

The dollar value for a loss of life: the politics of monetization of the terror disaster in Sara Colangelo's *Worth* (2020)

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Abstract

The article argues that Sara Colangelo's *Worth* (2020) problematizes the monetization of the terror disaster. It explores the hegemonic politics involved in terming some lives more (un)grievable in monetary terms. The film highlights that the loss of lives and bodily injuries in a terror disaster cannot be converted into tangible monetary value. Instead, it emphasizes that all lives are equally grievable irrespective of their economic loss value. There needs to be democratic mourning that grieves the loss of all lives equally. The article draws on the works of trauma and memory studies theorists to analyze the primary data. The paper explores the social and economic aspects of trauma and the psychological perspective. It argues that mourning requires a democratic approach, particularly one that acknowledges and laments the loss of every life with equal weight. *Worth* exposes the inequitable treatment of victims and questions the underlying power dynamics in society by questioning the monetization of terrorist events. In the end, this paper promotes a more open-minded and sympathetic attitude to collective and individual trauma and raises an understanding of the intricate and multifaceted nature of mourning.

Keywords: 9/11, trauma and memory, social trauma, economic trauma, psychological trauma, non-transferability, democratic mourning, hegemonic politics, loss of lives.

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1. Introduction

The event of 9/11 and its impact on cultural production is immense, particularly in the US. It has shaped literature and media representation. Apart from its influence on global politics and the resulting war on terror, it has highlighted the impact of a national and international disasters on human lives. The terror attack on the World Trade Centre is unprecedented in the history of the US. It has only suffered one attack before the tragic event of 9/11, i.e., the Japanese army's attack on Pearl Harbor during WWII. The attack was an act of international warfare, and the casualties were also military personnel. The attack on WTC, however, was an act of global terrorism. The target of the attack was not just some military installation – like, Pentagon – but ordinary citizens working in the two towers. The literary responses to 9/11 are varied; most have either captured the perpetrators or the victims of the attack. Much of the cultural productions are based on recapturing the trauma and memory of the event. Showtime's *Homeland* (2011-2020) is one of the most popular TV shows that portrays post-9/11 events and trauma suffered by the victims of terror plots.

Similarly, Scott Z. Burns' *The Torture Report* (2019) highlights the CIA's notorious detention centers and the role of bodily and mental torture to traumatize the detainees. The 9/11 attacks shaped the compensation laws for the victims and survivors of the terror attack. In an unprecedented move, the victims and survivors of the attack were compensated by the government of the United States for the bodily and mental injuries incurred by the event. The role of neuroscience in the litigation process has become monumental. Netflix's production *Worth* (2021) deals with the role of compensation laws and the victims and survivors of the 9/11 event. I intend to analyze the movie from the perspective of the problematics of monetization of trauma and memory. In Sara Colangelo's *Worth*, Kenneth R. Feinberg challenges the mathematical formula of the government's fund established for the compensation of 9/11 victims and highlights the politics of monetization of trauma, (re)emphasizing the worth of human grief, memory, loss, and its non-transferability in monetary terms.

2. Literature review

2.1. Background of the memory and trauma studies

Memory and Trauma studies emerged as critical theory fields in the 1990s. Klein Lee Kerwin (2000) argues that 'Memory' as a critical theory term and memory as a jargon are different. He believes the memory term (critical theory) emerged in the 1980s when it was used as an alternative for history. He weighs on the definition of memory by sociologist Michael Schudson. Schudson argues that memory is not the property of an individual mind "but a diverse and shifting collection of material artefacts and social practices" (Klein, 2000, p. 130). On the other hand, trauma is a psychological term concerned with situations threatening an individual's life. Memory and trauma studies as a field stem from Holocaust studies. Some of the seminal works include Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery* (1992), Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub's *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing; In Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1992), Cathy Caruth's *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) and *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996).

