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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Matthew Francis Carlini entitled "The 'Ruins of the Future': Counter-Narratives to Terrorism in the 9/11 Literature of Don DeLillo, Jonathan Safran Foer, and Ian McEwan." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.

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THE "RUINS OF THE FUTURE": COUNTER-NARRATIVES TO TERRORISM IN THE 9/11 LITERATURE OF DON DELILLO, JONATHAN SAFRAN FOER, AND IAN MCEWAN

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Arts
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

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August 2009

ABSTRACT

In the days after 9/11, Don DeLillo asserted that the narrative of the future ended in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks, and "it is left to us to create the counter-narrative" (34). In this thesis project, I illustrate how Jonathan Safran Foer and Ian McEwan take up DeLillo's call to construct a counter-narrative to empty futurism and the backwards-oriented narrative of terrorism. Through my comparative analysis of *Cosmopolis* and *Falling Man* in Chapter One, I illustrate how DeLillo argues for the renewed importance of the place of memory in the world following the attacks of 9/11. *Cosmopolis'* world of constant motion illustrates a pre-9/11 mindset of the persistent "white-hot future" that eviscerates the space of memory in society. However, in *Falling Man*, following the attacks of 9/11, the characters highlight the utility and importance of productively engaging with the past in order to move forward into the future. After setting up the renewed importance of memory after 9/11, I turn to an analysis of how the increased importance of memory structures the 9/11 writings of Jonathan Safran Foer and Ian McEwan as they extend DeLillo's literary counter-narrative to terrorism. Chapter Two's discussion of Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* highlights how the narrative itself serves as a site of memory that speaks to the power of a productive engagement with the past to illuminate the future. An engagement with his grandfather's past allows Oskar Schell to look back and provide a witness to the traumatic past of his grandparents at Dresden in order to transition beyond the trauma of losing his father on 9/11. Finally, Chapter Three concerns Ian McEwan's *Saturday*, specifically how Henry Perowne and his family struggle with the vicarious traumatization that they experience living in an anxious post-9/11 geopolitical moment. Ultimately, these novels construct a forward-looking counter-narrative to the backwards-looking

narrative of terrorism that productively engages with the past in order to transition into the future, at the same time that they speak to the trauma of the present.

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Introduction

Constructing a Literary Counter-Narrative to Terrorism

"Many things are over now. The narrative ends in the rubble, and it is left to us to create the counter-narrative."

—Don DeLillo "In the Ruins of the Future"

Since the completion of their construction in 1973, the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center have cast a large shadow across not only the island of Manhattan but also across the American national imagination.[1] As a symbol of American capitalist might and an emblem of the "white-hot future," they served as highly symbolic buildings that spoke both to the promises and the problems inherent to American democracy and free-market capitalism (DeLillo 34). In addition to their role as a political symbol, the twin towers have also cut a rather prodigious figure as a "character" in contemporary literature. Their shadows haunt the literary oeuvre of Don DeLillo—from 1977's *Players* through 2007's *Falling Man*. Indeed, they serve as a focalizing afterimage in both political and literary discourses surrounding the terrorist attacks. Far from disappearing after 9/11, the shadow cast by the towers continues to persist in the aftermath of their destruction.[2]

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[1] As Habermas argues when he addresses to what degree the attacks of 9/11 were unprecedented, "What was new was the symbolic force of the targets struck. The attackers did not just physically cause the highest buildings in Manhattan to collapse; they also destroyed an icon in the household imagery of the American nation. Only in the surge of patriotism that followed did one begin to recognize the central importance the towers held in the popular imagination, with their irreplaceable imprint on the Manhattan skyline and their powerful embodiment of economic strength and projection toward the future" (Habermas qtd. in Borradori 28).

[2] The use of the term "9/11" in this study is a conscious choice made for the sake of argument concision. To see Derrida's detailed examination of the theoretical considerations that lie behind referring to an event with a date, see his dialogue with Giovanna Borradori in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*.

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, which erased the physical shadow cast by the towers, have emerged as one of the key geopolitical and cultural moments of twenty-first century America.[3] The aftershocks of the attacks continue to structure American political and cultural discourse, and as the chronological distance from the terrorist attacks of 9/11 increases, the number of politico-philosophical and literary discourses surrounding the event continues to multiply. A number of prominent theorists have weighed in on the politico-philosophical implications of the terrorist attacks of September 11, including Jean Baudrillard, Slavoj Zizek, Paul Virilio, Noam Chomsky, Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida. These theorists examine the overarching geopolitical implications of terrorism and the United States's response to the attacks.

One common theme in these texts is the desire of terrorists to achieve a destructive return to the past. As Don DeLillo asserts in his *Harper's Magazine* essay "In the Ruins of the Future," the narrative of the "white-hot future" emblematized by the World Trade Center lies in the rubble of the terrorist attacks of 9/11, and the task at hand is to create the counter-narrative to terrorism. DeLillo is not the only writer or theorist to assert that the terrorist attacks of September 11 represent a challenge to contemporary life's prevailing narrative of the future. Habermas and Derrida also offer perspectives on the ways in which terrorism represents an assault upon the future. In the introduction to her edited set of dialogues with Habermas and Derrida, Giovanna Borradori highlights the manner in which the project of terrorism speaks against the rushing onset of the future as she contends that the "explicit ideology of the terrorists responsible for the attacks of 9/11 rejects modernity and secularization" (Borradori xi). This

[3] Habermas and Derrida disagree concerning the status of 9/11 as a singular world historic event. For Habermas, it is the first world historic event (49), while for Derrida it merely looks like a major event (96) due to an intensification of a typical event by the media. However, within either of these perspectives, the events of 9/11 assume the appearance of a major world event.

rejection of the ever-onrushing progress of modernity necessitates a reevaluation of the project of Enlightenment theorists. As Borradori notes:

> While for Habermas terrorism is the effect of the trauma of modernization, which has spread around the world at a pathological speed, Derrida sees terrorism as a symptom of a traumatic element intrinsic to modern experience, whose focus is always on the future, somewhat pathologically understood as promise, hope, and self-affirmation. Both are somber reflections on the legacy of the Enlightenment: the relentless search for a critical perspective that must start with self-examination. (22)

The "pathological speed" of modernization and the traumatizing elements of modern experience, with its constant focus on the future, contribute to the rise of a destructive desire to return to the past that typifies terrorism. Therefore, for both Habermas and Derrida, terrorism emerges as a narrative strongly opposed to the intense speed of onrushing futurity that seems to be especially intrinsic to modern living. Derrida asserts that the actions and discourses of terrorism "open onto no future and, in my view, have no future" (113) due to their destructive desire to return to the past. Thus, in the face of the terrorists' desire to return unconditionally to the past, it is the work of contemporary culture to engage productively with the past through the workings of memory. Through the mechanisms and workings of memory, contemporary society must also critically confront its own desire for and reliance upon the ever-onrushing white-hot future. Mitigating society's intense futurity through an engagement with the past, literature helps construct a forward-looking counter-narrative to terrorism that productively engages with the past in order to open out onto a humanized future. Borradori aptly sums up the thought of Derrida in this regard as she addresses the manner in which memory engages with both the past and the future:

> After all, Derrida points out, the movement of memory is not necessarily tied to the past. Memory is not only about preserving and conserving the past, it is always already turned toward the future, "toward the promise, toward what is coming, what is arriving, what is happening tomorrow." (172)

Thus, for Derrida—as well as the fiction writers that I will examine over the course of this study—a turn toward the past through an engagement with the workings of memory mitigates the present's destabilizing reliance upon the white hot future and also contributes to constructing an effective counter-narrative to terrorism.

A wide range of writers have produced literary works that speak to the oftentimes traumatic effects of the terrorist attacks on the lives of individuals. This study focuses upon three such works that are especially suffused with considerations of memory—Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*, Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, and Ian McEwan's *Saturday*. While there are now a wide array of fictional works dealing with the events and aftermath of 9/11,[4] there remains relatively little criticism on these works and the ways in which the generic category of "9/11 literature" as a whole functions culturally in our contemporary world. Despite the recent publication of Ann Keniston and Jeanne Follansbee Quinn's edited volume *Literature After 9/11*, a great deal of critical work remains to be done on the literature surrounding the events of September 11, 2001—especially criticism that takes into consideration the ways in which the two above-mentioned varieties of discourse intersect in 9/11 novels.

[4] Prominent examples of literary works centered around 9/11 and its aftermath include Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*, Frédéric Beigbeder's *Windows on the World*, Andre Dubus III's *The Garden of Last Days*, William Gibson's *Pattern Recognition*, Ken Kalfus's *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country*, Jay McInerney's *The Good Life*, Claire Messud's *The Emperor's Children*, Hamid Mohsin's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland*, Art Spiegelman's *In The Shadow of No Towers*, and Paul West's *The Immensity of the Here and Now*.

That is, although there has been a great deal written that addresses 9/11, the two distinct varieties of narrative concerning the events have remained largely separate—often at the expense of a frank public discussion that grapples with both the political issues that give rise to terrorism as well as the traumatic force that it exerts in the world. E. Ann Kaplan addresses the public silence concerning narratives that attempt to link these two discourses:

> Political public discussion of 9/11 has been and still is (despite the remarkable 2004 9/11 Report) inadequate because of the unfortunate limits being set on what can and cannot be debated. But why must confrontational, thorough, and critical political debate be opposed to a discourse including empathy for those who suffer trauma and hurt? Can't we have substantial political analyses that criticize the actions of the United States in the past and present, and yet welcome public discussion about trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder, vicarious traumatization, and ways to help those suffering these disorders? (Kaplan 16)

Kaplan urges the examination of the factors that contribute to terrorism in tandem with the concerns of trauma victims. Similarly, this study aims to explore the ways in which three novelists of 9/11 link these two discourses in an effort to transcend the trauma of terrorism, reshape the geopolitics of futurity that give rise to terrorism, and move productively into the future. Kaplan contends that the literary must merge with the ideological and the ideological must merge with the literary in order to work through the traumas of 9/11. In light of Kaplan's considerations about the failings of public discourse, this project will explore how novelists step into the void to link the two discourses related to 9/11 and simultaneously give voice to political and individual perspectives on the impact of terrorism. This disjunction between the two varieties of discourse—the psychological and the political—also appears in the critical literature written about works that address the attacks. In the majority of articles published on 9/11

literature thus far, scholars largely limit their work either to considering the manner in which a given text comments on the geopolitical situation or to discussing individual experiences of trauma. This study aims to balance these discussions and examine the critical literature surrounding 9/11 fiction, analyzing how explicit narratives of trauma implicitly construct an overarching counter-narrative to terrorism.

Into the space of this inadequate public discussion step the novelists addressed in this study. The writers that I address have stepped into this space of silence in an attempt to link the politico-philosophical and traumatic narratives centering on 9/11.[5] In the wake of 9/11, these novelists have used words to find meaning in both the personal and political, as well as the literal and the metaphorical, voids created in the wake of 9/11. While these novelists explicitly highlight the traumatic experiences of individuals in their novels, the suffusion of the individual lives that they depict with processes of memory contributes to an implicit overarching political counter-narrative that speaks against the onset of the white-hot future. The implicit counter-narrative present in these works critically examines the political conditions that gave rise to the events of 9/11, while still treating the traumatic experiences of individuals with empathy and concern.

Over the course of the study, I will illustrate how the novelists under consideration write narratives of individual trauma that simultaneously construct an overarching counter-narrative to the destructive backwards-oriented narrative of terrorism. Ultimately, I will argue that the works under consideration in this study are suffused with the workings of memory and that the reliance upon memory in these novels serves a dual focus as it works to merge the traumatic and the

[5] Ulrich Baer provides one perspective on the function of narratives in the wake of disaster in his introduction to his 2002 edited collection *110 Stories: New York Writes After September 11*, when he surmises that "stories explore the possibilities of language in the face of gaping loss, and register that words might be all that's left for the task of finding meaning in—and beyond—the silent, howling void" (1).

polemical or politico-philosophic narratives surrounding 9/11. Apropos to my study is David Simpson's Derridean theory concerning the workings of memory:

> Rituals of memorialization exist to assimilate these intense and particular griefs into received vocabularies and higher broader realms than the merely personal. The routines of commemorative culture, whether private or public, exist to mediate and accommodate the unbearably dissonant agonies of the survivors into a larger picture that can be metaphysical or national-political and is often both at once. (2)

In the novels I examine, memory functions in a manner similar to Derrida's and Simpson's formulations—serving a dual function as both a process of mourning/memorialization and a political counter-narrative to terrorism—while I contend that in these novels of 9/11 memory engages with the past in order to productively open out onto the future.

More specifically, this project will consider how the novels under discussion function as both literal and metaphorical sites of memory, or *lieux de mémoire*. By applying the trauma theory of E. Ann Kaplan in conjunction with the historical thought of Pierre Nora, this study connects the geopolitical counter-narratives of the politico-philosophical discourses of 9/11 to the individual traumatic narratives of authors' fictional accounts of the terrorist events.[6] Analyzing the intersection of these two broad categories of 9/11 narratives shows how the

[6] This study chooses to utilize theories concerning trauma from the perspective of a film theorist due to the acute visuality of the terrorist attacks of the events of 9/11. Borradori observes that according to Habermas, "never before did anyone get as much reality from a TV screen as people worldwide got on 9/11. The footage of 9/11 wasn't edited or even produced for its own media coverage and this renders it, in his words, the 'first historic world event'" (49). Although Derrida contends that it was the nearly constant portrayal of the events of 9/11 by the media that conveyed an impression of the event as a singular world historic event, his strain of thought itself speaks to the vast importance of the visual in assessing the impact of 9/11. The authors under consideration in this study address this visuality in varying fashions; however, the visual impact of the events of 9/11 structures each of their responses in its own way, thereby lending validity to the application of a film studies perspective to novels of 9/11.

authors under discussion construct an overarching counter-narrative to the narrative of terrorism through the development of trauma narratives that emerge as literary sites of memory.

This project begins with Don DeLillo. Chapter One, entitled "From the 'Ruins of the Future' a Space of Memory Arises," foregrounds DeLillo's literary and non-fiction responses to the events of 9/11 to illustrate how *Falling Man* signals the collapse of the "white-hot future," and the subsequent renewed importance of memory, through its depiction of the drastic spatial modifications wrought by 9/11 upon New York. Through the shifts that occur between *Cosmopolis* and *Falling Man*, DeLillo asserts that 9/11 instituted a transition from a space obsessed with futurity towards a space structured through memory. Extending a latent strain of thought within the theory of Pierre Nora, the chapter contends that DeLillo's characters emerge as living *lieux de mémoire* in the post-9/11 New York cityscape and that for DeLillo, the reinstitution of memory in New York serves as a redemptive counter-narrative to terrorism's destructive attack upon the future.

Chapters Two and Three address how the key thematic concerns of DeLillo's work operate in the writing of Jonathan Safran Foer and Ian McEwan. Chapter Two's discussion of Foer's, "'*Stuff that Happened to Me*': *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* as a Narrative Site of Memory," highlights how the narrative itself serves as a site of memory that speaks to the power of a productive engagement with the past to illuminate the future. Foer's narrative constructs a series of traumatic memoirs in order to explore issues of transgenerational trauma. This theme of trauma across generations allows Oskar Schell to look back and provide a witness to the traumatic past of his grandparents at Dresden to transition beyond the trauma of losing his father on 9/11. In Chapter Three's discussion of McEwan's *Saturday*, "A *Saturday* in the Life: Ian McEwan, Vicarious Trauma, and Embodied Sites of Memory," I highlight how an engagement

with the past assists Henry Perowne and his family in their struggles with the vicarious traumatization that they experience living in an anxious post-9/11 geopolitical moment. Throughout the novel, as he goes about his daily tasks, Henry Perowne engages with the memories that constitute his past in a fashion that would be unthinkable for DeLillo's Eric Packer in *Cosmopolis*. Henry's engagement with these streams of memory transforms him and his family members into embodied sites of memory. Memory similarly plays an important role in the climax of *Saturday*. Perowne's ability to awaken a yearning for a productive engagement with the past in the memory-stricken mind of Baxter subdues the hostile invader long enough for the Perownes to defend themselves.

