has especially been intent on making her readers recognize her efforts in creating characters that defy stereotypes. Her character Ansar, a Muslim man who runs a foreign-policy lobby and is a member of The Muslim American Coordinating Council, condemns Americans' stereotypical perception of Muslim people acting out as Waldman's mouthpiece when he says: "when you watch the movies, you root for the cowboys, but when you read the history, you root for the Indians" (Waldman 80). He likens the perception of Americans to that of people who are "locked in a movie theater" (80). Ansar's criticism directed at American society refutes the claim of many Americans that 9/11 changed everything (Legatt 218). The novel presents the fact that some Americans still think in stereotypes. This fact openly contradicts with the idealized official depictions of the American in public memory. The values of the ideal America (offered in national discourse as well as in national memorials) such as egalitarianism, freedom, democracy, entitlement to certain rights, and being a nation of immigrants are presented to be lacking in the daily lives of the novel's characters. As the novel

points to the problems in the country, it automatically criticizes the fact that the vernacular expressions do not match the official ones. In other words, the novel dedicates itself to reveal vernacular expressions together with the official ones without bothering to unite them for the sake of a "blindfold" patriotism.

Depicting the memorial crisis by creating an unpleasant fictional past reminiscent of the actual unpleasant past, the novel makes its readers remember 9/11, itself becoming a counter-monument. It scorns the type of history that "bury the living" ("The Counter-Monument" 295), exemplified in the case of the illegal immigrants who are not recognized as Americans. It does not aggrandize Americans nor does it celebrate national ideals and triumphs. It is instead "antiheroic," and "often ironic" pointing to "the national ambivalence and uncertainty" of its time ("Memory and Counter-Memory"). It forces itself "to disperse" causing the reader to think about each part, event, and character in detail ("The Counter-Monument 294). And it surely "mocks the traditional monument's certainty of history (295). In Khan's words, "it pushes America" to think, and reminds the reader what America claims to be (Waldman 195).

The novel would rather work toward a "constructive patriotism," "an attachment to country characterized by critical loyalty" and "questioning and criticism" driven by "a desire for positive change" (Schatz, et.al. 153). Waldman reveals the implications of Khan's memorial using Asma as her mouthpiece this time. For Asma, Khan's garden, being the product of a mix of influences from all around the world, "is what America is—all the people Muslim and non-Muslim, who have come and grown together" (Waldman 231). Asma's interpretation of the garden is an all-encompassing one for Americans from different classes, genders, professions, religions or residential statuses. Khan's garden embraces a "healing through rapprochement between cultures, through meddling elements of Western and Islamic art" which would be considered "incomplete otherwise" (Milhãilescu et. al 292). In other words, it negotiates discrimination and essentialism of any kind. It avoids embracing a didactic attitude; does not depict the fictional past in rigidity from one point of view but from many, thanks to the multiple characters Waldman weaves her plot with. The author does not finish the novel in a way that would satisfy the reader but to the contrary, the ending provokes the reader further into questioning the past and probably the present.

The novel invites readers to remember the past and commemorate themselves the way Claire's son commemorates his father in Khan's garden, even though the memorial is not in New York but in a country far away from and very different than America. In the final scene, twenty years after the memorial crisis, Claire Burwell's son and his girlfriend visit Khan in Mumbai to interview him, now that his works are acknowledged as great architecture. It is revealed to the reader that he has managed to make his dream come true despite the American politics that prevent it from being built in the United States and the private ownership that prevent it from becoming public in Mumbai. Having interviewed both Khan and her mother, Claire Burwell's son "la[ys] his hand" on Khan's garden. "With a pile of stones, he [writes] a name," the name of his dead father (299). The garden, no matter where it is placed or whom it belongs to now, functions as a living memorial of 9/11 unlike the Garden of Flags that has taken its place.

Similarly, the novel is written in order to "come to life, to grow, shrink, or change form," as diverse readers read it and individually do the memory work for themselves upon reading the fictional story. In other words, it now has a "will of its own," being out of the control of its author ("The Counter-Monument" 284). It invites readers to take "concrete actions in light of a memorialized past" (296), and thus, functions as a counter-monument if a work of fiction itself, reflecting the brutality "rather than repressing it" without pretending "that we're living in another era" (Mairs).

3. Conclusion

The Submission depicts the post 9/11 doubt and paranoia, "dropping the 9/11 attacks, the victims and the victims' families from their sacred pedestal," introducing multiple perspectives through its depiction of characters with complex identities (Eikonsalo 81). It deconstructs the stereotypes it presents and provokes the reader into questioning American values, culture, and national identity by presenting a political crisis triggered by the debates over the ideal 9/11 memorial.

Comparing the expectations from and the criticisms directed at both the actual 9/11 memorial design of Michael Arad and the fictional memorial design of Mohammad Khan narrated in *The Submission*, this article displays America's relationship to its past as one that tends

to ignore the causes and consequences of actual historical events. In both real and fictional realms, Americans are depicted to expect from memorials reinvigoration of mythical national values, affirmation of the strength embodied in American national identity, the implemented political decisions, ideologies and a unified notion of the past and the present. The selected memorial designs are expected to provide a closure to the past event to help Americans get over it. In each case, the memorials under discussion are not favored if they provoke questions and criticism. Being a controversial memorial that is the product of the ideologically divided society of the novel, Khan's memorial fails to come to life, leaving its place to the Garden of Flags which fulfills the expectations listed above. Depicting the two fictional alternatives for a 9/11 memorial, Waldman's novel calls into question the meaning of memory and memorialization together with the perception of the Muslim "other" in American society.

Doing this, the novel functions as what James Young would call a "counter-monument," serving as an anti-solution to the attacks on the Twin Towers, provoking readers to remember, think and question the past, rendering them active participants rather than "passive and forgetful" ones for whom the memory work is done by the memorials. In line with Young's concept of the counter-monument, Waldman's novel does not attempt to show American society better than it is, nor does it attempt to provide a closure or a reconciliation regarding 9/11. Instead with its depiction of a fictional memorial debate, it challenges a unified notion of the past forced on Americans by problematizing the building of a memorial that bury events beneath national myths, which confirms the novel's function as a counter-monument.

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