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Beyond "Infinite Jest": Post-Postmodern Solidarity in 9/11 Narratives

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BEYOND “INFINITE JEST”: POST-POSTMODERN SOLIDARITY IN 9/11 NARRATIVES

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BEYOND “INFINITE JEST”: POST-POSTMODERN SOLIDARITY IN 9/11 NARRATIVES

By

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THESIS

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ABSTRACT

My thesis interrogates the postmodern view of popular culture as being banal and questions Theodore Adorno's view of postmodern consumer culture as ultimately anti-human(istic). My re-reading of postmodern popular culture finds that there is potential for meaningful human interaction through popular culture. My re-reading asserts that popular culture is capable of being a vehicle for solidarity. In my analysis I locate a postmodern paradigm shift in which human solidarity becomes a necessary consideration and focus of postmodern narratives and art forms. I term this shift "post-postmodernism" which is marked by a focus on solidarity.¹ While the shift to the post-postmodern begun in pre-9/11 context, the post-9/11 context makes the shift particularly evident. The focus of this project lies in the role of human solidarity in post-9/11 narratives and how those narratives subscribe theoretically to the post-postmodern paradigm.

The texts I am working with are the fictional novel *Falling Man* by Don DeLillo, the fictional novel *Incredibly Loud and Extremely Close* by Jonathan Safran Foer, the graphic narrative and memoir *In the Shadow of No Towers* by Art Spiegelman, and the 9/11 Digital Archive. While there are many other 9/11 narratives that also explore what it means to be human, I choose these particular texts because of their exploration of human solidarity through the falling man image. In my discussion of the Digital Archive I focus the discussion on five images that illustrate a pastiche of official documented history and narrative with artistic reinterpretation of that history and narrative of the event(s) of 9/11, which again has a particular emphasis on the

¹ The solidarity I aim to reference in this project focuses on a sense of solidarity that is not group specific, but rather focused on the human community as a whole. There are various forms of solidarity – from Marxist to feminist solidarity, but the way I view and use solidarity in this project lends itself to a conception that solidarity is not necessarily group specific, but human specific.

World Trade Center. While there is a plethora of 9/11 texts and narratives that would be excellent examples to include, I choose these particular texts because of their emphasis on the visual rhetoric of 9/11. The impetus for my project is a quote by David Foster Wallace: “I just think that fiction that isn’t exploring what it means to be human today isn’t good art” (McCaffery 131). My project demonstrates how these texts utilize pop-culture, and particularly visual culture as a way to initiate a sense of compassion and human solidarity in their characters and readers. My thesis begins by considering the way popular culture functions in postmodern society and how it can create a sense of solidarity. The project focuses on 9/11 narratives and explores how the narration of the event is indicative of a post-postmodern literary/narrative shift because there is a need to embrace solidarity and cope with the “organic [human] shrapnel” (DeLillo 16) of the event(s). My aim in this project is to demonstrate a shift in American postmodern literature and show how these authors embrace a sense of solidarity by addressing the concept of what it means to be human today to their readers and how they use the postmodern signs of popular culture as a vehicle for that interrogation, which ultimately reinforces the human connection behind the postmodern American culture.

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INTRODUCTION: THE POST-POSTMODERN PARADIGM: REVISITING SOLIDAIRTY
WITH WHOM AND FOR WHAT?

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 regards to popular culture. This concept seems to produce a paradox. However, in my interrogation I demonstrate 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 my discussion in the context of Wallace’s claims, I demonstrate the emergence of a postmodern culture that embraces a sense of solidarity with other humans and moves beyond focusing on the alienation of the postmodern world, albeit that aspect is a significant frame work to view postmodern culture and will be addressed. The focus of my project is to investigate literature and 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 I am 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.

My conception of solidarity is based in 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 authors², the concept of solidarity she establishes aligns with the emphasis on the human that Wallace suggests and that I believe is present in the works analyzed in this project. Aurora Levins-Morales writes in *Medicine Stories: History, Culture and the Politics of Integrity* that “[s]olidarity is not a matter of altruism” but rather it comes “[f]rom 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-Morales³ and Lauren Berlant⁴ in a critical conversation with each other does not seem like a likely choice. However, I choose these two theorists in particular for my 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

² There is a dominating association in postmodernism literature, especially earlier postmodern literature, to be associated with white, middle class America. For example, in Pynchon’s *The Crying of Lot 49*, Oedpia Maas is first introduced to readers by having just “come home from a Tupperware party whose hostess had put perhaps too much kirsch in the fondue to find that she, Oedpia, had been named executor, or she supposed executrix, of the estate of one Pierce Inverarity” (1). The Tupperware party is indicative of postmodern consumer culture but there is nonetheless a certain racial and class associated connotation with the concept of the Tupperware party. Tupperware parties are just about as Middle America as it gets. My point here is to demonstrate that some of the more characteristically postmodern literature does have a particular white, male, Middle America association and presence. By bringing in different theoretical lenses to examine the postmodern literature of Middle America, I hope to complicate not only readings of the texts but also the paradigms associated with postmodern literature.

³ Aurora Levins-Morales is associated with and writes about identity politics, and particularly feminist, ethnic, and multi-identity theoretical concepts.

⁴ Lauren Berlant is associated with popular culture, queer theory, and national identity, affect theory and writes on the concept of the structure of feelings.

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 goal(s) are to demonstrate the significance of solidarity and addressing 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 story telling. The literary texts I focus on are: *Falling Man* by Don DeLillo, *Incredibly Loud and Extremely Close* by Jonathan Safran Foer, *In the Shadow of No Towers* by Art Spiegelman, and the 9/11 digital archive. The 9/11 digital archive project began as an effort to “record and preserve the record of 9/11.” The project was funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and organized by the American Social History Project at the City University of New York Graduate Center and the Center for History and New Media at George Mason University. The archive, as of 2003, was acquisitioned by the Library of Congress into the permanent collection and also marked the Library’s largest digital collection and continues to still grow today. The archive’s goals and methodology made it a relevant narrative addition to the texts in my project. These texts are not only examples of postmodern literature that engage

with popular culture, but are examples of postmodern art that engages quite explicitly with the question(s) of human connectivity, or solidarity.

The view of solidarity I am 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 and the concept of ‘Solidarnosc’ 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 and further my conception of the role of human in these post-9/11 narratives. The spirit of cosmopolitanism makes the emphasis on the human much more theoretically 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, as Marshal McLuhan would claim. Although Marshal McLuhan’s concepts are more readily applicable to electronic interaction and media, the concept of connectivity, communication and accountability is central to cosmopolitan thought.

McLuhan’s concept of the global village becomes even more prevalent when considering the 9/11 digital archive. Technology is one method in which the concept of being a global village, or global tribe as Appiah suggests creates a sense of community and connectivity.

Narratives such as DeLillo's *Falling Man*, Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, and Spiegelman's *In the Shadow of No Towers*, similarly ask these 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 my 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. While there are many other political and social theorists who I could have utilized to demonstrate the conjecture of cosmopolitanism, Benhabib's discussion is particularly pertinent because she points to the complicated intersections of cosmopolitan ideologies. In *Another Cosmopolitanism*, "The Philosophical Foundation of Cosmopolitan Norms," 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 key words of our time” (17).

Benhabib’s discussion then 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 (Jeremy Waldon)” (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.⁵

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 (Jürgen Habermas, David Held, and James Bohman)” (18) and Benhabib claims that her project mostly aligns with the third group. My project in suggesting a paradigm shift in postmodern frames for analyzing literature and culture – the shift to the post-postmodern - attempts to demonstrate the intersection between these three different sub-camps of cosmopolitan thought and theory. Since the term cosmopolitanism has become prevalent in

⁵ The texts I am looking at in this project challenge Adorno’s views of popular culture because they use popular culture as a way to engage in solidarity and action rather than conformist passivity.

contemporary thought and discourse as Benhabib suggest, it is important to demonstrate how my project seeks to interject itself into this debate about cosmopolitanism. However, since the focus of my project is on the literary rather than political constructions, the interjection into the cosmopolitanism debate is demonstrated through narrative.⁶ 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 project – DeLillo, Foer, and Spiegelman – 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 politically and culturally the question of solidarity has been 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 my project because of the way it functions in particular texts I am analyzing – DeLillo’s *Falling Man*, Foer’s *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, Spiegelman’s *In the Shadow of No Towers*, and the 9/11 Digital Archive.

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. For example, the role of comic, or “comix” as Art

⁶ Though that is not to say that literature is not political and that the two fields are not interconnected because by creating a correlation between the literary and the political through the cosmopolitan discourse, the political aspects become incredibly significant for the literary, and the literary becomes significant in debating the political, especially when discussing a topic as politically charged as 9/11.

Spiegelman⁷ states, is significant for Art Spiegelman and other writers such as Michael Chabon⁸ because for them the comic form enables a processing of trauma and engages in a kind of connectivity that is edifyingly “healing.”⁹ The concept of a narrative enabling a sense of “healing” is not limited to the comic form, but rather applicable to the act of writing/creating as a way to process trauma and in that sense each of the narratives discussed in this project engages in a collective “healing” through the use of narrative/story. Aurora Levins-Morales’s discussion of healing can help demonstrate what Spiegelman and Chabon, as well as 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”

⁷ Art Spiegelman, author of *Maus I and II*, revisits his task of being a historian in his 9/11 text - *In the Shadow of No Towers*. The historical continuity and narrative task of retelling of his father’s survivor story of the Holocaust translates into his narration of 9/11. In both texts, Spiegelman struggles with the burden of being a historian and narrating others’ stories (although his own story also becomes a part of the narration). Spiegelman’s struggles as narrator of history and with his role as historian can be relevantly considered not only for his work on 9/11, but also for the theoretical struggles of narrating history and exploring the concept of human solidarity within a postmodern and post-9/11 context. Arguably, one could say that the other authors in this project and the 9/11 narratives struggle similarly with the responsibility of narrating history. While this is not necessarily the point of this project in particular, I think it is worth considering along side the discussion of Lauren Berlant’s ideas of compassion. In terms of multi-layered and multi-generational narratives, the politics of emotion and the emphasis of solidarity can be applicable when considering a large historical context. Solidarity and theory of affect is not necessarily a new concept, but rather there is a reemergence of it within the postmodern theoretical engagement.