Throughout these chapters I also analyze how *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and *Saturday* trace an ever widening spatial, chronological, and psychic distance from the traumatic events of 9/11. While *Falling Man*'s Keith Neudecker survives the physical attack upon the Twin Towers, in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, Oskar Schell experiences the trauma of 9/11 through the loss of a loved one. *Saturday*'s Henry Perowne experiences 9/11 through its attendant *cultural* anxiety. Therefore, the order of the texts under discussion proceeds from first-hand experiences of trauma to a wide-reaching cultural traumatism and is a means to explore the far-reaching impact of 9/11. Ultimately, I will assert that the texts under consideration serve as narratives that operate both literally and metaphorically as *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, in a post-9/11 age. These sites of memory allow characters to engage productively with the past in order to transition into the future while also constructing a counter-narrative to terrorism that emerges from the rubble of the Twin Towers.

Chapter One

From the 'Ruins of the Future' a Space of Memory Arises

In his 1997 essay "The Power of History," Don DeLillo writes that "a fiction writer feels the nearly palpable lure of large events and it can make him want to enter the narrative" (60). DeLillo clearly feels the lure of the large event of this new century, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and he has entered the narrative surrounding the attacks through *Cosmopolis*, "In the Ruins of the Future," and *Falling Man*. He is in a unique position to comment upon the attacks, since, as Margaret Scanlon states, "terror, like an airborne toxic event, floats across the deceptively shiny surfaces of DeLillo's fiction" (229). DeLillo's *Falling Man* engages with both his essay and *Cosmopolis* to claim that the attacks of 9/11 have reshaped the contours of New York urban cultural space that his characters inhabit. Working through these recent additions to DeLillo's *oeuvre*, this chapter asserts the events of 9/11 restructured the way his characters inhabit the space of New York City that serves as the setting for both novels. In *Cosmopolis*, the constant motion of the novel's main character through New York in "a virtual road novel" illustrates a space of futurity that is obsessed with an intense solipsism and a future-oriented ethic of capitalist consumption (Valentino 148). However, in *Falling Man*, DeLillo presents characters that illustrate a drastic shift away from the "constant becoming" of *Cosmopolis* towards a centered notion of being that privileges the memory of the past. The discontinuous way in which his characters move through and respond to space in these two novels illustrates that for DeLillo, 9/11 represents a radical shift away from a space of futurity towards a space of memory.

DeLillo provides a literary illustration of the thought of Pierre Nora concerning the disjunction between memory and history through this shift in the New York space of his two novels. Through an application and extension of Nora's theories relating to sites of memory, DeLillo's *Falling Man* proposes a counter-narrative to the narrative of terrorism that he argues asserted itself on 9/11. DeLillo's counter-narrative holds that in the wake of 9/11, individuals can serve as living *lieux de mémoire* in the world, a space that in *Cosmopolis* was almost totally devoid of memory.[7] DeLillo's positioning of the individual as a site of memory establishes a redemptive vision of Nora's *lieux de mémoire* through the reinstitution of memory in post-9/11 New York. Thus, while the narrative of terrorism focuses upon violently transitioning the world away from the onrushing future and back towards history, DeLillo's counter-narrative to the terrorist attacks focuses upon the embrace of a redemptive space of memory, through which the individual can move into the future with a renewed sense of the past.

In the modern academy, recent literature across a wide array of disciplines focuses upon issues of memory, especially as it relates to historical discourse and what has been termed a crisis of modern memory.[8] One of the events that stimulated this interest was the publication of Pierre Nora's essay "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Memoire*" in which Nora, speaking of the disjunction between history and memory, identifies memory "as a primitive or sacred form opposed to modern historical consciousness" (Klein 127). For Nora, "There are *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, because there are no longer, *milieux de mémoire*, real environments of memory" (Nora 7). Nora asserts that "We speak so much of memory because

[7] For an examination of Nora's implicit notion that the body can serve as a repository for memory, see Legg's article "Contesting and Surviving Memory: Space, Nation, and Nostalgia in *Les Lieux de Mémoire*."

[8] Klein provides an astute examination of the rise of studies of memory in the modern academy in his "On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse." Also see Hutton's "Recent Scholarship on Memory and History" for a brief examination of recent scholarship in related areas.

there is so little of it left" (7), and "if we were able to live within memory, we would not have needed to consecrate *lieux de mémoire* in its name" (8). Thus, according to Nora, these *lieux de mémoire* emerge as negative side effects of an inability to live within the sacred space of myth and memory. Phillip Wolf argues that these sites of memory carry a negative connotation, since "the modern *lieux de mémoire* are always also an expression of absence, of the impossibility of a living repetition or re-presentation of a commonly shared past" (17).

However, in the world of *Cosmopolis*, even *lieux de mémoire* have disappeared from the landscape of pre-9/11 New York, resulting in a world devoid of memory. *Cosmopolis*, a novel that features a protagonist in a state of constant motion through a world that looks continually towards the future, provides an apt illustration of the space of futurity that characterizes DeLillo's vision of pre-9/11 New York City, while at the same time it depicts Nora's hypothetical conception of a space devoid of memory and under the thrall of the white-hot future. While the novel was published after the 9/11 attacks, it is clear from the April 2000 date in which DeLillo situates *Cosmopolis* that he is attempting to evoke a pre-9/11 cultural moment. In his essay on the events of 9/11, DeLillo speaks to the space of futurity that *Cosmopolis* suggests:

> In the past decade the surge of capital markets has dominated discourse and shaped global consciousness. Multinational corporations have come to seem more vital and influential than governments. The dramatic climb of the Dow and the speed of the internet summoned us all to live permanently in the future, in the utopian glow of cyber-capital, because there is no memory there and this is where markets are uncontrolled and investment potential has no limit. ("Ruins" 33)

As Eric Packer, the main character of the novel, moves through the city exerting his influence with reckless abandon, he emerges as an individual who has been "summoned to live permanently in the future because there is no memory there."

As Packer moves through the streets of New York in pursuit of a haircut, the future is constantly on his mind. As Jerry Varsava observes, "Though existentially constrained by the present like everyone else, Packer seeks to transcend the present through the pursuit of futurity, and it is above all technology that serves as a proxy for the latter" (Varsava 85-6). Even the disgruntled employee who will later assassinate Packer surmises, "He is always ahead, thinking past what is new, and I'm tempted to admire this, always arguing with things that you and I consider great and trusty additions to our lives. Things wear out impatiently in his hands. I know him in my mind. He wants to be one civilization ahead of this one" (*Cosmopolis* 152). Time-space compression as outlined by David Harvey structures the uncertainty surrounding the present moment and forces Packer to turn to the future in an effort to control his world. As the novel's narrative voice states, Packer "liked to know what was coming" (*Cosmopolis* 38). However, Harvey's time-space compression forces Packer to attempt to "mastermind the volatility" since attempts to "discount the future into the present" paradoxically create a constantly onrushing future (Harvey 292). Packer illustrates this tendency to attempt to mastermind the volatility and consequently "attain mastery over ideas and people" (*Cosmopolis* 52). Through his speculations on the Yen and the world's interrelated money markets, Packer attempts to make sense of the constant flux of the present moment. In his attempts to reduce the entirety of the world around him to a set of quantifiable data flows through a constant consumption of the stock ticker and news reports in his mobile office/limousine, Packer, and the space of *Cosmopolis,* speaks to a society that as Nora imagines is "entirely absorbed in its own

historicity. It would be incapable of producing historians. Living entirely under the sign of the future, it would satisfy itself with automatic self-recording processes and auto-inventory machines, postponing indefinitely the task of understanding itself" (Nora 18). As the incessant stock ticker serves as the cyber-capitalists' "automatic self-recording processes and auto-inventory machines," it illustrates what Nora terms "…the tremendous dilation of our very mode of historical perception, which, with the help of the media, has substituted for a memory entwined in the intimacy of a collective heritage the ephemeral film of current events" (7-8). Thus, *Cosmopolis* emerges as the hypothetical example of Nora's society "living entirely under the sign of the future."

DeLillo explores the pre-9/11 New York space of futurity and its impact upon the individual through Packer's chief of theory—Vija Kinski. DeLillo uses her character as his mouthpiece to present the theoretical underpinning for the space of futurity Packer inhabits, as well as his concerns related to the white-hot future. Kinski cites the very phenomenon that DeLillo names in his essay on 9/11 as a force for drawing individuals into the future: "the glow of cyber-capital" (*Cosmopolis* 78). Packer and his fellow capitalists create the glow of cyber-capital as part of their attempts, in Harvey's terminology, to mastermind the volatility of the world. Kinski also highlights the extremely powerful ability of the "glow of cyber-capital" to draw the individual into the future. She readily admits that she "understands none of it," yet she finds the screens that track the cyber-capital in Eric's limousine "radiant and seductive" (78). She then goes on to echo Harvey in her discussion with Eric: "The idea is time. Living in the future. Look at those numbers running. Money makes time. It used to be the other way around. Clock time accelerated the rise of capitalism" (78-79). Kinski realizes that it is the power of cyber-capital that accelerates the onrush of the future and structures pre-9/11 New York into a

space of futurity: "It's cyber-capital that creates the future" (79). Kinski also aptly summarizes the relation between cyber-capital, consumer capitalism and the future:

> Time is a corporate asset now. It belongs to the free market system. The present is harder to find. It is being sucked out of the world to make way for the future of uncontrolled markets and huge investment potential. The future becomes insistent. This is why something will happen soon, maybe today…To correct the acceleration of time. Bring nature back to normal, more or less. (79)

Through Kinski's theoretical musings, DeLillo's implicit societal critique in *Cosmopolis* implicates the future and foreshadows critiques of capitalism by the backwards-oriented narrative of terrorists on 9/11. Therefore, the pre-9/11 space of *Cosmopolis*, in which the future is everything, does not even contain the attempts at memory that Nora castigates as *lieux de mémoire*, much less *milieux de mémoire*. It is, instead, a space almost completely devoid of memory.

In a world where the future is everything, Packer is troubled by the sense of memory that objects or spaces suggest. As he has his daily doctor's checkup in his stretch limousine, the narrator relays Packer's thoughts on the outmoded nature of the doctor's tools: "He didn't know why stethoscopes were still in use. They were lost tools of antiquity, quaint as bloodsucking worms" (43). Similar sentiments emerge when he muses on ATM's in the city: "He was thinking about automated teller machines. The term was aged and burdened by its own historical memory. It worked at cross-purposes, unable to escape the inference of fuddled human personnel and jerky moving parts. The term was part of the process that the device was meant to replace. It was anti-futuristic, so cumbrous and mechanical that even the acronym seemed dated" (54). Since, according to Varsava, "Technology is Packer's means to hegemony and, at the same time,

its possession the purest expression of it," these artifacts of the past disrupt Packer's dominance over the future and result in what Varsava terms "…his dismissive views of purportedly antiquated consumer goods" (86). In Nora's terms, these outmoded artifacts are the closest things the novel offers to sites of memory:

> *Lieux de mémoire* are fundamentally remains, the ultimate embodiments of a memorial consciousness that has barely survived in a historical age that calls out for memory because it has abandoned it. They make their appearance by virtue of the deritualization of our world—producing, manifesting, establishing, constructing, decreeing and maintaining by artifice and by will a society deeply absorbed in its own transformation and renewal, one that inherently values the new over the ancient, the young over the old, the future over the past. It is the nostalgic dimension of these devotional institutions that makes them seem beleaguered and cold—they mark the rituals of a society without ritual. (12)

Thus, working through the thought of Nora, one sees that the space of futurity in *Cosmopolis* represents an extreme case of a society "deeply absorbed in its own transformation and renewal" that "values the new over the ancient […] the future over the past," since it has abandoned even nostalgic relics of memory.

DeLillo also addresses the theme of doubt as it relates to the onrush of the future throughout *Cosmopolis*. His treatment of doubt within the novel further illustrates his concern with the manner in which a space of futurity obliterates the workings of memory. DeLillo asserts that in the space of futurity, doubt has been eliminated and replaced with a faith in the future, which establishes a society living firmly under the sign of the future. For example, Packer responds thus to his personal art dealer and sometime lover, Didi Fancher, as she tells

him that doubt has begun to creep into his life: "'Doubt? What is doubt?' He said, 'There is no doubt. Nobody doubts anymore" (*Cosmopolis* 31). The space of futurity that Eric inhabits attempts to eliminate the notion of doubt because the concept implies a retrospective focus upon memory. After all, the very notion of doubt is predicated upon a reexamination of one's beliefs. Vija Kinski reveals the dependence of doubt upon a memory of the past when she responds to Packer's revelation that he is beginning to doubt that he can see the "affinity" between the market and the natural world in the case of the Yen: "'Doubt. What is doubt? You don't believe in doubt. You've told me this. Computer power eliminates doubt. All doubt rises from past experience. But the past is disappearing. We used to know the past but not the future. This is changing,' she said. 'We need a new theory of time'" (86). In this quotation DeLillo illustrates the tendency for a space of futurity to empty the consciousness of the individual of any focus upon memories of the past. As the past disappears through the constant onset of the future, individuals' memory of the past disappears as well.

Despite the loss of his fortune through the vicissitudes of the market and his attempt to inhabit the present moment, Packer remains situated firmly in a pre-9/11 space of futurity due to his inability to engage with memories of the past. Packer comments on this shortcoming when he ties his inability to engage in acts of memory to the processes of cyber-capital with which he is engaged: "I've never liked thinking back, going back in time, reviewing the day or the week or the life. To crush or gut. To Eviscerate. Power works best when there's no memory attached" (*Cosmopolis* 184). In this passage, Packer's thoughts reveal the problematic nature of memory in a space of futurity and the resulting suppression of memory at the hands of the power of global cyber-capital. The powers behind the ever increasing global forces of cyber-capital want to suppress memory in order to focus individuals upon the future and quash any doubt that the

memory of the past raises relating to the negative consequences of the onward rush of global capital. For Eric and the other leaders of the global cyber-capital movement, the power that they yield works best without the fetters of memory.

Even in Packer's final earthly act, his death at the hands of Benno Levin, he attempts to hold onto an understanding of the future as he muses on the future of cyber-capital and its development of a space of futurity beyond natural life: "It would be the master thrust of cyber-capital, to extend the human experience toward infinity as a medium for corporate growth and investment, for the accumulation of profits and vigorous reinvestment" (*Cosmopolis* 207). Due to his inability to engage in the processes of memory, his intense focus upon the future remains as Packer dies: "This is not the end. He is dead inside the crystal of his watch but still alive in original space, waiting for the shot to sound" (209). Therefore, even in death Eric reveals the insistent claims of the white-hot future.

In light of his post-9/11 social criticism and fiction, DeLillo's recent work illustrates how the narrative of terrorism necessitates a break with the insistent future of *Cosmopolis* (230). DeLillo's *Falling Man*, alongside his essay "In the Ruins of the Future," also illustrates his construction of a counter-narrative to the backwards-oriented narrative arc of terrorism. This movement parallels DeLillo's shift away from a space of futurity towards a space of memory that features the individual as a redemptive example of Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire*. Following 9/11, in the New York space of DeLillo's *Falling Man*, Nora's *lieux de mémoire* reappear. As he explores the impact of 9/11, DeLillo astutely notes that "We have fallen back in time and space" ("Ruins" 38). When examining the impact of 9/11 on the utopian glow of cyber-capital that predominated prior to the attacks and structured the space of *Cosmopolis*, DeLillo simply states, "All this changed on September 11" (33). According to DeLillo, what

drew the fury of the terrorists was "the high gloss of our modernity" and "the thrust of our technology," the very technology that drove Packer resolutely onwards into the future (33). The terrorist attacks of 9/11 attempted to hold off the future in order to keep it from overwhelming the present. DeLillo goes on to state, "We like to think America invented the future. We are comfortable with the future, intimate with it. But there are disturbances now, in large and small ways, a chain of reconsiderations" ("Ruins" 39). Thus, for DeLillo, the future "has yielded, for now, to medieval expedience, to the slow old furies of cutthroat religion" (37). The future loses its insistence in the wake of 9/11. Through *Falling Man*, DeLillo highlights the changes following 9/11 and creates a counter-narrative, since in the aftermath of the attacks, "Many things are over. The narrative ends in the rubble, and it is left to us to create the counter-narrative" (34). Thus, DeLillo seeks to explicate a counter-narrative to terrorism that emerges from the narrative of futurity that ended in the ashes of 9/11.

