

“No Tears Left to Cry”: Analyzing Space and Place of the Rock Concert Memorial

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In the fall of 2017, my husband and I traveled to London to see the European leg of the Metallica tour at the O2 Arena. We have always enjoyed participating in the collective experience that concerts bring—connecting with other music fans, singing along, wearing the right t-shirt, and waiting in anticipation of an encore. Though we were excited about seeing an American band overseas, what differed about this free-wheeling experience was that it was exactly five months after the bombing at the Ariana Grande concert in nearby Manchester, that killed twenty-two concert-goers. To add to this unease, the cue through security wrapped halfway around the O2; everyone slightly on edge, but no one complaining. Collectivity now had a different meaning.

As this was not my first time seeing this band perform, I could not overlook a few differences. First, the engineers significantly reduced the pyrotechnics. Additionally, Metallica regularly plays a song called “One” in which a screen projects videos of World War II soldiers. Part of this song includes an audio of a round of gunfire and a bomb detonating. When the sound of the bomb exploded, an audible silence occurred, about as long as it takes to inhale. In that brief second, the possibility of what could occur crossed my mind, and likely in the minds of other attendees. These small decisions by both the performers and the spectators led to larger questions on how space, performance, and audience can create an epideictic rhetorical experience. If these anxious emotions could be felt five months after an attack and 200 miles away, how is a space altered in the direct aftermath of a tragic event at a concert venue?

This study analyzes the performed memorial events in response to the bombing at the Ariana Grande concert in Manchester that occurred on May 22, 2017. This bombing is one of three major concert tragedies that have occurred in the last five

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years; the other two being the shooting at the Eagles for Death Metal concert at the Bataclan in Paris in 2015 and the shooting at the Jason Aldean concert in Vegas Village in 2017. Because these tragedies may unfortunately continue, understanding how these post-concert memorials can promote healing by focusing specifically on the Grande concert will provide some insight on the performers' roles in re-inventing the space and place of tragedy.

Performers enacted two memorial concerts after the attack: the first one at the Old Trafford Cricket ground 3.1 miles away called *One Love Manchester*, and the second *We Are Manchester* at Manchester Arena (the location of the bombing). Both memorials call into question larger ideas about the manipulation of space and place. By analyzing these performances, I argue that a carefully orchestrated performance impacts the relationship between performer and audience to create a new identity construction via collective memory. Through this collective memory a place is either redeemed (as in the case of *We Are Manchester*) or a new space is embodied (via *One Love Manchester*). My research methodology draws on recordings of performances, published interviews, setlists, and music criticism, all of which is informed by theories on memorials, space, trauma, and performance such as work by Sara Ahmed, Carolyn Blair, Vanessa Matajic, and Roger Aden.

In a gesture that would seem unusual in any other circumstances, commemoration of the victims occurred through the type of event that resulted in their deaths. Despite this seeming irony, this paper explores the relevance of concert memorials as attendees collectively seek healing in the aftermath of the attack. As both performances demonstrate, proximity of time and/or proximity to place in the creation of these memorials had three functions for both the artist and audience: 1) to honor the deceased in the “next-best” place; 2) to allow both victims and survivors to embody the space or place; and, 3) to utilize this embodiment to reclaim public memory in a new context for the purpose of healing and agency. This study focuses on how both shows reclaim a new collective memory.

To begin, I provide some background on the attack and a brief description of the two subsequent memorial concerts. Then, I analyze artist's interviews, the setlist, and speeches given by performers to understand how the manipulation of space and place in both shows is supported by theories on trauma and collective memory. Even though these two shows memorialize the same event, their enactment substantially differed. I argue that the organizers catered to the emotional needs of the respective attendees. As both shows sought healing and unity, they had two very different aims of achieving it.

Grande Bombing Remembered

On May 22, 2017, Grande had just completed her set at the Manchester Arena when a suicide bomber, Salman Abedi, detonated a bomb outside the arena, killing 22 people, primarily teens and children. Though initial reports suggested that the bombing was tied to ISIS, a clear connection was not proven; and published accounts indicate an individual act. This was the deadliest attack to occur in Manchester in the last twelve years prior to this event (Smith-Spark). Grande did not witness the mass casualties as she was quickly whisked off the stage once the bombing was heard; however, she continues to struggle from PTSD and anxiety to this day as a result (Miller). That evening she tweeted “broken. from the bottom of my heart, i am so sorry. i don’t have words. [sic]” (McKirdy)

After the Grande bombing, two key memorials transpired. The first, *One Love Manchester*, was performed two weeks later on June 5, 2017, with performers from the U.K and U.S. Grande initiated this memorial to raise money for the victims of the bombing. More than 50,000 fans attended the concert, which sold out in six minutes and raised thirteen million dollars for the We Love Manchester memorial fund (“Ariana Grande Manchester”). BBC broadcasted the full concert. British performers first opened the show before American performers were brought to the stage. Grande performed seven songs either sung solo or with other artists and ended the concert.

