

Chapter One

Introduction: Human Connectivity in Post-9/11 Context

The human connection behind a story is what drives a narrative. In this context, David Foster Wallace states: “I just think that fiction that isn’t exploring what it means to be human today isn’t good art” (McCaffery 131). Postmodern culture tends to focus on the alienation of that human connection rather than its preservation, particularly in regard to popular culture. This concept seems to produce a paradox. However, this dissertation demonstrates how there is a re-focus and re-vision of the human aspect of postmodern culture that needs to be addressed. Postmodern culture needs to focus more on the human connection and to explore what it means to be human as Wallace suggests. By situating this discussion in the context of Wallace’s claim, this dissertation demonstrates the emergence of a postmodern culture that embraces a sense of connectivity with other humans and moves beyond focusing on the alienation of the postmodern world, although that aspect is a significant framework to view postmodern culture. The focus of this dissertation is to investigate two 9/11 literary narratives that consciously and actively attempt to resituate the focus and notion of solidarity with other humans. This is not to say that postmodern literature does not engage with these ideas, but that the texts—Don DeLillo’s *Falling Man* and Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, this dissertation is addressing are specifically working with this idea of human connectivity and solidarity in both a postmodern context and also in a post-9/11 context.

The conception of solidarity in this dissertation is based on the work of Aurora Levins-Morales. While her work and theoretical concepts typically associate her with female and ethnic authors and not with white male American authors, the concept of

solidarity she establishes aligns with the emphasis on the human that Wallace suggests and that is present in the works analyzed in this project. Aurora Levins-Morales writes in *Medicine Stories: History, Culture and the Politics of Integrity* that “solidarity is not a matter of altruism” but rather it comes “from the recognition that, like it or not, our liberation is bound up with that of every other being on the planet, and that politically, spiritually, in our heart of hearts we know anything else is unaffordable” (125). This form of solidarity embraces a concept of compassion that Lauren Berlant states in which compassion is something that plays upon “our visceral sense of right” and that “we must be compelled to feel right, to overcome our aversion to others’ suffering by training ourselves in compassionate practice (11).

Putting Aurora Levins-Morales and Lauren Berlant in a critical conversation with each other does not seem like a likely choice. However, this dissertation chooses these two theorists in particular for critical engagement in order to demonstrate that while they intersect in different theoretical aspects they are ultimately asking similar questions, which is to consider the concept of human solidarity in postmodern times. In the introduction to *In A Different Voice*, Carol Gilligan writes that her work seeks to show “the intersection of experience and thought, in different voices and the dialogues to which they give rise, in a way we listen to ourselves and to others, in the stories we tell about our lives” (2). Though Gilligan writes and discusses a particular brand of feminism and that particular view on solidarity, the concepts she puts forth aligns with Wallace’s ideas of fiction, or narratives, exploring the concept of being human. Solidarity has been associated with particular groups, however, in this project solidarity rests on the concept of human life and the literary texts analyzed explore the human connectivity of solidarity that is not necessarily group specific but rather human specific.

Levins-Morales and Lauren Berlant's claims about the human emphasis and function of solidarity and compassion aligns with Wallace's claim that art must explore the human connections. The project's goals are to demonstrate the significance of solidarity and address issues of solidarity in a postmodern context by utilizing the example of 9/11. While it is a particularly American event, the narratives embrace ideas of solidarity and compassion and utilize them as a way of storytelling.

The view of solidarity this dissertation is using aligns with earlier historical takes on solidarity but then builds and expands on those ideas to move from a group and culturally specific representation to a more global concept and particularly a human aspect of connectivity. Marxist solidarity and the Polish solidarity can be seen as the roots in this return to solidarity. The emphasis on human connectivity and solidarity is central to some theoretical concepts of cosmopolitanism. These ideas of solidarity within the cosmopolitan framework help to situate the conception of the role of human in these post-9/11 narratives. The spirit of cosmopolitanism makes the emphasis on the human much more immediate.

In Anthony Appiah's foundational text on cosmopolitanism, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, he addresses the need to return to concepts of solidarity and human connectivity. He asserts that the "challenge, then, is to take minds and hearts formed over the long millennia of living in local troops and equip them with ideas and institutions that will allow us to live together as the global tribe we have become" (xiii). Appiah's reinterpretation of tribalism and the shift from the local to the global creates a sense of accountability and responsibility not only to those who inhabit the same space locally but also the sense that we exist in a global village. The concept of connectivity, communication and accountability is central to cosmopolitan thought. Narratives such as DeLillo's *Falling Man* and Foer's

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close, ask questions of global connectivity. Appiah's discussion of existing as a global tribe, he is pointing to the concept of existing both locally and globally, which is a central idea to consider and interrogate regards to postmodern culture as well as the post-9/11 global climate and the narratives that emerge from those shifting paradigms.

Another aspect of cosmopolitanism worth mentioning here is Seyla Benhabib's discussion of the term and its use in political terminology. It is important to discuss Benhabib's ideas of cosmopolitanism because she addresses its global and political significance. Although this project is not focused on those aspects of cosmopolitanism, but rather on narrative and exploring the concept of the human and is situated in literature rather than politics, it is nonetheless significant to address and discuss the philosophical and political foundations of this concept. Benhabib's discussion is particularly pertinent because she points to the complicated intersections of cosmopolitan ideologies. In *Another Cosmopolitanism*, Benhabib begins by questioning Hannah Arendt's philosophical definition of crimes against humanity not necessarily meaning crimes against humanness "as if what was intended was a moral injury that violated some kind of shared moral code" (14). Benhabib then uses Arendt's disconnect to insert her theoretical discussion on the nature of cosmopolitanism and the political and philosophical discourse it inhabits. She writes: "Cosmopolitan norms of justice, whatever their conditions of their legal orientation, accrue to individuals as moral and legal persons in a worldwide civil society" (16). She continues to state that the "term 'cosmopolitanism,' along with 'empire' and 'globalization,' has become one of the keywords of our time" (17). Benhabib's discussion points to three main camps of cosmopolitan thought, philosophy and discourse. The first having a particular "enlightened morality that does not place 'love

of country' ahead of 'love of mankind' (Martha Nussbaum)" (18) in part aligns with the aspect of solidarity as not as altruistic but situated on a realization of the human. She continues to assert that cosmopolitanism can also signify "hybridity, fluidity, and recognizing the fractured and internally riven character of human selves and citizens, whose complex and aspirations cannot be circumscribed by national fantasies and primordial communities (Martha Nussbaum)" (18). The second concept demonstrates parallels to the aspect(s) of postmodern culture that focus on the alienating aspects of popular and material culture, as Theodor Adorno would suggest. Adorno's views on popular culture situate the use of mass cultural tools, such as television, magazines, and even novels to an extent as being vehicles to manipulate the masses into passivity. The third group in Benhabib's discussion sees cosmopolitanism as a "normative philosophy for carrying the universalistic norms of discourse ethics beyond the confines of the nation-state (Jurgen Habermas, David Held, and James Bohman)" (18) and Benhabib claims that her project mostly aligns with the third group.

This dissertation, in suggesting a paradigm shift in postmodern frames for analyzing literature and culture—the shift to the away-postmodern—, attempts to demonstrate the intersection between the concept of connectivity, communication and accountability is central to cosmopolitan thought whereas morality, popular and material culture and normative philosophy or ethics are the three different sub-camps of cosmopolitan thought and theory. Since the term cosmopolitanism has become prevalent in contemporary thought and discourse, it is important to demonstrate how this dissertation seeks to interject itself into this debate about cosmopolitanism. However, since the focus here is on the literary rather than political constructions, the interjection into the cosmopolitanism debate is demonstrated through narrative. Therefore the shift from the political and socio-economic debates and has also

become a pressing and necessary question and issues in literary and cultural theory and analysis. The authors discussed in this dissertation—DeLillo and Foer—use narrative and particularly popular culture as a way to interject the literary into this conversation of cosmopolitanism, furthering the idea that popular culture can be a vehicle for solidarity and theoretical intersection. In the aftermath of 9/11, the question of solidarity has been politically and culturally contentious, and while this project's goal is not to analyze the various political and media facets of 9/11 contentions it is important however to demonstrate how these authors make use of the literary, narrative and popular culture to address some of these post-9/11 contentions.