What does this counter-narrative to terrorism entail? For DeLillo, "The writer begins in the towers, trying to imagine the moment, desperately. Before politics, before history and religion, there is the primal terror. People falling from the towers hand in hand. This is part of the counter-narrative, hand and spirits joining, human beauty in the crush of meshed steel" (39). According to DeLillo, the terrorists wish to drag us back into a historical past. However, for Nora, "Memory and history, far from being synonymous, appear now to be in fundamental opposition" (Nora 8). While "memory is life," history, on the other hand "is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete of what is no longer. Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past" (Nora 8). DeLillo implicitly appropriates the disjunction between these concepts to contest the oppressively historical and backwards seeking regime of terrorism, with the ultimately

redemptive return of memory to the space of New York that allows the individual to proceed beyond the trauma of 9/11 into a space that is more humane than Eric Packer's world of futurity. In fact, through his illustration of a space of memory in *Falling Man*, DeLillo presents his *characters* as *lieux de mémoire*, or sites of memory, that emerge as a counter-narrative to terrorism, one that embraces the new-found focus on memory. These characters consequently emerge as a key element of DeLillo's counter-narrative as they embrace the renewed importance of memory in a post-9/11 world.

In sharp contrast to the society "living entirely under the sign of the future" that DeLillo presents in *Cosmopolis*, *Falling Man* illustrates a space of memory (Nora 18). This contrast emerges on a structural level through the organization of the novels' differing narratives. While *Cosmopolis* utilizes a traditional narrative structure that drives towards the future and an imminent conclusion to the novel's plot through Eric's physical journey across the city, *Falling Man* is an essentially circular narrative suffused with memory and narrative flashbacks. The novel's finale, the collision of the planes into the World Trade Center Towers and the beginning of Keith's journey back to his ex-wife Lianne, could just as easily be read as the novel's opening, thereby illustrating a narrative space permeated with memory. Keith himself privileges the space of memory as he returns to his past life with Lianne following the attacks. Thus, while the very structure of *Cosmopolis* rushes onwards into the future, the narrative structure of *Falling Man* turns towards the redemptive space of memory.

At several key moments in the text, DeLillo's descriptions of *Falling Man*'s protagonist Keith Neudecker and his ex-wife serve as contrasts to the portrait of Eric Packer. Through these oppositions, DeLillo highlights the shift from a space of futurity to a space of memory, in which

individuals such as Keith and Lianne exist as sites of memory. Keith at once calls to mind and contradicts the characterization of Eric Packer:

> It was Keith as well who was going slow, easing inward. He used to want to fly out of self-awareness, day and night, a body in raw motion. Now he finds himself drifting into spells of reflection, thinking not in clear units, hard and linked, but only absorbing what comes, drawing things out of time and memory and into some dim space that bears his collected experience. (*Falling Man* 66)

This description highlights how Keith has shifted from a space of futurity towards a space of memory following the terrorist attacks of 9/11. As DeLillo himself writes, "For many people, the event has changed the grain of the most routine moment" ("Ruins" 39). Keith retreats from the onrushing pursuit of the future that characterized DeLillo's pre-9/11 New York. He has turned away from the life of a "body in raw motion," a phrase that aptly describes the manner in which Packer cuts an aggressive swath through the world, and he is "easing inward" as he takes his past habit of playing poker to professional heights in an attempt to center himself in a world of being that contradicts the world of constant motion portrayed in *Cosmopolis*. The card playing functions simultaneously as an act of memory and as part of Keith's inward retreat since it calls to mind the poker games Keith played with his friends who died in the World Trade Center and also centers him at the same time. Through poker, Keith surmises, "He was becoming the air he breathed" as he moves ever further into a centered notion of self over the course of the novel (*Falling Man* 230). Following the attacks of 9/11, Keith achieves an ability to engage in the acts of memory that Packer was unable to cultivate in his societal space enshrined under the sign of the future.

Keith's remembrance of the attacks with Florence Givens, a woman whose briefcase he returns after carrying it off the morning of 9/11, highlights the narrative's use of the individual as a repository for memory. The interactions between Florence and Keith, in which they recount their experiences of that September morning, illustrate the importance of a space of memory to serve as a redemptive counter-narrative to terrorism. One of Keith and Florence's encounters situates their interactions as acts of memory and its importance in their lives: "She talked about the tower, going over it again, claustrophobically, the smoke, the fold of bodies, and he understood that they could talk about these things only with each other, in minute and dullest detail, but it would never be dull or too detailed because it was inside them now and because he needed to hear what he'd lost in the tracings of memory" (*Falling Man* 90-91). This quotation sets up DeLillo's characters as sites of memory since the events were "inside them now" as they move into a new future. Although these sites of memory are typically signs of an empty nostalgia according to Nora, in the post-9/11 landscape DeLillo transforms them into redemptive sites through his situation of individuals as *lieux de mémoire*. Keith's and Florence's attempts to engage with their memories emerge as a contrast to Eric Packer, who was totally cut off from memory. Keith's and Florence's relationship thus signals the redemptive movement of individuals engaging with the past in the wake of 9/11.

Keith also highlights a change in the intensely acquisitive nature of cyber-capital following the terrorists' attacks on the future. As DeLillo notes in the narrative, "Keith used to want to acquire more of the world than there was time and means to acquire. He didn't want this anymore, whatever it was he'd wanted, in real terms, real things, because he'd never truly known" (*Falling Man* 128). If there were ever a character who attempted to acquire "more of the world than there was time and means to," it would be Eric Packer. In contrast, following his

experiences on 9/11, Keith sees that the seductive glow of cyber-capital is not the pinnacle of human existence. In this passage, DeLillo also suggests that the allure of cyber-capital actually prevents individuals even from knowing what they truly want or value in this world. Related to Keith's movement away from the glow of cyber-capital is his decision to return to his ex-wife and son. This movement partially corrects the intense imbalance between the realms of cosmos and hearth that Packer perpetuated in the pre-9/11 space of *Cosmopolis*.[9] Keith privileges the realm of hearth over cosmos following the attacks, shifting away from Packer's ideal of constant motion towards a more solid sense of individual identity: "…he was about to become someone of clear and distinct definition, husband and father, finally, occupying a room in three dimensions in the manner of his parents" (157). In this passage DeLillo reveals that Keith is seeking another kind of life following 9/11, a life based in the newly developing space of memory, one that is redemptive and settled.

However, despite his own status as a site of memory, Keith is ultimately not as effective as Lianne at transitioning beyond the traumatic events of 9/11. This difference between the two characters ultimately stems from Lianne's realization of her role as a site of memory through her interactions with the performance artist known as Falling Man, and DeLillo thus reinforces *Falling Man*'s overall focus on memory through the character of Lianne. She illustrates the centrality of memory to the narrative through her own interactions with the Alzheimer's patients' group that she leads as well as through her engagement with the performance artist Falling Man. Further, over the course of the novel, Lianne is haunted by notions of memory and its loss. Her inner monologue is obsessed with issues of memory, which stem from her own father's suicide at

[9] For a full examination of the theoretical distinction between the concepts of cosmos and hearth, see Yi-Fu Tuan's "Cosmos vs. Hearth."

the onset of an impending bout of dementia. The suicide of Lianne's father suggests that it is impossible to exist in the world without a solid sense of memory to structure one's experience and has "marked her awareness of who she is and how she lives" (*Falling Man* 218). While Packer was disturbed by the incursion of memory into his onrushing schematics for the future, Lianne is haunted by the exclusion of memory from the world around her, as she makes clear when she describes her reaction to the episode when a member of her Alzheimer's group forgets where he lives: "This was an occasion that haunted Lianne, the breathless moment when things fall away, streets, names, all sense of direction and location, every fixed grid of memory" (156). She is haunted by this disappearance because Lianne views memory as a key constitutive component of individual identity: "Lianne herself, bearing her father's mark, the potential toll of plaque and twisted filaments, had to look at this woman and see the crime of it, the loss of memory, personality and identity, the lapse into eventual protein stupor" (125). For Lianne, *Cosmopolis*' space of futurity would be a space devoid of identity as well as memory, an ultimately de-humanizing environment.

Post-9/11 New York's status as a space of memory in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks, as well as DeLillo's transformation of the individual into an effective site of memory, is seen most clearly through the appearances of the performance artist known as Falling Man. The only main character in the novel that directly encounters his work is the memory-saturated Lianne. As Lianne, the novel's true arbiter of memory, herself states when she sees Falling Man for the first time outside of Grand Central Station, "He brought it back, of course, those stark moments in the burning towers when people fell or were forced to jump" (33). Lianne's inner monologue highlights how Falling Man's art illustrates the renewed cultural importance of memory: "It held the gaze of the world she thought. There was the awful openness of it,

something we'd not seen, the single falling figure that trails a collective dread, body come down among us all. And now, she thought, this little theater piece, disturbing enough to send her back into the terminal" (*Falling Man* 33). Despite this hostility, Falling Man becomes a site of memory that forces individuals such as Lianne to engage with their traumatic memories of 9/11 in the absence of the twin towers. After all, as Andreas Huyssen writes, "…memory, even and especially in its belatedness, is itself based on representation. The past is not simply there in memory, but it must be articulated to become memory" (Huyssen 2-3). Lianne likewise observes that the ability of Falling Man to serve as a *lieu de mémoire* focuses observers' attentions, thereby allowing them to work through the events of 9/11. Thus, Falling Man emerges as an apt example of Nora's site of memory since his performance art stands as a material, symbolic, and functional act that articulates the events of 9/11. At the same time, DeLillo challenges Wolf's negative conception of *lieux de mémoire*, since Falling Man's performances are a "living repetition or re-presentation of commonly shared past," which Wolf believes are impossible characteristics for *lieux de mémoire* to possess. Through his situation of the individual as a site of memory, DeLillo empties Nora's *lieux de mémoire* of nostalgia and investigates their possibilities as redemptive sites of memory: Falling Man turns the city of New York into a site of memory for Lianne and the other characters in the novel.

Several weeks after the attacks, as Lianne leaves a meeting of her Alzheimer's group, she sees Falling Man preparing to perform near a set of subway tracks. Lianne's attempt to situate the motives of the performance artist places his intentions firmly within her obsession with memory: "There was one thing for them to say essentially. Someone falling. Falling man. She wondered if this was his intention, to spread the word this way, by cell phone, intimately, as in the towers and in the hijacked planes" (*Falling Man* 165). For Lianne, Falling Man functions

much the same way as DeLillo's essay "In the Ruins of the Future" functions for Marco Abel: "the essay attempts rhetorically to position readers so that they become capable of *seeing* that which cannot be perceived in the event's endless televised images….Operating alongside and within television's powerful perceptual apparatus of capture in order to mutate its most mind-numbing and moralizing effects, DeLillo's essay instead allows the event to emerge with a 'crystalline ambiguity'" (1240). This paradoxical effect explains Lianne's differing engagements with the art of Falling Man and the traumatic television footage of the planes:

> Every time she saw a videotape of the planes she moved a finger toward the power button on the remote. Then she kept on watching. The second plane coming out of that ice blue sky, this was the footage that entered the body, that seemed to run beneath her skin, the fleeting sprint that carried lives and histories, theirs and hers, everyone's, into some other distance, out beyond the towers. (*Falling Man* 134)

Jeremy Green asserts that images of televised violence "assault memory" and "efface the distinction between the real and the fictional" in DeLillo's earlier work, and a similar process occurs here through Lianne's engagement with the televised images of the violence of 9/11 (572). Contrasted with the site of memory that is Falling Man, television speaks to Nora's contention that the workings of the modern media have "…substituted for a memory entwined in the intimacy of a collective heritage the ephemeral film of current events" (Nora 7-8). Thus, Falling Man's performance as a *lieu de mémoire* allows Lianne and others an access to the memory of 9/11 that the medium of television does not provide. Likewise, Lianne projects her own emotions and the role of memory in dealing with those emotions when she describes a derelict attempting to make sense of Falling Man:

> He seemed to be in a pose of his own, attached to this spot for half a lifetime, one papery hand clutching his bicycle wheel. His face showed an intense narrowing of thought and possibility. He was seeing something elaborately different from what he encountered step by step in the ordinary run of hours. He had to learn how to see it correctly, find a crack in the world where it might fit. (*Falling Man* 168)

In much the same way, Lianne grapples with memory in order to find a "crack in the world" where the traumatic events of 9/11 can fit into a new framework for living. Falling Man grants Lianne and others the opportunity to engage with the events of 9/11 in an effort to find where they fit in the world that they now inhabit. Falling Man is, then, a redemptive site of memory that prevents the collapse of the twin towers from becoming merely another event lost in the constantly onrushing white-hot future. At the same time, Falling Man's productive engagement with the past allows Lianne to work through the trauma of 9/11 and move forward into the future. This measured engagement with the past represents DeLillo's counter-narrative to terrorism since it also challenges the purely backwards-oriented narrative arc of terrorism.

Following her two brief encounters with Falling Man, Lianne does not dwell on the meaning of his art until several years later when she comes across his obituary in the newspaper, which prompts her to search out information on his work over the internet. Lianne discovers that there was some debate concerning whether his falling motion was 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 sides, one leg bent, a man forever in free fall against the looming background of the column panels in the tower" (*Falling Man* 221). As DeLillo notes, "Free fall is the fall of a body within the atmosphere without a drag-producing device such as a parachute. It is the ideal falling motion of a body that is subject only to the earth's gravitational

field" (221). As Lianne realizes when she sees an old picture of Falling Man, "Headlong, free fall, she thought, and this picture burned a hole in her mind and heart, dear God, he was a falling angel and his beauty was horrific" (221). Falling Man thus comes to represent the fall of DeLillo's characters from the space of futurity that they occupied in the pre-9/11 New York of *Cosmopolis* into a space of memory.

It is ultimately through this horrific beauty of his art that Falling Man enshrines himself as a site of memory that grants individuals access to the events of 9/11. He represents how "we have fallen back in time and space" following the terrorist attacks of 9/11 while also illustrating the redemptive counter-narrative of memory DeLillo creates in his work ("Ruins" 38). Lianne realizes that in the same way that Falling Man was a site of memory for New Yorkers in the days after the attacks, she is now a site of memory for the horrific beauty of Falling Man's art: "There were no photographs of that fall. She was the photograph, the photosensitive surface. That nameless body coming down, this was hers to record and absorb" (223). In this climactic realization, Lianne discovers that her body is now the repository of the memory of 9/11 much the same way that Falling Man served as a repository of memory in the immediate aftermath of the attacks. Thus, it is now Lianne herself who serves as a *lieu de mémoire*. Shortly following Lianne's renewed engagement with Falling Man, and her discovery that she now functions as a site of memory, she realizes that the space of memory that persists following 9/11 has ultimately been redemptive, and she is ready to move resolutely into the future: "She was ready to be alone, in reliable calm, she and the kid, the way they were before the planes appeared that day, silver crossing blue" (*Falling Man* 236). Through this redemptive engagement with the art of Falling Man and the processes of memory he evokes, Lianne is ready to move into the future with a

sense of memory that results in a much different orientation towards the future than the space of futurity in *Cosmopolis*.