Judith Herman is considered one of the essential theorists in the trauma studies. In *Trauma and*

Recovery (1992), she defines trauma: ...an affiliation of the powerless. At the moment of trauma, the victim is rendered helpless by overwhelming force. When the force is that of nature, we speak of disasters. When the force is that of other human beings, we speak of atrocities. Traumatic events overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection, and meaning. (Herman, 1992, p. 33)

Herman's definition encompasses the psychological aspect of trauma and its impact on the victim. She draws on domestic violence and extends trauma to political terror and its effect on the individual and public levels. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub's *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing; In Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1992) puts forward their theory of "theory of testimony" concerning Holocaust studies based on personal accounts of survivors, literary texts, and movies. They describe the Holocaust as an "unprecedented historical occurrence of . . . an event eliminating its own witness" (Felman & Laub, 1992, p. 70). They are mainly concerned with the witnessing process of historical events and the problematics and politics of witnessing.

Cathy Caruth's *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) problematizes the concept of trauma explained by the American Psychological Association (APA) in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). She argues that trauma is not definable solely by a traumatic event – it may or may not be traumatic – and the impact of the event might not be the same for every person; instead, trauma can be analyzed "in the structure of its experience or reception." (Caruth, 1995, p. 5). In her other work, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History* (1996), she maintains that a traumatic event lies outside the ordinary course of speakable events. For her, trauma is unspeakable because it is not an assimilated event and disrupts trauma's linguistic representation.

Karyn Ball (2021) reconciles trauma and memory studies. He argues that the works of Cathy Caruth and Shoshana Felman in trauma studies materialized from Holocaust memorial studies. In the 1990s, to honor the Holocaust's victims and survivors, studies were drawn on the Holocaust studies of the 1980s. Remembering, mourning, witnessing, and perpetrator tropes in trauma studies are taken from the 1980s Holocaust studies. The co-edited *Memory Unbound* (2017), by Lucy Bond, Stef Craps, and Pieter Vermeulen, presents the different forms of movements of memory: transcultural, transgenerational, transmedial, and transdisciplinary. They are concerned with "memory's unbounded properties" (Bond, Craps, & Vermeulen, 2017, p. 21). Thus, the vast array of background scholarship entangles memory studies and trauma studies, one stemming from the other.

2.2. 9/11 in the context of memory studies

9/11 terrorist attacks are memorialized not only through the testimonies of the survivors of the attack but also through cultural production like literature, movies, memorial sites, docudramas, and non-literary production. In *Frames of Memory after 9/11* (2015), Lucy Bond examines the frames of media representation of 9/11. She believes that the cultural, social, legal, and political paradigms are compromised in remembering the trauma of 9/11. She traces the different methods of commemoration and problematizes the modes. For her, the modes of remembrance that emerged after 9/11 delimit the representation of trauma and memory to artificial construct. She explains:

The corpus of 9/11 trauma fiction recurrently returns to tropes of silence and amnesia, evoking buried or repressed pasts, whose unavailability to recall destabilises the very coordinates that make it possible to interpret the world (Bond, 2015, pp. 22-23).

Kelsie Donnelly, in her doctoral thesis, *Beyond '9/11': Counter-narratives of Grief in Post-9/11 Literature* (2020), explores the concept of grief in the context of 9/11. Her primary concern is with the outcome of grief in different contexts. She argues the modes of engagement with grief in literary texts and how the texts grieve the “ungrievable bodies” (Donnelly, 2020, p. 4). She differentiates between the concepts of trauma and grief by drawing on the works of Julia Kristeva, Judith Butler, and Lauren Berlant. She analyses grief, not through the “medico-psychiatric model” but through a literary lens. W. Bryan Rommel-Ruiz’s essay “We are Alive in Hell: Finding Historical Meaning and Significance in 9/11” (2011) investigates the movies produced after 9/11. He analyses the impact of historical events, their representation in movies, and the engagement of the American people with history and collective trauma. He also incorporates the role of “conspiracy theories or alternative histories” as “counter-narratives of 9/11” (Rommel-Ruiz, 2011, p. 246), and how they confront “terrorism in the aftermath of September 11th” (Rommel-Ruiz, 2011, p. 249).