The role of popular culture is also significant for this dissertation because of the way it functions in particular the texts this dissertation is analyzing—DeLillo's *Falling Man* and Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. Popular culture in these texts does not take on just the aspect of banality and play indicative of postmodern culture, but also serves as a vehicle for engaging in solidarity. The texts also employ forms of popular culture and engage with the idea of what is art in order to further explore the role of popular culture as enabling solidarity through an emphasis on healing process. The concept of a narrative enabling a sense of applicable to healing is applicable to the act of writing/creating as a way to process trauma and in that sense each of the narratives discussed here engages in a collective healing through the use of narrative/story. Aurora Levins-Morales's discussion of healing can help demonstrate what DeLillo and Foer are doing in their narratives. She writes that "healing takes place in community, in the telling and the bearing witness, in the naming of trauma and in the grief and rage and defiance that follows" (16). While Levins-Morales's discussion is situated on the trauma of abuse, her idea of healing is applicable to these post-9/11 texts as well because they narrate and respond

to the community's response to trauma and serve as a form of healing. For example, the "Falling Man" image in Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* has served as a healing narrative for narrator nine-year-old Oskar. Likewise, the "Falling Man" image invokes similar individual and community healing reactions. Healing of trauma in these post-9/11 narratives as this dissertation is discussing it here relates back to the concept of solidarity—the healing comes from exploring what it means to be human.

The dissertation's attempt is to resituate the current understanding of postmodernism in terms of solidarity within postmodern American literature. However, this postmodern solidarity seems to suggest a shift in the way postmodern texts are analyzed. This dissertation questions the postmodern theoretical framework's ability to encapsulate postmodern solidarity and whether the shift also requires a movement beyond postmodernism. What this critique of postmodernism means is that postmodernism is used because the prevalence of solidarity and the search for solidarity requires a move beyond current postmodern ideology in regard to white male American authors. The concept of embracing solidarity is emphasized in both women and ethnic writers, however it is not readily associated with white male American authors. And since Levins-Morales, Berlant and Wallace's views of solidarity, compassion, writing, and art exhibit a universal connectivity rather than one that is compartmentalized and particularly based on gender, ethnic or religious background, the shift in postmodernism seems to be relevant.

The relevance of the postmodern shift has become more evident in the context of post 9/11 climate. While there is too much of both American nationalism and sentimentality, there is also a global anti-American movement, and some theorists may argue that 9/11 was the day that changed everything. The point of this dissertation is not to analyze the event of 9/11 or the political and media responses to

the event and its aftermath. Its goal is, however, to engage with the narratives that have come out of that event and discuss how in response to 9/11 there is a narrative paradigm shift that re-embraces solidarity.

It is important to address how the targets of the attacks on 9/11 and particularly the World Trade Center are visually symbols of empire. This dissertation uses Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's ideas in *Empire* to consider the concept of empire as it applies to the narratives under discussion here and how the postmodern shift in these narrative reformulates the dominant narrative structures of history and narrative, leading to the emergence of away-postmodernism. They state that sovereignty has taken a "new form, composed of a series of national and supranational organisms under a single logic of rule" and that this rule and "new global form of solidarity is what [they] call Empire" (xii). The concept of empire further addresses the issues of history in this project because "the concept of Empire is characterized fundamentally by a lack of boundaries: Empire's rule has no limits" and that in the context of history "Empire presents itself not as a historical regime originating in conquest, but rather as an order that effectively suspends history and thereby fixes the existing state of affairs for eternity" (xiv). The struggle is to "contest and subvert Empire" and that this struggle "will have to invent new democratic forms and new constituent power that will one day take us through and beyond Empire" (xv). The new "cartography" that challenges Empire is not limited to specific geographic regions but that the "geographies of alternative powers, the new cartography, is still waiting to be written—or really, it is being written today through the resistances, struggles, and desires of the multitudes" (xvi).

While Hardt and Negri's text discusses power structures and systems of globalization, the concept of destabilizing empire is significant to this dissertation's

concept of away-postmodern solidarity and narrative because the new cartography seeks to challenge the power structure of empire to embrace a multinational sense of solidarity. While the focus here is on narratives, it is important to demonstrate that the emphasis on the human connection and the destabilization of dominant narratives and power structures is part of a larger systemic challenge and movement. The concept of empire can help illuminate some of the problems involved in the historicity of 9/11.

Hardt and Negri's discussion of Empire and new cartography contributes to this dissertation's discussion of 9/11 narratives because each of the narratives not only explore what it means to be human but also they attempt to navigate the new cartography of the post- 9/11 world. For example, DeLillo's *Falling Man* makes use of the concept of "organic shrapnel" covering the space of Lower Manhattan in order to express a new cartography that literary and physically demonstrates the exploration of human connectivity (DeLillo 16). Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* also makes use of the idea of human shrapnel as well as the image of "The Falling Man" as representative of "somebody" to fill all the empty coffins (Foer 325).

The challenges towards the concept of empire put forth in Hardt and Negri's text, along with my formulation of away-postmodern solidarity and narrative seems to reformulate the loss of history in postmodernism that Jameson views in *Postmodernism, Or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* seems to advocate. In relation to postmodernism, Jameson claims that "no longer does there seem to be any organic relationship between the American history we learn from schoolbooks and the lived experience of the current multinational, high rise, stagflated city of the newspapers and of our own every day life" (22). Fredric Jameson points to the disconnect between learned history and lived history. The struggles in *Empire* and this dissertation's interpretation of away-postmodern seek to reestablish that organic

connection with history in the form of human solidarity. The shift in the away-postmodern narratives discussed in this dissertation seek to not only rediscover the organic connections that seem to have been lost in some aspects of postmodern culture but also to make the organic connection the central concern, which like Wallace suggests, explores what it means to be human today.

This dissertation's theoretical conception of away-postmodernism points towards a multidisciplinary shift. However, here the away-postmodern interject focuses on 9/11 literary narratives in order to demonstrate the literary and narrative shift towards exploring what it means to be human. The aim of this dissertation is to demonstrate how the examples of 9/11 narratives use the event of 9/11 as a vehicle for engaging in ideas and questions about human solidarity. The literary texts chosen utilize the concept of solidarity within a 9/11 framework. However, the narrative reactions to the event are not limited to the event itself but rather recreate the history of the event to engage in large theoretical and human concepts of solidarity, loss of life, and disruption of the world. Collectively, the narratives make reference to other significant historical events such as the Holocaust and the bombings on Hiroshima, as well as personal loss from death, to separation and divorce. So while the event of 9/11, and particularly the New York City local and the destruction of the World Trade Center, is the backdrop for the literary narratives, the particulars of each story uses basic human feelings of compassion to reach a sense of narrative solidarity for the characters and for the reader.

Chapter Two

Narrative Solidarity in Delillo's *Falling Man*

How do we narrate 9/11? The events of 9/11, in many ways, are American specific events. However, the ownership of narrating those events speak to an audience beyond just an American audience. 9/11 is a national trauma that is still being processed today by many Americans. Political and media studies in particular have analyzed both the event itself, its representation, and the aftermath of 9/11 of its political implications. While post-9/11 narratives do comment on these issues, the 9/11 narratives in this project reflect on the narration of trauma and of using narrative as a way to express a collective sense of healing, as Levins-Morales points to in *Medicine Stories*. These narratives address the concern of what it means to be human, as David Foster Wallace, suggests. While 9/11 is an act of terror, and in many ways the aftermath has caused political, global and ethnic divides, the narration of what it means to lose someone and to grieve the loss of a human life embraces a tone of solidarity. In many ways, the narration of the events of 9/11 has become both an act of solidarity by bringing those who have no direct connection to the events into a space that seems to be universal—the loss of human life. The events of 9/11 promote a narrative solidarity, but they also become a vehicle for questioning solidarity by particularly questioning whose narrative is the narrative that the act of solidarity should situate itself in.