DeLillo's nonfiction, centered on the divide between pre-and post-9/11 New York, speaks to the contrast that he draws between *Cosmopolis*' space of futurity and *Falling Man*'s space of memory:

> Two forces in the world, past and future. With the end of Communism, the ideas and principles of modern democracy were seen clearly to prevail, whatever the inequalities of the system itself. This is still the case. But now there is a global theocratic state, unboundaried and floating and so obsolete it must depend on suicidal fervor to gain its aims. Ideas evolve and de-evolve, and history is turned on end. ("Ruins" 40)

In the face of terrorism, DeLillo still asserts the dominance of a system of liberal democracy, an assertion that he can make through his advocacy of a viable counter-narrative to terrorism that he presents through "In the Ruins of the Future" and *Falling Man*. While terrorists insist on attempting to recapture a lost historical epoch through their violent attempts to hold off the future, DeLillo recognizes what Pierre Nora sees as the disjunction between history and memory through his proposal to take a look backwards towards the redemptive realm of memory, a realm that was completely absent from the pre-9/11 space of futurity. Thus, in the face of the terrorists' movement, DeLillo implicitly advocates historicity, a stepping back from the constant onrush of the future and an engaging in processes of memory that transform individuals into *lieu de mémoire* prior to moving forwards. DeLillo asserts the writer's role in calling attention to processes of memory in the post-9/11 world: "In its desertion of every basis for comparison, the event asserts its singularity. There is something empty in the sky. The writer tries to give memory, tenderness, and meaning to all that howling space" ("Ruins" 39). Through his attempt

to give "memory, tenderness, and meaning to all that howling space," DeLillo highlights the reawakening of memory in the post-9/11 world through a transformation of his characters into *lieux de mémoire* that enables them to follow the advice of Martin, the sometimes lover of Lianne's mother: "'There's the event, there's the individual. Measure it. Let it teach you something. See it. Make yourself equal to it'" (42). Thus, the event teaches DeLillo's characters as well as his readers the importance of memory in the post-9/11 world. It is ultimately an engagement with the redemptive space of memory that allows DeLillo's characters to make themselves equal to the events of 9/11, as they transition into a new future as living sites of memory.

Chapter Two

"*Stuff that Happened to Me*": *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* as a Narrative Site of Memory

"I have no need for the past, I thought, like a child. I did not consider that the past might have a need for me."

—Jonathan Safran Foer, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*

While the other novels I examine in this study feature characters that function as metaphorical sites of memory, the narrative of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* itself functions as a site of memory that assists multiple generations of the Schell family in their struggles to process the traumatic events of their lives. Within Foer's complex narrative structure, Oskar Schell struggles to cope with the death of his father in the World Trade Center on 9/11 in a manner similar to that of his grandparents' struggles to cope with the impact of their traumatic World War II experiences. A collection of memoirs and physical artifacts from three voices responding to the events of their various traumatic wounds, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* emerges as a site of memory that speaks to the power of human beings to engage with the past in order to move productively into the future. Through recording, and consequently working through, the memories of his traumatic past, Oskar moves into the future. His memoir simultaneously provides a testimonial witness to the events of 9/11 and his attempts to work through these traumatic events, while also offering his grandfather and grandmother—survivors of the firebombing of Dresden—an opportunity to engage fully with their traumatic memories in a way that their lives previously occluded. Over the course of these intricately interwoven traumatic memoirs, Foer's novel upholds E. Ann Kaplan's theoretical refashioning of Cathy Caruth's model of traumatic experience. Therefore, in a manner similar to

DeLillo's *Falling Man*, Foer's 9/11 novel constructs a counter-narrative to terrorism that productively engages with traumatic memory to move forward into the future.

Critics could level the charge that *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* diminishes, or even negates, the historical past through the transgenerational analogues it draws between the events of 9/11 and the firebombing of Dresden. Dresden was a bombing campaign that was part of a continuing Allied air war against Germany during the sustained horrors of World War II, while 9/11 was a single day of terror that at the time was not tied to an overarching war. Also, although 9/11 represents a tragic loss of life in its own right, the four horrific bombing attacks that took place in Dresden from February 13–15, 1945, resulted in a much greater death toll and wider swath of destruction than the attack upon American soil in 2001. Therefore, critics could charge Foer with ignoring the United States' historical violence and embracing American narcissism by placing 9/11 in the context of Dresden, which would diminish Dresden as a world-historical event. However, I contend that the similarities and differences between these two traumas inform *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* without conflating, or devaluing, the events of Dresden or 9/11. Ultimately, Foer's choice of Dresden as an analogue to 9/11 implicitly calls American readers to reexamine the role of their own nation's historical violence in the attacks at the same time that it awakens them to the history of twentieth-century trauma. Thus, over the course of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, Foer brings readers to the same realization as his protagonist Oskar Schell—I am not the only one to suffer, and consequently the trauma of others is just as genuine as my trauma.

Foer's choice to place the trauma victims of Dresden and 9/11 in conversation allows him to raise implicitly unpopular questions concerning America's footprint. Although *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* declines to take up these themes explicitly, it is difficult for readers to

view the paired traumas of Dresden and 9/11 without broaching the complicated and contrasting dialogues of victimization and geopolitical responsibility in the wake of trauma. After all, despite the traumatic horror and the sufferings of innocent civilians, the attack on Dresden was ostensibly part of an Allied air strike upon German forces responsible for the Holocaust. Therefore, it is difficult to read Foer's novel without questioning whether, and to what extent, Foer implicitly assigns culpability for the horrific, traumatic sufferings of 9/11's innocent victims to decisions of American statecraft. Although the novel ultimately fails to offer any satisfactory answers to these questions, it is hard to ignore the manner in which the contrasting dialogues of victimization and responsibility structure Foer's specific choice to contextualize his novel of 9/11 through the bombing of Dresden. At the very least, it is possible to read Foer's pairing of Dresden and 9/11 as an invitation to readers to reexamine critically the shadow the United States casts across the world and how our own history of violence repeats itself.

In addition to urging readers to reexamine America's historical violence, Foer turns to the trauma of the air attacks on Dresden to contextualize 9/11 within the traumatic history of the twentieth-century. Although the events of 9/11 are often interpreted as a singular world event, Foer depicts them alongside an urban trauma of the past in order to situate 9/11 more properly within the context of history. Derrida speaks to the necessity of disentangling the difference between the impression an event produces and the event itself:

> But we can, and I believe, must (and this duty is at once philosophical and political) distinguish between the supposedly brute fact, the 'impression,' and the interpretation. It is of course just about impossible, I realize, to distinguish the 'brute' fact from the system that produces the 'information' about it. But it is necessary to push the analysis as far as possible. (89)

Rather than devaluing the horrific events of Dresden, Foer's turn to a past trauma explores the "brute" facts of 9/11 as a separate reality from the mediated portrayal of the attacks as a singular world-historic event after which nothing can be the same. Ultimately, Foer's decision to pair Dresden with 9/11 symbolically awakens Oskar Schell to the traumatic history of the past and forces him to realize that others, even those close to him, have suffered the effects of trauma in much more horrific ways. At the beginning of the novel Oskar's childish solipsism consequently represents an American narcissism unable to conceive of a trauma surpassing 9/11 in the wake of the attacks. Foer uses Dresden as a counterexample to 9/11 to awaken the American consciousness to terrors that our own nation has historically propagated at the same time that he invokes the related dialogues of victimization and responsibility. Through the historical interplay between 9/11 and Dresden, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* emerges as a counter-narrative that argues against the mediated impression of 9/11 as an unprecedented, major world event and implicitly questions America's responsibility for the attacks. Foer's novel contests the singularity of 9/11 by placing the terrorist attacks upon New York in dialogue with the trauma of Dresden, which resulted in a much higher death toll and wider swath of destruction. Foer's choice of Dresden as a point of comparison for 9/11 thus allows readers to distinguish the impression of 9/11 from the traumatic events themselves by contextualizing the attacks within the history of twentieth-century urban trauma.

At the same time, Foer constructs his own counter-narrative to the intense futurity of *Cosmopolis* through the novel's attempt to grapple with the traumatic history of Dresden. *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*'s historical consciousness in the aftermath of 9/11 represents a reawakening to the traumatic past of the twentieth-century in a society that was firmly enshrined under the sign of the future prior to the attacks. Rather than negating the

history of Dresden, Foer reawakens a memorial consciousness by implying that historical traumas bind us together in potentially redemptive ways.

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close has already received a fair amount of scholarly attention despite its fairly recent publication date. Undoubtedly, some of this attention stems from Foer's innovative incorporation of visual elements into the text. Critics such as N. Katherine Hayles discuss how Foer combines the conventions of print and electronic literature through the novel's visual elements.[10] I contend that its formal narrative experimentation serves to reinforce the novel's conceit—that the manuscript functions as a collection of memoirs in the form of journals, daybooks, and letters that constitute a narrative site of memory.

While several writers have explored the workings of trauma in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, they usually read the novel in conjunction with other works instead of examining Foer's novel on its own merits. In "Foer, Spiegelman, and 9/11's Timely Traumas," Mitchum Huehls reads Foer alongside *In the Shadow of No Towers* as he asserts that the two works "chronicle different attempts to mend the relationship between temporal experience and consciousness" (42). Huehls ultimately argues that the difference between the two works lies in the difference between *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*'s performativity and *In the Shadow of No Towers*' representation. According to Huehls, Spiegelman's representation emerges as a more enlightened and measured response to the time-oriented traumas of 9/11. In "Still Life: 9/11's Falling Bodies," Laura Frost addresses the trauma of 9/11 in Foer's novel through her treatment of Foer's use of the falling man image within the novel. Frost presents a compelling reading of Oskar's quest to transform the intrusive image of the falling man from a traumatic memory into a narrative memory. However, Frost ultimately relates the representation of the

[10] See *Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary*.

falling man in the novel to the larger set of representational issues that center around the media portrayals of those who jumped from the World Trade Center towers on 9/11. Thus, Frost ultimately fails to develop fully the message that *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* offers to its readers concerning trauma. Meanwhile, in "'The Age of Reason is Over…an Age of Fury was Dawning': Contemporary Anglo–American Fiction and Terror," Robert Eaglestone addresses the failure of 9/11 literature to address fully the issues they raise. Eaglestone dismisses *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* "as a cipher for a search for a pre-9/11 security" (20). However, Eaglestone's approach disregards the trauma that sets Oskar's search in motion—a search that goes beyond Eaglestone's literal interpretation of Oskar's flipbook as a desire to return to the past—and he overlooks the transgenerational impact of the traumatic occurrence. In this chapter, I will address Foer's novel of 9/11 on its own terms in an attempt to explicate what *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* itself has to tell readers about the workings of trauma and literary counter-narratives to terrorism in a post–9/11 world.

In some respects, Foer's young protagonist and his grandfather in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* resemble victims of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) that Cathy Caruth describes in the introduction to her edited volume *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. In her attempt to examine the impact of traumatic experience upon individuals, Caruth writes that "the pathology consists, rather, solely in *the structure of its experience* or reception: the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated *possession* of the one who experiences it. To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event" (4-5, emphasis Caruth's). Three successive generations of the Schell family are indeed "possessed" by the images and events of two horrific traumas—the fall of the World Trade Center during the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the bombing of Dresden during World War II. For Oskar, this

traumatic possession takes the image of the falling man that plays a prominent role in his collage book and his search for the lock that accompanies his father's key. For his grandfather, this traumatic possession takes the image of the memory of his first love Anna and his failed attempts to reach her during the bombing of Dresden.

Caruth's definition of PTSD as an outgrowth of surviving trauma relies upon the notion of dissociation: "the traumatic symptom cannot be interpreted, simply, as a distortion of reality, nor as the lending of unconscious meaning to a reality it wishes to ignore, nor as the repression of what once was wished" (5). Therefore, the return of the traumatic dream "cannot be understood in terms of any wish or unconscious meaning, but is, purely and inexplicably, the literal return of the event against the will of the one it inhabits (5)."[11] For Caruth, the traumatized "carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess" (5). Thus, according to Caruth, an individual's cognitive awareness of trauma's impact on his or her life is greatly diminished through the very workings of trauma. As I will illustrate, characters in Foer's novel are indeed possessed by their traumatic pasts as they attempt to tell their stories in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. However, over the course of the novel Foer's characters become more than "symptom[s] of a history that they cannot entirely possess" as they consciously attempt to possess their memories. Oskar's and his grandfather's conscious attempts to possess their histories lead them to turn to the past in order to move into the future.

[11] Caruth goes on to assert that "Indeed, modern analysts as well have remarked on the surprising literality and nonsymbolic nature of traumatic dreams and flashbacks, which resist cure to the extent that they remain, precisely, literal. It is this literality and its insistent return which thus constitutes trauma and points toward its enigmatic core: the delay or incompletion in knowing, or even in seeing, an overwhelming occurrence that then remains, in its insistent return, absolutely *true* to the event" (5, emphasis Caruth's).

Consequently, in certain respects, especially at key moments within the pages of Foer's novel, Caruth's conception of characters being possessed "insistently and against their will" by traumatic events remains an unsatisfying portrayal of how characters themselves choose to respond to trauma. In *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature*, E. Ann Kaplan attempts to develop a more nuanced and fulfilling model of trauma's impact upon the individual that goes beyond Caruth's focus on dissociation. Relying on neuroscience research, Kaplan advances a model that explores how victims of trauma remain consciously self–aware of the trauma that afflicts them. According to Kaplan, when a victim is conscious of trauma "in a sense, two circuits happen at the same time: a circuit as described above, where the cortex is bypassed; and a circuit that includes the cortex, so that the trauma does find its way into memory" (38). As Kaplan refashions Caruth's dissociative model of trauma, she asserts,

> We can distinguish three possible kinds of brain function in firsthand trauma: first, the dissociation function (which so attracted humanists) in which the trauma is not accessible to cognition or memory, and where the event is understood to come from outside, not mediated by the unconscious; second…which involves both dissociation and cognition, thus allowing for the trauma to be in conscious memory; and finally, a function not discussed by neuroscientists and which goes back to Freud's 'seduction theory' where the victim of trauma involving perpetrators and their victims partly identifies with the aggressor. In this way the victim is implicated in the traumatic situation. (38)

These models are not mutually exclusive reactions to trauma, and Kaplan herself states, "None has to be ruled out. Each of the three possible processes might come into play, and more than one might be involved" (38).

For E. Ann Kaplan, 9/11 stands as "a paradigmatic recent example of a national trauma that was at the same time deeply personal and individual" (20). Over the course of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, Oskar and his grandfather illustrate Kaplan's second possible model of brain functioning in a traumatic situation, which involves both dissociation and cognition. The trauma constitutes a conscious memory within an individual's psyche at the same time that its literal return haunts the victim of trauma. The literal return of their traumatic pasts spurs Oskar and his grandfather to engage with these memories to transition into a post-traumatic future.

Foer's mixture of the personal and the political within *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* emerges as a site of memory that illustrates how, according to Kaplan, events of national trauma initially "produce new subjectivities through the shocks, disruptions, and confusions that accompany them, and second, how a new catastrophe reactivates emotions associated with prior ones [traumatic events] in both the individual and the nation" (20).[12] The events of 9/11 clearly produce a new subjectivity in Oskar; the loss of his father traumatizes the young boy. At the same time, they reactivate the trauma that the elder Schells experienced in Dresden. Thus, as Kaplan asserts in her discussion of Holocaust memoirs, "victims of parallel but different traumatic situations put their experiences in writing, I believe, for several reasons: to organize pain into a narrative that gives it shape for the purposes of self-understanding (working their trauma through), or with the aim of being heard, that is, constructing a witness where there was none before" (20). As I will illustrate, Oskar and his grandfather work through their respective traumas to organize pain into a narrative for the sake of self-understanding. As both Oskar and

[12] According to Kaplan, in the context of personal traumatic memoirs "the painful personal memories explored expose the complex interrelatedness of the subject with the powerful and inevitable historical and political forces in which she is inescapably caught up" (20).

his grandfather engage with their traumatic pasts to organize their memories into a narrative, they simultaneously construct a counter-narrative to terrorism itself. For Kaplan this process of "working through" ultimately motivates the trauma memoir as individuals write their histories in order to engage with the past so that they may move into the future (44).

Foer's construction of a narrative site of memory built around the traumatic memoirs of the Schell family ultimately reinforces Kaplan's refashioning of Caruth's dissociation theory of trauma. Oskar, his grandfather, and his grandmother all exhibit traumatic symptoms that are best understood as a mixture of both dissociation and cognition. The cognitive function allows the victims of trauma to grapple with their memories of the past. The clearest instances of this transition are the insistent, haunting return of both Oskar's father's phone messages and the picture of the falling man that appears throughout his collage book—*Stuff that Happened to Me*. In Oskar's portion of the narration, the phone messages of his father insistently possess him. The messages left by his father, and indeed the physical artifact of the phone itself, haunt Oskar, since they are constitutive memories of 9/11 that he is unable to share with others. When he came home from school that September morning, he was greeted with a message from his father that he includes verbatim in his traumatic memoir:

> Message one. Tuesday, 8:52 A.M. Is anybody there? Hello? It's Dad. If you're there, pick up. I just tried the office, but no one was picking up. Listen, something's happened. I'm OK. They're telling me to stay where we are and wait for the firemen. I'm sure it's fine. I'll give you another call when I have a better idea of what's going on. Just wanted to let you know that I'm OK, and not to worry. I'll call again soon. (14–15)

When he receives this and the four other messages from his father, Oskar "listened to them, and listened to them again" prior to hearing the phone ring for the sixth time and learning that it was

his father from the caller ID (15). For Oskar, the act of listening to the phone messages left by his father that morning represents his initial traumatic engagement with the events of 9/11, since he did not see the videos of the events until later when he goes to buy a replacement phone to protect his mother from his father's calls. The insistent return of these traumatic phone messages over the course of Oskar's narration in the novel illustrates a Caruthian definition of trauma as dissociation. This dissociation is exemplified by the random insertions of phone messages into the body of Oskar's traumatic memoir. Thus, the content of these messages returns intact to haunt Oskar anew over the course of his narrative.