All the discussion on the background of memory and trauma studies leads to this assertion that the problematics of trauma, memory, and grief remain the unexplored territory in literary studies. Thus, my article discusses the politics and problematics of monetization of terror disasters from a literary studies perspective.

2.3. Memory and trauma studies in the domain of law

Law is part of history, but it also has its own history. It not only corresponds to history but is one of the carriers of legal history. It shapes history and, in doing so, shapes the future. Laws are made on retrospective events for future legal issues. One of the significant sources of law is customs and traditions, which are rooted in memory. Therefore, the law takes into account historical memory. In legal discourse, history and memory are the two integral elements. Austin Sarat and Thomas R. Kearns explain in their essay “Writing History and Registering Memory in Legal Decisions and Legal Practices: An Introduction” (2002) that law is an active participant in writing history. Law and its proceedings are also sites for “memory and commemoration” (Sarat & Kearns, 2002, p. 2). There are precedential and unprecedented laws that are connected to memory and commemoration. Precedential laws have their history and memory, which responds to history, while the unprecedented laws have no memory and history and create history. For example, 9/11 in US history is an unprecedented event that created history in every field, including litigation processes.

Lawrence Douglas’ essay “The Legal Imagination and Traumatic History,” included in his book *The Memory of Judgement* (2001), surveys the legal implications of the Holocaust criminal trials. He is mainly concerned with the criminal proceedings against the Holocaust perpetrators and the limitations of the laws to grasp the full scale of collective historical trauma resulting from mass killings. Therefore, law and justice are wholly involved in assessing the trauma of mass killings and crimes against humanity.

3. Theoretical framework: Politics of non-transferability of memory and trauma into money

The relationship of trauma and memory with the law is problematized in assessing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in victims/survivors' collective and individual memory. In *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (1994), John Gillis asserts that the very nature of commemoration is political. He believes that public memory, collective memory, and cultural memory are all but social constructs. It requires political power to determine which traumatic and historical event can be commemorated nationally. The same is the case with the 9/11 terror attacks' commemoration acts. One of the 9/11 victims' commemorations acts was the establishment of the 9/11 Victims' Compensation Fund. In her essay "Forms of Judicial Blindness: Traumatic Narratives and Legal Repetitions" (2002), Shoshana Felman proposes that legal proceedings can also act as sites of commemoration and remembrance. The legal intertextuality among litigation procedures leads to the politics of precedential and unprecedented legal issues. She compared the fictional trial in Leo Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata* and the infamous O. J. Simpson's trial. In both cases, the men have accused their wives of adultery, due to which they have killed them. Both the trials led to the acquittal of the prime accused on moral grounds. For Felman, the law has a troubled relationship with trauma, as in the case of O. J. Simpson, he was a domestic violence culprit due to which his wife filed for divorce and later got involved with another man. The court neglected his wife's trauma of being a domestic violence victim.

Dominick LaCapra's "Memory, Law, and Literature: The Cases of Flaubert and Baudelaire" (2002) reviews the famous case of Flaubert and Baudelaire (French writers). LaCapra demystifies the case and claims that in their case, literature is brought under the radar of the laws concerning books ban. Literature, for LaCapra, cannot be read without considering the context of the writing. Both the writers were expected to write about conventions and traditions they defied. He maintains that "a reading that serves to commemorate convention, defeats literature." (LaCapra, 2002, p. 16). Law constrains memory and remembrance, according to LaCapra, in a predictable manner; there are limits to the law.