⁸ Michael Chabon, author of *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* discusses the role of the comic form in relation to history, as a tool for processing trauma, and as an art form. Moreover, in *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*, Chabon uses the setting of NYC and World War II, particularly the Holocaust to engage political and theoretical questions about history and the role of comix as art.

⁹ While I understand that this idea is incredibly complex, these two authors/artists create connections between the creation of comics and the ability for comics to enable a sense of “healing.” The concept of healing is not particular to the comic form but for these two authors, the use and function of the comic form acts as a way to process and heal from traumas. Additionally, this concept of healing is incredibly individual, however, as Levins-Morales points out, the act of healing occurs both individually and collectively. The post-postmodern and post-9/11 narratives I am discussing in this project engage in her sense of healing as a both an individual and community activity.

(16). While Levins-Morales discussion is situated on the trauma of the abuse, her idea of healing is applicable to these post-9/11 texts as well because they narrate and respond to the “community” response to trauma and serve as a form of healing. For example, Richard Drew’s “Falling Man” image in Foer’s *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* has served as a “healing” narrative for narrator nine-year-old Oskar. Similarly, according to *The Falling Man* documentary film that image invoked similar individual and community healing reactions. Healing of trauma in these post-9/11 narratives as I am discussing it here relates back to the concept of solidarity - the healing comes from exploring what it means to be human.

The project’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. The project questions the postmodern theoretical framework’s ability to encapsulate postmodern solidarity and whether the shift also requires a movement beyond postmodernism, post-postmodernism. The term post-postmodernism is used because the prevalence of solidarity and the search for solidarity requires a move beyond current postmodern ideology in regards 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 a plethora of both American nationalism and sentimentality, there is also a global anti-American movement, and some theorists will argue that 9/11 was the day that

changed everything. The point of this project is not to analyze the event of 9/11 or the political and media responses to the event and its aftermath. The project's 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.

The post-postmodern theoretical framework, however, extends further back than the event of 9/11. The event of 9/11 is an example and a part of a larger narrative movement towards solidarity that engages with the concepts Wallace suggests. For example, Wallace's own work engages with these ideas. The last words of the short-story "Westward The Course of Empire Takes Its Way" in *Girl with Curious Hair* are "you are loved" (Wallace 373).¹⁰ Though one could argue that the post-9/11 climate marks a significant shift and that all narratives are now post-9/11 and therefore creates an additional shift. But, for the context of this project, the post-9/11 narrative collective is a subdivision of the large post-postmodern literary narratives. The theoretical theme of a re-emerging solidarity extends back to a pre-9/11 context and can be viewed theoretically as not necessarily situated in the event or culturally specific but as a larger paradigm shift. However, the global and political impact created by the attacks on the World Trade Center shook the global community thus in many ways making the symbolic aftermath of 9/11 historically and politically poignant.

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. I am using Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's

¹⁰ The collection was first published in 1989, which is well before September 11, 2001 so the concept of solidarity in fiction and narratives is not a 9/11 specific response but a re-emergence in a larger post-postmodern movement that seriously focuses on the concept of exploring what it means to be human. 9/11 narratives are one example of this post-postmodern shift towards solidarity. However, the prevalence of solidarity in narratives seems to have become more prominent and evident in the post-9/11 context.

ideas in *Empire* to consider the concept of Empire as it applies to narratives and that how in the post-postmodern shift in narrative reformulates the dominant narrative structures of history and narrative. 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 in then 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 is discussing power structures and systems of globalization, the concept of destabilizing Empire is significant to my theory of post-postmodern solidarity and narrative because the “new cartography” seeks to challenge the power structure of Empire to embrace a multinational sense of solidarity. While my focus is on narratives, I felt 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. This 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 my discussion of 9/11 narratives because each of the narratives because not only do they 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" (16) covering the space of Lower Manhattan in order to express a "new cartography" that literary and physically demonstrates the exploration of human connectivity. 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" (325) to fill all the empty coffins. Spiegelman's *In the Shadow of No Towers* contemplates the perception of being a "rooted and rootless cosmopolitan" (panel 4) and having a "shared reality" (panel 6). And the images from the 9/11 Digital Archive reinvent the historicity of the World Trade Center creating a "new cartography" not only of the site itself but also of its place in public memory.

The challenges towards the concept of Empire put forth in Hardt and Negri's text, along with my formulation of post-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). Jameson points to the disconnect between learned history and lived history. The struggles in *Empire* and my interpretation of post-postmodern seek to reestablish that organic connection with history in the form of human solidarity. The shift in the post-postmodern narratives discussed in this project 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.

My theoretical conception of post-postmodernism seems to be a multidisciplinary shift, however, for this project the post-postmodern interject focuses on 9/11 narratives in order to demonstrate the literary and narrative shift towards exploring what it means to be human.¹¹ The aim of this project 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.

¹¹ While my project is focused mainly on the ways post 9/11 narratives embrace a sense of solidarity it is also important to recognize that politically and in terms of globalization and empire that there many instances where this sense of solidarity is not the case. For example, in the United States in the post 9/11 climate there was a sense of anti-Arab and anti- Arab American suspicion, which created a huge sense of alienation and blame for certain groups in the US and abroad, which is anti-solidarity. The event of 9/11 itself is not a solidarity creating vehicle but rather the globalized sense of loss of life and trauma has created a narrative shift in some aspects of postmodern literature, culture and narrative that questions ideas of compassion, solidarity and grievable lives. The narratives in this project consider the issue of loss of human life. 9/11 becomes then a vehicle for exploring the question of what it means to be human today.

PART I. DON 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 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 become both an act of solidarity by bring 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 do 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 I discuss 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 from the postmodern, to what I am calling the post-postmodern. In this post-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 post-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 will help situate the term I am framing - the post-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 post-postmodern. By being in the space of New York City's Financial District and a skyscraper, the WTC on the one hand embraces a global sense of community but it also inhabits a particular kind of white (male) American narrative. What I mean 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 succumb 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.¹² 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 post-postmodern discourse seeks to challenge this narrative hierarchy. The paradigm shift in the post-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 post-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

¹² Though it is also important to note that in the aftermath of 9/11 there was a large amount of anti-American solidarity that made use of the attacks and the symbol of the WTC as a means to communicate that anti-American sense of solidarity.

“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 a post-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 project, which can be viewed as being metahistorical romances and memoirs-like text 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" (Elias 163). The metahistorical romance is an apt paradigm to consider the work DeLillo is undertaking in 9/11, however, the added layer of post-postmodern solidarity complicates both the contemporary debate(s) 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 “[t]he 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 my 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 artist¹³ 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

¹³ I would like to point to the parallels between the Falling Man performance artist's work in DeLillo's novel and the performance artist/tight ropewalker Philippe Petit in the documentary film *Man on Wire*. In both performers there is a sense of re-appropriating public space to create a sense of heist over the space, which creates a sense of shock. What makes the performance artist in DeLillo's work so shocking is that his performance echoes the tragedy of the jumpers from the WTC on 9/11 so there is a certain sense of atrocity in his recreations and performances.

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 her 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 regards to the images of the jumpers becomes - to jump or to burn?¹⁴

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

¹⁴ This becomes a more pressing question in Foer’s narrative *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, in which nine year Oskar contemplates whether his father burned or jumped and which action he would take if placed in the same situation. The documentary film *Falling Man*, the question of whether to jump or to burn was an underlying question and exploration. There was mix of reactions from different family members and friends of the possibly victim(s) in question. Additionally, Richard Drew’s controversial photo created a reality for the where the options were either to jump or to burn, and the issue of jumping became a moral and ethical concern because the public had to question is it and was it noble to jump? While I am not personally offering an opinion on the moralities of either decision, I am however pointing out that the concept of the jumpers and voyeuristically witnessing the loss and last minutes of human life, as Susan Sontag would suggest, has created a national and global sense of unrest. There is a reality of the loss of human life, which makes the question of whether to jump or to burn so personal and creates an organic sense of solidarity between the viewers and witnesses and the victims.

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 “[N]arrative 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 post-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 a post-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 post-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 post-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 audience(s) 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 a post-

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" (DeLillo 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" (DeLillo 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 post-postmodern paradigm, especially in regards to his other postmodern works, I would like to engage Emily Apter's ideas about paranoid oneworldness and how it pertains to a psychogeographical 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 a post-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 post-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 loss¹⁵. 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:

¹⁵ Alissa Torres’s *American Widow* also addresses the issue of the commodification of loss. For example, the protagonist is faced with concept of receiving compensation for the loss of her husband, his “economic value” and her “pain and suffering” (132) in the 9/11 attacks are to be compensated monetarily by the government. Torres’s discussion correlates to Lianne’s need to find out more about the victims in 9/11 than the information provided in the obituaries. The commodity culture of 9/11 is addressed by these narratives and complicated by the character interactions, however discussing the commodification of 9/11 both in economic and political terms is beyond the scope of this project.

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” (Apter 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 event(s).

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 places 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.¹⁶ 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

¹⁶ This resonates with Freud's concept of mourning and melancholia. The impact of 9/11 culturally, nationally and for the characters in these 9/11 texts seems to be a form of melancholia rather than mourning. However the aspect of solidarity with the loss of human life seems to help transform the melancholia into mourning.

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” (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.

PART II. JONATHAN SAFRA FOER'S EXTREMELY LOUD AND INCREDIBLY CLOSE

Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* central theme 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 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 grieveable 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. 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 discussing 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 father 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" (Foer 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" (285) Oskar decides to continue his search for the identity of the key.¹⁷ 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" (Foer 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). Foer'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

¹⁷ There are some intertextual parallels to further the 9/11 and WWII connections in Foer's text. Specially, there is an intertextual postmodern commentary in Foer's Oskar Schell to Gunter Grass's Oskar Matzerath in *The Tin Drum*. As Grass's Oskar carries and keeps precious tin drum, Foer's Oskar similarly keeps the key, the answering machine and his "Stuff that Happened To Me" notebook which are all collectively a precious trinity he creates about the same person and the same event.