However, despite this traumatic dissociation in which the events of the past return to possess Oskar in their literality, he retains a measure of cognition over the trauma that afflicts him. In spite of the insistent return of the traumatic messages, Oskar remains aware of the trauma that impacts his daily existence when he takes the phone out of its hiding place in his closet and listens to the messages from his father. Oskar exhibits this Kaplanian notion of trauma as he chooses to listen to message four shortly after meeting with a therapist to discuss his feelings. Oskar recollects the drive home after his visit to the therapist: "I turned on the radio and found a station playing 'Hey Jude.' It was true, I didn't want to make it bad. I wanted to take the sad song and make it better. It's just that I didn't know how" (207). Oskar remains aware of the trauma that afflicts him and thus does not suffer from the pure traumatic dissociation posited by Caruth. Indeed, Oskar's desire to "take the sad song" represents a yearning to engage with the past so that he may "make it better" and move into the future. However, Oskar does not realize what exactly will allow him to overcome the trauma that structures his existence at this stage in his narrative recollection.

While Oskar is haunted by the aural trauma of his father's phone messages, he is also possessed by the visually traumatic falling man image in a similar manner as Lianne Neudecker in *Falling Man*. The iconic picture of a man who has chosen to jump rather than await his fate at the top of the World Trade Center appears repeatedly throughout Oskar's collage book of his "experiences"—*Stuff that Happened to Me*. The image of the falling man and an enlarged close-up of the figure appear with the reader's first introduction to Oskar's notebook. The insistent return of the falling man image haunts Oscar throughout the search for his father's lock. Oskar speaks to the traumatic insistence of the falling man image in his life as he visits Abby Black to garner information about his father's key: "I pulled the key out from under my shirt and put it in her hand. Because the string was still around my neck, when she leaned in to look at the key, her face came incredibly close to my face. We were frozen there for a long time. It was like time was stopped. I thought about the falling man" (97). In this quotation Oskar speaks to the insistent return of the falling man image over and above its repeated visual return in his notebook.

Nowhere does Oskar's behavior with respect to the falling man image reinforce Kaplan's understanding of trauma more than in the novel's flipbook-style conclusion. Oskar illustrates his awareness of the image's impact when he describes his own relationship to the falling man near the conclusion of his memoir: "I ripped the pages out of the book. I reversed the order, so the last one was first, and the first was last. When I flipped through them, it looked like the man was floating up through the sky" (325). Through this gesture, Oskar reveals his cognitive awareness of trauma as he attempts to transform the traumatic memory of the falling man into a narrative memory that allows him to work through the loss of his father. As he re-appropriates his traumatic past into a narrative memory through the reorganization of the falling man flipbook, Oskar consciously engages with his memories of 9/11 in order to reconstruct a productive future.

Facing down the past allows Oskar to transition into the future as he assembles a counter-narrative to terrorism.

Foer broaches issues relating to transgenerational trauma in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* through the inclusion of a series of letters to Oskar and his father that serve as his grandparents' testimonial memoirs of their traumatic pasts. As Oskar was traumatized by the events of 9/11 that led to the loss of his father, his grandparents were stricken by the traumatic events of their youth—the firebombing of Dresden during World War II. While the insistent return of the traumatic phone messages and images of the falling man possesses Oskar's consciousness, the traumatic memories of Dresden haunt his grandparents. Just as Oskar is haunted by the image of the falling man, Oskar's grandfather, Thomas Schell, remains haunted by the image of a doorknob and the memory of his true love Anna, who was the sister of Oskar's grandmother. Through Thomas' own memoir, Foer's readers see the insistent return of a photograph of a doorknob and memories of Anna. The insistent return of the lock and memories of Anna clearly possess Thomas Schell throughout his lifetime. Thomas writes to his unborn child about how his past impinges upon his present:

> In this life, I'm sitting in an airport trying to explain myself to my unborn son, I'm filling the pages of this, my last daybook, I'm thinking of a loaf of black bread that I left out one night, the next morning I saw the outline of the mouse that had eaten through it, I cut the loaf into slices and saw the mouse at each moment, *I'm thinking of Anna, I would give everything never to think about her again, I can only hold on to the things I want to lose*, I'm thinking of the day we met, she accompanied her father to meet my father, they were friends, they had talked about art and literature before the war, but once the war began, they talked about only war, I saw her approaching when she was still far away, I was

> fifteen, she was seventeen, we sat together on the grass while our fathers spoke inside, how could we have been younger? (113, emphasis mine)

In this passage, Thomas speaks to the ability of a traumatic experience to hold the individual it afflicts in its thrall long after the initial event is over. Thomas illustrates the immense power of the traumatic past to return and possess the individual against his or her own will: "I can only hold on to the things I want to lose." Thomas' life serves as an illustration of this immense power of the traumatic past to possess the individual, since the letters that constitute his traumatic memoir are filled with reminiscences of Anna that insert themselves into his thoughts against his will. Ultimately, Thomas' marriage to Oskar's grandmother continues to haunt him until he flees from his new life in America once Oskar's grandmother gets pregnant. However, Thomas' decision to attempt to start a new life in America with Anna's sister, both initially and after 9/11, exemplifies an attempt to face the trauma that structures his life, since his lost lover haunts him in the form of her sister.

Exercising a symbolic resonance that is more straightforwardly literal than his remembrances of Anna, Thomas' traumatic memoir includes several pictures of a doorknob. The haunting image of the doorknob itself represents the traumatic past's possession of Thomas years after the firebombing of Dresden. In a letter that Foer leads his readers to believe his son read, since its mistakes are circled in the younger Thomas Schell's trademark red ink, Thomas Schell the elder articulates his memories of the firebombing of Dresden and his loss of Anna:

> …all that remained of our house was a patch of the façade that stubbornly held up the front door, a horse on fire galloped past, there were burning vehicles and carts with burning refugies, people were screaming, I told my parents I had to go find Anna, my mother told me to stay with them, I said I would meet them back at our front door, my

> father begged me to stay, I grabbed the doorknob and it took the skin off my hand, I saw the muscles of my palm, red and pulsing, why did I grab it with my other hand? My father shouted at me, it was the first time he had ever shouted at me, I can't write what he shouted, I told them I would meet them back at our door, he struck me across the face, it was the first time he had ever struck me, that was the last time I saw my parents. On my way to Anna's house, the second raid began…. (211)

Thomas' re-appropriation of the doorknob image in his daybooks parallels Oskar's reconstruction of the falling man flipbook. As he works through his traumatic memories, Thomas Schell engages with the past so that he may transition into the future. The inclusion of photographs of the doorknob in his journal allows him work through his trauma. Oskar's grandmother describes how her husband took photos and put them throughout their new apartment: "He could have rebuilt the apartment by taping together the pictures. And the doorknobs. He took a picture of every doorknob in the apartment. Every one. As if the world and its future depended on each one. As if we would be thinking about doorknobs should we ever actually need to use the pictures of them" (175). Thomas' choice to include an image that continues to haunt him in his daybooks and letters—artifacts that represent the entirety of his communications with the world around him—represents a mixture of dissociation and cognition that engages with the traumatic past.

The Schells recognize the theoretically liberating influence of engaging with the past to bear witness to trauma. Thomas gives a typewriter to his wife so that she may "relieve the burden of her life" and does not have to "suffer herself" (219). Through this gift of a typewriter to his wife, Thomas speaks to the ability of engaging with the past to "relieve the burden" of traumatic memories. In the single letter to his son that we are certain Thomas Schell, Jr. actually

read, the elder Thomas speaks repeatedly of the freeing power of bearing witness to the traumatic past: "Sometimes I think if I could tell you what happened to me that night, I could leave that night behind me, maybe I could come home to you, but that night has no beginning or end, it started before I was born and it's still happening" (208). Although he has not "always been silent" (16) in the aftermath of Dresden, "the silence overtook me [Thomas] like a cancer" until the time he met Oskar's grandmother when he was "out of words" (28). Thomas' concern with the benefits of engaging with memory despite his inability at times actually to do so clearly structures a great deal of this crucial letter to his son. Thomas returns to the theme at the end of the letter:

> When your mother found me in the bakery on Broadway, I wanted to tell her everything, maybe if I'd been able to, we could have lived differently, maybe I'd be there with you now instead of here. Maybe if I had said, 'I lost a baby," if I'd said, 'I'm so afraid of losing something I love that I refuse to love anything,' maybe that would have made the impossible possible. Maybe, but I couldn't do it, I had buried too much too deeply inside me. And here I am, instead of there. I'm sitting in this library, thousands of miles from my life, writing another letter I know I won't be able to send, no matter how hard I try and much I want to. How did that boy making love behind that shed become this man writing this letter at this table? (216)

In this quotation, Thomas speaks to the power of bearing witness to the past and productively working through the pain of the traumatic situation. However, at the same time, Thomas also illustrates the immense difficulty of providing a witness to traumatic events. Despite his deep desire to tell Anna's sister everything, he cannot, since he has buried too much too deeply inside

of himself. Therefore, prior to his mutually beneficial exploration of the past with his grandson, Thomas remains unable to engage productively with the memories of his past.

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In the wake of Oskar and Thomas Schell's engagement with their traumatic memories, Foer's novel implicitly posits a counter-narrative to terrorism similar to DeLillo's. Oscar is vehemently offended when his therapist asks "Do you think any good can come from your father's death?" (203). However, Foer explores the transgenerational traumas that afflict the Schell family in order to illustrate how an engagement with the traumas of the past can open out onto a productive future in a renewed space of memory similar to that posited by DeLillo. Thomas Schell affords Oskar an opportunity to engage with his memories of 9/11 at the same time that Oskar offers his grandparents an opportunity to grapple with their memories of Dresden. Their mutual engagement with the past allows Oskar and Thomas to reappropriate their traumatic pasts in order to move forward into the future. Much as Thomas Schell and his wife are unable to directly engage with the traumatic events of their youth, Oskar is unable to appropriate the traumatic events that altered his life—the phone messages that he hears from his father on the morning of 9/11 prior to his death: "I'm gonna bury my feelings deep inside me…No matter how much I feel, I'm not going to let it out. If I have to cry, I'm gonna cry on the inside. If I have to bleed, I'll bruise. If my heart starts going crazy, I'm not gonna tell everyone in the world about it" (203). Oskar's traumatic memoir represents his retrospective retelling of the quest he undertakes in order to work through his father's death—his search for the lock that accompanies a key he discovers in his father's closet. Oskar's search for the lock into which his father's key fits comprises an important stage of the grieving process laid out by David Aberbach

in his book *Surviving Trauma: Loss, Literature and Psychoanalysis*. In a discussion of how artists represent the stages of grief in their works, Aberbach argues:

> In normal grief four main phases may be identified, although these may oscillate or overlap with one another. First on suffering the loss there is a sensation of numbness, which may last for as little as a few hours and generally passes within a week or so. Second, the bereaved yearns and searches for the lost person—this may last for months or even years. Third despairing of the possibility that the lost person will return the bereaved undergoes depression, and this too may last for long periods. Fourth, and finally, he will come to terms with the loss and reorganize his life in accordance with the changed circumstances. (28)

Oskar's search for his father takes the very literal form of the search for the lock that accommodates his father's key. Oskar reveals the role that the lock and his subsequent search for it play in his own life when he finally arrives at the conclusion to the mystery and is ultimately saddened by the end of his search when his grandfather asks about what he found:

> 'I didn't know what to say. I found it and now I can stop looking? I found it and it had nothing to do with Dad? I found it and now I'll wear heavy boots for the rest of my life. 'I wish I hadn't found it.' 'It wasn't what you were looking for?' 'That's not it.' 'Then what?' 'I found it and now I can't look for it.' I could tell he didn't understand me. 'Looking for it let me stay close to him for a little while longer.' 'But won't you always be close to him?' I knew the truth. 'No.' (302–304)

In this passage, Oskar portrays his search for the lock as a continuation of one of the reconnaissance expeditions on which his father often sent him. The search for the lock is Oskar's attempt to engage with the traumatic memory of losing his father on 9/11. Oskar's

search emanates from his yearning to remain close to his father in the wake of 9/11. However, only with the help of his grandfather and his insights into the importance of engaging with the past is Oskar able to transition beyond the search for his father's key into a post-traumatic future.

Oskar's search for the lock and Thomas' quest to recapture the time he spent with Anna coincide to illustrate how reconstructing the past is crucial to the construction of a productive future that emerges out of the wake of trauma. The characters within the novel are able to work through their traumatic memories of the past so they may attempt to live in the future. Thus, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* represents a strategy for dealing with the trauma of 9/11 in a manner similar to the other works under consideration in this study. The events set in motion by 9/11 ultimately provide Oskar and his grandparents an opportunity to engage productively with the traumatic memories that afflict their lives. The events of 9/11 bring Thomas back to New York City in an attempt "to try to live" with the mother of his child and have the life that they were unable to live the first time around (268). Thomas attempts to testify and explain the sum of his life to his wife over the phone from the airport when he returns to the United States following 9/11. Once he returns to America, he has the opportunity to get to know his grandson from a distance. Eventually, Thomas and Oskar cross paths and offer one another an opportunity to work through their respective traumatic memories. Writing in his section of the collected memoirs about the first time that he met Oskar, Thomas speaks to his desire to offer Oskar the chance to testify to his trauma: "Poor child, telling everything to a stranger, I wanted to build walls around him, I wanted to separate inside from outside, I wanted to give him an infinitely long blank book and the rest of time" (280). Thomas expresses the desire to serve as a reader of Oskar's trauma in a manner that may help both generations of Schells understand the impact of the traumatic past.

His grandfather's wish becomes a reality when Oskar asks him, "Can I tell you my story?" (238). The opportunity to engage with the past and tell his story clearly benefits Oskar's psyche since he went so far as to do something that "surprised" himself and engaged with his main traumatic memory of 9/11—the tapes of his father's phone messages: "The renter was standing in exactly the same position, like I'd never left, or never been there at all. I took the phone out of the scarf that Grandma was never able to finish, plugged it in, and played those first five messages for him. He didn't show anything on his face. He just looked at me. Not even at me, but into me, like his detector sensed some enormous truth deep inside me" (255). The enormous truth that Oskar's grandfather (the renter) realizes is that by engaging with one another's respective traumatic memories, both Schells can transition productively beyond the traumatic events of 9/11 and Dresden.

This engagement with his grandfather allows Oskar to transition beyond the phone's haunting possession of him, as he himself indicates when he plays the message from Abby Black nearly a year after she had left it on the Schell answering machine: "I pressed the Message Play button, which I hadn't done since the worst day, and that was on the old phone" (288). Ultimately, this ability to overcome the traumatic remembrance of the phone allows Oskar to complete his quest for the lock that accompanies his father's key and engage the memory of his father's final phone call—a fact that he was unable to share even with his grandfather—when he goes to talk to William Black and learns that his father had bought the vase that contained the key at an estate sale as an anniversary gift for his wife. Although the conclusion to the mystery of the lock initially saddens Oskar, the conclusion of that quest ultimately allows him to move into Aberbach's fourth stage of grief as he reconstitutes the image of the falling man in his *Stuff that Happened to Me* collage book into a backwards running flip book. Oskar's reconstitution of

the falling man image illustrates his ability to come to terms with the loss of his father through his metaphorical search and quite literally reorganize his life in accordance with his changed circumstances at the end of his narration. Therefore, Oskar's engagement with the remembered trauma of 9/11 allows him to transition beyond the haunting images of his traumatic memories into the future.