On September 9, 2017, “Mr. Manchester, Himself,” Noel Gallagher, headlined the second memorial concert called *We Are Manchester* with the support of fellow British performers (primarily from Manchester). Noel Gallagher achieved international fame in the band Oasis with his brother, Liam, but has since split from the duo to pursue a solo career. This performance, attended by 14,000 people, was the first concert to re-open the Manchester Arena (Thomas). In addition to musicians, the memorial included a poet, comedian, rapper, grime artist, and Manchester mayor, Andy Burnham, thus creating more a variety-show feel rather than a full-fledged concert (McCormick). As mentioned previously, these two were constructed quite differently from each other, and each will be analyzed in their own sections.

One Love Manchester

Proximity is an important element of *One Love Manchester* performance. Although Grande was not able to return to the actual site of the attack, this concert was organized only 3.1 miles away from Manchester Arena. While most victims of a tragic event would seek to avoid the activity or location of the event, Grande did the opposite, despite her initial feelings. In her first interview over a year after Manchester, Grande recounted her emotions immediately following the attack, which included struggles with anxiety. Despite dealing with her own PTSD she chose to return to Manchester only two weeks after the attack.

I went right home I went to Florida and I was like I can't. I'm not putting those costumes on again I can't sing those songs again I was like I can't. I was like I love yall I can't do it. I was like there's no way. And then I was trying to go to sleep that night and it didn't feel right it didn't feel like the right decision. I think we should set a better example and kind of like celebrate their lives you know what I mean and try to like not to let hate or like violence or any kind of darkness of that magnitude win in the scenario.”[sic] (ABC News)

Not only did she return, despite her significant reservations, but so did survivors and family members of survivors, who were given front row tickets. To re-embodiment this space, Grande and her producers converted this moment of tragedy and darkness into a celebration of the victims.

Raymie McKerrow argues that “space is a symbolic practice fully implicated in engaging, constraining, producing, and maintaining discursive practices” (272). Consequently, the symbols are worth exploring as Grande and her co-producers made very specific choices in this reconstruction of space. While a concert performance may be considered an unusual act for a memorial, the act of ignoring their deaths is far more egregious (Wright). Silence gives more momentum to the political motives of the bombing and also denies the strength of the Manchester people, who refused to remain in victimhood. According to Grande:

Their love, strength, and unity showed me...not to be defeated. To continue during the scariest and saddest of times. To not let hate win. But instead, love as loudly as possible, and to appreciate every moment. The people of Manchester were able to change an event that portrayed the worst of humanity into one that portrayed the most beautiful of humanity. (Mela)

This need to take action quickly allowed the people of Manchester to establish agency over this horrific event. As mentioned in the opening, trauma has a way of transforming a space and creating anxiety in the air. Veena Das argues this point in

her book, *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*, in which she states “the everyday can be ‘eventful’: precarious, violent, filled with unspoken echoes of previous events, and always subject to doubt” (218). Grande’s attempt to return to the ‘everyday’ would become a source of tremendous anxiety and unease not only for herself, but also some of her audience. Even though Grande could not return to the physical place to give it new meaning, she was tasked with filtering out the trauma that the visitors carried with them with the same activity that led to the trauma in the first place. Additionally, she had to overcome her own fears of performing again. This collective memory of both performer and audience had to be redesigned to create a new space.