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” (Miller 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 Miller 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 Miller'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" (326) which are the last words of the novel followed by the reverse flip book. 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 grieveable 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" (Foer 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.” 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” (Versluys 2009, 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.¹⁸ 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 we’ll 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 image 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

¹⁸ There are and have been many parallels made between 9/11 and the Holocaust and I am not saying that these parallels should or should not be made, but merely wanting to point to the fact that they are being made and some writers/artists – Spiegelman and Foer for example – make the connections to narrate and process these new traumas of 9/11. The historical continuity seems to be relevant and the events of 9/11 for these writers and artists only reaffirm the need to remember or rememory the events of holocaust. Theodor Adorno claimed that poetry after Auschwitz was barbaric, but in the post 9/11 aftermaths, many people turned to poetry – Spiegelman references a W.H. Auden poem in particular at the end of *In the Shadow of No Towers*. While this project does not address post-9/11 poetry, it is worth mentioning in order to mention the historical and conscious parallax created with 9/11 art and narration.

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 commenting 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 “[i]sn’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?” (Foer 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:¹⁹

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

¹⁹ I would like to note that the WTC attacks have become the most prevalent symbol for the events of 9/11. In narratives and in representations both in actual news coverage and in artistic narrative representation, the WTC becomes the synonymous symbol with 9/11 even though there were two other places attacked. I think this is significant in the kind of historicity being presented about 9/11 - it is localized; yet it becomes indicative for the entire event and representational across the globe. Also, the towers themselves are the embodiment of global capitalism and a certain sense of American arrogance. Discussing this further is beyond the scope of this project, but I wanted to mention the visual representation and symbolism of the WTC and its prevalence in the concept of Empire that Hardt and Negri seek to challenge.

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. I would like to compare this passage 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.

PART III. ART SPIEGELMAN'S IN THE SHADOW OF NO TOWERS

The visual aspect of 9/11 documentation is incredibly significant for its narration and historiography. This has already been demonstrated in discussing the significance of the “Falling Man” image in DeLillo’s *Falling Man* and Foer’s *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. The visual representation of 9/11 in comics further adds to the visual rhetoric and literary narratives of the event. I decided to focus on Spiegelman’s *In the Shadow of No Towers* because within the text he both narrates 9/11 and theorizes about the use of the comic form and its ability to engage in solidarity. Also Spiegelman is a white, male American author, which places him within the cultural framework of the dominating factors of postmodern discourse. However, Spiegelman and Foer are Jewish²⁰ writer that make issues related to being Jewish at the forefront of their writing. However, their relationship to postmodernism still aligns with the dominating white, male American discourse despite the exploration of issues that are culturally specific to the Jewish American experience. Their cultural interjections as part of the white, male American component of postmodern discourse aligns with my earlier discussion of post-postmodern solidarity not being gender or ethnically specific but rather as a discourse that engages in a universal aspect of solidarity.

Additionally, other texts postmodern texts that are outside the white male dichotomy of postmodern discourse like Alissa Torres’s *American Widow* engage in aspects of solidarity.

Torres’s text makes use of Carol Gilligan’s idea of using narrative and story telling as a way to

²⁰I am referencing the Jewish cultural aspect here to illustrate my point of tension in postmodern discourse. I recognize that there is an entire body of theory that discusses Jewish studies and Jewish American authors and those issues but that is not the focus of this project. However since two of the authors discussed in the project are Jewish and do write about pertinent Jewish American culture, and particularly make connections between 9/11 and the Holocaust, I felt that it was important to make a note towards the issue.

create connections. Solidarity with other people is established through the act of story telling. In Torres's narrative, she processes the trauma of losing her husband in the 9/11 attacks. While Gilligan and Levin-Morales's ideas of narrative as "remedios" tends to be a feminist concept and while Alissa Torres certainly engages in those ideas and utilizes the comic and visual form to tell her story, I use Spiegelman along with DeLillo and Foer to demonstrate that this form of narrative solidarity is not a gender-specific idea. DeLillo, Foer and Spiegelman engage in story telling as a healing process which breeches the gender gap maintained through the discourse of storytelling as a healing process. These authors challenge the gendered conception of storytelling as a healing mechanism. By making this correlation, I aim to suggest that narrative solidarity is not gender or ethnically specific but rather human specific. These white, male American authors maintain an emphasis on the human in their narratives and do so by creating a sense of solidarity.

In Art Spiegelman's *In the Shadow of No Towers*, the comic form and the visual aspect of narration allows him to not only work through his present trauma of 9/11, but he also makes connections to the past trauma of the Holocaust. For Spiegelman, connections to the Holocaust are a necessary part of his processing of trauma. While making connections between 9/11 and the Holocaust can be problematic, for Spiegelman it becomes a direct and necessary link for discussing his reaction to 9/11. Moreover since Spiegelman makes visual references *In the Shadow of No Towers* to the *Maus* allegory he created and reassumes that persona, the connection becomes even more explicit. Hillary Chute discusses Spiegelman's temporal intersections and the fragmented nature of *In the Shadow of No Towers* and in relation to *Maus*, the seem like "radically different" texts, however, "we may recognize a common theme: characters brushing up against, and trying to make sense of, brutal historical realities" (229). She continues to state that "*In the Shadow of No Towers* sometimes feels more like an interesting

theoretical object than an engaging comics narrative; Spiegelman has said it is “hardly like a graphic novel” but rather like “novel graphics” (229). The idea of “novel graphics” in relation to the fragmented, yet overly visual representations of 9/11 is significant for the narrative historicity of 9/11. The overabundance of images of 9/11 opens the 9/11 discourses for a historicity that is being formulated recursively. Chute continues to argue, “*No Towers* is explicitly about the inter-section of past and present, both thematically and formally. And as with *Maus*, *In the Shadow of No Towers* makes interlacing temporalities part of the text’s very structure” (230). By making the interlacing temporalities a part of the text’s structure, Spiegelman is commenting and theorizing about 9/11’s historicity.

In the introduction to *In the Shadow of No Towers*, Spiegelman states “I made a vow that morning to return to making comix full-time despite the fact that comix can be so damn labor intensive that one has to assume that one will live forever to make them” (1). In this affirmation to recommit himself to “comix,” Spiegelman is able to engage in an artistic connection with the past and [re]evaluate the ideal of cosmopolitanism through neighborhood, country, and history. In the fourth panel of *In the Shadow of No Towers*, Spiegelman writes in a speech bubble: “Y’know how I’ve called myself a “rootless cosmopolitan.” Equally homeless anywhere on the planet? I was wrong...(Spiegelman 4). He then draws an arrow to himself and writes “‘Rooted’ Cosmopolitan.” In the introduction to *Cosmopolitanism*, Sheldon Pollock et al. ask the reader to “think only of the various culture wars [...] these experiences gave meaning to nationalist emphases on a family of ideas all of which, in the end, connected identities to imaginations of place: home, boundary, territory, and roots” (2). The aftermath of 9/11 political reinforced a sense of patriotism, nationalism and a national boundary. This boundary enforcement enabled a very “rooted” disposition. Pollock et al. continues to state “cosmopolitanism, in its wide and

wavering nets, catches something of our need to ground our sense of mutuality in conditions of mutability, and to learn to live tenaciously in terrains of historic and cultural transition”(4). The aftermath of 9/11 has clearly become a marker of cultural transition not only locally but also globally.

The rooted/rootless paradox Spiegelman creates addresses the notion that “the twilight of Transition, rather than the dawn of millennial transformation, marks the questions of our time” (Pollock et. al. 4). Additionally, Ulrich Beck conception of cosmopolitanism in “Cosmopolitanization Without Cosmopolitans: On the Distinction Between Normative and Empirical-Analytical Cosmopolitanism in Philosophy and the Social Sciences” further complicates Spiegelmans’s discussion of being a rooted/rootless cosmopolitan. Beck writes that “the cosmopolitan includes the local” and that it is “glocal” which means it has “wings and roots at the same time” (15). He continues to state, “These roots of cosmopolitanisms [...] rejects the either/or alternative between hierarchical difference and universal sameness. It rejects the either/or alternative between territorial-bounded national and ethnical identities without denying the historical narrative behind them” (22). One way that Spiegelman roots his cosmopolitan interjection in the historical narrative is through connections to the Holocaust. Another way he interjects in the historicity of 9/11 is by questioning the political aftermath and questioning the idea of human solidarity in the post-9/11 climate.

In *In The Shadow of No Towers* Spiegelman questions the notion of what is cosmopolitanism, and the concept of a grieveable life, as Butler would suggest, by focusing on the concept of loss of human life as a theoretical vehicle to enable a sense of human solidarity. The concept of a grieveable life in connection to solidarity complicates the aspect of narrative boundaries with regards to the sense of localized place that Spiegelman is attempting to

interrogate through his remarks of being a rooted and rootless cosmopolitan. While Spiegelman's narrative is a self-reflective process of trauma and very much placed in a localized setting, his narrative structure focuses on narrating history that establishes a human-specific reaction to 9/11 rather than a cultural specific one, as White would suggest.

Spiegelman begins the introduction of *In the Shadow of No Towers* by reflecting on his "near-death experience" and his role as "comix" creator and historian. The use of the visual allows him a narrative space to engage in the idea of narrating a grievable life. Spiegelman, just as the Falling Man performance artist in DeLillo's work and the reserve flip book of the "Falling Man" image in Foer's text, places himself into the visually representational space of the 9/11 "jumpers." Visually, Spiegelman explores Butler's concept of a grievable life. Spiegelman depicts himself as tumbling through the air, while an ashy shadowed tower is placed in the background. He connects this fall with the visual images of the jumpers. He writes mid-fall that he is "haunted now by the images he didn't witness...images of people tumbling to the streets below...especially one man (according to a neighbor) who executed a graceful Olympic dive as his last living act" (Spiegelman 6). Butler's concept of a grievable loss is evident in Spiegelman's narrative consciousness. While Spiegelman's narrative technique is highly self-referential, *In the Shadow of No Towers* is a memorial so it addresses an individual response to the events of 9/11 it also engages with the concept of "organic shrapnel" put forth by DeLillo. The organic shrapnel left behind by 9/11 caused Spiegelman to return to the creation of comix as he "made a vow that morning to return to making comix full-time despite the fact that comix can be so damn labor intensive that one has to assume that one will live forever to make them. (Spiegelman 1). In reconsidering White's concept of narrative, Spiegelman is demonstrating the need to narrate history.