Just as Thomas gives Oskar an opportunity to engage with his traumatic memories, Oskar also offers Thomas an opportunity to work through his own trauma to move into the future. Although it ultimately proves unsuccessful, Oskar inspires his grandfather to at least attempt to speak as a witness to his past for the first time in over forty years (257). Even though Thomas does not gain back his speaking voice, he is able to reengage with his past in a way that has eluded him for years through his efforts to help his grandson and himself work through the trauma of 9/11. When Oskar and his grandfather first meet, Oskar's asks, "'What's your story?' 'What's my story?' 'Yeah, what's your story?' 'I don't know what my story is.' 'How can you not know what your story is?' He shrugged his shoulders, just like Dad used to" (238). This exchange reveals Thomas' inability to understand and integrate his traumatic past into his life's narrative. However, Thomas' experience following Oskar around New York and bearing witness to his quest for the lock allows him to assimilate his traumatic past and move forward into the future. Thomas' declaration to his wife that Anna was pregnant when she died in Dresden and his idea to bury the letters within his son's empty coffin highlight his newfound ability to engage productively with the traumatic past and transition into the future. Thus, Oskar's insistent search for the lock forces his grandfather to return to the traumatic past of his own story in an effort to move beyond his own struggles in order to support his newfound grandson.

The mutually beneficial relationship between Oskar and his grandfather allows both generations to engage with the traumatic memories that structure their lives. This mutually beneficial interaction with the past suggests that the key Oskar holds to connect with his father fits perfectly into the doorknob that haunts his grandfather's memory. Each holds the constitutive element that allows the other to engage productively with their traumatic memories in order to set the other free and transition into a post-traumatic future. The plot between grandfather and grandson to dig up the empty coffin of the family member that links them together represents both Thomas and Oskar's attempt to bury the past after engaging with the haunting effects of trauma within their writing. Thomas' decision to bury the letters he has written and been unable to mail in his son's empty coffin allows him to deliver the letters metaphorically in an attempt to grapple with the past once more in order "to try to live" in the future (268) Thus, at the conclusion of their respective trauma memoirs, both Oskar and his grandfather ultimately reach the fourth stage of the grieving process according to Aberbach in which the individual "will come to terms with the loss and reorganize his life in accordance with the changed circumstances" (Aberbach 28). Both Oskar and his grandfather reorganize their own lives through the influence of each other. Thomas reorients himself to life as he attempts to "try to live" in the future after engaging with the traumatic past and leaving it behind him in the form of his buried unsent letters. Meanwhile, Oskar literally reorganizes the images of the falling man in his *Stuff that Happened to Me* collage book, which suggests the trauma of 9/11 no longer haunts him in the same manner that it did initially, despite his realization that life will remain altered forever in the wake of his trauma.

The transgenerational elements of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* illustrate the importance of engaging with both collective and personal past histories to transition beyond

trauma into the future. While it is the characters themselves who emerge as metaphorical sites of memory in *Falling Man* and Ian McEwan's *Saturday,* in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, it is the narrative construction that operates as a site of memory and facilitates an engagement with the past. Foer's narrative construct of interlocking memoirs illustrates positive ways to engage with the trauma of the past in order to move forward into the future. Foer's creation of a site of memory constitutes a narrative design that pulls the reader of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* into the act of engaging with the traumatic memories of the past as well. As witnesses to the Schell family's traumatic memories, readers of Foer's novel must engage with traumas of the past in order to rebuild the future that lies in the ruins of 9/11 and terrorism's backwards-oriented narrative arc. The next chapter focuses its attention on another family immersed in an effort to re-appropriate the narrative of the future—the Perownes of Ian McEwan's *Saturday*. However, while DeLillo and Foer's fictionalized counter-narratives to terrorism concern those who were directly affected by the events of 9/11, McEwan extends his literary examination of 9/11's aftermath to include those stricken with the symptoms of a vague cultural anxiety that permeates society in an age of uncertainty.

Chapter Three

A *Saturday* in the Life: Ian McEwan, Vicarious Trauma, and Embodied Sites of Memory

In his first appearance in *Saturday*, channeled through the narrative thoughts of his father, Henry Perowne's teenage son Theo articulates one explanation why the majority of the writers who have tackled the events of 9/11 on the page focus on the daily lives of everyday individuals:

> On a recent Sunday evening Theo came up with an aphorism: the bigger you think, the crappier it looks. Asked to explain he said, "When we go on about the big things, the political situation, global warming, world poverty, it all looks really terrible, with nothing getting better, nothing to look forward to. But when I think small, closer in—you know, a girl I've just met, or this song we're going to do with Chas, or snowboarding next month, then it looks great. So this is going to be my motto—think small. (35)

Theo's aphorism—think small—provides an explanation for the thinking behind the retreat into the intensely personal in the face of traumatic disaster typified by the writers examined in this project. McEwan's characterization of Henry Perowne over the course of the novel provides another piece of evidence for the truth behind Theo's theorizing on contemporary life in a post-9/11 age. Thinking about the big geopolitical picture, as Perowne often does in *Saturday*, results largely in a paralyzing sense of vicarious traumatization in the face of crippling uncertainty. However, with a turn inwards to the simple pleasures of life, such as family and an engagement with daily life suffused with memories of the past, Perowne's representation of post-9/11 life opens out onto a productive future.

Before turning specifically to *Saturday*, it is instructive to examine the novel's relationship to a modernist precursor—Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. Throughout his career, McEwan has been influenced by Woolf, and *Saturday* emerges as a contemporary rewriting of *Mrs. Dalloway* in a fashion similar to *Atonement*'s rewriting of *To the Lighthouse*. The similarities between the two works abound but originate from their formal observation of the classical unities of time and space. McEwan's Henry Perowne unmistakably echoes Woolf's Clarissa Dalloway as he moves about the spatial environs of upper middle-class London over the course of a single day. In the days depicted in each of the novels, we see both Perowne and Dalloway planning for dinner parties in the evening that bring friends and family members from their pasts together again. In preparation for these evening gatherings, both novels center on a constant stream of memories that help Henry and Clarissa as they attempt to come to terms with the anxious ages in which they live. At the end of the day, both novels reveal that their main characters are much more than bourgeois socialites as Henry Perowne and Clarissa Dalloway emerge as forces of compassion and human connection in the world.

Perowne and Dalloway turn to their pasts to seek guidance about how to live in the present due to the post-traumatic cultural anxieties that populate the metropolis they fictionally share. The London of both *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Saturday* emerges as an unsettled cosmopolitan environment attempting to deal with the disturbing events of the present. *Mrs. Dalloway*, set in the aftermath of World War I, depicts an uneasy empire as the nation emerges from the horror of war and British colonialism enters its waning days. As she sets off to procure flowers for her dinner party, Clarissa muses on the war's impact on the populace: "this late age of experience had bred in them all, all men and women, a well of tears" (Woolf 9). Although Clarissa illustrates a widespread cultural anxiety in the aftermath of WWI, Woolf directly presents the

traumatic horrors of the First World War through the character of Septimus Smith, a veteran suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome. Smith, the representative figure of trauma in the novel, serves as a mirror to Clarissa, and their removed interaction ultimately espouses the novel's central virtue—sensibility. Lady Bradshaw, the wife of Smith's doctor, brings the news of his suicide with them to the dinner party, prompting Clarissa to reflect, "Oh! Thought Clarissa, in the middle of my party, here's death, she thought" (183). Although she initially admonishes the Bradshaws in her thoughts for talking of death at her dinner party, Clarissa withdraws from the party to reflect, and eventually she realizes the similarities between herself and the trauma stricken soldier:

> Somehow it was her disaster—her disgrace. It was her punishment to see sink and disappear here a man, there a woman, in this profound darkness, and she forced to stand here in her evening dress. She had schemed; she had pilfered. She was never wholly admirable. She had wanted success. Lady Bexborough and the rest of it. And once she had walked on the terrace at Bourton. (185)

In her ruminations, Clarissa identifies with Septimus Smith and ultimately feels responsible for his death. She admires him for his courage and his inability to compromise his soul in the face of life's restrictive conventions. Thus, Woolf portrays Clarissa Dalloway as much more than a self-absorbed socialite. However, Clarissa's reckoning with and feelings of responsibility for the death of Smith remain completely abstracted within her mind in a fashion that precludes recovery from cultural trauma.

Saturday, set in the aftermath of 9/11 and its subsequent geopolitical upheaval, depicts a London anxious about terrorism and politically divided over the war in Iraq. As I will illustrate in depth in this chapter, McEwan also portrays the widespread, vicarious cultural traumatism of

the age through the musings of Perowne, who is a "habitual observer of his own moods" (McEwan 4). However, Perowne also has to confront trauma head on through the character of Baxter, a street thug who assaults Perowne following a traffic accident and forces his way into the Perowne's home later that evening. Baxter represents the importance of memory in the post-9/11 era through the Huntington's disease that slowly deteriorates his memory as well as the invasion of the era's cultural anxiety into the domestic space of the Perownes.

Although there are a great deal of similarities between *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Saturday*, their differences inform McEwan's illustration of living with trauma in contemporary society. While the metaphorical incursion of Septimus Smith into Mrs. Dalloway's dinner party influences her character and structures the way she lives, it remains a great deal less forceful than the very literal incursion of Baxter into the life of Henry Perowne and his family. This increased reach of *Saturday*'s cultural trauma seems paradoxical in light of the widespread, massive traumatic suffering that occurred during and following WWI, which was a much larger world-historic event than 9/11. The increased physical presence of the traumatic symptom in McEwan's *Saturday* suggests that in the present day, cultural traumas operate more forcefully upon individuals and are nearly impossible to ignore. The reach of the era's cultural trauma is likely due to the nearly constant barrage of television and radio news coverage that intensifies any cultural anxieties circulating in the world, a reach that McEwan illustrates through the immense influence of the news media throughout *Saturday*. Time and again in the pages of the novel, Perowne's thoughts of cultural traumatism are shaped through his engagement with the news cycle, and ultimately Perowne looks to the news to structure his understanding of the events he witnesses, especially the novel's recreation of a post-9/11 news arc surrounding the plane crash that opens the narrative. However, the increased reach of cultural trauma forces Perowne to

confront publicly and ultimately to bear witness to Baxter's trauma and the importance of memory in the post-9/11 in a way that eludes Clarissa. Perowne's ability to bear witness to the trauma of Baxter in addition to the widespread cultural anxiety that afflicts his daily life nevertheless suggests the possibility of recovering from trauma in a manner that Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* occludes. Therefore, McEwan's novel illustrates Karen DeMeester's theory concerning the limitations of the modernist form's portrayal of a trauma survivor's psyche:

> Although Woolf's form is particularly well-suited for depicting trauma and deftly manifests in art a psychological condition that science failed to understand until half a century and several wars later, it is ill-suited to depicting recovery. Modernist literature defines the post-traumatic condition, but the task of giving individual and cultural meaning to the suffering falls to later generations of artists. (DeMeester 652)

As I will show in this chapter, McEwan takes on themes of post-traumatic suffering in *Saturday* through the interactions between Perowne and Baxter, while at the same time examining the process of recovery in a way that the modernist form of *Mrs. Dalloway* did not afford.

In McEwan's *Saturday*, we turn to a novel characterized by constant motion that is similar to the pre-9/11 New York landscape that Don DeLillo constructs in *Cosmopolis*. The reader's initial introduction to Henry Perowne is *in media res*: "Some hours before dawn Henry Perowne, a neurosurgeon, wakes to find himself already in motion, pushing back the covers from a sitting position, and then rising to his feet" (1). With this introduction to Perowne, McEwan establishes his hero as an individual characterized by motion. Perowne's status as an individual "already in motion" even though it is "some hours" before dawn sets the stage for Perowne's journey through his day in post-9/11 London. Perowne's movement through the space of his Saturday emerges as both a literal and metaphorical journey. McEwan's protagonist moves

through the physical space of London as he traverses the city on foot and by car in order to play squash with a fellow surgeon, pick up food for dinner, spend time with his mother, hear his son's music rehearsal, and journey home in order to preside over a strained reunion between his daughter and father-in-law. At the same time that Perowne moves through the physical space of London, he must also traverse the temporal space of his own mind through a series of narrative flashbacks to the past.

Throughout these literal and metaphorical journeys, Perowne must navigate a host of obstacles that speak to the conditions of contemporary life in a post-9/11 world. While the perpetual motion of Eric Packer in *Cosmopolis* obliterated the past and resulted in the crushing onset of the white-hot future, Perowne's constant motion, both literal and metaphorical, relies upon an engagement with the past in order to open out onto a productive future. Therefore, McEwan's *Saturday* represents a measured vision of constant motion in a post-9/11 world that turns to the past in order to move forward. Perowne's journey through *Saturday* is turned inward as opposed to the solely outward constant movement of Packer in *Cosmopolis*. While Packer moves through a deterritorialized, virtual world, Perowne moves through a world suffused with physicality and embodied memory in order to work through and move beyond the vicarious traumatization that he experiences at the hands of the 9/11 terrorists. Therefore, in *Saturday* McEwan illustrates the overarching vicarious traumatization of society that occurred following 9/11 and suggests a way forward into the future through the establishment of a counter-narrative to terrorism. In McEwan's analeptic counter-narrative individuals serve as embodied *lieux de mémoire*, or sites of memory, that attempt to grapple productively with vicarious traumatization and serve as witnesses instead of as empty vessels of empathy.

As Perowne wonders about the source of a feeling of euphoria he experiences after arising in the early morning hours from his restless slumber, *Saturday*'s narrator casts him as a "habitual observer of his own moods" (4). Thus, in addition to the theme of constant motion that the opening of *Saturday* suggests, the narrative establishes Perowne as a character newly engaged with the world through his wakefulness in the face of vicarious traumatization. In *The Terror of Neoliberalism: Authoritarianism and the Eclipse of Democracy*, Henry Giroux discusses a "politics of worldliness" as it applies to Edward Said's similar notion of wakefulness. Giroux, writing on Said's consideration of his personal inability to sleep, argues that:

> This sense of being awake, displaced, caught in a combination of diverse circumstances suggests a particular notion of worldliness—a critical and engaged interaction with the world we live in mediated by a responsibility for challenging structures of domination and for alleviating human suffering. As an ethical and political stance, worldliness rejects modes of education removed from political or social concerns, divorced from history and matters of injury and injustice. (150)

Giroux's theory of critical and cultural wakefulness falls in line with Jacques Derrida's notion of the importance of arising from a "dogmatic slumber" from which only a new philosophical reflection can awaken us."[13] Perowne initially awakens from his "dogmatic slumber" through the vicarious traumatization he experiences at the hands of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. However, he is further awakened from his dogmatic slumber through his interactions with the character of Baxter. Over the course of the novel, Perowne ultimately emerges from empty empathy towards Baxter to inhabit a space of witnessing that allows him to move forward into the future, and Perowne and his family are transformed into living *lieu de mémoire*.

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[13] See interview with Jacques Derrida in Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, 100.

As critical discussion surrounding the novels of 9/11 expands in the wake of increasing temporal distance from the attacks, McEwan's *Saturday* has inspired the most literary criticism to date in this emergent subgenre of contemporary fiction. In an article entitled "On a Darkling Plain: Victorian Liberalism and the Fantasy of Agency," Elaine Hadley reads *Saturday* as a work that "perpetuates Victorian liberalism at the same time that it offers fresh evidence of its failures" (98). Frances Ferguson reads against Hadley's assessment in "The Way We Love Now: Ian McEwan, *Saturday*, and Personal Affection in the Information Age" when she argues that "it is precisely this account of Victorian liberal values—the celebration of culture and love as deep understanding—that McEwan's novel challenges" (47). Ferguson views *Saturday* as a novel that presents "a rational man not only observing the world and speculating about it but also observing himself and the observational networks that he and we participate in" (47). In other words, Perowne reflects the critical wakefulness posited by Giroux's reading of Said that allows him to turn usefully to the past.