Through the example of nineteenth-century European nationalism, Vanesa Matajic discusses the “cultural mapping of space” (4), which is what happens here. Rather than thinking geo-political boundaries, a new nation is created via a shared cultural identity. This cultural nationalism is formed by “individuality of the native language, in the collective memory of the historical experience, and above all in different kinds of cultural production—from the arts to the sciences” (Juvan 328, as quoted in Matjac 5). Performers and audience have a shared cultural experience that is expressed through the language of music and the symbiotic relationship between performer and audience. The artist performs despite fatigue, illness, or the fact that it has been the same show day after day for months at a time. The audience rewards this performance with cheers and pleas for an encore. They have collected and memorized her music, watched her videos and interviews, and paid to participate in the collective experience. For some of those fans who travel to multiple shows, follow her twitter feed, and keep abreast of her published and recorded interviews, they take on a new role as “followers.” Each concert, in a sense, is its own subculture, or as Benedict Anderson would dub: an “imagined community.” As Grande had to think about how to re-build this post-trauma space, it was not based on world politics, but instead a preservation and healing of the community that she created.

In this (re)construction of this particular space as performed memorial, it was essential to maintain proximity of the location where the 22 concert-goers lost their lives to create a new collective memory in place of a brick and mortar memorial. “This need for such rhetorical memory space explains why so many groups mobilize to ensure that their memories gain legitimacy” (Wright 55). The young casualties were commemorated and celebrated in an activity that they themselves enjoyed and in the city from which they were from. Despite its unusual location

and type of performance, the *One Love Manchester* show became an apt memorial. Grande, as well as the co-producers, explored these boundaries by visiting victims of the bombing and family members of the deceased before the concert (Bloom). In visit after visit, families and victims warmly welcomed Grande further solidifying the decision to enact this memorial at the Old Trafford Cricket Yard. Grande received the “blessing” and approval of whom would be her harshest critics. In addition, the organization of the concert and the symbols employed were key to operating within these boundaries.

Once the concert location was determined and accepted, how the attendees, performers and even the victims embody the space and dwell within it become exceedingly important to (re)construct this new space. The name *One Love Manchester* attempted to create a space that promoted peace and love. Performers frequently made “heart hands” (in which fingertips are brought together to make a shape of a heart). The colors pink and purple dominated the set creating a warm “feminine” space where feelings could be expressed and validated. “I ♥ MCR” was projected on the screen. Love conquers fear dominated as a theme. The setlist included songs such as: “Happy” by Pharrell Williams and Miley Cyrus; Grande’s “Be Alright;” Cold Play’s “Viva la Vida;” “Where Is the Love?,” a duet with Grande and the Black Eyed Peas; “Don’t Look Back in Anger,” a duet with Chris Martin; and, Grande and “The Way” (a duet with then love interest, Mac Miller). This reconstructed space countered terrorism with feelings of healing and positivity.

Sara Ahmed has analyzed how love is used to create a collective identity: “Love becomes a way of bonding with others in relation to an ideal, which takes shape as an effect of such bonding. (124)” Grande tells her audience “I love you so much” and proclaims “love as medicine for the world.” In a sense, this space has been transformed into a love group. Thinking again of these fans as a subculture, the bonding which previously occurred through music now needs an added layer of love and security to create new collective memory and identity. This re-creation of space has gendered implications and Grande’s approach towards her primarily female fans, seeks to manipulate this space to allow the free expressions of feelings ranging from grief to joy.

The show started and ended with a strong sense of emotionalism, indicating its function to give free reign to such feelings. Marcus Mumford, an American-born English singer, led a moment of silence to commemorate both Manchester and the London Bridge attack, that occurred just the day before on June 3rd. I could only

imagine the level of the anxiety of the crowd. He started his song by saying, “let’s not be afraid” before breaking out into an acoustic slow-tempo song “Timshel” that was reminiscent of a funeral dirge. The refrain is:

But you are not alone in this
 And you are not alone in this
 As brothers we will stand and we’ll hold your hand
 Hold your hand (Mumford and Sons 2009)

At the inception of the show, it is made clear that they are grieving together as a collective entity. This song also acknowledges the purpose of this gathering as a healing space to separate it from a traditional concert. Starting the show with pop songs, bright lights, and vivid costumes would have disrupted this careful reconstruction of space. Additionally, because the bombing was the result of an American performance on British soil, the selection of a British-American artist to begin the show was apt.

It must be noted that the performers could not maintain this morose tone throughout the show because it would have counteracted the purpose of overcoming the feeling of victimhood. Very careful song placement and ordering of performers existed to bring the audience up and to take them back down as a reminder of the event. To take the crowd back up to a more celebratory tone, the Manchester band *Take That* performed three songs in which the crowd sang along with the performers. Following their set, British native, Robbie Williams led the crowd in “Manchester We’re Strong.” Even though Grande and her producers coordinated the concert, the British presence was key to the show’s success.