The postmodern narratives under discussion in this dissertation question the ideas of what it means to be human in the postmodern world, and in many sense in the post-9/11 world, but also question how to narrate the loss of human life. Judith Butler, in *Precarious Life* presents this question: “Who counts as human? Whose lives count as lives? And, finally, What makes for a grievable life?” (21). She situates these

questions within the concept of loss and that the “we” aspect of this human question draws upon the tenuous collective emotion of loss and grief. By situating 9/11 within Butler’s concept loss and the ability to have a global concept of what the loss of a human life entails, the narration of 9/11 within postmodern literature can demonstrate that there is a shift away from the postmodern. In this away-postmodern narrative world, the narrative goal is to not only to interrogate the human connection and the role of solidarity, but also to demonstrate that human solidarity in the away-postmodern narrative becomes necessary and that the narrative output needs to demonstrate the significance of considering the value of human life. There needs to be an understanding of what it means to be human, and in the case of 9/11, understanding human loss.

By focusing the consideration on the value of human life in the post-9/11 context, an understanding of the solidarity of loss helps situate the term “the away-postmodern” condition. The shift frames the idea of solidarity not just within specific cultural, gendered or ethnic backgrounds, but addresses the ability for that solidarity to engage in a global unification of human understanding—a cosmopolitanism-type notion of solidarity. The local space of the World Trade Center is a significant site for the conceptualization of the away-postmodern. By being in the space of New York City’s Financial District and a skyscraper, the WTC on the one hand embraces global sense of community but it also inhabits a particular kind of white (male) American narrative. What this dissertation means by the World Trade Center having a particular white, male American narrative is that its role in postmodernism lends itself to a specific class, ethnic and gendered relationship. As mentioned earlier, there is a dominance in postmodern narratives that succumbs to a white and male narrative. For example, contemporary historical texts like Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, which can be

considered a postmodern text, resist that term of postmodernism because of its association with white male hierarchy. Kimberley Davis writes that there is suspicion in reading Morrison's fiction "through the lens of postmodernism, post-structuralism, or "white" academic theory," because these lenses are tactics "that underestimates the crucial importance of Toni Morrison's black cultural heritage to any interpretation of her works" (243). Davis makes the argument that the critical intersect of postmodernism may not be applicable to work like Morrison's because it does not account for particular cultural aspects.

The structure of the WTC, however, should also be critically examined within this framework because its relationship to postmodernism has certain cultural associations and narratives that are particularly white, male and American. In the aftermath of 9/11, the WTC becomes a symbol for national and global solidarity. It is important to recognize the dominating factor that the white, male, American perspective has not only on the cultural significance of the WTC structure but also within the larger framework of the postmodern discourse. The away-postmodern discourse seeks to challenge this narrative hierarchy. The paradigm shift in the away-postmodern discourse can demonstrate that a white, male, American narrative can transcend being culturally specific and become universally human specific by purposefully exploring what it means to be human today.

The structure of the WTC and the events of 9/11 also engage in away-postmodern solidarity because the structure, despite its particularly white, male and American significance, also presupposes its role as being a key structure in the global community. In the aftermath of 9/11 the WTC structure's role in a strictly American narrative becomes challenged and is no longer associated with one particular person, or group of people, but with the experience of loss and the collective response to the

loss of human life. One particularly striking image is that of the “Falling Man” taken by Richard Drew of the man falling from the North Tower on September 11, 2001. While the image caused much controversy among the American public and was pulled immediately after it was printed, there remained a desire to decipher the “jumper’s” intention(s) and uncover those narratives.

According to the documentary film *The Falling Man*, viewers of the image recognized the human narrative behind the image and sought to understand “why” but most significantly, the viewers sought within themselves their connection and response to the image. Ultimately the “Falling Man” image communicated a sense of solidarity. The image of the “Falling Man” and the public response to the image communicates a narrative quest to process and engage the events and aftermath of 9/11 within an away-postmodern condition, and within a particular American consciousness, though arguably it is also present in a global consciousness.

The commemoration of 9/11 must factor into the global consciousness of 9/11. The official act of commemoration takes place every September 11 where the city of New York broadcasts two large beams of light from the site of ground zero to the sky. This recreates the towers, and brings them out of the shadowing haunting background into the present collective American and global consciousness. How does non-official acts of commemoration challenge that narrative structure, and to what extent can a narrative commemorate an event? David Simpson in his work, *9/11 The Culture of Commemoration* addresses the cultural contentions of 9/11 by interrogating the idea(s) of change and memorial in the post-9/11 climate in stating the following:

Acts of commemoration are particularly sensitive occasions for assessing the balance of change and continuity within the culture as large. They often declare their adherence to time-honored and even

universally human rituals and needs, but nothing is more amenable to political and commercial manipulation than funerals, monuments, epitaphs, and obituaries. (1)

The narratives in this dissertation, which can be viewed as being metahistorical romances and memoir-like texts, challenge the official narrative(s) of 9/11 by interrogating the use of narrative as a means of political and commercial manipulation. For example, Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*, draws upon an official newspaper printed, albeit controversial, image of the events in order to recreate the tenor of New York during and in the aftermath of 9/11. DeLillo's recreation of these events subscribes to Amy Elias's concept of the metahistorical romance as being "historical fiction which morphs the historical romance genre into a literary form that is able to encompass the historiographical debates of its own time" (163). The metahistorical romance is an apt paradigm to consider the work DeLillo is undertaking in 9/11, however, the added layer of away-postmodern solidarity complicates both the contemporary debates on 9/11 commemorate and narrative culture as well as the claim and status of 9/11 as history. Can 9/11 be considered history when so much of the current historical debate, particularly within the media, seems to it not as an event that happened, but something that is still happening? The aspect of 9/11 still happening is evident in American political and cultural usage of 9/11 as a forum for certain ideologies and actions. Is the commemoration culture of 9/11 the root of its history? It seems that only when narrating loss 9/11 becomes a fixed event, so perhaps the commemoration culture is the trajectory in which DeLillo's *Falling Man* can claim a narrative spaces as a metahistorical romance.

The characters in DeLillo's work seek to find their narrative voice within the commemoration culture. The narrative interception that DeLillo makes is that the

commemorative culture becomes a vehicle for historical critique of the 9/11 historiographies, which is primarily situated in a culture of commemoration. Lianne in particular looks to the official commemoration and narrative structure as a way to formulate her own narrative relationship to the event of 9/11. For example, she is in many ways obsessed with three things throughout the novel, in relation to 9/11 the official written narrative and forms of commemoration, and to an extent analysis, such as information and stories within newspapers, obits of victims, etc.; the way people reconstruct their own narrative responses to the event, which she finds in, and forces onto the writing group she voluntarily runs; and the falling man performance artist, who she sees all over New York, but does not understand. At the novel's end, she discovers the performance artist has died and find his obituary as not doing him justice so she then embarks on a information search to find out who this man was and how she can come to understand what it is that he did—Lianne is focused on the human aspect and finds a sense of connectedness with this man, even though she says “the man eluded her” and that the familiar surrounds of New York and those people were what she know and that “she could believe she knew these people, and all the others she'd seen and heard that afternoon, but not the man who'd stood above her detailed and looming” (DeLillo 224).

The image of the “Falling Man” by Richard Drew, and the documentary film *The Falling Man*, seem to seek a similar tenor of mystery—the image of the falling man is present but there seems to be a disconnect in pointing to him as one person known, but rather as a looming figure that serves as a symbols for all those who are unknown. This is where this dissertation's discussion begins—with the image of the falling man and the way that image has sparked different narratives about the events of 9/11, and the interrogation with solidarity that arises.

The “Falling Man” performance artist is featured throughout DeLillo’s novel and echoes a significant image of death associated with 9/11—the jumpers as they were known in the 9/11 media coverage were not being disclosed to the public. DeLillo’s use of the Falling Man performance artist not only significantly addresses the jumpers, but his reenactment of the jumpers forces the reader and the fictionalized Manhattan viewers to imagine/view the image of the jumpers. The performance artist’s actions are filtered through Lianne’s sightings of him, which both intrigue and disturb her, which is not unlike public response to the real photos taken of the jumpers. In DeLillo’s narrative, Lianne and the reader come to know who he, the “Falling Man” performance artist, was as a person through his death, which parallels journalistic responses to the jumpers and particularly Drew’s photo and a public quest to find the narrative behind the image.