In the context of an overarching argument that is similar to Ferguson's, Elizabeth Kowaleski Wallace also reads the novel as a challenge to conventional Victorian liberal values—including traditional notions of British foreign policy and imperialism. However, Kowalski Wallace diminishes the overarching impact of *Saturday* as she reads the novel's linkages with terrorism—which she limits to the Russian cargo plane's mechanical troubles—as a red herring that ultimately obscures the novel's commentary on Great Britain's post-imperialistic phase of development. Kowaleski Wallace ultimately contends that "what disturbs the novel [*Saturday*] is less an anxiety about personal safety in a world of destabilized politics and more a psychological condition that sociologist Paul Gilroy, in a recent, provocative monograph has called 'postcolonial melancholia'" (466). For Kowaleski Wallace, "McEwan's novel continually

glances at a multicultural and cosmopolitan society with which it resists engagement" (467) and is ultimately "unique in its failure to carry through on the very conversation it introduces: what does England become in the wake of its imperial greatness?" (467). Although she offers a compelling reading of the novel in light of Gilroy's theory of "postcolonial melancholia," Kowaleski Wallace's argument marginalizes *Saturday* through its engagement with the novel's themes solely through a questioning of post-imperial British identity. Ultimately, Kowaleski Wallace offers no reason beyond the national identity of the novel's author and the text's setting for limiting the scope of her argument to an analysis of post-imperial Britain. In this chapter I will examine how the application of E. Ann Kaplan's theory of vicarious traumatization to the text casts McEwan's *Saturday* as a synecdoche for living in a post-9/11 world instead of merely a synecdoche for a contemporary history of Henry Perowne's "homeland" (474).

As he awakes to the aftermath of 9/11 in *Saturday*, Henry Perowne serves as an apt illustration of an individual suffering from E. Ann Kaplan's formulation of vicarious trauma. Kaplan explores the notion of vicarious trauma as a concept often overlooked in the application of trauma research to the humanities.[14] Martin Hoffman, generalizing from survey data collected from therapists on the subject, defines vicarious trauma as "the deleterious effects of trauma therapy on the therapist" (Hoffman qtd. in Kaplan 40). For Kaplan, this transfer of symptoms from patient to clinician warrants "establishing vicarious trauma as a factor of clinical work with victims of catastrophes and physical abuse" (41). Since the symptoms of trauma can be conveyed from the patient to the clinician, Kaplan extends this vicarious experience of trauma into the humanities in order to explore "the distinction between traumatic situations per se and

[14] As Kaplan contends, "In the absence of much attention to or concrete research about vicarious trauma in the humanities, work by clinicians may offer some insight. While Freud himself and many clinicians following him never isolated or named vicarious or secondary trauma, vicarious trauma has been recognized by clinicians in recent years, to the extent that there is now a substantial literature on the subject" (39-40).

vicarious ones" that has been overlooked in literary and cultural studies. Kaplan ultimately argues that "the reader or viewer of stories or films about traumatic situations may be constituted through vicarious or secondary trauma" (39). She is also interested in examining "what happens to spectators of traumatic events in popular media" (87). Hoffman's conceptualization of vicarious trauma and Kaplan's subsequent extension of the subject into the humanities, and media more generally, in no way seeks to diminish the traumatic experiences of those directly affected by trauma. However, Kaplan contends that "most of us generally encounter trauma vicariously through the media rather than directly" and that "such exposure may result in symptoms of secondary trauma," making vicarious traumatization a line of inquiry well worth exploring in literary and cultural studies (87).

As Kaplan asserts, "most of us most of the time experience trauma in the 'secondary' rather than direct position, for good or ill," making it essential to deal with the ways in which notions of vicarious trauma impact individuals in light of an event such as 9/11 (39). While the majority of the clinical research on vicarious trauma explores the impact of trauma victims' stories on therapists themselves, constant media focus on 9/11 may have similar effects on its consumers. Fictional narratives concerning the events may convey vicarious trauma and represent a means of working through such trauma for both characters and readers. Perowne—a character constituted through his experience of the social trauma inherent in an age of terror—experiences vicarious trauma because he listens to the news and reads newspapers. At the same time, McEwan writes a novel that exposes readers to vicarious trauma through their reading of Perowne's experiences.

In the pages of *Saturday*, Perowne explicitly links the backwards-focused arc of terrorism with a despotic childlike psychology: "But even despotic kings, even the ancient gods, couldn't

always dream the world to their convenience. It's only children, in fact, only infants who feel a wish and its fulfillment as one; perhaps this is what gives tyrants their childish air. They reach back for what they can't have" (39). According to Perowne, the tyrannical narrative of terrorism represents an attempt to reach back into the past in order to recapture a time when it was possible to satiate individual desire at will without any force of mediation or cultural interference. Ultimately, this desire to return to such an earlier era of development is reductive and dangerous since Islamic fundamentalist terrorists construct a "doomed tradition of utopia" that seeks to return to a supposedly idyllic past state of society, but "ends up licensing every form of excess" (34). Perowne further derides the backwards-oriented narrative of terrorism as he moves through the London city streets in the midst of the February 15, 2003, war protest. In order to illustrate the ultimate futility of the terrorists' backwards-oriented narrative, Perowne asserts the values of modern life and the Enlightenment project that critics such as Derrida and Habermas assert are challenged by terrorism:

> It [the city] won't easily allow itself to be destroyed. It's too good to let go. Life in it has steadily improved over the centuries for most people, despite the junkies and beggars now. The air is better, and salmon are leaping in the Thames, and otters are returning. At every level, material, medical, intellectual, sensual, for most people it has improved….In indignation, Perowne grips the wheel tighter in his right hand. He remembers some lines by Medawar, a man he admires: "To deride the hopes of progress is the ultimate fatuity, the last word in poverty of spirit and meanness of mind. (76-77)

Although Perowne argues that terrorism's backwards-oriented narrative arc is untenable, in a certain sense he still suffers from what his inner monologue terms "anosognosia"—a

neurological condition that constitutes a lack of awareness and prevents him from seeing exactly how this belief in progress serves his own prosperity.

Perowne's philosophical musings establish him as a vicariously traumatized "victim" of the 9/11 attacks. Perowne contends that he lives during "baffled and fearful" days that emerge as a sharp contrast to the more optimistic times of the past (3). As he arises from his slumber, Perowne realizes he has mistaken the burning Russian cargo plane in the sky for a comet when he "hears a low rumbling sound, gentle thunder gathering in volume" (13). The narrative description of the plane burning in the night sky over London both invokes images of terrorism and is also a metaphor for common reactions to terrorism:

> The leading edge of the fire is a flattened white sphere which trails away in a cone of yellow and red, less like a meteor or comet than an artist's lurid impression of one. As though in a pretence of normality, the landing lights are flashing. But the engine note gives it all away. Above the usual deep and airy roar is a straining, choking banshee sound growing in volume—both a scream and a sustained shout, an impure, dirty noise that suggests unsustainable mechanical effort beyond the capacity of hardened steel, spiraling upwards to an end point, irresponsibly rising and rising like the accompaniment to a terrible fairground ride. Something is about to give. (14)

Perowne inhabits a post-9/11 world in which people constantly feel as though "something is about to give." He is living in a changed world in which "Everyone agrees, airliners look different in the sky these days, predatory or doomed" (15). The Perownes inhabit a society on edge following the 9/11 attacks. Perowne and his family have been vicariously traumatized by the events of 9/11 through the news media's constant broadcasting of the attacks. Then, as he watches the burning plane traverse the London sky, Perowne's inner voice surmises that "the

scene construed from the outside, from afar like this, is also familiar" (15). Once again a key element of the event is the horror that Perowne derives from the unseen: "That is the other familiar element—the horror of what he can't see. Catastrophe observed from a safe distance. Watching death on a large scale, but seeing no one die. No blood, no screams, no human figures at all, and into this emptiness, the obliging imagination set free" (15). Henry further reveals his status as a victim of vicarious traumatization when he speaks inwardly of realizing the "extent of his turmoil" in the face of the burning plane:

> His thoughts have a reeling, tenuous quality—he can't hold an idea long enough to force sense out of it. He feels culpable somehow, but helpless too. These are contradictory terms, but not quite, and it's the degree of their overlap, their manner of expressing the same thing from different angles that he needs to comprehend. Culpable in his helplessness. Helplessly culpable. (22)

In this quotation it is apparent that Perowne emerges as a synecdoche for all individuals inhabiting a post-9/11 world. Despite Perowne's awakening in the aftermath of 9/11, his conflicted feelings of culpability in the face of the terrorist disaster exhibit what Kaplan refers to as empty empathy that he will seek to overcome.

An analeptic counter-narrative to terrorism is McEwan's ultimate answer to terrorists' destructive desire to return to a child-like state of societal development and the narrative of vicarious traumatization propagated by the news media over the course of the novel. Perowne makes an allusion to living a life structured by memory as he discusses a memory of his mother, a character who herself highlights the importance of memory because of her deteriorating capacity for it. As Perowne reminisces about his mother's swimming, the narrator observes that "He could never throw himself in, the way she did, the way she wanted him to. Submersion in

another element, every day, making every day special, was what she wanted and thought he should have. Well, he was fine with that now, as long as the other element wasn't cold water" (38-39). Throughout the novel Perowne indeed lives his daily life submerged in another element that is not the cold water of the present—he lives it submerged in warm memories. He returns to the story of his mother's swimming as he embarks upon an amorous moment with his wife:

> Now he is freed from thought, from memory, from the passing seconds and from the state of the world. Sex is a different medium, refracting time and sense, a biological hyperspace as remote from conscious existence as dreams, or as water is from air. As his mother used to say, another element; the day is changed, Henry, when you take a swim. And that day is bound to be marked out from all the rest. (52)

Despite Perowne's assertion that this moment is freed from thought and memory, his memories of Rosalind open out from a narrative flashback onto Perowne's loving encounter with his spouse.

The linkage of marital love and memory in this passage also establishes a strong sense of how the body itself serves as a *lieu de mémoire*, or site of memory, in the novel. Ultimately, it is Perowne's engagement with the slipstream of memories that mark his day out from all the rest that structures the narrative space of *Saturday*. In fact, an array of Perowne's memories plays key roles in the constitution of the narrative. We see numerous memories of key events in Perowne's life—for example, the story of his meeting with and courtship of his wife Rosalind, the falling out between his daughter and father-in-law, and his memory of a conversation with an Iraqi exile. The opening of the novel's second chapter circles back to the scene between Henry and Rosalind, as Henry thinks to himself, "There is a grandeur in this view of life" (53). Perowne "hears" this phrase repeated through his shower's radio until "he begins to sense a

religious content as its significance swells" and it repeats the phrase "over and again" (53). He relates the phrase back to the grandeur of swimming in the medium of memory, an interpretation that takes on greater salience when Perowne links it with his reading of a Darwin biography that he undertook as part of his daughter's reading list the night before. The grandeur of memory ultimately stems from "endless and beautiful forms of life, such as you see in a common hedgerow, including exalted beings like ourselves, arose from physical laws, from war of nature, famine and death. This is the grandeur. And a bracing kind of consolation in the brief privilege of consciousness" (54). For Perowne, a counter-narrative that relies upon memory exhibits a kind of grandeur that, much like evolution, engages with the successes and failures of the past in order to open out onto a productive future.

Perowne sees memory as a key constitutive element of human life and links memory with the functioning of the body through his professional experience as a neurosurgeon. In his surgical endeavors, Perowne deals with the brain as an organ of embodied memory that is a key element of human functioning. As he describes moments when his surgical expertise fails, he surmises, "when they involve patients, these moments have a purity and innocence about them; everything is stripped down to the essentials of being—memory, vision, the ability to recognize faces, chronic pain, motor function, even a sense of self" (85). This association of the body with the workings of memory serves to demarcate human beings as *lieux de mémoire*, or sites of memory.

Although he suffers from a societal form of vicarious traumatization because of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, an intrusion of trauma into his domestic life further consolidates processes of traumatization in Perowne's psyche. As he rides through the streets closed off for the Iraq war protest march, he collides with the red BMW of a street tough who refers to himself as Baxter.

Finding himself physically threatened, Perowne speaks to the street tough's innermost fears concerning his deteriorating neurological condition. Perowne's astute diagnosis undermines Baxter's authority and saves him from a physical altercation. Perowne's encounter with Baxter recalls Kaplan's question, "how might vicarious trauma in spectators facilitate or interfere with pro-social individual and cultural change?" (87). Kaplan herself admits that such a response can be mixed: "Arguably, being vicariously traumatized invites members of a society to confront, rather than conceal, catastrophes, and in a way that might be useful. On the other hand, it might arouse anxiety and trigger defense against further exposure" (87). In *Saturday*, Perowne exemplifies both of these responses to vicarious trauma in his two instances of engagement with Baxter, whom he sees first as a physical embodiment of the terrorist Other and then as a physical embodiment of Perowne's sense of vicarious traumatization.

In their first meeting, Perowne fails to see Baxter as a fellow human being and lapses back into his professional habit of the "intellectual game of diagnosis" in a manner that allows him to exercise "*a false sense of superiority*" [emphasis McEwan's] (91) as he exhibits empty empathy with respect to Baxter. However, shortly following this physically hostile encounter in the streets of London, the narrator observes that "Perowne suddenly feels his own life as fragile and precious" (103). In Perowne's first interaction with Baxter, he exhibits what Kaplan refers to as "empty empathy," a form of empathy "elicited by images of suffering provided without any context or background knowledge" (93). Perowne gets enough of an image of Baxter to misuse his medical power as a diagnostician in a way that reduces a human being to the outward signs of his pathology. Despite his suffering as a victim of vicarious trauma, Perowne takes a zero-sum approach to the conflict as he surmises that "someone is going to have to impose his will and win, and the other is going to give way" (87).

McEwan's proposed counter-narrative to terrorism emerges through the Perowne family's confrontation with Baxter and proposes a cure for Perowne's anosognosia through a memory-infused act of witnessing. Although Perowne retains traces of anosognosia in his first encounter with Baxter, McEwan opens the door for his hero to transition from a space of empty empathy to a position of ethical witnessing through the processes of memory. Despite the fact that his encounter with Baxter—an embodied representation of the pervasive fears that have troubled Perowne throughout his Saturday—unsettles Henry's afternoon, he puts it out of his mind until Baxter walks into the family reunion holding a knife to Rosalind. Baxter's incursion into the family life of the Perownes represents the backwards-oriented narrative of terrorism on a microcosmic scale. After all, Baxter's incursion into Perowne's domicile ultimately represents a destructive attempt to return to the moment of conflict that occurred earlier that morning. Thus, Baxter's narrative serves as a stand-in for what Perowne derides as an untenable narrative that seeks to return to a point in the past where all desires are satiated indiscriminately. Baxter's tyrannical child-like desire manifests itself in his sexualized desire for the pregnant Daisy—a longing that he wishes to fulfill through mechanisms of power when he asks her to take off her clothes. Daisy, along with the Perowne family as a whole, is stricken with the trauma of the moment as she "shrinks abjectly into herself" and disrobes in a "panic" before the terrifying figure of Baxter (226). Baxter's repulsion at Daisy's pregnant form ultimately speaks to the desire of the terrorists' narrative to return to the past, since he is affronted by a physical embodiment of the future—a mother and child.

In contrast, the mechanism that Daisy uses to subdue the aggressions of Baxter—an embodied memory that situates her as a *lieu de mémoire*—emerges as a practical application of the theoretical counter-narrative to terrorism that McEwan advocates throughout the flashback-

suffused narrative space of *Saturday*. Daisy's response to Baxter's aggressive directive for her to read a poem functions as an embodied memory on two levels. As Baxter threatens to hurt her mother if she does not read a poem, her estranged grandfather John Grammaticus "says to her quietly 'Daisy, listen. Do one you used to say for me'" (228). Although this response initially is cryptic to her, as the narrator observes, she eventually "seems to understand" the communication from her grandfather as she begins to recite a poem from memory that, as the narrator relates earlier in the novel, her grandfather encouraged her to learn as a child: Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" (228). Apart from the poem's status as an embodied memory for Daisy and Grammaticus, Perowne's lay commentary on the message of the poem itself indicates its artistic status as a work of memory: "The lines surprise him—clearly, he hasn't been reading closely enough. They are unusually meditative, mellifluous and willfully archaic. She's thrown herself back into another century" (228). As the couple in the poem listen to the surf along the coastline, Perowne imagines that they "hear in the sound a deep sorrow which stretches right back to ancient time" and that "there was another time, even further back, when the earth was new and the sea consoling and nothing came between man and God" (229). Perowne's reading of the poem paints a picture of individuals in a time past who inhabit an age of vicarious traumatization similar to the one in which Perowne and his family currently live. However, through an engagement with "another time, even further back," the couple in the poem hopes to open out onto a redemptive future in which they can raise their child free from the destructive influence of the armies who stand ready to fight. Thus, the poem presents an analeptic counter-narrative, a way to engage productively with the past in order to facilitate a move into the future since Daisy herself serves as an embodied *lieu de mémoire*.