In Spiegelman's attempt to process the trauma he feels (both past and present) he needed to re-examine his ideas of home and localized space, which lead to a creation and renewed devotion to "comix" and graphic storytelling, which is his artistic narrative home. Through considerations of home, form and cosmopolitan ideals, Spiegelman [re]evaluates his understanding of what it is to be cosmopolitan in relation to art, form, narration and history. Spiegelman's *In the Shadow of No Towers* is a cosmopolitan narrative that conveys a sense of solidarity through the loss of a symbolic freedom (the towers). The text interrogates the concept of loss, 9/11 historiography, and the concept of human solidarity through the artistic and narrative struggle. Spiegelman is representative of an individual attempting to exemplify loss in the wake of a government and nation unwilling to reflect on the historiographical impact brought forth by the 9/11 trauma and the altered and perpetuated mass media representations of the events. Spiegelman is able to create what Aurora Levins-Morales calls a "medicine story" in her work *Medicine Stories: History, Culture and the Politics of Integrity*. What Levins-Morales means to suggest is that literature, or a story, has the power to heal the individual who has experienced trauma, and the necessity for victims to not feel dehumanized by the trauma but rather to use the trauma and the victimization as a way to work through the trauma and heal the spirit, by writing a medicine story, or "*remedios*" as she puts it. By utilizing the comic form and the fragmentation that the form allows to recreate and relive the events of 9/11, Spiegelman can begin to work through his trauma(s). While Spiegelman is not a direct victim of the attack, he is nonetheless just as much affected by it and attempts to reach beyond his individual self to achieve a representation for the solidarity of experience and an understanding of cosmopolitanism. This revisualization of the attacks turns his account of the events of 9/11 into a cosmopolitan narrative about a system, a city, ideology, and history through a localized

individual narrative of victimhood that links his present trauma to the past trauma of his parents' survival tale of Auschwitz.

Levins-Morales describes the experience of victimhood and abuse as having a connection between individual and collective oppression and that they are “not different things, or even different orders of magnitude” but rather that they are “different views of the same creature, varying only in how we accommodate to them” (Levins-Morales 4). She continues to address the global context of abuse in terms of human solidarity:

Abuse does not make sense in the context of our humanity, so when we are abused, we must either find an explanation that restores our dignity or we will at some level accept that we are less human and lose ourselves, and our capacity to resist, in the experience of victimhood. (Levins Morales 4)

Spiegelman's unwillingness to move past the events of 9/11 suggests that he is unwilling to accept a dehumanized version of himself by resisting the implications of abuse and victimhood that the post 9/11 society attempts to place upon him. The experience of victimhood is imposed upon him through the country's absolution of the trauma of 9/11 and quick response of retaliation. Throughout *In the Shadow of No Towers* Spiegelman visually places himself between his own government and Al-Qaeda in order to demonstrate the paradox of fear and terrorism created by the post-9/11 political aftermath and retaliation. This anxiety and paranoia ultimately results in his use of a medicine story to work through the psychological fragmentation and trauma of the 9/11 events, which results in him also reliving the trauma of the Holocaust. In *In The Shadow of No Towers*, Spiegelman resumes his *Maus* mouse mask on several occasions. The trans-historical narrative and trauma he assumes challenges the 9/11 historicity and the narrative ownership of 9/11 trauma. The trauma of 9/11 becomes “glocal.”

The frame that most poignantly reestablishes the paranoia he feels with his own government as well as the horrors of past traumas is in panel 6 where Spiegelman discusses his shared reality with his “crazy lady” in which “her inner demons had broken loose and taken over our shared reality.” The image depicts the “crazy lady’s” demons as having overtaken Spiegelman’s neighborhood creates an image of fiery inferno of destruction. The last frame in this panel shows a child mouse Spiegelman awaking from a nightmare exclaiming “...then John Ashcroft pulled off his burka and shoved me out the window and...” to the mother figure who is wearing a gas mask. This image echoes the last frame of Winsor McCay’s “Little Nemo in Slumberland,” which is in the comic supplement section Little Nemo awakens from his dream of climbing the buildings of Lower Manhattan. Spiegelman is reclaiming a connection to the early 20th century, the rise of modernism and the skyscraper, as well as a reliving of the trauma of the Holocaust. Moreover, Spiegelman signs his name at the end of the panel as McSpiegelman further mirroring McCay, and adding yet another layer of story telling to the panel and to the narrative history of 9/11. Spiegelman revisits the cosmopolitan ideal of human solidarity by demonstrating a sense of solidarity for the horrors of a shared reality in which the nightmare is to be victimized by one’s own government, ultimately destabilizing a sense of security. Moreover, the “crazy lady’s” horror or demons as Spiegelman considers them is his presence on the street and his Jewish ethnicity.

The center of the panel depicts the crazy lady’s head exploding into that blistering horror of an inferno with tumbling buildings all around. Her “demons” overtake the page and spill out onto the other frames. Her accusations and “blaming the Jews” for 9/11 recreates in Spiegelman the anxiety of being victimized by one’s own government and country, which recreates the trauma of the Holocaust. The trauma Spiegelman exhibits transcends the present and local New

York trauma linking to a past and a locality beyond his “rooted” neighborhood of Lower Manhattan, reinvigorating a connection to trauma beyond his individual “heartbroken narcissist’s” experience. However, despite the transient connections, this solidarity of trauma further establishes Spiegelman’s rootedness by allowing him to engage in the act of story telling as healing for both his present and past traumas.

For Spiegelman, the reliving and revisiting the trauma(s) of history generates a productive understanding about the ephemeral nature of comics and of history. It is through his affront with his own trauma that he can not only recreate a comic narrative that can adequately express his own fears and anxieties, but one that reestablishes his own need for reverting to those earlier ephemeral comic forms²¹. Additionally in Panel 2, Spiegelman includes a brief strip entitled “Notes of a heartbroken narcissist” in which Spiegelman struggles with issues of self-representation, ultimately resulting in the visual representation of the mouse metaphor in which he reassume the *Maus* mouse mask. Adjacently, he depicts himself again as a mouse at his drawing table, ancient comic pages in-hand, head down, between images of Al-Qaeda and the US government. This image further stresses Spiegelman’s feelings of displacement, literally, politically, historically and artistically. According to Kristiaan Versluys the comic image focuses on his mental process and records both fear and panic in the “between melancholia or acting-out, on the one hand, and mourning or working-through, on the other” which demonstrates the trauma process that the book represents and demonstrates the “record of a psychologically wounded survivor, trying to make sense of an event that overwhelmed and destroyed all his normal psychic defenses” (Versluys 2006, 982). In addition to struggling with working out a personal psychological representation of trauma, Spiegelman is also attempting to place workout the

²¹ The original publication of *In the Shadow of No Towers* took form in the US in the weekly publication in the *Jewish Forward*, and in the German newspaper *Die Zeit*.

event's historiographical narrative and the psychological trauma innately connected.²²

Spiegelman like Foer makes use of other global historical traumas in order to communicate the traumas of 9/11. The re-wearing of the *Maus* mask resonates with Foer's linkage to the bombings of Hiroshima and Dresden, which creates a notion of solidarity through narrative and trauma. Both authors recognize that the historicity of 9/11 establishes a collective and global trauma and that by connecting to other instances of trauma shapes the transition into the post-9/11 global climate.

Not only is Spiegelman caught between past and present, the trauma of the Holocaust and the trauma of 9/11, but between issues of representation as well. As Spiegelman goes between his *Maus* persona and his human persona, he is reevaluating his victimization and his rooted/rootless cosmopolitanism. In an interview (2003) Spiegelman discusses the victimization he felt during the events and aftermath of 9/11 with the Italian Newspaper *Corriere Della Sera* after his resignation from the New Yorker:

CDS: Do you consider yourself a victim of September 11?

AS: Exactly so. From the time that the Twin Towers fell, it seems as if I've been living in internal exile, or like a political dissident confined to an island. I no longer feel in harmony with American culture, especially now that the entire media has become conservative and tremendously timid. (*Corriere Della Sera* 264)²³

²² While the focus of this project is not to address the aspects of trauma, it is however, important to demonstrate the significance of trauma as impacting narrative historiography, because each of the narratives addresses in this project to some degree are utilizing art, literature and narrative historiography as a way to process trauma.

²³ Interview taken from Joseph Witek's collection, *Art Spiegelman: Conversations*

Spiegelman, in living in internal exile is caught between his victimization and censorship forcing him to feel rootless and detached from his own country. His rootlessness is then re-rooted as he begins to return to the form of comics both in reading them and in constructing his own graphic medicine story about 9/11, turning his feelings of dehumanized alienation into the solidarity of a healing narrative. Spiegelman, like DeLillo and Foer, explores the concept of being human.

Spiegelman, in being caught between past and present reassumes the *Maus* persona to narrate his particular story and sequence of events on the day September 11, 2001 as he re-wears the *Maus* mask. The human persona relives the day, but the *Maus* persona narrates the connections to the past, in particular, the indescribable smell. Both in narrative and in form, the past and present collide. Famed cartoonist Will Eisner in *Comics and Sequential Art* describes the way the comic form allows for the multiplicity of narratives in allowing for multiple narratives to exist in the same space. He writes that “in a plot where two independent narratives are shown simultaneously, the problem of giving them equal attention and weight is addressed by making the panel that controls the total narrative the entire page itself” (82) which is what Spiegelman does visually in *In The Shadow of No Towers*. The reader is visually overwhelmed with the plethora of competing narratives, which echoes the visual rhetoric put forth by the media²⁴ in 9/11 that overwhelmed the viewing public with visual narrative accounts.