It was not until an hour into the concert that co-producer Scooter Braun introduced Grande. In true “the show must go on” format she immediately started singing and dancing with the song “Be Alright” with her back-up dancers, using choreography from the *Dangerous Woman* tour. Grande mechanically follows her routine as if on auto-pilot and does not speak to the crowd until several songs into her set. Grande’s selective mutism was not a disconnect from the audience, but instead appears as a form of self-preservation. It became obvious from her mechanical movements, devoid of her typical performance energy and enthusiasm, that the act of performing required all of her mental energy. Grande’s reaction is supported by trauma scholars such as Edward Casey who writes “if words are coming only haltingly, this is due to the weight of the trauma, which acts to immobilize those suffering from it” (36). Silence as a rhetorical argument now had a different meaning.

In her first verbal engagement with the audience, Grande recounted a visit with the mother of a deceased girl named Olivia and began to cry: “I had the pleasure of meeting Olivia’s mommy a few days ago. As soon as I met her I started crying and I gave her a big hug. And she said ‘stop crying’, Olivia wouldn’t want you to cry and she told me Olivia would’ve wanted to hear the hits” (Broadcasting America). And so, with that statement, Grande performs the most un-ceremonious of songs: her number 1 hit “Side to Side” (a song about a woman having so much sex she cannot walk straight).

Despite the buoyant songs throughout the show, several decisions reiterated the solemnity and overall purpose of the concert as a form of honoring the deceased. The performers aided in controlling the embodiment of this space in how they presented themselves. In a type of contemporary mourning attire, many of the performers dressed more casually wearing hoodies, warm-up jackets, t-shirts, baseball caps downplaying elaborate costuming or expensive designer clothing, that would be typical during most full-scale concerts. Grande, who wears revealing costumes during her shows, wore an oversized sweatshirt with words “One Love Manchester,” jeans with a hole at the thigh, heeled boots, and a high ponytail. Aside from confetti released into the crowd during Cold Play’s set and pink streamers during Grande’s set, little theatrical production occurred. For the most part, this concert was very pared down and focused on the music.

Songs to quiet down the crowd were intermixed within the setlist to evoke more overt emotionalism of the audience. This oscillation of upbeat songs followed by slower tempo ballads reminded the audience that they were there to have a good time even if it was a memorial. This up and down of emotions became a way for the performers to control how the audience was embodying the space. The audience held signs “For Our Angels” and “We Stand Together” that surfaced during the more solemn songs. An emotional Ariana Grande struggled to end the concert with “Somewhere over the Rainbow” and burst into tears mid-performance. Her feelings were echoed throughout the tears of the crowd and everyone left the event acutely aware of the honorary purpose.

In addition to the message of love, professing unity between the U.S. and U.K. was equally important. Even though Grande organized the concert, the U.K. singers first started the show. A reversal in order would suggest a form of colonization in which the Americans were coming to the aid of their British brothers; therefore, nullifying the strength and independence of the Manchester citizens. American singers wore I ♥ MCR shirts and professed their love for the Manchester people.

Chris Martin of Cold Play and Grande sang a duet further demonstrating unity. In addition, Grande sang with a Manchester high school choir, singers the same age as many of the victims. Towards the end of the concert, all the performers came together to sing “One Last Time.” All of these songs conveying that they were working together.

The performers of *One Love Manchester* carefully choreographed the crowds’ emotions and ideals and built from Grande’s designation of this concert as a loving and unified space. The psychology of the love exchanged between a crowd and its’ leader reverts all the way back to Freud who argues “that a bond of a group relies on love to the leader” (Ahmed 130). And even though Grande does not appear until one hour into the concert, she is the clear leader. Though *One Love Manchester* could have easily taken on more overt political overtones, especially because of the London terrorist stabbing, no mention of “terrorist” or “bombing” exists. While silence is used to honor the deceased, silence was also used to take away the perpetrator’s power by ignoring his existence.