The effect of the poem upon Baxter, who slackens the grip he holds of the knife and relaxes his posture in a manner that indicates "a possible ebbing of intent," forces Henry to ask whether the poem "could…precipitate a mood swing" (229). Baxter himself provides the explicit answer to Perowne's silent question when he states, "You wrote that. It's beautiful. You know that, don't you. It's beautiful. And you wrote it" (231). It is ultimately the poem's status as an embodied memory that inspires Baxter to change his mind concerning his intentions towards Daisy, since he states that "it makes me think about where I grew up"—shifting his intentions towards Daisy from lust to love (231). Baxter's engagement with the past through Daisy's poetic recitation forces him to cope productively with his past and consequently inspires him to move into the future as he excitedly asks Perowne about the state of medical trials for his Huntington's disease.

For Kaplan, the difference between empty empathy and witnessing "involves distance; empathic sharing entails closeness but may lead to the overidentification of vicarious trauma. Witnessing has to do with an art work producing a deliberate ethical consciousness" (122). She goes on to argue that:

> "Witnessing" is the term I use for prompting an ethical response that will perhaps transform the way someone views the world, or thinks about justice. Vicarious traumatization may be a component of witnessing, but instead of only intensifying the desire to help an individual in front of one, witnessing leads to a broader understanding of the meaning of what has been done to victims, of the politics of trauma being possible. (123)

Perowne serves as a witness to the trauma Baxter perpetrates upon his family at the same time that he witnesses the power of Matthew Arnold's poem to produce 'a deliberate ethical

consciousness" within the character of Baxter, while Baxter himself, in turn, witnesses what it means to deal with the past. Arnold's work creates an ethical consciousness within Baxter, who abandons his plans to sexually assault Daisy following her recitation of the poem, at the same time that it reinforces an analeptic counter-narrative to terrorism through its valuation of memory. Granted, Perowne and his son use the opportunity the poem affords to incapacitate Baxter. However, Henry also witnesses Baxter's illness with a fuller sense of the context that he lacked during his initial diagnosis in the streets of London. After seeing Baxter's illness in context, Perowne decides to operate in order to save the life of the fallen intruder. Perowne himself highlights the impact his act of witnessing exerts upon how he "views the world" and "thinks about justice" as he surmises that "I have to see this through" because "I'm responsible" (245). Perowne also observes the greater context that his act of witnessing affords him in his treatment of Baxter: "Henry never doubted he was right, but the physical evidence confers its own bleak satisfaction" (257). Perowne's acts of witnessing—both his literal experience of the impact of memory on Baxter and his ethical decision to operate on Baxter—allow him to view the embodied symptoms of Baxter's pathology in context. Therefore, his acts of witnessing grant Perowne the contextualized perspective that allows him to provide a response to Baxter that goes beyond the empty empathy of their first meeting.

As the Perowne family attempts to decompress from the traumatic shock of the events surrounding Baxter's attack, they once again turn to memory in order to help them engage with the past and assimilate it into the future. Following the exit of the police and paramedics, they all have "sudden bursts of urgent, sometimes tearful recall…broken by numb silences" (237). Their fresh memories allow them to subdue the threat posed by Baxter (237). Memory calms and joins them together after the incursion of the trauma since

> All they do is describe: when they came in the room, when he turned, when the tall one horsy one just walked out of the house….They want to have it all again, from another's point of view, and know that it's all true what they've been through, and feel in these precise comparisons of feeling and observation that they're being delivered from private nightmare, and returned to the web of kindly social and familial relations, without which they're nothing. (237-38)

In this memory of the Perownes' traumatic ordeal, they have discovered what Theo refers to as the power of "thinking small." It is through this power of small thinking that Perowne engages with the past to open out onto a productive future. As he muses on the future of his children and his own prospects, Perowne seamlessly transitions from his Saturday into his Sunday as an embodied site of memory that provides a witness for the future through his engagement with the past. Through this movement in *Saturday*, McEwan takes up the call of Don DeLillo as he constructs an analeptic counter-narrative to the backwards-oriented narrative arc of terrorism. McEwan's counter-narrative ultimately provides an apt illustration of what it means to live in the culturally traumatized space of memory that emerged in the wake of the 9/11 attacks.

Conclusion

Emerging from the *Netherland* of 9/11

As Don DeLillo asserts in his *Harper's Magazine* essay "In the Ruins of the Future," the narrative of the "white-hot future" emblematized by the World Trade Center lies in the rubble of the terrorist attacks of 9/11 (34). Through their assault on the physical buildings of the World Trade Center, the terrorists symbolically attacked an unquestioned belief in the future and progress. The backwards-oriented narrative arc of terrorism consequently necessitates a re-evaluation of how we as individuals orient ourselves in the world. For DeLillo, the task at hand in the face of these ruins is to create a counter-narrative to terrorism. The counter-narrative that DeLillo argues for in his *Harper's* essay is defined by the thematic element that links the novels under discussion in this study—memory. This theme of memory represents a way for those dealing with the traumatic impact of 9/11 to engage with the past in a way that productively transitions into the future instead of insisting upon a violent return to the past that shuts down the future completely.

As I have argued over the course of this project, Don DeLillo, Jonathan Safran Foer, and Ian McEwan each attempt to showcase the renewed and important place of memory in the post-9/11 world in their writing. Through my comparative analysis of *Cosmopolis* and *Falling Man* in Chapter One, I illustrated how DeLillo argues for the renewed importance of the place of memory in the world following the attacks of 9/11. *Cosmopolis'* world of constant motion illustrates a pre-9/11 mindset drenched in the "white hot future" that eviscerates the space of memory in society. However, following the attacks of 9/11, Keith and Lianne Neudecker in

Falling Man highlight the utility and importance of productively engaging with the past in order to move forward into the future as a mechanism for dealing with trauma.

After setting up the renewed importance of a productive engagement with the past through my analysis of this shift in DeLillo's work, I turned to an analysis of how the increased importance of memory structures the 9/11 writings of Jonathan Safran Foer and Ian McEwan as they grapple with the construction of their own literary counter-narratives to terrorism. Memory in both of these novels allows characters to engage with the past in order to transition productively into the future. Chapter Two's discussion of Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* highlighted how the narrative itself serves as a site of memory that speaks to the power of a productive engagement with the past to illuminate the future. Foer uses a series of traumatic memoirs in order to explore issues of transgenerational trauma. This theme of trauma across generations allows Oskar Schell to look back and provide a witness to the traumatic past of his grandparents at Dresden in order to transition beyond the trauma of losing his father on 9/11.

Finally, in Chapter Three's discussion of McEwan's *Saturday*, I highlighted how an engagement with the past empowers Henry Perowne and his family in their struggles with the vicarious traumatization that they experience living in an anxious post-9/11 geopolitical moment. Throughout the novel, Henry Perowne engages with the memories that constitute his past as he goes about his daily tasks in a fashion that would be unthinkable for DeLillo's Eric Packer in *Cosmopolis*. Henry's engagement with these streams of memory transforms him and his family members into embodied sites of memory productively engaging with the past. Memory similarly plays an important role in the climax of *Saturday*. Daisy Perowne's ability to awaken a yearning for a productive engagement with the past in the memory-stricken mind of Baxter subdues the hostile invader long enough for the Perownes to defend themselves. *Falling Man*, *Saturday*, and

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close each strive to mitigate society's intense futurity through an engagement with the past. Each of these works helps construct a forward-looking counter-narrative to terrorism that productively engages with the past in order to transition into the future at the same time that it speaks to the trauma of the present.

As the chronological and psychic distance from the events of 9/11 increases, the role of memory and the need to engage productively with the past continue to be key themes in new fiction about 9/11. For instance, no recent work serves as a more apt example of this persistent trend than Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland*, which tells the story of a Dutchman named Hans van den Broeck living in Manhattan immediately after 9/11. Hans' tale operates much like the traumatic memoir of Foer's young protagonist Oskar Schell. The novel is the story of Hans' attempt to make sense of the interconnected traumas of experiencing the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and his wife Rachel's decision to leave him to go back to her native London instead of living in post-9/11 New York. Hans tells his tale to make sense of the various traumas that afflict him and to comprehend the murder of his one friend during the period after the towers fell in New York City—Chuck Ramkissoon, a "Gatsbyesque" Trinidadian cricketer who reacquainted Hans with his childhood passion for cricket. Hans' story embodies the major themes discussed in the present thesis.

In *Netherland*, O'Neill returns readers to considerations of the urban space of New York City that structured the work of DeLillo in *Cosmopolis* and *Falling Man*. However, in a manner similar to that of McEwan's Henry Perowne, Hans is constantly grappling with the meanings of his past memories and the way those memories structure his present. As he reminiscences about the time he spent in New York after 9/11, when he and his family had been forced from their

lower Manhattan loft into the quirky Chelsea Hotel, Hans remembers a co-worker reminiscing about the city:

> But it turns out he was right in a way. Now that I, too, have left that city, I find it hard to rid myself of the feeling that life carries a taint of aftermath. This last-mentioned word, somebody once told me, refers literally to a second mowing of grass in the same season. You might say, if you're the type prone to general observations, that New York City insists on memory's repetitive mower—on the sort of purposeful postmortem that has the effect, so one is told and forlornly hopes, of cutting the grassy past to manageable proportions. For it keeps growing back, of course. None of this means that I wish I were back there now; and naturally I'd like to believe that my own retrospection is in some way more important than the old S.V.P's, which, when I was exposed to it seemed to amount to not much more than a cheap longing. But there's no such thing as a cheap longing, I'm tempted to conclude these days (4).

The post-9/11 New York inhabited by Hans van den Broeck "insists on memory's repetitive mower" in a way that the pre-9/11 world of Hans' fellow financial analyst Eric Packer in *Cosmopolis* completely occluded. Throughout *Netherland*, as a displaced resident, Hans engages in a "purposeful postmortem" of his time in the Chelsea Hotel and although the past may not in and of itself become a manageable entity, he is at the end of the novel able to transition beyond the traumas that afflict him. For Hans, the nostalgic "longing" that has value throughout the traumatic stretch of time following the departure of his wife is his reacquaintance with the constitutive sport of his youth—cricket.

After their family was displaced from their Tribeca loft, Hans' wife Rachel fled New York with the couple's son Jake as the city in the wake of the attacks of 9/11 "took on a

fearsome, monstrous nature whose reality might have befuddled Plato himself" (24). In the aftermath of both 9/11 and her flight, Hans endures a feeling of "wretchedness" throughout his association with Chuck Ramkissoon and his time in New York (31). As Hans himself surmises during this time in his life, he was "to anyone who could be bothered to pay attention, noticeably lost" (72). However, Chuck's obsession with a dream of constructing a cricket stadium in New York City awakens in Hans a sharp nostalgia for the sport of his youth. Hans' nostalgia for cricket connects him with his past in a manner that allows him to deal with both the politically and personally "phantasmagoric and newly indistinct world beyond the Chelsea's heavy glass doors" (33). He finds some measure of personal salvation in the ruins of 9/11 through a return to the cricket-playing days of his youth.

O'Neill's use of cricket as a focus throughout the novel transforms the post-9/11 urban landscape of New York City into a post-colonial contact zone that forces readers to tackle a host of difficult questions concerning how much life has changed in the face of terrorism. In a passage that speaks to the cross-cultural sociality of cricket in a newly globalized post-9/11 New York City, Hans surmises:

> I've heard that social scientists like to explain such a scene—a patch of America sprinkled with the foreign-born strangely at play—in terms of the immigrant's quest for subcommunities. How true this is: we're all far away from Tipperary, and clubbing together mitigates this unfair fact. But surely everyone can also testify to another, less reckonable kind of homesickness, one having to do with unsettlements that cannot be located in spaces of geography or history; and accordingly it's my belief that the communal, contractual phenomenon of New York cricket is underwritten, there where the point is finest, by the same agglomeration of unspeakable individual longings that

> underwrites cricket played anywhere—longings concerned with horizons and potentials sighted or hallucinated and in any event lost long ago, tantalisms that touch on the undoing of losses too private and reprehensible to be acknowledged to oneself, let alone to others. I cannot be the first to wonder if what we see, when we see men in white take to the cricket field, is men imagining an environment of justice. (120–121)

In response to a less reckonable kind of homesickness that cannot be located in geography or history, Hans is inspired to construct a counter-narrative to terrorism. Hans ultimately turns to cricket to find the key to the unsettlement that affects him despite his inability to locate its cause in spaces of geography or national history. The cricket fields of O'Neill's phantasmagoric and newly indistinct New York City emerge as a counter-narrative to the destructive narrative arc of terrorism as immigrants of different nationalities and faiths imagine "an environment of justice" on the fields across the river from the "great downtown vacancy" created on 9/11 (78).

O'Neill's tale of post-9/11 New York City represents one individual's attempt to replay the past in his mind in order to make "knowledge out of memory" on both the cricket pitches and his personal life (174). If the contact zones created on the cricket fields of New York remain a dream deferred at the conclusion of *Netherland*, Hans' personal engagement with the past nonetheless allows him to transition into a productive future. As his relationship with Chuck evolves, it reveals to Hans that he desires to return to London and reunite with his wife and son. Thus, Hans moves resolutely into the future following his productive engagement with the cricket fields of his past. The concluding scene of *Netherland* illustrates Hans' emergence from the "sanctuary" offered by the "holy space of reverie" (217). As Hans, his wife, and his child meet up after work to observe their city from atop the London Eye, Hans makes peace with the interconnected traumas of his past and looks forward to the future:

> A self-evident and prefabricated symbolism attaches itself to this slow climb to the zenith, and we are not so foolishly ironic, or confident, as to miss the opportunity to glimpse significantly into the eyes of the other and share the thought that occurs to all at this summit, which is, of course, that they have made it thus far, to a point where they can see horizons previously unseen, and the old earth reveals itself newly. Everything is further heightened, as we must obscurely have planned, by signs of sundown: in the few clouds above Ealing, Phoebus is up to this oldest and best tricks. Rachel, a practical expression all of a sudden crossing her face, begins to say something, but I shush her. I know my wife: she feels an urge to go down now, into the streets and into the facts. But I leave her with no choice, as willy-nilly we are lowered westward, but to accept her place above it all. There is to be no drifting out of the moment. (255)

As Hans reaches the zenith of the Eye, he speaks to his desire to keep from drifting out of the moment. His need to accept his place in the universe signifies a readiness on his part to move into the future after engaging with his memories of life in the aftermath of 9/11, which illustrates a movement similar to those that occurred in the work of DeLillo, Foer, and McEwan.

Undoubtedly, *Netherland* will not be the final fictional treatment of 9/11 and its aftermath. O'Neill's nuanced novel, which is informed by a chronological distance from the events, extends the work of 9/11 literature into a post-colonial context that further informs and challenges understandings of our traumatic national past. As the years go on, it will be interesting to continue to track the manner in which novelists productively engage with this traumatic past in order to transition resolutely into the future while constructing a literary counter-narrative to terrorism. At the end of the day, this project attempts to engage in a critical, scholarly movement similar to the engagement with the past that occurs in the fiction of Don DeLillo, Jonathan

Safran Foer, and Ian McEwan. As it analyzes the construction of a counter-narrative to terrorism in the works of these authors, this thesis implicitly engages with the past of 9/11 literature in order to see how the construction of counter-narratives to the backwards-oriented narrative arc of terrorism will lead readers into the future of contemporary literature. *Falling Man*, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, and *Saturday* provide similar yet different answers to the question of what kind of literature emerges out of the ruins of national tragedy. Only time will tell how future authors will engage with the traumatic national past of 9/11.

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