Interestingly though, for Spiegelman, the use of the comic form allows for his dual realities to take shape enabling a result of “a set of panels within panels, attempts to control the reader’s line of reading so that two storylines may be followed synchronously” (Eisner 82).

²⁴ While the media’s coverage and visual rhetoric of 9/11 is significant and impacts not only public perception but also the historical narrative and is worth discussion, a more in depth discussion, however, of the media’s coverage is beyond the scope this project that focuses on the literary and visual narratives that respond to 9/11 rather than focusing on media coverage of the event itself.

The ephemera of comics and the singularity of “comix” and the comic form is what allows Spiegelman to work through his trauma and why it is so important to him to get back to writing “comix.” Spiegelman discusses the use of the comic supplement and why including one is significant for his project:

AS: “...When I tried to figure out how to make this into a book, there’s a comics supplement that actually deals with the issues that those old comic strips bring to the foreground and that are evoking an argument that’s not about even the overt politics of the “No Towers” pages or the specific of my experiences on September 11th, but that have to do with the nature of ephemera, and what happens when even buildings and civilizations become ephemera. Those are issues that concerned me and I got to obliquely get at them through this long comics supplement – no comic books should be without a comics supplement – that make that part of the reason for making a book out of this stuff.” (297)²⁵

As already mentioned, Spiegelman does make some direct connections to the comic supplements in his own “comix,” but moreover, the comic supplement sections allows him to re-root himself against the pull between his own government and Al Qaeda ultimately being able to recreate comics and work through the trauma in the form what Levins-Morales states as being a medicine story. The comic supplement functions in part as a historical comic archive.²⁶ Like DeLillo and Foer, Spiegelman’s use of the comic archive to process and narrate 9/11 makes use of Elias’s concept of the metahistorical romance. While Spiegelman’s text is a graphic memoir type text, his inclusion of the comic archive and re-appropriation and narration of that history as a way to

²⁵ Interview with Joseph Witek 2004

²⁶ The digital archives of 9/11 and particularly the visual images in the archive will be discussed in the following section in more detail.

view the events of 9/11 is a metahistorical romance. The comic archive explores the concept of history, narrative, solidarity and what it means to be human today as Wallace suggests.

Throughout the panels of *In the Shadow of No Towers*, Spiegelman struggles with issues of urgency and narration. He needs to tell his story of 9/11 in order to regain a sense of self and the ability to process trauma. Spiegelman writes in the *Introduction to In the Shadow of No Towers* that he “tends to be easily unhinged” and that “Minor mishaps – a clogged drain, running late for an appointment” send him into “a sky-is-falling tizzy” which can “leave one ill-equipped for coping with the sky when it actually falls” (1). Spiegelman's response to the events of 9/11 and the aftermath create a sense of his historical convergence. He continues by discussion that before the events of 9/11, his “traumas” were “all more or less self-inflicted” but that in the wake of 9/11 and that shared reality, the visual war zone of lower Manhattan left him “reeling on that fault line where World History and Personal History collide – the intersection my parents, Auschwitz survivors, had warned me about when they taught me to always keep my bags packed” (1). The concept of personal history and world history colliding gives way to a cosmopolitan evaluation and understanding of the events and thus reaffirms the need for Spiegelman to create a sense of solidarity in his narration.

Solidarity, according to Levins-Morales, is established through a cosmopolitan response that addresses recognition not only of self, but also of the inevitability and necessity of the connectivity to others, to humanity and comes from the “inability to tolerate the affront to our own integrity of passive or active collaboration in the oppression of others” and a recognition of human solidarity (125). Spiegelman's struggle with narrating World history and personal history is rooted in not only his ideas of his own rooted/rootless cosmopolitanism but also in ideas of self-representation. He cannot divorce himself personally from world history.

In the opening words of the book there is not only a sense of historic continuity but also a sense of urgency. It is this sense of urgency that prompts Spiegelman to return to creating “comix.” Spiegelman by making several references to *Maus* also revisits some of the anxieties of being a historian.²⁷ At the top of panel 2 there are three comic frames depicting Spiegelman wearing an albatross around his neck as he says: “Doomed! Doomed to drag this damned albatross around my neck, and compulsively retell the calamities of September 11th to anyone who will still listen... I insist the sky is falling; they roll their eyes and tell me it’s only my post-traumatic stress disorder...that’s when time stands still at the moment of trauma...which strikes me as a totally reasonable response to current events!..I see that awesome glowing tower as it collapses.” The frames in the strip shift from a 2 dimensional space to a 3 dimensional image of the towers. Spiegelman’s struggle to process the trauma of 9/11 is both rooted in history as well as the need to retell history as a means of healing. Levins-Morales writes that in order to recover from trauma one is required to create and tell a 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 burden of the 9/11 albatross Spiegelman bares begins to instill in him and the reader/viewer a sense of urgency in story telling. He must retell the events of 9/11; it is his burden to bear not only as an observer of the events and a historian, but also a responsibility to humanity.

²⁷ There are some theorists in media and communication studies who claim that the “name-date” aspect of September 11th (in which the date is disconnected from the year) is not only a bridge to other political post-9/11 activities but also prevents it from being a part of history in the sense that it is treated as an ongoing event happening in the present rather than something that happened in the past. Discussing this concept in more detail is beyond the scope of the project but for Spiegelman this idea of historical continuity is evident in how he demonstrate a collision between his various and shared realities and in a sense is an ongoing process of trauma so it is relevant to mention the aspect of the name-date.

Spiegelman ends his comix in the first half section of *In the Shadow of No Towers* with a strip about the anniversary of September 11th. The image portrays the Spiegelman family as mice once again standing in the streets of New York amongst a crowd of people made up of the characters from the comics supplement under a rain of cowboy boots. Albeit this is poignant political commentary on the Bush administration, but it also representative of Spiegelman's struggle to find the connection between world history and his personal history. Moreover, the recreated image of the shadowed towers becomes more and more defused – what was once a fiery glow, diminishes to shadowy gray, to an almost solidly black monochromatic square indicative of an Ad Reinhardt painting. Similarly, this black on black background effect also is seen on the cover of *In the Shadow of No Towers*, which also was the cover of the September 24, 2001 *New Yorker*.

Spiegelman discusses the creation of the *New Yorker* cover in an interview with Gene Kannenberg, Jr. in 2002 which remained previously unpublished until Joseph Witek's collection of Spiegelman interviews in 2006. Spiegelman discusses the feeling of trauma and chaos of that day and how he ultimately decided to depict the cover as being the shadowed representation of the World Trade Center, which ran as the September 24, 2001 cover of the *New Yorker*, as “a two-panel comic strip, one where the second panel gets delivered a week after the first. Spiegelman state that “the result was I didn't know what to do with myself that day, and I began seeing if I could come up with a cover...and ended up with Ad Reinhardt, finally...I also was traumatized enough that day to want to make comics again, so what I've started doing now is going to begin running in a German newspaper” (252). The initial *New Yorker* cover was, according to Spiegelman, seemed “wrong-headed” and was at the time “not going to fly” but despite the city of New York's reaction or the country's reaction, Spiegelman now was

compelled to complete his project despite the lack of available forums for his comics to be published. The compel to complete this project for Spiegelman seems to stem from his anxiety of being a rooted/rootless cosmopolitan and the complexities it brings to explore the notion of being human today in the aftermath of 9/11 by drawing on the concept of a shared trauma and reality. It is the solidarity of shared traumas through the rooted/rootlessness anxiety that perpetuates the need for Spiegelman to retell the story of September 11th and to retell it in the ephemeral comic form.

The individual expression Spiegelman is able to create in his account of history through the “comix” and graphic narrative form allows him to process personal, localized trauma and history as well as global sense of trauma and history. Similarly Foer makes use of historical events – the bombings of Hiroshima and Dresden – to pose similar questions about the translation of trauma. The cosmopolitan ideal for Spiegelman is realized, reconsidered and evaluated through the creation of his own “comix” but in terms of re-reading old comics and a comic archive. The invisibility behind the absent towers and the absent voices of both the victims of 9/11 and the Holocaust are constantly echoed in Spiegelman’s graphic narrative, prompting the need to start creating “comix” again and creating solidarity of trauma through his feelings of anxiety and paranoia, rooted and rootlessness, present and past, and personal and world history.

The comic form allows for the possibilities of experimentation and fragmentation. The comic form, or “comix” as Spiegleman refers to form, allows him the ability and forum to process his reality of the 9/11 events in a non-linear, seemingly nonsensical way, creating a shared reality and a movement beyond the paralyzing trauma of victimhood to achieve a medicine story that process trauma to reinvigorates the humanity that was strained and threatened. Each panel in *In the Shadow of No Towers* is made up of several competing

narratives but each narrative itself does follow a somewhat linear structure. The visual structure recreates the fragmented and chaotic narrative and historicity of 9/11. Hillary Chute discusses Spiegelman's use of the serial form. She asserts that the "jagged sequencing of the *No Towers* strips in their original form as part of the disruption of linear or regular serial context" (231) disrupt the linear aspect of the narrative but also, at an additional level, the "book's strange, overall structural movement, and also within the strips themselves" (231) the linear structure of narrative is also disrupted. This is not to say that this narrative structure is problematic, but rather it adequately conveys and recreates the trauma and urgency of the 9/11 aftermaths and historicity. Chute continues to argue that *In the Shadow of No Towers* is "conditioned by a traumatic temporality" and "presents an experimental view of sequence and seriality that powerfully— and politically—suggests the enmeshing of the past and the present" (231). The visual and narrative form Spiegelman creates allows him to insert his voice into the 9/11 historicities.

The political engagement Spiegelman creates through his use of "comix" allows for him create a narrative space that challenges the hegemonic 9/11 narratives and historicity that have been propagated by the administration and the mainstream media. According to Scott McCloud, comic theorist: "Today, comics is one of the very few forms of mass communication in which individual voices still have a chance to be heard" (197). The comic form provides Spiegelman the ability to work not only with visual fragmentation and to experiment with large-scale panels, but also to recreate the invisible elements, i.e.— the process of trauma and the representations of Personal/World History. This is manifested in the shadowy figure of the gone and invisible towers that forever reside in the background of Spiegelman's narrative. Scott McCloud claims that "today's comics do their dance with the invisible better than ever before" and "embedded in

all pictures of the visible world are the seeds of the invisible. The seeds of expressionism and synaesthetics” (209). Spiegelman’s narration of 9/11 engages in a shared reality and solidarity by engaging the question of what it means to be human today. The collision of his personal history with world history is explored through the comic form.