In exploring the problematic relationship between law and memory, Francis X. Shen's essay "Monetizing Memory Science: Neuroscience and the Future of PTSD Litigation" (2012) evaluates the possible impact of new neuroscientific evidence on civil recovery and damage awards for emotional and physical injury in the American tort (civil) laws. According to Shen, present neuroscientific evidence of PTSD will not likely lead to better monetary awards from juries. However, neuroscience may challenge the existing legal distinctions between "bodily" and "mental" injury (Shen, 2012, p. 10). He believes that there can be significant gains from monetizing memory science.

One thing is clear from the discussion that the relationship between trauma/memory and law is a strained one. It is never a straightforward affair. The compensation or civil damages laws deliberate trauma and transfer its value into money for the victim/survivor. However, in my analysis, the transference of trauma/memory into monetary terms is politicized and problematic. The laws fail to assess the extent of trauma suffered by victims/survivors of a traumatic event. Therefore, I claim there is non-transferability between trauma/memory and its monetary value.

I used textual analysis as a research tool to analyze the film. This method focuses on closely scrutinizing the film as a text and critically dissecting its formal components, plot, cinematography, sound design, editing, and other creative elements. It necessitates delving into the film's content and evaluating how each of its constituent pieces contributes to its major point or themes. In order to accomplish this, I viewed the video several times, paying close attention to capturing intricate details and complexities. I conducted a thorough literature review to acquire insights from current scholarly discussions and critical assessments pertinent to the film and its genre, as well as any relevant cultural, social, or historical settings. I have analysed the film's underlying message, themes, and creative features using the trauma theory as a theoretical framework, ultimately helping to develop a more thorough comprehension of its relevance.

4. How much is a human worth? Discussion and analysis

Sara Colangelo's directorial *Worth* (2020) is based on the autobiographical book by Kenneth R. Feinberg – a well-known American lawyer – who was appointed as a special master to settle the 9/11 Victims Compensation Fund. The movie deals with the politics of awarding monetary compensation to the survivors and victims' families. The US Congress asks Ken and his legal team to settle the fund among the families, so they do not opt to file a lawsuit against the two airline companies. The main concern of congress is to avoid the litigation process because it will result in an economic meltdown, and the big corporations, and the US, might go bankrupt if the families opt for the lawsuit. Senator Ashcroft gives 2 years and one month time to Ken to settle the fund. However, Ken's initial treatment of the victims' families is very cold and devoid of sympathy, as his main concern is only to bring the families to the point of agreement with the government's fund. For most families, the formula presented by Ken is problematic as it is based on the victims' income. It implies that the higher the salary, the more value the victim will get from the fund. On the other hand, the families are angry at the government for its negligence in letting 9/11 happen.

9/11 was a man-made terror disaster. As explained in *Preparing for the Psychological Consequences of Terrorism: A Public Health Strategy* (2003), there are three typologies of disaster, namely a) natural events, b) technological events, and c) mass violence (Buttler et al., 2003, p. 44). The mass violence category includes disasters resulting from wilful human acts, e.g., terrorism. We can classify 9/11 as a terror disaster resulting from wilful human acts of terrorists to disrupt innocent humans' lives and strain a country's economy. In the movie, congress is more concerned with saving the US economy from collapsing due to the terrorist attacks. It wanted to settle the issue outside the court so the families would not sue the airlines for negligence in security. However, the special master's formula to compensate the families is at odds with the demands of the grieving families. The families want the fund to be equally distributed among all the victims' families, irrespective of the victims' income. Some congress members object to this suggestion because they look at the situation from the perspective of economic loss per victim rather than human loss.

The movie also tackles the issue of trauma associated with the 9/11 attacks. As discussed earlier, psychological trauma, as described by APA, is related to a threat to one's life. However, recent research shows that there are other forms of trauma as well that are not related to danger to life. Bjornsson et al., in their article "Social Trauma and its Association with Post-traumatic Stress Disorder and Social Anxiety Disorder" (2020), have put forward the concept of social

trauma. They assert that social trauma is also one of the causes of PTSD. It stems from humiliation and rejection in society (Bjornsson, et al., 2020, p. 1). The point I want to make here is that in the movie, all the victims' families are not psychologically traumatized but suffering from social trauma due to the government's unjust funding.