The blurb written about the performance artist in the newspaper does not do his memory justice which causes Lianne to further investigate his life. In addition to finding out about his life, she also finds out information about how he performed his falling stunts and the rudimentary equipment he used that not only caused him significant injuries but also could have caused his death, however he was “dead at 39. No signs of foul play. He suffered from a heart ailment and high blood pressure” (DeLillo 220). The cause of death seems ironic in juxtaposition to his death-defying stunts and performances. The performance artist in conjuring up images of the jumpers causes Lianne and other on-lookers to question their own mortality as he is “dangling from the flies at Carnegie Hall during a concert,” or “dangling over the East River on the Queensboro Bridge” (219). Yet, he died of natural causes.

The “Falling Man” performance artist’s life was summed up in a short obit and the acts he performed were “noted in a single sentence, pointing out the fact that

he was the performance artist known as Falling Man” (DeLillo 219). Lianne’s investigation continues to recount the various falling acts he had done all over Manhattan. There is a particular emphasis on how he performed his stunts. DeLillo writes “was this the position intended to reflect the body posture of a particular man who was photographed falling from the north tower of the World Trade center, headfirst, arms at his side, one leg bent, a man set forever in free fall against the looming background of the column of panels in the tower?” (221). This is apparently the “ideal falling motion of a body that is subjected only to the earth’s gravitational field” (221). The position of the falling body creates in viewers a sense of humanity and a need to interrogate that sense of solidarity. In the 9/11 aftermath the question in regard to the images of the jumpers becomes—to jump or to burn?

In DeLillo’s *Falling Man*, the world has certainly changed. The novel reflects on real world anxieties in the post-9/11 climate as well as attempts to recreate, re-imagine and narrate the events of 9/11. DeLillo narrates an American fear in the post 9/11 aftermaths but he also challenges those fears by interrogating who has narrative ownership over 9/11 and how the world has changed for not only those directly affected by 9/11, i.e. New Yorkers, and to a larger extent, Americans, but also those want their voices in the larger collective narrative history. Jean Baudrillard writes, in *The Sprit of Terrorism*, that “the whole play of history is disrupted by this event [9/11], but so, too, are the conditions of analysis. You have to take your time” (4). In Simpson’s work, *9/11: The Culture of Commemoration*, he builds upon Baudrillard’s concept by questioning the passage of time in relation to analyzing the particular cultural influences and effects of 9/11 and its aftermath, in which there seems to be a crucial recognition of the passage of time. The passage of time allows for not only creative works that analyze and comment on the 9/11 events and culture, but also that

part of that cultural critique comes cultural analysis which the conditions of analysis, as Baudrillard suggests, much take into account the passage of time and it ultimately affects the narration of 9/11.

The role of narrative should engage in a sense of human solidarity. Hayden White complicates the way narrative functions in terms of cultural knowledge by recreating a narrative that can provide knowledge in an accessible way, which seems to align with Elias's idea of the metahistorical romance. White writes that "Narrative might well be considered a solution to a problem of general human concern, namely, the problem of how to translate knowing into telling, the problem of fashioning human experience into a form assimilable to structures of meaning that are generally human rather than culture-specific" (5). The narrative structure White suggests translates to the away-postmodern paradigm of solidarity that focuses on the human specific aspect of narrative and knowledge rather than the cultural specific way(s) of knowing, which interestingly complicates the narrative roles and structure of 9/11 historiography. DeLillo's 9/11 American narrative is in many ways culturally specific, but since it is also engages with an away-postmodern solidarity, the localized and culturally specific narrative transforms itself to be a narrative that is inherently human specific. The telling of knowledge within the framework of solidarity communicates a cosmopolitan concept of understanding and communication that invites multiple narratives without procuring a monocultural representation of knowledge and narrative. By presenting the knowledge of grief, loss and trauma as a universal concept rather than a localized or individual reaction, the narrative ownership of the event of 9/11 is disseminated. One of the key aspects to this knowledge of telling is the idea of loss being a glocal form of communication and narrative:

Despite our differences in location and history, my guess it that it is possible to appeal to a 'we,' for all of us have some notion of what it is to have lost somebody. Loss has made a tenuous 'we' of us all. And if we have lost, then it follows that we have had, that we have desired and loved, that we have struggled to find the conditions for our desire.

(Butler 21)

The conditions for a human specific form of knowledge are contingent on a human specific form of communication and knowing—the loss of human life. Loss is not a culturally specific narrative but rather a human specific narrative, and since the away-postmodern metahistorical post-9/11 fictions privilege the knowledge of loss as a form of narration and communication, the events of 9/11 transcend a localized space, and become a glocal space. Placing the question of what it means to be human in a post-9/11 and away-postmodern context removes it from just being a culturally specific historiographic narrative. Therefore there is a shift and the narrative becomes cosmopolitan in nature and the concept of our narrative solidarity is dependant on the basic human structures of meaning such as loss of human life as Butler suggests.

By situating history and narrative through Hayden White's lens of human specific telling and knowledge as well as Butler's concept of loss, the post 9/11 narratives interrogate the hegemonic presentations of history and narrative voice. This fashions the shifts to a collective and open-ended discourse about narrating and placing into the lens of history an event, that in many ways, is still occurring, and being reenacted every year. Moreover, the 9/11 metahistorical romances in particular focus on challenging the narrative representations of the current history of 9/11 as well as the narrative focus of the aftermath. Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* does address the political and cultural aspects of the post-9/11 climate, and the core of the narrative

there is difficulty by the characters to re-narrate the events of 9/11. There is also a quest to uncover lost, or rather undeveloped human narratives, but finally there is a recognition that change has occurred not only locally but also globally, which turns both the site of 9/11 and its narrative ownership into a glocal space of knowledge.

The 9/11 narratives do narrate a New York specific experience, however the narration also recreates the space of New York to make the event of 9/11 applicable for a global audience. This is not to necessarily displace ownership, if such an event can even have ownership, but to create a sense of solidarity with the simple reaction to terror, the loss of human life and chaos. Also, while this is not the world's first experience with large scale acts of terror, or loss of life, the significance of the event in an American context is that this is the first time for something on the scale and nature of 9/11 has happened on American soil, and particularly in the contemporary age. So there is an attempt from American audiences and narrators to project a global experience onto a local event. This logic, particularly from the American government and news cycle, may be problematic. However, the narrative emphasis from DeLillo and others draws upon Judith Butler's ideas of a grievable life in *Precarious Life* and engages the sense of an away-postmodern solidarity. The narrative's overarching focus is to grieve loss of human life, of symbolic ideologies, of relationships, and of human connectivity.

Don DeLillo begins *Falling Man* with the words: "It was not a street anymore but a world, a time and space of falling ash and near night" (3). These words establish the tone of 9/11 for both the narrative and also the history of the event—it encompasses a space of falling ash and near night- the shadowed towers are hauntingly placed in the background of not a street but a world. The terror aspect of 9/11 has begun in this ashy night aftermath. The opening lines of *Falling Man*

continue: “The roar was still in the air, the buckling rumble of the fall. This was the world now” (3). The roar of 9/11, as DeLillo puts it, moves beyond the space of the streets of 9/11 to the entire city, to the entire world. 9/11 no longer becomes a localized event, narrated by just those who experienced it, but rather, it moves to become the world—and from the American government’s perspective, the events of 9/11 become the grounding for larger political happenings and the war on terror ensues. However, by focusing on the narrative world situated in a 9/11 metahistorical romance, established by Don DeLillo and others, the event of 9/11 becomes a crucial event in American historical consciousness that needs to be narrated and re-narrated; but this re-narration of the event as history seems to be contingent on its space in commemorative culture.