The emphasis on the visual aspect is significant in considering the documentation and narration of 9/11. The prevalence of media coverage and images of 9/11 has enabled a multitude of narratives about 9/11. Many of these visual narratives create visual metahistorical romances out of the events of 9/11 by re-appropriating the space of the World Trade Center as well as re-narrating the past personal histories in relation to the Towers. Similarly Spiegelman finds himself rethinking the space of those towers. He writes, “I never loved those arrogant boxes, but now I miss the rascals, icons of a more innocent age...if not for the tragedy and death, I could think of the attack as some sort of radical architectural criticism” (panel 2). The coinciding images are fiery-red, gridline images of the towers with red smoke billowing out of them until the physical structures completely collapse and all that is left is overwhelming red smoke. Solidarity rises out of the image of the red smoke.

PART IV. THE 9/11 DIGITAL ARCHIVE

The digital archive can be a space where the collision of personal and world history occurs. Like Art Spiegelman's discussion of "comix" as being ephemeral, the visual space of the images in the Digital Archive also function as ephemeral artifacts of history. A large part of the 9/11 narratives is in the form of the official documented images. The 9/11 Digital Archive invited the general public to contribute, complicating the Archive as narrative history and as art. What is unique about the digital archive is the narrative space it creates – it opens up the ability for multiple and opposing interpretations and representations of the historicity of 9/11.²⁸ I am focusing only on visual narrative representations of 9/11 because I want to demonstrate how processing 9/11 is heavily reliant on the visual. First I will discuss the archive as a whole and then the specific visual examples that illustrate the complexity of narrating 9/11. Additionally each of these visuals and their narrative contribution to the archive and the history of 9/11 function as meta-historical romances. There is a plethora of images, video and other "stories" in the archive, the images chooses had a connection to the other narratives discussed in this project in addition to the narrative commentary they provide about 9/11, its commemoration, and historicity. The idea of the camera as the lens of history is particularly relevant for the historicity

²⁸ I should note that while the Archive does seem to promote an openness in adding to the collection it is monitored. In my research I did not come across any images or text that subscribed to an anti-American stance on the post-9/11 climate, which suggests that certain narratives and perspectives do not make it into the official 9/11 Archive. Perhaps this brings up the question of why and how is this Archive and historiography any different from other archives and historiographies because certain narratives and viewpoints are omitted. The goal of the Archive seems to be to create a more global interaction and narrative collection about the historiography of 9/11. The website states that its goal is to "collect, preserve and present the history of the September 11, 2001 attacks" (Previous Archive Version, Home).

of 9/11 because so much of its narration is in the visual form, from news coverage to artistic photography. Since the project as a whole interrogates the historicity of 9/11, the camera lens as narrative vehicle is an appropriate focus to discuss the concept of metahistorical romance and the concept of solidarity through narrative in post-postmodern texts.

One of the controversies of 9/11 photography and war photography according to Susan Sontag in *Regarding the Pain of Others* is the ability for the camera to capture death. She writes that “to catch death actually happening and embalm it for all time is something only cameras can do, and pictures taken by photographers out in the field of the moment of (or just before) death are among the most celebrated and most reproduced of war photographs” (59). Richard Drew’s “Falling Man” image captures the moments of death, as Sontag suggests, and has become one of the most controversial and reproduced images. The conflict is facing the reality of the jumpers but also it creates that sense of the moments before death.

Susan Sontag writes in “photographs of an atrocity may give rise to opposing responses” (13). The images of 9/11 are controversial. One key example is Richard Drew’s “Falling Man” image. While I could have chosen more controversial images to depict, the images chosen have a particular metahistorical tone and create a sense of narrative solidarity while complicating the narratives of 9/11. The images picked are a ticket stub from the original opening of the WTC observatory in 1973, which addresses the historical continuity and significance of the towers and the memorialization. The next image is a child’s drawing and interpretation of the events in a black and white sketch; this image connects to the feelings of loss and trauma process exemplified by Oskar in Foer’s *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. The next image is an actual photograph of the last remaining parts of the WTC on the afternoon of September 11, 2001. It creates a shadowy lingering image of the towers as well as the black ashy war zone that

lower Manhattan assumes for the next several months. The next image depicts a postcard framing of the WTC in a New York skyline that no longer contains its physical presence, however, the shadow of it still remains. The perspective of this image is of a person looking at and onto the New York skyline from a distance so this additional resonates with the non-localized aspect of trauma and absence that the physical space of the WTC creates in national and global consciousness. The last image used contains the graffiti words “You Are Alive” written on a wall near the ground zero site shortly after 9/11. This image parallels the end of Wallace’s “Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way” with the word “you are loved”. This last image complicates notions of solidarity while also reinforcing the concepts compassion and a grievable life.

While there were many patriotic images created in the achieves, images of the event itself, as well as images of people being at the Towers pre-11 but I choose not to focus on those because I wanted to show how the visual rhetoric of 9/11 complicates the narrative recreation of its historicity. Susan Sontag discusses the term “A Democracy of Photographs” which was used as the subtitle of a photo display/exhibit entitled *Here Is New York*. This exhibit had a similar tone and approach to the digital archive – anyone’s image or narrative can become a part of the collective history. The exhibit accepted at least one image from each person who submitted. The concept of the Democracy of Photographs is crucial for the understanding the photos of the digital archive. The photos in *Here Is New York* had no captions as the New Yorkers who lined the streets had no need for them because

They had, if anything, a surfeit of understanding of what they were looking at, building by building, street by street, - the fires, the detritus, the fear, the exhaustion, the grief. But one-day captions will be needed. And the misreadings

and the misrememberings, and the new ideological uses for the pictures, will make the difference” (29).

The images I choose complicate that narrative discourse by commenting on the event itself. That is not to say that those other images do not comment on the event or would not add to my discussion. The images described in this section were chosen because of the use of the visual the connections to DeLillo, Foer and Spiegelman’s work. These images further the narrative discourse of 9/11 by being metahistorical artifacts.

The September 11 Digital Archive states that it uses “electronic media to collect, preserve, and present the history of September 11, 2001 and its aftermath.” The contents of the archive range from images of the actual events of September 11th, to artist renditions to the family photos taken at the WTC pre-9/11. The Archie claims that it contains “more than 150,000 digital items, a tally that includes more than 40,000 emails and other electronic communications, more than 40,000 first-hand stories, and more than 15,000 digital images.” With this plethora of narratives to consider in my research I needed to make a choice over which ones to include. I decided to focus on visual representation because the visual rhetoric of 9/11 is a central connecting aspect to my interjection and because Richard Drew’s still image has lead to so many different responses to that single act of jumping that I would like to explore other images who similarly capture a particular essence to the narrative historiography of 9/11. The narrative historiography of the Digital Archive and its place in public memory can be discussed through Marianne Hirsch’s concept of “postmemory.” While Hirsch’s discussion focuses on the postmemory of the Holocaust it is also applicable to 9/11 and especially to the Digital Archive because many of the images depicted in the archive function as second-hand reactions to and interpretations of the 9/11 events. She states that “the term “postmemory” is meant to convey its temporal and

qualitative difference from survivor memory” and that it is a “secondary, or second-generation memory quality, its basis in displacement, its vicariousness and belatedness” (9). This concept of belated memory is evident in the narrative quality of 9/11 Digital Archive. Although the events affected people on global level, the immediate localized trauma is situated in New York City. The idea of “postmemory” in relation to 9/11 is significant because it demonstrates the memory gap, which is not to say however, that the power of postmemory does not equally create a sense of post-postmodern solidarity through postmemory-ing and re-narrating the events and historicity of 9/11. Hirsch continues to state that “postmemory is a powerful form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through representation, projection, and creation” (9). Many of the images in the 9/11 Digital Archive are representation, projection and creation, and the recollection the images assume is based in a metahistorical romance of the historicity of 9/11.

Additionally the Digital Archive’s contents and narrative historiography should be questioned in terms of the official history of 9/11. Electra Haskins writes that digital archives or digital memory “more than any other form of mediation, collapses the assumed distinction between modern “archival” memory and traditional “lived” memory by combining the function of storage and ordering on the one hand, and of presence and interactivity on the other” (401-402). The interactivity of the archive allows for individual interpretation of the historiography of 9/11, albeit the archive is monitored so the interpretation is limited. The presence of interactivity however, allows for a people to use the digital archive as a space to process trauma and communicate their reactions and interpretations of the 9/11 events. The Digital Archive creates a sense of solidarity by bringing together different voices to narrate the history of 9/11. Haskins continues to state that “as a result of these technologically abetted

cultural changes, professional historians, archivists, and museum curators find themselves compelled both to acknowledge the role of ordinary people in history making and to include diverse forms of popular expression into the “official” record of history.” By engaging in this presentation of history, they face a challenge in being the “stewards of public memory” and in order “to remain relevant, they must strike a delicate balance, as it were, between a desire to accommodate as many different voices as possible, on the one hand, and a responsibility to provide a common ground for this diversity, on the other” (Haskins 408).