As this (re)constructed space was clarified, it is necessary to return again to the most basic function of this concert: to honor the deceased. Their embodiment occurs with markers throughout the concert. Mumford’s minute of silence broke through the din of 50,000 people who were asked to stand. The silence mixed with the physical act of standing forced the audience to actively acknowledge those who were missing. The pink signs “For Our Angels” became a tangible artifact also maintaining the deceased’s presence in the crowd. Braun’s introduction brought forth his visit to the children’s hospital and reminded the audience that the kids were watching. The kids, to which Braun referred, could not physically be in the space due to the level of their injuries. Instead, Braun facilitated their embodiment by passing on their messages to the crowd, such as that by Adam, a 15-year-old casualty, who said: “don’t go forward in anger, love spreads.” Grande brought Olivia Campbell Harding’s presence to the show by quoting her mother “her daughter and all the others lost will never be victims” (Broadcasting America). This embodiment of the bombing casualties from acknowledged their presence, as Ahmed argues “forgetting would be a repetition of the violence or injury” (33). The performance that was broadcast worldwide through the BBC becomes a new type of memorial.

This show demonstrates reclamation of collective memory and agency. The emphasis on love, the color palette chosen, and a primarily female audience suggests a more “feminized approach” to combat terror in what Greg Dickinson

calls an “experiential landscape,” which means that this space was being created through a shared experience (“Spaces of Remembering” 30). The artists attempt to envelope the audience in a proverbial embrace. By emphasizing love, Grande is developing what Bertrand Robert and Chris Lajtha call a “positive polarity to crisis management” (Robert 185, as quoted in Wombacher 135). The situation in Sandy Hook is a comparable example. Grande’s primary audience is middle school to high school girls. Sandy Hook was an elementary school. Rather than speak out against terrorism—or, in the case of Sandy Hook, gun control—the emphasis of the producers/administrators was on meeting the social and emotional needs of the young victims. Positivity, rather than anger, was necessary to heal this audience.

In many instances throughout the show, this positivity occurs through sing-alongs which supports the interaction between performer and audience. Giving the audience “unofficial” permission to sing, Gary Barlow, the second performer from Take That said “Our thoughts are with everyone that has been affected by this, but right now we want to stand strong, look at the sky, and sing loud and proud.” And with cue, they did. What is interesting about these sing-alongs were the different collective memories that they evoked. For example, Robbie Williams’ “Manchester We’re Strong” encouraged the audience to dig deep into their inner strength and to identify themselves as Manchester citizens. Pharrell William’s “Happy,” which was the number one downloaded song in Manchester, suggested finding joy and returning to everyday activities. The sing-alongs with Ariana Grande encouraged and supported the artist as she struggled to return to stage. Niall Horan’s song “This Town,” which he dedicated to Manchester, drew emotion from the audience as they tearfully sang along. Manchester native, Liam Gallagher and British band Cold Play’s version of “Live Forever” encouraged the audience’s active participation as they waved the lights of their cellphones, again bringing forth the embodiment of the deceased. Finally, the sing along of “One Last Time” involving all the performers, left the collective memory of unity with the audience.

Grande’s encore song “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” demonstrated a binary between audience and performer that is not always one-sided. As mentioned, the sing-alongs with Grande gave the artist encouragement and motivation to continue with the performance despite debilitating anxiety. As she tearfully performed in front of an equally teary audience, she stops the song before the end and bursts into tears. It is the cheers of the audience who urge her on to continue. After which, she completes the song, even hitting the high note. Then, she burst into tears again before walking off stage.

Performers, audience, and even casualties embodied the concert space. Their participation reclaimed their public memory and created a new context for the purpose of healing and agency (Conrad 78). Attending a concert, an everyday activity, became an event which took the lives of 22 young people. Even after all the arrangements were made to organize *One Love Manchester*, the stabbing at the London bridge increased the fear of being in these public spaces. But performers and audience members deliberately attended, and in doing so they demonstrated a concrete choice to combat fear by embracing the everyday. As Das argues, “Recovery from trauma takes place through the ‘descent into the everyday’ [...] recovery is always uncertain and involves ongoing engagement in humble ordinary routines and pragmatic activities” (Das, as quoted in Conrad, 74). The larger purpose of this memorial was for the participants to heal by triumphing over victimhood and terrorism through resuming life. (Re)constructing this space away from, but close to the original site of trauma, forced a confrontation with fear as Danielle Endres and Samantha Senda-Cook argue: “rhetorically challenge dominant meanings and practices in a place” (258). Concert participants were challenging fear and terrorism and using concerts to initiate a new collective memory through joy and healing rather than pain and death. While *We Are Manchester* similarly sought to challenge fear and terrorism, their aims were more confrontational and defiant.