To situate how DeLillo’s *Falling Man* engages with solidarity within the away-postmodern paradigm, especially in regard to his other postmodern works, this dissertation would like to engage Emily Apter’s ideas about paranoid one-worldness and how it pertains to a psycho-geographical tenor of paranoia in the post-9/11 context that echoes a paranoia of the Cold War. While Apter’s concept applies to *Falling Man* and the text certainly does initially engage the fears and bleak paranoia of “what’s next”, DeLillo writes: “Nothing is next. There is no next. This was next.” (10). The focus shifts from the postmodern culture of paranoia to a narrative consciousness that examines a culture of human loss. This shift expresses an away-postmodern solidarity that responds to the culture of paranoia. As the narrative progresses, the paranoid oneworldness becomes marginalized and there is a refocusing on the human solidarity, which can help demonstrate that DeLillo’s *Falling Man* is engaging in a narrative shift from the postmodern culture of paranoia to the to the away-postmodern intersection of solidarity.

DeLillo's *Falling Man* reflects on the aspect of what it means to be human in the aftermath of 9/11 by claiming that there is a necessary aspect of human connectivity that does not give into a oneworldness situated within a globalized capitalistic framework, but rather that it challenges that capitalist logic and puts value not on the commodification of human life, but rather on the unavoidable necessity to have a shared value for each human life lost. Ironically, however, the avenue for engaging within this paradigm, the narrative opening is within the culture of commemoration, which is a commodification of human loss. However, DeLillo challenges that commodity aspect of the commemoration culture by not simply presenting instances of narrative commemoration but engaging in a metahistorical romance that recreates and decolonizes that narrative space. For example, Lianne, in her quest to learn about the victims of 9/11 and about the life of the falling man performance artist challenges the hegemonic narratives and the threat of monocultural thought by putting together her own narrative(s) about those lives lost. DeLillo writes:

She [Lianne] read newspaper profiles of the dead, everyone that was printed. Not to read them, every one, was an offense, a violation of responsibility and trust. But she also read them because she had to, out of some need she did not try to interpret. (DeLillo 106)

Through these commemorative fragments, Lianne is able to not only process her own traumatic experiences but more significantly she is able to give herself and these fragmentary commemorative profiles a narrative voice. In considering that the human aspect cannot be removed from the events of 9/11, nor the local and global paranoid that arose in the aftermath, DeLillo uses that paranoid culture to reveal that the central narrative aspect is not to just convey the paranoia of a post-9/11 culture but more so to demonstrate that at the root of the paranoia is a need to recover human narratives and

the only way to recover that form of telling is through a universal understanding of loss.

Emily Apter writes in “On Oneworldness” that the writings of DeLillo function within the post WWII paranoid culture and that his “work imports into literature the mesh of cognitive modeling and conspiratorial globalism that gives rise to theories of paranoid planetarity” (368). She continues to assert that “paranoia has returned with a vengeance as the *ordre de jour* in the aftermath of 9/11” (369). Apter argues that the spectra of oneworldness relies on the logic that the connection(s) are made by relying on what is not connected and that through the lens of oneworldness in relation to paranoia there is a monocultural thought. In *Falling Man* DeLillo does address the American paranoid culture and the monocultural aspects of global capitalistic society, however, the core of the novel focuses on the human/organic shrapnel that is left behind in the aftermath of 9/11.

Don DeLillo begins interrogating ideas of narrativity in the opening chapter of *Falling Man* in describing the situation of Lower Manhattan, although up until this point there has been no direct indication that the apocalyptic scene being described by DeLillo is in fact the chaos and aftermath of the first tower being hit. He writes:

In time he heard the sound of the second fall. He crossed Canal Street and began to see things, somehow, differently [... The buildings] were unfinished, whatever that means. They were unseen, whatever that means [...] Maybe this is what things look like when there is no one here to see them.

He heard the sound of the second fall, or felt it in the trembling air, the north tower coming down, a soft awe of voices in the distance. That was him coming down, the north tower. (DeLillo 5)

The scenes of lower Manhattan point to the aspect of change—that things are not how they should be, however, DeLillo also points out that there is a disconnect between knowing that things are different and understanding or acknowledging why those things are different. The unfinished and unseen aspects that DeLillo draws out are foreshadowing the not yet finished aspects of the events—there is more to come, which builds into the underlying American paranoid culture. The aftermath of 9/11 now presents itself open to ideas of finishing, seeing, knowing, and narrating. The narrator relates the tower coming down to his person — his [Keith] narrative interjection into history and DeLillo’s metahistorical romance are being shaped. The falling action seems to be interchangeable — his narrative identity is linked to the falling tower. While Keith has a direct connection to the events of 9/11, having first hand experienced them, other characters create narrative connection through shared human experience of trauma and loss. The narrative identity and linkage is not specifically situated within those who actually experienced the events. In considering Hayden White’s claims of the function of narrative as being able to engage in a sense of human solidarity, the narrative aftermath DeLillo engage with focuses on a human specific form of telling—a solidarity—that challenges a cultural specific sense of ownership. The narrative parallel between buildings and man, and between narrative and reader, *Falling Man* creates a sense of narrative solidarity even for those who do not have a direct connection to the events.

The concept of organic (human) shrapnel is significant for the sense of human solidarity created in DeLillo’s *Falling Man* narrative. The bits of human flesh are imbedded physically into people but also mentally into the collective consciousness and aftermath of the event DeLillo describes this phenomenon as “organic shrapnel,” he writes: “Then, months later, they find these little, like, pellets of flesh that got

driven into the skin. They call this organic shrapnel” (DeLillo 16). The image DeLillo writes creates a sense of people as a part of infrastructure but also reinforces the human loss behind the events. The organic shrapnel is representative of the loss of human life that transcends the localized place of the events and blurs boundaries between local and global. The human shrapnel then is placed in the spectral of a national, and global, consciousness of loss of life. Additionally, the organic (human) shrapnel that exists creates within public memory and cultural consciousness a collective wound that’s scars are particularly human, and the impact is particularly human, and recognizes a cosmopolitan sense of loss, similarly to the aspect Butler presents with the concept of grievable life and mourning life. The concept of organic also influences the narrative history of the event since it penetrates cultural consciousness, it blurs those distinctions and “the boundaries between the official and the vernacular, the public and the private, the permanent and the evanescent will cease to matter, for all stories and images will be equally fit to represent and comment on the past” (Ekaterina Haskins 405). DeLillo’s *Falling Man* is the only narrative discussed in this project that has a character that is directly in the towers. However it is this daring narrative proximity that allows DeLillo to make use of the fragmented, unsettled and bleak narrative. 9/11 in contemporary consciousness is fragmented, unsettled, and bleak. Though, despite the cultural assertion of the event(s) and the aftermath, there is a sense of human solidarity invoked with the image of the “Falling Man.” In DeLillo’s narrative the “Falling Man” serves as a figure and reminder of the events of 9/11 however, in Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, the image of the “Falling Man” becomes a sense of comfort because of the emotion of compassion felt for the loss of human life.

Chapter Three

Oskar's Quest: A Sense of Solidarity in Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly*

Close

The central theme of Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* is processing trauma through a quest for solidarity with other people. The main narrator and character, nine-year-old Oskar Schell, is in search of answers about the mysterious key he has found in his father's belongings. The search for answers about the key is also Oskar's way of searching for answers about his father's death in the 9/11 attacks. His interactions with other people through this quest bring them into the space of his trauma. The solidarity becomes one of a grievable loss. While the story and characters are mainly situated in New York, which makes the impact of 9/11 locally impacting and traumatic, Oskar's quest connects the people he encounters not only to himself but also to each other. The individual loss becomes a collective one.

Oskar also must process the idea of inhaling bits of his father when he is at the downtown Manhattan skyline. Like DeLillo's *Falling Man*, Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* engages with the concept of organic (human) shrapnel. Oskar feels that he inhales his father when he is downtown. The fact that he has no tangible body to bury puts him on his quest to uncover the mystery of a key in an envelope with the word "Black" written on it which he found in his father's closet, who died in the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center. The narrative takes place in New York City and Oskar lives in Manhattan's Upper Westside. In Oskar's quest to uncover the "secrets" of the key he is also trying to make sense of the tragedy he experienced and to know his father. In his quest he attempts to meet every person with the last name Black in New York to ask if they know anything about the key. Through

this quest he enables a sense of solidarity by bring unrelated people together to process trauma and create a historicity of 9/11 and the death of his father.