The Digital Archive states that “in September 2003, the Library of Congress accepted the Archive into its collections, an event that both ensured the Archive's long-term preservation and marked the library's first major digital acquisition.” This induction into the official Archives is significant for the discussion of 9/11 as a historical event. Not all the acquisitions in the archive are necessarily documents of the event and many of them are recreated metahistorical romances about 9/11 and the post-9/11 climate. The metahistorical artifacts included in the archive speak to the notion of solidarity because the de-emphasis on “official” history, and even the concept of what counts as historical documentation is challenged in the archive. Many of the artifacts have nothing to do in particular with 9/11 but are responses to the event. These responses are a collective response and processing of trauma. The contributors maintain a sense of solidarity by presenting images of themselves, or family members, for example, at the WTC years before 9/11. History is re-appropriated and the significance of those personal histories is meant to serve as a collective response to trauma. There are many pictures of the WTC that are revisited which demonstrates a further implication of metahistorical narratives – contributors are recreating a historical significance by situating a captured image and moment in the past with contemporary and future historical relevance. This complicates the Archives role in the 9/11 historiography

because it is commenting on the present while also recreating a past, which makes it align with Elias's concept of the metahistorical romance and historical sublime. This historical narration becomes dialogical. The dialogical narration is a metahistorical romance that re-appropriates the space of the World Trade Center and creates a sense "of nostalgia for the World Trade Center and the post-industrial utopia it symbolized" (Haskins 414). The post-9/11 climate asserts a particular historiography of the WTC that has shifted because in the pre-9/11 context the Towers were "Criticized as the epitome of bad urban planning and architectural hubris during their lifetime," but now in the metahistorical romance of the historiography, in the WTC "haunting absence the towers became beloved martyrs whose resurrection was viewed by many as essential to the restoration of New York City and the old world order" (Haskins 414). Similarly Art Spiegelman finds himself missing those "arrogant boxes" (panel 2) as he comments on his individual and the public response to the physical the absence of the WTC.

In considering the Archive's role in history and the relationship to Elias's concept of the metahistorical romance, the narration becomes dialogical. The Digital Archive, under the "about" section, states the following: "The Archive is also using these events as a way of assessing how history is being recorded and preserved in the twenty-first century and as an opportunity to develop free software tools to help historians to do a better job of collecting, preserving, and writing history in the new century." The archive itself points to a reassertion of history and the way in which history is documented. This new documentation of history aligns with the concept of the metahistorical romance. For example, many of the images use the political aftermath along with images of 9/11 and patriotic symbolism to comment on the historical present and American political climate. Many images use the American flag, the bald eagle, and images of 9/11 to ensue emotions of patriotism. In considering the cosmopolitan and

frame works of solidarity explored in this project – the digital archive while reinventing historical documentation also presents moments of dissonance. Ulrich Beck examines this dissonance and the cosmopolitan tensions in *Cosmopolitan Vision* by asking, “what makes the cosmopolitan outlook ‘cosmopolitan’? What do we mean by ‘cosmopolitanism’? this word evokes at once the most marvelous and the most terrible histories” (1). The 9/11 events and particularly the political aftermath can exemplify the theoretical and ideological tension(s) rooted in cosmopolitan vision. While in many ways, on the national level in particular, the events of 9/11 and the sense of compassion and grievable loss demonstrate a sense of solidarity with the aspect of the human. However, the events of 9/11 and the political aftermath, both locally and globally, has demonstrated a cosmopolitan disconnect – the tragedy of 9/11 has been used as a tool for engaging in political rhetoric of difference and terror²⁹.

Beck continues by addressing the media’s role in a cosmopolitan existence in which “the foundations of the industries and cultures of the mass media have changed dramatically and concomitantly all kinds of transnational connections and confrontations have emerged” (7). This concept demonstrates the positive capabilities of digital media as well as some of the goals of cosmopolitanism in which there are blurred boundaries that enable communication. Beck

²⁹ This disconnect can be discussed at great length in terms of political and media theory and American global politics, however a further discussion of the cosmopolitan tension is beyond the scope of this project. I discuss Beck’s concepts to demonstrate that there are significant flaws in the cosmopolitan rhetoric associated with 9/11. Moreover, the official Archive (and memorial in a sense) propagates a goal to complicate the narrative of history of 9/11 and the way history is narrated and archived in the 20th century. The Archive makes space for multiple and individual narratives and reinterpretations of the event(s). Also, by allowing not just official documentation but also artist and narrative commentary on the events and aftermath, the Archive becomes a meta-historical romance. However, in utilizing a cosmopolitan framework there are also problems that arise, which Beck points to as being a reinforcement of difference. Not to say that the Archive does this, but that the narrative history given to the public by the media, particularly the news media does to an extent adhere to that reinforcement of different. Spiegelman points to this when he depicts himself caught between his own government and Al-Qaeda. It is important to recognize that the digital archive is a part of that media structure.

continues by asserting, “loyalties and identities have expanded beyond national borders and systems of control” (7). With the concept of cosmopolitanism and new media this border and identity blurring is possible, however it is not without problems, mainly that these simultaneous realities can also be very different realities. Beck concludes this idea by claiming, “individuals and groups who surf transnational television channels and programmes simultaneously inhabit different worlds” (7). The Digital Archive creates a similar space – the viewers and contributors inhabit different worlds but are able to collectively respond to the events of 9/11 through the Digital Archie which allows for both an individual response to trauma and a collective one to exist and occur simultaneously.

The first image I choose to discuss is an image of a ticket to the World Trade Center. The background is black with a blood red colored WTC towers with the words, “World Trade Center Observation Deck” and “adult” on the one side of the ticket. The opposite side of the ticket is included in the image as well; it reads the words “Management reserves the right to revoke the license granted by this ticket by refunding purchase price.” The author of this image chooses to create the composition of the Twin Tower image. I choose this image because it takes the towers out of the shadow in a red composition that seems to visualize the loss of life. The image is indicative of the shadowed towers presented in Spiegelman’s *In the Shadow of No Towers*. Where the Towers are shadowed in Spiegelman’s recreation, here the composition allows for the vibrant blood red images. The red composition brings the towers out of the shadow but depicts them as the blazing red, on-fire image, which correlates to Spiegelman’s recreation of the awe-inspiring image of the towers. Additionally, the admissions ticket aspect of this image relates to Oskar’s adventure in the Empire State Building in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. Oskar and Mr. Black venture up the Empire State building in search of one of the other Blacks who

they find works and lives on the observation deck of the building. By being in the Empire State Building, which is now New York's tallest building, Oskar re-appropriates the space and tries to image himself and his father being in the World Trade Center as the planes hit and the buildings collapsed.

Another interesting visual aspect of the color red to mention is that red has communist associations. It is visually interesting that a structure like the World Trade Center, which is so emblematic of capitalism be represented by a red image. The color red seems to re-appropriate the use of the towers and remove them from the individualist aspect of the capitalist agenda into a color associate with communism and certain Marxist visions of solidarity. By viewing the color red as associated with solidarity, this ticket then recreates a space of memory for the towers not only for the localized citizens of New York and those who have been there but also for all those people who have never been. The ticket as an artifact allows for the narrative and historical space to be reclaimed. The red represents the life lived and lost in the space of the towers before the events of 9/11. It recreates the space of human life in a visual mode but also in an archival and tangible mode.

The ticket symbolically creates in public memory a realistic existence of the towers. The Photo description states: "I lived in NYC 1973-1976. The day the World Trade Center Observation Deck opened in 1973, I went to the top. This is my original ticket from that visit." The photo belongs to Paul Blizzard of Beckley, West Virginia. The image of the ticket recreates the Towers and then creates a metahistorical romance and imagined space for them.

The second image is a six-year old kid's drawing and process of 9/11. The image is a coarse black pencil sketch on white paper with two huge towers. At the foot of the towers two people are looking up wide-eyed. The people seem small, shocked, and awed at the same time as they

look up at the towers. Also the people are leaning in a way that makes them look like they are about to fall over. The words at the top of the image state: “today you will be with me in paradise.” This connects back to Foer’s *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. The towers in this image are both extremely loud and incredibly close. The child who drew this image recognizes the significance of this tragedy on a human scale and there is a sense of creating the idea of solidarity between her and the victims in the towers. She uses a Bible passage, Mark 27:43 to create a sense of connectivity between human life. While Foer does not use religion to narrate 9/11, he does invoke a sense of religion for Oskar, who turns to science and invention as his way to process the world around him and events of 9/11. Also, Oskar’s quest for the key drives his search for connections with people who would otherwise not be connected.

The image description states “this image is my daughter's reaction to the events of 9-11. She was 6 years old at the time. This was not prompted by myself or a school assignment, she spontaneously drew it as her way of coping. It shows the twin towers with smoke above, two women with tears in their eyes running away, and quotes Mark 27:43 from the Bible - applying it to the victims of terror.” The mother states that her child’s drawing depicts the people running away, however, it looks like the towers could also captivate the people. From news coverage and other images, the reaction to the towers had a similar paradox – an urge to run away, yet it was mesmerizing to watch. Spiegelman similarly in *In The Shadow of No Towers* draws a versions of himself that is mesmerized by the towers and his eyes are large, absorbing the images and reflecting the fiery towers back to the viewer/reader. Even though the towers are physically gone, the recreation and rememory of them are present in the 9/11 historiography.

The third image title by the photographer as “Resurrection Within” is a black and white photograph that captures the last shadowy fragments of the World Trade Center. The image

shows the bending remaining beams of steel of the towers. Debris, rubble and ash fly everywhere. There is a window of light from the clouds behind the remnants of the tower. While the image is clearly chaotic and incredibly loud, it also seems still and quiet, capturing a moment before the rest comes crumbling down. This image seems to echo the awe of the plane hitting the first tower in disbelief the image resembles a war zone, not the downtown Manhattan skyline.

This image is the only physical image of the Towers' destruction that I am using from the digital archive. The visual created echoes Spiegelman's shadowed towers, as well as visually narrating the opening description of DeLillo's *Falling Man* in which Keith is navigating through the debris, ash and falling buildings. The image demonstrates the visual aspect of the human and organic shrapnel as being a part of the destruction of the towers. The composition of light and dark space is interesting in this photo because it quiets the extremely loud and incredibly close aspects of the event -- it is almost surreal. Susan Sontag states that in war images, "something becomes real – to those who are else where[...] – by being photographed" but that by being photographed the experience will "seem eerily like its representation" (21). This is what is particularly striking about this photograph – it is a representation of the fall of the towers yet it is also something else entirely – an unreal apocalyptic future where the towers do not exist.