The film begins with an unnamed woman remembering her son, who is burnt in WTC; even her son's body was not found. She asks the interviewer a scathing question: "How do you calculate that?" (Colangelo, 2020). This question is the central arc of the film. The families feel humiliated by the fund's formula, which discriminates a CEO against a janitor. In pre-9/11 scenes of the movie, we find Ken instructing his students, "What is life worth?" – it is the name of Feinberg's books as well – and asks the students, "Who's gonna give us a number?" (Colangelo, 2020). He creates a hypothetical case to illustrate the monetary value of life and how money can settle the issue between the grieving party and the accused party in US tort laws. Ken tries to separate the philosophical aspect of human worth from the quantification of human life. He is more concerned with the statistical data than the emotional value of things and human beings.

In the post-9/11 scenes of the movie, the politics of remembering is foregrounded. The compensation fund is problematic as congress is only interested in stopping the grieving families from suing the mega corporations because it will create an economic emergency in the country. Tanja E. Bosch, in her article "Memory Studies: A Brief Concept Paper" (2016), asserts that the politics of remembering involves power. Only the one in power can decide who is to be remembered and honoured in the collective memory of a nation (Bosch, 2016, p. 6). Similarly, in the movie, this politics is at work; some grieving families only wanted the government to remember the victims by name in government records, not only as statistics. The fund becomes the site of memory, and the families want their dead to be honoured and respected, not humiliated by converting them into a number. It reminds me of W. H. Auden's "The Unknown Citizen," which mocks the state monument erected for the unknown citizen who is only known through a numeric code in the government's record.

Ironically, the state is not concerned with the emotional well-being of the unknown citizen but only with his conformity with the state laws and rules; therefore, "Was he free? Was he happy? The question is absurd:/ Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have heard." (Auden, 1940, pp. 30-32). The victims' families do not want to convert their loved ones into statistical data and demand to be treated with respect and dignity. The movie (un)intentionally avoids naming the victims and grieving family members, except for few named characters all others are unnamed. The (un)naming is problematic in the movie as the grieving members demand the naming of their victims in the government report. Ironically, Ken knows everything about the fund and its method of distribution, but when he asks Camille, his associate, "What we are forgetting?" she replies, "Their names" (Colangelo, 2020). In her essay "The Missing White Girl Syndrome" (2007), Sarah Stillman theorizes that victims should be named so the perpetrators of the crime can be shamed. In the movie, people are not concerned with shaming the perpetrators but only want their victims to be honoured.

Charles Wolf – a musician, a columnist, and critic of Kenneth's formula – accuses Ken of insensitivity towards the victims. He asks Ken if he knows any of the victims' names and if he has listened to the story of any grieving family. Charles refuses Ken to sign the fund's deed because he asserts, "My wife is not a statistic" (Colangelo, 2020). Towards the movie's end,

Ken realizes the families' trauma and starts listening to the testimonies. Each family's memory and trauma of the event differs from the other. Mieke Bal's essay "Travel Companions" (2015) asserts that memory is performative in nature (Bal, 2015, p. 158). Bal believes that memory is not a static process but performative in nature. The performativity of memory can be observed in Ken's character, who, when he starts listening to the testimonies of families, can sympathize with them rather than looking at all the cases through some mathematical formula but only through a purely human perspective. For Ken's law firm, the 9/11 case is an unprecedented one. His firm has dealt with settlement cases of Asbestos and Agent Orange victims, but 9/11 is a different issue.