Foer's work makes use of images, color, blank verse, blank pages, and sentences on a single page, overlapping typeface to tell the narrative. These narrative techniques are a part of the actual text but also function as visual metanarrative for the underlying feelings and questions being addressed by the text. While the form is exemplarily of postmodern art, the context makes use of those overtly postmodern techniques in order to focus on feelings, particularly Oskar's feelings and obstacle he faces by feeling too much. *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* emphasizes and confronts the concept of feelings and solidarity, and particularly how to process feeling too much. Raymond Williams's concept of the "structure of feeling" is relevant to address here because the idea of shared perceptions and values helps formulate the cultural moment (23). In the case of 9/11, the shared notion of loss and trauma not only on a local scale but a national and global one helps shape and inform the cultural impact and historicity of 9/11.

In addition to the role of feelings, the text also addresses the issue of burying the dead. For many of the families and friends of the 9/11 victims the lack of physical bodies made the cultural rite of burying the dead impossible. Oskar processes the trauma of not being able to actually bury his farther but only an empty coffin by telling Abby Black about the elephants that remember their dead. Oskar discusses a study being done in the Congo that plays the recordings of elephant calls and other animal sounds back to the elephants. Oskar remarks that what is really fascinating about the study is that after the researcher played the sounds of the dead elephants' family members back to the elephants, they would then approach the speaker. Abby Black responds by stating "I wonder what they were feeling?" and Oskar asks, "what

do you mean?” She replies, “When they heard the calls of their dead, was it with love that they approached the jeep? Or fear? Or anger?” (Foer 96). The voice of the dead elephants resonates with Oskar’s recording of his dead father on the answering machine and his inability to process the feelings he has towards that voice. Abby Black later states, “Didn’t I read somewhere that elephants are the only other animal that bury their dead?” And Oskar replies, “No, [...] you didn’t. They just gather the bones. Only human bury their dead” (96). The only remains Oskar has of his father is that recording.

When Oskar and Thomas—who is Oskar’s newly resurfaced grandfather and who has not yet made his identity known to Oskar but instead is posing as a renter in Oskar’s grandmother’s apartment—exhume his father’s coffin, he places the answering machine with the recorded voice of his father’s final words into it to serve as a place holder for the physical body. The day after Oskar and the “renter” had “dug up Dad’s grave” Oskar decides to continue his search for the identity of the key (285). As Oskar wanders the streets of New York he wonders about the “googolplex people” and he asks, “Who were they? Where were they going? What were they looking for? I wanted to hear their heart beats and I wanted them to hear mine” (288). Oskar and Foer’s narrative seek to explore what it means to be human and that human connection. Matthew Mullins writes that Foer’s “novel proposes alternative conceptions of identity that encourage global community across existing identity boundaries, especially those of nation and culture” (298). Foers’s exploration of solidarity in some ways extends identity beyond human boundaries, but also, as is evident from the elephant story, a sense of solidarity with living things. In Oskar’s quest to find out more about how his father died and the secrets of the mysterious key he increasingly blurs the lines of individual trauma by making his personal trauma

into a collective one. The narrative he constructs begins in Manhattan but takes him to the whole of New York. Foer further expands this narrative of trauma by blurring the lines of history and the ownership of narrative and trauma. *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* then “transcends the newly strengthened boundaries of national identities created in the wake of 9/11, positioning an alternative conception of community” (299).

One way that Foer conceives of an alternative conception of community is through the “Story of the Sixth Borough” (217-223). In the “Story of the Sixth Borough,” the island of the Sixth Borough breaks away from the rest of New York and slowly sinks and eventually disappears. In the story there is a jumper who routinely in public spectacle makes the act of jumping from the Sixth Borough on the edge of Manhattan. The whole of New York came out to witness that performance/spectacle, and “for those few moments that the jumper was in the air, every New Yorker felt capable of flight” (Foer 218). This image resonates with Richard Drew’s “Falling Man” image. In the story of the Sixth Borough, the “jumper” brings the community together. Similarly, “The Falling Man” image creates a sense of solidarity for community and particularly for Oskar who at the end of the novel uses that image to process his individual trauma. Foer’s text blurs the boundaries between the individual and collective identity through this image and through the connection Oskar makes on his quest. Matthew Mullins argues that the “primary way in which the novel blurs these identity lines [the lines between ‘us’ and ‘them’] is by focusing its gaze on the traumatic bombings of Hiroshima and Dresden during World War II rather than focusing on the details of the attacks on the World Trade Center” (299). *Extremely Close and Incredibly Loud* contextualizes 9/11 through the bombings of Hiroshima and Dresden. The trans-historiography of trauma blurs the lines between

culturally specific traumas, which demonstrates Butler's concept of a grievable life. The loss of life and trauma is not a culturally specific phenomenon; it is a human specific phenomenon. By narrating 9/11 through these events Foer is exploring what it means to be human. Additionally, while Mullins's argument provides insight into the historical and collective conceptions of trauma, it is also significant to note how the novel makes use of the "Falling Man" image since it is the culminating point of solidarity in the text.

Foer and Oskar end the novel by recreating the "Falling Man" image in reverse, which serves as a cathartic undoing of the events in Oskar's mind. Oskar looks at all the images in his *Stuff That Happened to Me* book and concludes that "the whole world was in there" and that the images of the "Falling Man" could have been his dad but that "whoever it was, it was somebody" (Foer 325). The reverse flip book of the "Falling Man" image aims to recreate a New York in which September 11, 2001 never happens, and Oskar's father would have not died in the World Trade Center and they "would have been safe" which are the last words of the novel followed by the reverse flip book (326). While this is the way that Oskar processes the trauma of 9/11, it also demonstrates the significance of the "Falling Man" image and the sense of a grievable life that Butler mentions and the connection to solidarity.

A dominating theme in Foer's novel is the ability to cope with death on a larger scale as well as a personal one. Death and the act of processing death are localized in New York, yet the characters draw back into history to process the feelings in the post-9/11 world. Oskar's grandmother, for instance, processes her feelings through narrative by writing Oskar a journal-like memoir of certain points and relationships in her life. These sections are entitled "Feelings" and take on a mixture of prose styles and blank verse. Writing is a key theme in the novel. Oskar's

grandfather stopped speaking after Dresden and utilized tablets and notebooks to write. He says “I started carrying blank books like this one around, which I would fill with all the things I couldn’t say, that’s how it started [...] at the end of the day I would take the book to bed with me and read through the pages of my life” (18). He would refer to set of words to convey what it was he was trying to say, though at many times the words he had were insufficient but they were what he had available.

This concept of words having lost their ability to communicate is interesting for the narration structure of 9/11. Kristiaan Versluys discusses the problem of narrating 9/11 as being linked to the trauma of the events and the inability to find the words to express the magnitude. He states that the title of Foer’s book—*Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*—“signals a signature event that language can barely contain” and that it becomes “something so extreme and incredible that it defies description” (146). He continues by stating that “the disruption in the texture of the text, the strangeness of its tone, and the pyrotechnic visual devices of which it makes use (photographs, blank pages, illegibly dark pages, pages in cipher), serve to underscore the incommunicability of experiences of extremity” (146). While Foer is expressing the incommunicability of experiences of extremity and words seem not to be sufficient for the characters to express themselves, Versluys’s assessment of the use of visuals in Foer’s text seems to be underdeveloped. The visuals (and objects) play a key role in Oskar’s ability to communicate and process the trauma of the death of his father—he finds solace and comfort in the images of the “Falling Man.” Moreover, the grandfather, who cannot communicate orally because of his traumatic experiences, makes use of a writing pad to communicate. The writing pad turns the written word into a semi-visual one since he carries around pre-established words. It seems that Foer is suggesting that written language is not sufficient for narrating the

historiography of 9/11—the visual component is essential because words are simply not enough. It seems in the narrative historiography of 9/11 images are necessary to narrate the events. Considering this idea of limited words in relation to narrative historiography, Foer is challenging how one uses words to narrate history when words cannot even begin to describe the events. Similarly to DeLillo, Foer uses the image of the “Falling Man” as a central concept to his narrative.