The photo description states that it "is of the last remaining tower standing. Photo was taken on 9/11/01 at about 2:30-3:00pm. From a side street looking north. This photo/shot is the only one in the world taken during this time. The name of the photo is called "RESURRECTION WITHIN". The title, "Resurrection Within," seems appropriate, especially considering the light and dark composition that will later coincide with the memorialization of the WTC every September 11th. The eeriness of the photo recreates the collective pause and silence as the country and world witnessed the second plane crash into the WTC. The photo claims that it is the

only one of that view of the WTC take at that particular time which demonstrates that the only way for viewers to gain access to that moment of 9/11 historiography is to collectively view the image on the 9/11 Digital Archive. This particular image is also used by the Digital Archive as the shadowed background of the site's pages. The shadow like outline of the building demonstrates its place in the collective consciousness and also in the historicity of 9/11. The event becomes hallmarked by the shadowy images of the Twin Towers, which very much echoes Spiegelman's *In the Shadow of No Towers* and *New Yorker* covers. The shadowed image-creates a collective remembering of the event and creates a sense of solidarity by grieving the loss of human life, as Butler suggests. Since there were so many bodies not recovered from the attacks, the ashy crumbling building serves to represent the collective lost lives similarly to how Richard Drew's image of the "Falling Man" invokes for Oskar in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* a sense of solidarity by being somebody and standing in for his father. Additionally this photo by being juxtaposed to the "Falling Man" image becomes representational of the other half of the question – to jump or to burn?

The fourth image is a "Wish You Were Here" postcard like images that depicts a frame and window of the localized space of New York as still having the space of the towers there from the view across the Brooklyn Bridge. This image complicates the localized reaction to the events of 9/11 and moves them to occupy a more global space. The touristic aspect resonates with the first image of the ticket to the WTC observation deck, which further translates the trauma from the localized space the global one. The emphasis on the touristic aspect is significant because a large amount of the images, particularly photographs, in the Digital Archive are from tourists who took pictures at the World Trade Center observation deck, or on the ground areas surrounding the WTC. The images typically depict smiling families and couples. These images

take on a metahistorical characteristic in the post 9/11 context because while they describe a specific moment in individual histories, their inclusion in the Digital Archive repurpose them to represent a larger collective history. This retelling of collective history demonstrates why the postcard recreation of the Towers is so telling for not only the space of the towers but the space they occupy in collective memory.

One could also read the postcard symbolism as commentary on the culture of 9/11 and how to an extent the events have become a commodity³⁰. Also it frames the towers in a postcard with the words New York, which complicates the Towers as being symbolic of a specific space. In Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, the Empire State Building³¹ becomes a significant space in the narrative, so there are parallels in the physical spaces. Also, the framing of the Towers seems representative of the Windows on the World Restaurant where, supposedly, the actual man in Richard Drew's "Falling Man" image³² came from. So, there is an added visual representation of that idea here. In DeLillo's *Falling Man*, Lianne sees the falling man performance artist as snap shots and in windows of perception around the streets of New York. Her process of the trauma of 9/11 is created by a series of snap shots she creates out of pieces of

³⁰ The commodification of 9/11 is significant to mention here, however further discussion about the commodification and commemoration of 9/11 is beyond the scope of this project. However, there is a significant body of scholarship that does investigate the issues of 9/11 commodification and commemoration culture.

³¹ The Empire State Building is significant in Foer's novel because Oskar imagines being trapped in the towers and wonders what his father did and what he would do in a similar situation while trying to cope with the reality that his father could not have survived the events. Also in Michael Chabon's *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*, the Empire State building is a crucial character to the novel in that not is the setting for many significant events and also houses the Comic Book companies Kavalier and Clay work for, but also Kavalier attempts his magnum opus of escapes on its ledges. Also to juxtapose the Empire State Building to the World Trade Center is interesting because the Empire State Building assumes a very localized identity whereas the World Trade Center assumed a more globalized one.

³² There is still much speculation to this but one possibility has been suggested that the man in that particular image jumped from the floor that contained the Windows on the World Restaurant.

personal histories and obituaries of lost narratives. The Falling Man performance artist becomes one of her recreated stories. She collectively pieces together all of the narratives and stories she encounter to process the larger, collective trauma and historicity of 9/11. Similar to the “Wish You Were Here” postcard of the superimposed WTC, the fragmented pieces of building and organic shrapnel come together in a collective sense of the solidarity of trauma by the “Wish You Were Here” statement.

The last image is a night snapshot of black graffiti that reads “You Are Alive” on yellowish brick on the side of a building near the site of Towers a few days post 9/11. This image was particularly striking because it recognizes the loss of human life and forces the viewer to question the concept of a grievable life that Butler discusses. The aspect of graffiti here as social commentary is rather striking -- it forces a sense of survivor guilt upon the people passing by the wall. The words “you are alive” are haunting – the viewers must process that concept. The photo description states that: “I found this Graffiti on a wall on 9th Street between 3rd and 4th Avenue. September 14, 2001. The Graffiti has been cleaned up now.” The graffiti written is making a visual argument and commixing image and text. Some theorists would call this commixing an image event. While the concept of the image event is appropriately applicable, I would like to interrogate the multiple levels presented by the image. Galia Yanoshevesky writes that “image events are a subcategory of visual arguments” (1). She continues by stating “John Delicath and Kevin Deluca have defined image events as “staged acts of protest designed for media dissemination” (315) that offer a powerful way to appeal to audiences” (1).

Image events provide fragments of arguments that help foster public discussion and provide new ways of looking at issues within a public sphere. The words “you are a live” provoke the general public and create a sense of survivor’s guilt, which is perhaps why it was

removed. Yanoshevesky further claims that the image event needs to be considered in regards with the other elements it encounters, the mingling of text and image. Moreover, the aftermath of the image event can be a means “to challenge the hegemonic interpretation, to bring in a heteroglossy of meanings, to “crack open the door to new modes of thinking,” and to provide argumentative fragments for deliberation and argumentation” (Yanoshevesky 4). While Yanoshevesky makes the argument for the image event, and this is not to say that the graffiti on the wall cannot be seen as one, but it is moreover, a narrative. The narrative created both comments on the aftermath of 9/11 but also demonstrates a sense of solidarity by questioning what makes a life grievable.

The image/text is making a statement about the events of 9/11 and appropriates the public space to invite viewers and passersby to consider the implications of a grievable life. The words, “you are alive” echoes the last lines of David Foster Wallace’s short story “Westward The Course of Empire Takes Its Way” in *Girl with Curious Hair*, which are “you are loved” (373). David Foster Wallace states in an interview that “a big part of serious fiction’s purpose is to give the reader [...] imaginative access to other selves” (McCaffery 127). The 9/11 images and narratives and images seem to provide this access. Wallace continues to discuss the concept of suffering and its relationship to art. Wallace states that:

An ineluctable part of being a human self is suffering, part of what we humans come to art for is an experience of suffering [...] We all suffer alone in the real world; true empathy’s impossible. But if a piece of fiction can allow us imaginatively to identify with character’s pain, we might then also more easily conceive of others identifying with our own. This is nourishing, redemptive; we become less alone inside. (McCaffery 127)

What I mean to demonstrate with the image of the graffiti on the wall and Wallace's remarks is that there is to an extent an intrinsic human need to feel not alone, to search for that human solidarity. Ending with the image of the graffiti on the wall aptly promotes a sense of solidarity and questioning the concept of a grievable life. The graffiti image in many ways asks the viewers to consider the concept of a grievable life and to realize that this shared experience and shared suffering is not altruistic but rather demonstrates that human lives are interconnected. The shift to post-postmodernism asks these questions of human connectivity. The 9/11 narratives discussed in this project demonstrate that shift towards post-postmodernism by asking the question, what does it mean to be human today and what does it mean to be alive today in the post-9/11 context? By exploring the human aspect these narratives are able to process trauma through solidarity and by reflecting on the human story behind the trauma and the loss.

CONCLUSION: 9/11 AND BEYOND: “YOU ARE LOVED”

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 project. 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. And Spiegelman places himself in the role of the “Falling Man” as he theorizes the implications of the role of the visual and art in the post-9/11 climate. He visually depicts himself falling along side fiery red outlines of the WTC. 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 I mention in this project, 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. 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” (Dudziak 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 I stated in the beginning of this project, 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” (McLaughlin 67).

Post-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. Post-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, Foer and Spiegelman 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.

With regards to popular culture there is an interesting shift in science fiction in which revisionist historiographies of 9/11 are being presented. It seems to me really fascinating that an event that is still considered by many to be not yet in history already has alterative and revisionist historiographies being formulated. For example, William Gibson’s *Pattern Recognition* uses 9/11 as the backdrop for claiming the end of history and breaks away from the past and that history pre-9/11 becomes irrelevant. While this concept is relevant and 9/11 has certainly impacted the global structure, the view of 9/11 as being a historical reset button is interesting and problematic. Yes 9/11 has changed things, however, does the narration and

historicity of the event present such a large cultural phenomenon that history before the events of 9/11 seems impossible? Williams explores this question through the genre of science fiction in *Pattern Recognition*. Another example of science fiction's challenge of 9/11's historicity is creating alternate versions of the 9/11 attacks. For example, in J.J. Abrams's television show *Fringe*, there exists an alternate reality – a parallel universe – in which the September 11, 2001 attacks did occur but instead of targeting the WTC, the terrorists struck the White House.

There is a shift in the symbolic reality of representing the attacks. These revisionist historiographies on the one hand could 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 post-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 project as a part of the post-postmodern paradigm shift towards solidarity. The post-postmodern, as I see it, is 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 post-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*, Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, and Spiegelman's *In the Shadow of No Towers*, and the images extracted from the 9/11 Digital Archive make use of the events of 9/11 to ask this 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 post-postmodern literature/art, 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 project, is situated in a particular feminist and ethnic discourse but by placing that idea in conversation with these post-9/11 and post-postmodern narratives I wanted to show that solidarity and exploring what it means is not a localized phenomenon, but rather, that it 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* can help demonstrates the shift in this post-postmodern moment as not being culturally specific but rather as being human specific. Albeit, he comes to this conclusion through a culturally specific discussion, however, 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 a live.” 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 post-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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