Ken claims that his formula is all-inclusive and objective. In his discussion with senate committee members at the beginning of the movie, he posits, "I draft an objective formula, and I dispense reasonable payments" and "people are rational animals" (Colangelo, 2020), so they will accept the payout. He believes, "In politics conflicts sell; I find that what works best is a compromise, no one walks so happy just happy enough to walk away" (Colangelo, 2020). However, the senator argues, "But those towers had CEOs and janitors. They won't say yes to the same number" (Colangelo, 2020). What is at stake in this discussion is the monetary value of trauma and the issue of which lives are more grievable than the other. In their essay "Transmitting the Unspeakable through Literature and Art" (2013), Nossery and Hubbell argue: Traumatic experience may be unspeakable, but it is not necessarily unrepresentable. Even if pain is a corporal expression of trauma, it can further isolate the victim with its crushing reminders of the event (Nossery & Hubbell, 2013, p. 1). Nossery and Hubbell's concern is mainly with the representability of trauma in art and literature. Ken and congress's concern is to compensate the unspeakable through money or the material value of things.

Post-9/11 US memorial culture has problematized the personal and public loss. Lucy Bond's essay "Memory, Law, and Justice after 9/11" (2015) speculates that the US commemoration culture in the aftermath of 9/11 has eroded the boundaries of personal loss by "transformation of victims into national symbols" (Bond, 2015, p. 128), leading "to an appropriation of personal experience" (Bond, 2015, p. 128). In *Worth*, the personal losses of the people are appropriated under national loss. The grieving families are denied individuality of experiences of loss. They are forced to subsume in a mathematical formula objectively so that the government can carry on with its national and international politics. In one of the first meetings arranged by Ken with the families, Ken does not want to take any questions from the victims' families, and his sole concern is with the working of the formula and how "the formula is actually *fairly* [my emphasis] streamlined" (Colangelo, 2020).

One of the victims, Tom, and his grieving partner Graham Morris are un-adjustable in Ken's objective formula. Tom and Graham are homosexual partners, and Tom is estranged from his parents. Graham claims the compensation as a victim's family, but their union is not recognized by law in their state of residence. Therefore, his estranged parents are the claimants to the compensation. The question arises whether this distribution to the estranged parents will be justifiable. Another instance of personal loss in the movie is evident through Karen Donato – wife of Tom Donato, a firefighter who lost his life in the WTC. She terms the money as blood money to cover up the mistakes of the New York fire department for not changing the faulty gadgets of the workers, which could have saved lives. Karen asks Ken to include her husband's story in the government report to honour his death as a hero. She believes "no money in the world that's good enough for Nick" (Colangelo, 2020), and refuses to take monetary

compensation. For her, her husband's death is non-transferable to money. However, the government's concern in establishing the fund is not to honour the individual victims but to appropriate it with national loss to save the economy.

The precarity of human lives is questioned throughout the movie. The families of immigrant victims depicted are vulnerable; they are ready to accept any amount offered because their immigrant status will make it difficult to talk back to the government. Judith Butler's seminal work *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004) investigates the politics involved in the post-9/11 mourning and violence. She proclaims that deaths resulting from violence are sometimes marked 'grievable' or 'ungrievable' (Butler J., 2004, p. 36). She talks in the context of the American 'War on Terror' that the loss of lives of non-Americans is seen as ungrievable and invisible. My argument is that life's grievability is assessed more grievable when converted to economic statistics. During Ken's conference, when he tries to explain the formula to the families, he is interrupted with questions like, "Why do we need a formula? Why isn't it equal payment for all?", "My boy was a firefighter. Was he worth less than the guy pushing pencils and trading stock?" (Colangelo, 2020). Ken's response is of paramount importance when he replies to these questions, "But their mortgages did differ" (Colangelo, 2020). Butler, in *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (2010), extends her idea of the precariousness of human life:

What is a life? The "being" of life is itself constituted through selective means; as a result, we cannot refer to this "being" outside of the operations of power, and we must make more precise the specific mechanisms of power through which life is produced (Butler, 2010, p. 1).