We Are Manchester was perceptibly different from *One Love Manchester* in its rhetorical argument primarily because it had to reclaim the physical space of the Manchester Arena. The subculture shifts from Ariana Grande fans to Mancunians, changing the scope of the performance. I begin by describing the most obvious differences such as the scope and setlist, and then provide a deeper analysis of the emphasis on place versus space. Similar to *One Love Manchester*, focusing on place creates an alternate collective memory to promote healing, despite memorializing the same event.

We Are Manchester

While many YouTube videos of *One Love Manchester* exist, a full released video of *We Are Manchester* is more elusive. The show was not televised but instead broadcasted by Radio X, a British radio station, limiting the audience to those in the geographic area. Already a clear separation in audience from worldwide to only those from the United Kingdom exists. The objective shifts from love and

unity to an emphasis on independence and strength. Because of the outpouring of the funds during *One Love Manchester*, the victims were financially well-compensated; therefore, the proceeds from *We Are Manchester* were instead directed towards the Manchester Memorial Fund, which would build a brick and mortar memorial honoring the victims. A televised concert easily available on social media may have been the appropriate memorial for the teenage fans, in contrast, something more permanent near the place of their death would honor their surviving families. Patrizia Violi, as well as several other scholars of trauma site memorials, suggest the importance of place because of the direct link to the trauma itself (41). In the case of *We Are Manchester*, the place is defined as much more concrete, the physical environment where the bombs detonated. Holding this concert at the Manchester Arena required a different approach to promote healing.

Re-constructing the Manchester Arena as a place for entertainment rather than a place where a massacre occurred was an important gesture to re-claim agency and therefore, had to be carefully curated in the same way that *One Love Manchester* was. The difference, however, was the audience: the people who lived and worked in this city composed the majority of the *We Are Manchester* audience. Even though the show was held nine months after the attack, the producers created a suite for emotional first aid with licensed health professionals and, additionally, hired extra security to likely counter the increased anxiety (We Are Manchester Arena). These decisions acknowledge the possible post-traumatic stress that the attendees feel.

This concert is decidedly all things Manchester, made clear with the title of the show. While *One Love Manchester* suggested a unification between U.S. and Great Britain, *We Are Manchester* immediately creates the rhetorical argument of self-reliance. First off, looking at the set list, it must be noted that *We Are Manchester* was headlined by Noel Gallagher, the brother of Liam Gallagher who performed at *One Love Manchester*. The feud between the two brothers stemming from their time in the band Oasis is well-known in the music world. Ranging from physical assaults to public Twitter attacks, the two brothers after years of conflict have since pursued separate solo careers (Plitt). Noel played nine songs as part of the *We Are Manchester* concert. Noel's direct involvement, alone, establishes a distinct separation between the two concerts. Ariana Grande nor any other American performers are included in the show. Manchester mayor, Andy Burnham opened the show by reading the first names of the twenty-two victims, therefore, proclaiming the focus of the show. While the names of the victims would mean

very little to an American watching the *One Love Manchester* concert, to the attendees of the *We Are Manchester*, the names represent a neighbor or relative.

Poet, Tony Walsh follows with his poem, “This is the Place” which highlights the production, history, and strength of the Mancunians. The poem was first read at the vigil immediately following the Manchester attacks. The refrain states:

And there’s hard times again in these streets of our city
But we won’t take defeat and we don’t want your pity
Because this is a place where we stand strong together
With a smile on our face, Mancunians forever. (2012)

The phrase “we don’t want your pity” reiterates the Manchester attitude of self-reliance. This show, separate from *One Love Manchester* and void of American intervention, becomes a symbol of that need to take care of one’s own.

Although less publicized and less financially successful than *One Love*, *We Are Manchester* needed to be produced, performed, and attended by the citizens for them to establish their own agency over the healing process. At the conclusion of his poem, Walsh unexpectedly encourages the audience to erupt in a minute of defiant cheers rather than a minute of silence. Defiance would be a key theme of the *We Are Manchester*. The title of Walsh’s poem, “*This is the Place*,” aligns with the physical confrontation of the place where the attacks occurred in this decision to enact the memorial on the site. By cheering rather than remaining in silence, Walsh and the audience are reclaiming this place and setting the tone for the direction of the show.