Oskar’s narrative undertaking is centered on a pastiche of texts and a collection and documentation of the images, objects and experiences he has encountered. At the end of the narrative, Oskar realizes that his “Stuff That Happened to Me Book” is full and contemplates starting a new volume but reconsiders because he “read that it was the paper that kept the towers burning” and that all that paper functioned as fuel. He concludes that “maybe if we lived in a paperless society, which lots of scientists say well probably live in one day soon, Dad would still be alive” (Foer 325). He decides not to continue the book but reflects on the “Falling Man” image. The image of the “Falling Man” allows him the communicative tools to process and narrate the events when words have failed him. Out of everything in his book he turns to the image of the “Falling Man” to process the events of 9/11. For Oskar this images becomes not only representative for his father’s death but also it becomes representative of the all the loss of life that occurred in the attacks on the World Trade Center. Devin Zuber writes about constructing a memorial on the site of ground zero and that “the dilemma, then, is one of translation: what are all these deceased bodies to represent? Just how should the remains be remembered? (272). Although Zuber is discussing the implications of constructing a physical memorial, the questions he poses are relevant when discussing the concept of trauma and solidarity. The “Falling Man” image for Oskar in particular becomes the

representation and the remembrance of the lives lost in the events of 9/11. The “Falling Man” image translates those feelings of loss and trauma for Oskar. Foer creates a sense of solidarity and remembrance through the images of “The Falling Man.”

The intersection Foer presents between written text and a person’s own historiography. Oskar encounters the biographical index cards at his neighbor, Mr. Black’s apartment. Mr. Black has kept index cards, with the person’s name and one word to describe that person, for every person he has interviewed, read about, foot noted, etc. He states, “I write the name of the person and a one-word biography!” Oskar responds by asking “Just one word?” and Mr. Black states “Everyone gets boiled down to one word!” (Foer 157). The concept of the one word biography is an interesting investigation into the limits of written text and particularly of memorials. Foer seems to be commentating on the short obituaries found in the post 9/11 news cycle. In DeLillo’s *Falling Man*, Lianne was similarly questioning the limited justice text could provide about a person’s life.

The larger questions of human connectivity and the concept of a grievable life are evident in Foer’s work. The narrative begins by questioning the Earth’s capacity to contain the dead, and Oskar states that “isn’t it so weird how the number of dead people is increasing even though the earth stays the same size, so that one day there isn’t going to be room to bury anyone anymore?” (3). The concept that Foer and Oskar point to aligns with the postmodern view of history. By framing this view of the dead-of the past-within the postmodern view of history. Linda Hutcheon writes, in *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, that narrating history “is less the problem of how to narrate time than an issue of the nature and status of our information about the past that makes postmodern history, theory and art share certain concerns.” (90).

Hutcheon's concept helps illuminate the way these post-9/11 texts seek to narrative 9/11's historicity. Some critics argue that 9/11 is reluctant to be temporarily fixed, which may serve as a negative complication to its historicity. However, by viewing the narrative responses to 9/11 within Hutcheon's framework the aspect of time no longer seems to be that prevalent of an issue, but rather the significance is on the shared interpretation of meaning. The 9/11 narratives interrogate the nature and status of information about the events of 9/11 and their aftermath.

Hutcheon then continues to discuss her notion of historical metafiction as having a quality of questioning history that addresses not just the how but the what that is provided by narrative historicity and the documentation of history. While Oskar's remarks seem simple and childlike, Foer is addressing the underlying issues of narrating the historicity of 9/11 through the concept of buried dead and the past. Foer continues this idea by presenting history and current time as building upon each other to form a continuum and recognizing the weight of history upon the narrative recollection of 9/11. Oskar/Foer depict this concept with regards to the image of the skyscraper:

So what about skyscrapers for dead people that were built down? They could be underneath the skyscrapers for living people that are built up. You could bury people one hundred floors down, a whole dead world could be underneath the living one. (Foer 3)

The idea of the dead world existing under the living one resonates with the concept of ground zero. Oskar, like many other families of victims, must process the fact that his father is dead, yet he has no proof because there was no body—only an empty coffin to bury. Oskar, along with his grandfather, work out a plan to dig up his father's grave

and upon unearthing it he is able to accept that his father is dead. It is then that Oskar turns to the image(s) of the “Falling Man” in order to accept that truth.

Oskar seeks to dig up his father’s empty coffin because it is the only way he can receive some sense of closure—he needs to stop “inventing” ways his father died because there are “so many different ways to die” and Oskar just needed to know “which was his” (Foer 257). Foer is addressing the common feelings of loss and compassion in the aftermath of 9/11—the families and friends of the victims, as well as those people who have no direct connection to 9/11 seek to make sense of the different ways to die, which addresses the controversial question, to jump or to burn? Oskar/Foer asks this question by addressing the concept of pain—of feeling. Foer writes:

Which would I choose? Would I jump or would I burn? I guess I would jump, because then I wouldn’t have to feel pain. On the other hand, maybe I would burn, because then I’d at least have a chance to somehow escape, and even if I couldn’t, feeling pain is still better than not feeling, isn’t it? (245)

Oskar/Foer’s discussion here address the concept of feelings on several levels—the first is the aspect of actual physical pain and eventual death, but the additional layer is the aspect of grieving, which echoes the sense of pain felt not only locally but also nationally, and to an extent globally because the loss of human life should create a sense of pain. David Wyatt writes that 9/11 is marked by “a return to feeling, an upwelling of unironized emotion that writing has attempted to honor, represent, and contain” and that the struggle is to “find a form in which hurts can not only be felt, but also shared” (140). The idea of a shared form of hurt is rooted in the concept of shared spaces of mourning.

This concept of a space or forum of shared hurt takes shape, for Oskar in the form of a “Reservoir of Tears.” In Oskar’s discussion of the concept of the “Reservoir of Tears,” Foer provides an example of the interconnectivity of people affected by the tragedy of 9/11 but also the shared space of grievable loss that has taken shape locally in New York. Oskar states that the night he buried his father he “invented a special drain that would be underneath every pillow in New York, and would connect to the reservoir” and the tears of the people of New York would “all go to the same place and in the morning the weatherman could report if the water level of the “Reservoir of Tears” had gone up or down, and you could know if New York was in heavy boots;” and when terrible things happened “an extremely loud siren would go off, telling everyone to get to Central Park to put sand bags around the reservoir” (Foer 38).

The imagery of the “Reservoir of Tears” provides a connection between each person in New York—all of the tears go to the same place. While the immediate trauma is local, Foer’s trans-historicity engages the idea of a global community through the notion of solidarity in that “Foer is not as concerned with whether or not we were once a global community, as he is with whether or not we can become a global community” and the novel “celebrates difference while emphasizing community” (Mullins 322). The concept of the “Reservoir of Tears” that Oskar invents echoes Butler’s notion of a grievable life. Levins-Morales writes “recovery from trauma requires creating and telling another story about the experience of violence and the nature of the participants, a story powerful enough to restore a sense of our own humanity to the abused” (15). The image of the “Falling Man” for Oskar restores his own sense of humanity as well as the humanity of his father. It is through this image that he is not only able to process trauma and grieve but also to engage Butler’s concept of a grievable life.