The frames involved in terming a life grievable can be political, economic, and cultural. My concern is more with the economic frames involved in terming lives grievable. A human life's worth in today's world is calculated in terms of economic value. Camille and Ken explain to their staff that victims and their families will be compensated based on monetary value lost. There are concerns for, "Who's eligible? Who gets how much? Where do we draw the line?" (Colangelo, 2020). All these questions are supposed to be answered through calculations. Camille says, "For every claimant, we will need to calculate a dollar value for the human loss, whether it is a *loss of limb or loss of life* [my emphasis]" (Colangelo, 2020). The formula proposed by Ken is based on the classification of bodily injuries as well. Only those injuries are counted that occurred on the day of the attacks. However, some workers who cleaned up in the dust developed polyps from asbestos. Unfortunately, these workers could not be accommodated in Ken's objective formula. That is one of the reasons Charles calls the fund unjust in treating the victims and their families.

The government wants the victims' families to take the money and move on in their lives. The questions remain which lives are more worth and grievable than the others. David W. McIvor's *Mourning in America* (2016) discusses "the politics of loss and grief" (McIvor, 2016, p. xiii) in the American cultural and political context. He puts forward the idea of a desirable way of mourning which he calls the "democratic work of mourning" (McIvor, 2016, p. xii). For him:

Democratic mourning is not reducible to rituals of grief in response to experiences of public loss or trauma, such as the flowers or flags (soon to fade) left at the scene of a calamity. It is not reducible to the speeches and eulogies

given for the fallen. Instead, democratic mourning is an ongoing labour of recognition and repair—of recognizing experiences of social trauma and cultivating civic repertoires of response. (McIvor, 2016, p. xii)

The victims' families refuse the government's appropriation of their losses and demand their dead be respected and treated as individuals, not just as numbers. Another grieving family member questions Ken's compensation form. He argues about one question in the form asking if the victim had any medical complications. If the victim had any medical issues before the attacks, his dollar value would decrease. The man terms the form as a form of some insurance company than a compensation fund. One woman demands swift payment of the fund as she faces health and financial issues and cannot pay her bills. Ken's formula is oblivious to such individual demands, and he insists on impartiality to the family member's grief to implement it objectively because "that's the job" (Colangelo, 2020). However, Ken has an epiphany when listening to Karen Donato's testimony. Later, towards the end of the film, he puts aside his objective formula and looks into each case individually and collectively. Ken realizes the demand of the victims' families and sympathizes with their losses. He realizes this when Charles says, "It's for our own government, this system, to treat us all with dignity and respect" (Colangelo, 2020). At the movie's end, there is the realization that all lives are equally grievable, and their conversion to monetary value is problematic.

5. Conclusion

The politics involved in converting the loss of human lives into a monetary value is manifold. There are numerous problems to pay attention to in ascribing economic value to human life. Money is an essential aspect of human life, but apart from money, human life is entitled to dignity and a right to be appropriately commemorated. The politics of monetization of human loss involve the hegemonic powers that decide which lives are more worth than the others. The movie *Worth* (2021) tackles this idea meticulously. It avoids naming the victims, and during the testimonies, it avoids playing background music. On the one hand, it makes the victims absent; on the other hand, it honours the victims but avoids adding a solemn environment. The movie highlights the issue that human trauma, loss, grief, and memory are intangible, and there is no tangible compensation for them. In the end, the film leaves us pondering the criteria used to convert human loss into monetary value. It raises the question of whether trauma can be sold for money and prompts us to consider the ethical implications of trying to quantify and commodify something as deeply personal and nuanced as human existence. The conclusion that trauma and its severe repercussions cannot be reduced to monetary compensation emphasizes how difficult it is to put a monetary value on trauma. This awareness necessitates the development of a plan that goes beyond just economic considerations and is more sensitive to, and sensitively addresses, the feelings of loss and pain. It leads to a conclusion that there is non-transferability of trauma into money.

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