Only two female artists performed: Pixie Lott and Nadine Coyle. Manchester artist, Pixie Lott, gave a soulful performance of “Cry Me Out” with the audience swaying along waving their cellphones in a darkened room. She slowed down the tempo from her traditional released version. To contrast this more solemn mood, she ended her set with the dance hit “All About Tonight” flanked by choreographed male dancers with bright flashing lights changing the energy level of the room. Nadine Coyle, who followed, performed her buoyant song “Go to Work,” which maintains a pop/dance club feel to the concert. Her repetitive chorus “Why don’t you go to work, do your nine to five” celebrates the Mancunian worker bee attitude further acknowledging their collective identity. Occupying the least desirable place of a group performance, both female acts served as openers. In contrast to the female-led, *One Love Manchester*, in *We Are Manchester* it is the male voices who dominate this show.

Rick Astley from Lancashire continued to rev up the crowd with a cover of Foo Fighters' 1997 song "Everlong." The lyrics "If everything could feel this real forever. If anything could ever be this good again" reiterate the use of music as a form of escape, key to the healing goals of this concert.

The energy continued to rise with Manchester grime artist, Bugzy Malone, music by Blossoms (also from Manchester), the Courteneers from Middleton, and then stand-up comedian Peter Kay from Lancashire. While a comedian may seem like an odd inclusion in a music festival, he becomes yet another reminder of the reclamation of this place as an entertainment venue, not a scene of a massacre. While *One Love Manchester* sought an up and down of emotions, the energy of the crowd only continued to rise throughout the performance in *We Are Manchester* as the audience even began crowd surfing and body slamming.

While *One Love Manchester* sought healing through love and expression of feelings, *We Are Manchester* followed Veena Das's view to recovery which is "addressing the situation directly, voicing the trauma, bringing it out to the open, and trying to do something about it once and for all, as if time moved in a linear fashion" (Das and Kleiman as quoted in Conrad 83). Because this was nine months after the attack and required a reclamation of the place, the tactics had to involve a more direct confrontation. Noel Gallagher said in response to the attack in May: "having played that arena and all that and stood in that foyer, and being from Manchester, as it's dawning on you that it's aimed at young music fans...I say there are no words, there are words. Unfortunately, you can't broadcast those words" (Legaspi). Returning to the mayor's list of names and Tony Walsh's request for the audience to cheer, they both set the tone for how this audience was going to approach the trauma head on.

Noel Gallagher performed nine songs as part of *We Are Manchester*. The energy remained high with the crowd singing along, particularly with his former Oasis hits "Champagne Supernova," "Wonderwall" and "Don't Look Back in Anger." "Don't Look Back in Anger" was particularly significant as it was sung during the vigil after the bombing and has been considered by many, a Manchester anthem. Like *One Love Manchester*, the second to the last song of the show was a sing-along. Before beginning, Gallagher stated "every time you sing, we win, so sing like you've never sang before" (A Godlike Genius). Fifteen thousand spectators began to sing along. The refrain was emphasized by both singer and audience:

"So Sally can wait, she knows it's too late as she's walking on by

Her soul slides away, but don't look back in anger I heard you say
At least not today” (1996)

Like *One Love Manchester*, the setlist carefully planned the emotions of the audience. The feelings of defiance and confrontation are tempered with the Beatle-like melody of “Don't Look Back in Anger” and the lyrics which encourage the audience to move on from the pain.

In contrast to Grande's teary-eyed “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” to end the show, Gallagher performs an experimental and upbeat song “AKA...What a Life!” with lyrics that ironically include references to a rainbow again suggesting a dialogue between the two memorials:

Keep on chasing down that rainbow
You'll never know what you might find
Over the sunset on the horizon
It may be a dream but it tastes like poison
I'm going to take that tiger outside for a ride
What a life.

The difference is that these lyrics suggest a more active rather than passive approach further solidifying self-reliance and strength.

The announcer for K103 wrapped up his opinion of the concert quite succinctly, expressing that Gallagher successfully achieved the show's aims to reclaim the place of the attack. “One of the most incredible performances I have ever witnessed in my life. I have just witnessed 15,000 people scream the anthem of Manchester solidarity along with Noel Gallagher “Don't Look Back in Anger”: That felt like the ultimate end, like the most important moments in the history of this city. And I'll be frank with you I don't want to sound dramatic but one of the most important moments of my life as a proud Northern as a proud Mancunian...15,000 people chanting, singing, living, and loving, and doing exactly what they are supposed to be doing at the Manchester Arena tonight. (Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds”)

Evidently, the show represented something deeper than simple entertainment; it reflected the larger idea of picking oneself up after a tragedy and continuing to live life. The challenge, of course, was to achieve this, at the site of the attack.