Like DeLillo's concept of organic shrapnel, Foer also addresses the concept of human organic matter being imbedded into the air of lower Manhattan. Foer juxtaposes the aspect of memory to the concept of organic shrapnel by placing Oskar in opposition with his mother on how he should view the space of lower Manhattan as containing his father's memory. The conversation goes:

Mom said, "His spirit is there," and that made me really angry. I told her, "Dad didn't have a spirit! He had cells!" "His memory is there." "His memory is here," I said pointing to my head. "Dad had a spirit," she said, like she was rewinding a bit of our conversation. I told her, "He had cells, and now they're on rooftops, and in the river, and in the lungs of millions of people around New York, who breathe him every time they speak!" (Foer 169)

Oskar's reaction challenges the idea that his father's memory is occupied in a physical space because since there is no body, that space has to be ephemeral and has to be internalized. Oskar refuses to accept the idea of his father's spirit because he is still processing the loss and absence of his father's physical body. In the post-9/11 climate many people experienced similar frustrations. The image of the "Falling Man" functions for Oskar as a metahistorical romance for his father's own final historiography. Even though he has no way of knowing what happened to his father, the image of the "Falling Man" is someone with who he can engage in a sense of solidarity with and be able to grieve the loss of life. The image of the "Falling Man" in Foer's text serves to represent a collective loss of life. This passage is comparable to DeLillo's similar description of organic shrapnel in order to demonstrate the imbedded marks the attacks left upon the collective society. DeLillo writes of the suicide bombers' attacks an example of human shrapnel: "a student is sitting in a café.

She survives the attack. Then months later, they find these little, like, pellets of flesh, human flesh that got driven into the skin. They call it organic shrapnel” (16). The imprint of tragedy and trauma resonates with the concept of the shadowed towers in which only fragments remain.

Chapter Four

Conclusion: Shift towards Human Compassion in 9/11 Fiction

The 9/11 narrative culture and representation is situated in the visual. Images are at the core of the 9/11 narratives discussed in this dissertation. The momentum of each narrative is driven by the visual. Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* imbeds the visual into the text. The significance of the visual in 9/11 narrations is made explicit in his text through the placement of the falling man performance artist images. The images also echoes Richard Drew's *Falling Man*. Foer in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* very explicitly makes use of Drew's image as a way for Oskar to bury his father. The historicity of 9/11 can be narrated through the visual.

The narratives formulated about the attacks and particularly of the WTC have become so heavily ingrained in collective memory and consciousness that it is necessary to consider the significant role the visual rhetoric of 9/11 has played in the formulation of the narrative historiography. Also, the visual elements, along with the narratives mentioned in this dissertation, enable Elias's concept of a metahistorical romance. The WTC as once a symbol of Empire has now becomes in the post 9/11 historicity a monument and marker of lost human life. As Mary Dudziak avers, in the 9/11 historicity "the presence of change, the nature of change, of a historical moment so near may be, for this generation, impossible to measure" however through the metahistorical romances and narrations of the events "one thing, at least is new and enduring" which is "the perpetual creation—that is, the construction and reconstruction—of memories of September 11" (214).

This reconstruction and perpetual creation of the historiography of 9/11 may be problematic. The 9/11 historiography is still being formed, however, its role in public memory and narrative take on a role of solidarity because human suffering,

pain, and compassion are all necessary to engage in the issue of a grievable life. Judith Butler states that “the final moments of the lost lives in the World Trade Center are compelling and important stories” and that the “fascinate, and they produce and intense identification by arousing feelings of fear and sorrow” (38). Butler then considers what humanizing effects these stories have because they “stage the scene and provide the narrative means by which “the human” in it grievability is established” (38). The narrative provides a connection to the human.

As stated in the first chapter of this dissertation, 9/11 is just an example of the shift in post-postmodernism. The larger theoretical shift explores what it means to be human. For example, Wallace’s writing reflects on the idea that post-postmodernism’s responsibility is to write fiction that is human, in that it reflects on what it means to live and be human. Robert McLaughlin recognizes the shift by stating that the post-postmodern writers are less focused on the postmodern emphasis of “self-conscious wordplay and the violation of narrative conventions” but rather more concerned with “representing the world we all more or less share” (67). However in “presenting that world” post-postmodern fiction must “show that it’s a world that we know through language and layers of representation” and that “language, narrative, and the process of representation are the only means we have to experience and know the world, ourselves, and our possibilities of being human” (67).

Away-postmodern fiction seeks to move away from the overly cynical aspects of postmodern jest and seeks to embrace and explore the possibilities of being human. Away-postmodernism polemical development is even further manifested by recreating and readdressing narrative and metahistorical romances out of the popular culture references. The shifting paradigm and the development of post-postmodernism makes use of popular culture not just comment on the popular but rather to entice the

reader to consider the ramifications of existing in a world so wrought with cynicism that it neglects to recognize sincerity as sincerity but rather dismisses it as a didactic skill in furthering the ironic ridicule. Wallace states that a “big part of real art-fiction’s job is to aggravate this sense of entrapment and loneliness and death in people, to move people to countenance it, since any possible human redemption requires us first to face what’s dreadful, what we want to deny”(McCaffery 136). The 9/11 narratives force the reader/viewers to consider what is dreadful. 9/11 has spurred a sense of the inability to communicate, however DeLillo and Foer among many others have challenged that taboo of writing about 9/11 since in many ways its historicity is still being formulated. But perhaps this is how the current postmodern historicity of 9/11 becomes historicized. It seems that the only possible narrative history of 9/11 takes shape in the metahistorical romance because writers, artists and the general public are reinterpreting events as they occur, which might be partly due to the available media and popular culture tools to present or manipulate information.

There is a shift in the symbolic reality of representing the 9/11 attacks. The revisionist historiographies may be seen as creating obstacles against narrative and human solidarity because there is a distancing from the events and from the historical continuity of the loss of human life. However, by creating parallel universes and revisionist historiographies, popular culture demonstrates the significance of 9/11 narratives and metahistorical romances to question and explore what it means to be human today and how 9/11 narratives can be a vehicle to engage in those questions. The concept of away-postmodern fiction and narratives is not limited to 9/11 historiography and metahistorical romances but rather demonstrates a paradigm shift that seeks to question ideas of human solidarity, compassion and the criterion in which a human life is grievable.

The 9/11 narratives discussed in this dissertation as a part of the away-postmodern paradigm shift towards solidarity. The away-postmodern has been responding to the apolitical aspects formulated through modernism. The World Trade Center as a symbol of American capitalistic power demonstrates that apolitical ideology. In the away-postmodern, both in the literary and through similar movements in other disciplines, seems to be pushing that apolitical ideology in order to recognize that each individual human life is connected to every other life on the planet. There is a movement towards solidarity in the sense that each individual is a part of a global community that binds people by reflecting on the notion of being human. In art and literature, the question of what does it mean to be human becomes more pressing. Works like DeLillo's *Falling Man* and Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* ask the question not only of narrative and history, but also the function of literature and art, which according to Wallace is to explore what it means to be human.

The future of away-postmodern literature, and even thought seems to want to ask how can we explore what it means to be human. One such way is to make use of discourses that are group specific and demonstrate how those ideas translate to a larger global community. For example, Levins-Morales's concept of solidarity, which is impart the impetus for this dissertation, is situated in a particular feminist and ethnic discourse but by placing that idea in conversation with these post-9/11 and away-postmodern narratives. What the dissertation has gone on to show is that solidarity and exploring what it means to be human are not localized phenomena, but rather, that they translate to a larger global community in which the driving force of connectivity is being human.

Paul Gilroy's *Darker Than Blue: On the Moral Economies of Black Atlantic Culture* helps demonstrate the shift in this away-postmodern moment as not being

culturally specific but rather as being human specific. Although he comes to this conclusion through a culturally specific discussion, the underlying root of his comment explores the question of what it means to be human on a level of global and human solidarity. Gilroy writes that “we can begin to inquire into the possibility of moving beyond and beneath the old colonial dramaturgy into a more forward-looking and assertively cosmopolitan stance that requires a new history of the postcolonial present bolstered by some equally novel ways of comprehending and figuring our vulnerable humanity” (175). This idea of vulnerable humanity is echoed through Wallace’s statement “you are loved” and the graffiti on the wall “you are alive.” Exploring what it means to be human today demonstrates that by being alive “you” are explicitly connected to other human beings and that through a recognition of that solidarity “you” are able to feel a sense of connectivity, of love. The away-postmodern engages the ability to feel connectivity and to feel love by demonstrating the need for exploring the human, for engaging in a sense of solidarity and for emphasizing the need for feelings of compassion.

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