While both shows sought to manipulate space for the creation of a memorial, *We Are Manchester* had to reclaim the actual physical place of the attack to promote healing. Though place can be conceived as a “bordered, specified, and

locatable” use of physical environment (Dickinson, Blair and Ott, 23), the organizers of *We Are Manchester* had to combat the role that public memory played in changing the borders of that physical environment, re-drawn by police tape and investigators. This place as a “location of experience” resulted in powerful emotions and sentiments (Walter 21). Performers had to lead this reclamation of place, converting it from a site of a terrorist attack, or “place-bound crisis” to an entertainment venue with a new collective memory.

This act of reclaiming a space despite public memory has been attempted with other events. This same situation occurred with Sandy Hook Elementary, which also underwent a place-bound crisis as the site of the massacre of 20 children. (Wombacher, 164). The solution, however, was to raze the site and rebuild a new school on top removing the pain from confronting the memories associated with the previous building, while still claiming some agency over the site. While Sandy Hook was razed and rebuilt in true “rise from the ashes” rhetoric, Manchester Arena was not. Instead, the rebuilding had to happen internally through the embodiment of space suggesting an interdependence of place and space (Wombacher 166).

Based on theories of crisis renewal, two main factors contributed to reconstituting Manchester Arena as a site of performance. These conditions included: taking “action to reduce the likelihood of a crisis happening again” and the “strength of organizational relationships with stakeholders prior to the crisis (Wombacher 166). Manchester Arena increased security to prevent this type of attack happening again at this site. The arena’s general manager, James Allen, said ““May’s events will never be forgotten, but they will not stop us—or the Mancunian music fans – from coming together to enjoy live music.”” and added ““Public safety is always our priority, and we are doing all we can to keep people safe at our venue”” (Coscarelli).

Rebuilding materialized through the re-collection of public memory. “Re-collection is an ongoing process of what we call discursive fragments of memory into coherent bodies of meaning” (Aden 314). Each individual performance, carefully choreographed by Noel Gallagher and His High Flying Birds, pieced together these fragments to maintain a feeling of communal strength. Aden views re-collection as “a reciprocal and interrelated interaction among the people who remember” (316). In the case of performance, this occurs in the symbiotic relationship between performer and audience and how the audience comes together in their shared love of the music. Singers that encouraged singing along,

dancing, and moshing; and vocal performers who elicited communal emotions resulted in a collective involvement of the entire space, therefore generating an embodied performance. As Gallagher began his song “Don’t Look Back in Anger,” he tells the audience “it’s become some kind of anthem of defiance, and every time you sing, we win, so keep on singing” (A Godlike Genius). The singer and audience embody the space loudly in song intentionally creating a new collective memory. Again, like the Grande concert, by singing together they create a new embodiment of the space, consequently changing the energy and memory of the physical environment.

In contrast to *One Love Manchester*, this embodiment becomes more territorial because the Mancunians are left with the remains of the physical space. Councilor Sue Murphy, the deputy leader of the Manchester City Council, called the concert “a powerful symbol of this defiant and resilient spirit” (Coscarelli). This territoriality challenges *One Love Manchester*. The decision to fundraise for a physical monument, rather than simply hold a three-hour performance that would be forgotten in months but would guarantee that the collective memory would not forget the attack. Secondly, the Mancunian performers and audience asserted themselves as not needing any outside help eschewing any connection to the U.S. Again, the title of the concert was *We Are Manchester*. Broadcasting the concert locally creates an inclusiveness and a more private memorial excluding a world-wide superficial mourning. Finally, by holding the memorial at the actual site of attack redefined the territory in an act of defiance.

Conclusion

Both *One Love Manchester* and *We Are Manchester* differ from brick and mortar memorials due to the immediacy of the event and their manipulation of place and space. The (re)constructed space is more transcendent rather than tangible, yet, their roles as commemorative and cathartic experiences can be as equally impactful despite their varying approaches (Das 6). In their attempts to memorialize the victims of a tragic event, both shows sought to create a new communal identity and memory cognizant of their respective audiences (or sub-cultures). These events not only legitimize the concert as a memorial event, but also created a significant place and space for its victims to heal.

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