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# From Mutation to Disarticulation: Terror and the Body in Don DeLillo's Falling Man

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From Mutation to Disarticulation:  
Terror and the Body in Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*

An Abstract of a Thesis  
in English

by

Sarah McMichael

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

Master of Arts

August 2013

Buffalo State  
State University of New York  
Department of English

## ABSTRACT OF THESIS

From Mutation to Disarticulation:  
Terror and the Body in Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*

Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* addresses cultural changes within the age of postmodern indifference and global terror, as the reaction to the image of a falling body becomes controversial following the events of 9/11. After being initially removed by the media, Richard Drew's provocative photo titled "The Falling Man" captures a body falling against the backdrop of the World Trade Center, and is recovered and reexamined in DeLillo's novel. Several types of bodily disturbances are illuminated in *Falling Man* as the fictional bodies of both American citizens and foreign terrorists become susceptible to strange mutations and disarticulations. DeLillo uses the bodily form as a reference point to expose and analyze the hidden atrocities of American exceptionalism—a system that accepts and allows actual human bodies to become the waste by-product of these global exchanges. Image and reality have become blurred in the era of postmodernity, and the outrage over Drew's intriguing photo immediately after 9/11 should raise suspicion as to this image's cultural significance. By encompassing a strange mix of bodily concerns such as viral infections, detached faces, and the unique phenomenon of organic shrapnel, DeLillo unearths the suffering body from its hiding place and brings to the forefront again in *Falling Man*.

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*Up the hill backwards*

*It'll be alright*

*– David Bowie*

Table of Contents

Preliminary Pages: ..... i  
Introduction: ..... 1  
Chapter I: Sacred Bodies: ..... 7  
Chapter II: Bodily Parts and Pieces: ..... 37  
Chapter III: The Body Infected: ..... 59  
Conclusion: ..... 72  
Works Cited: ..... 75

## Introduction

After the attacks on 9/11, Americans were undoubtedly left in a state of shock and despair, repeatedly “reliving” those horrid moments day in and day out in the media. Images of the planes colliding with the towers, heroic firemen rushing to the scene, collapsing structures, and people covered in ash left bewildered in the streets, were just some of the common pictures and videos replayed in a collage of violence and anguish—slowly creating a national narrative of “collective trauma.” One of the most widely disseminated photos, taken by Richard Drew, was that of the “Falling Man”—a photo that ran the following day in several newspapers, displaying the image of a falling human being against the structural backdrop of one of the towers. He is upside down in a suit, hands at his side, one leg bent, caught in a strange pose of serenity and stillness, falling to his imminent death. Mentioning Drew’s photo, Sonia Baelo-Allue says, “The fact that the man is frozen into free fall is like a traumatic memory frozen in the brain which cannot be integrated into memory: it lacks a frame of reference or narrative” (“9/11” 73). All of the videos and images of people jumping from the towers, including Drew’s “Falling Man,” were removed from the 9/11 media spectacle only one day after they had been viewed by the public. Journalist Tom Junod notes, “All over the world, people saw the human stream debouch from the top of the North Tower, but here in the United States, we saw these images only until the networks decided not to allow such a harrowing view, out of respect for the families of those so publicly dying.” The images of people falling to their deaths are both intriguing and disturbing, and in a postmodern society that has

undoubtedly accepted bodily violence as a form of entertainment, one must wonder why these particular bodies demanded such special consideration.

Referencing another less well-known but controversial figure, Don DeLillo also includes the story of a provocative street performer known to post-9/11 New Yorkers as “The Falling Man,” who appears and reappears throughout the novel, and is based on a man who had actually existed (referred to in *Falling Man* as David Janiak). After 9/11, this performer moved throughout the city and recreated the experience of witnessing the 9/11 “falling” bodies by jumping off of a platform above an unsuspecting crowd while wearing only a harness. He also maintained a similar bodily pose to that of Drew’s photo, therefore making it a dangerous act that was both alarming and contentious to its witnesses.

In an essay titled “In the Ruins of the Future,” which was written shortly after 9/11, Don DeLillo gives his own insight into the challenges of writing about the horrific events of that day:

The writer wants to understand what this day has done to us. Is it too soon? ... language is inseparable from the world that provokes it. 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, hands and spirits joining, human beauty in the crush of meshed steel.

The visual of a businessman falling (jumping) to his death is a profound image; a body hung amongst the backdrop of the crumbling World Trade Towers—buildings seemingly



built to embody the ultimate manifestation of American domination and excess. Most Americans witnessed a media barrage which dismissed the bodily images and videos that DeLillo described as “human beauty,” and instead spent countless hours watching machinery (planes) crash into superstructures (towers)—the “human stream” of falling bodies was removed from this media spectacle.

In exploring the symbolism of infrastructure, Fredric Jameson makes a profound statement regarding the state of aesthetic cultural production in the United States:

Of all the arts, architecture is the closest constitutively to the economic ... it will therefore not be surprising to find the extraordinary flowering of the new postmodern architecture grounded in the patronage of multinational business ... Yet this is the point at which I must remind the reader of the obvious; namely, that this whole global, yet American, postmodern is the internal and superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world: in this sense, as throughout class history, the underside of culture is blood, torture, death, and terror (*Postmodernism* 5).

If terrorism is a response to the atrocities created by global intervention and exploitation, it is no wonder that the World Trade Center Towers, buildings that harbored American businessmen as well as many international players, were chosen as symbolic targets for aggressive retaliation. The crumbling of the Twin Towers became the emblematic representation of excess, reduced to visible, physical waste in front of the entire world. The “undersides” of American globalization, “blood, torture, death, and terror,” became

the desperate means by which to disassemble these architectural icons into ash, and then ultimately, back into empty space.

Drew's "Falling Man" photo explores the important function of the visible human body in the age of late capitalism—it bears witness to the human atrocities of American postmodernity as described by theorists such as Jean Baudrillard and Jameson. This image is suggestive of something outside of the nation's adaptation of "collective trauma," and was locked out of the national media narrative as a result. It exposed the truth that as a consequence of an accumulation of American international power and destruction, the human body was often the hidden waste product of these global institutions, and therefore, being a symbol which exposes this truth, it must remain unseen. The injured body thus remains unnoticed as a bi-product of the era of late capitalism.

Historical fiction novels such as DeLillo's *Falling Man*, become a necessary tool with which to help wade through America's dark realities. A demand to remove certain images of bodily violence implies that the human body must still hold a significant amount of power, and in the case of DeLillo's *Falling Man*, these recovered images induce feelings of shame and guilt in his main characters, and contain the possibility to expose evidence of other secret truths.

Drew's "Falling Man" photo starkly creates the notion of being frozen before falling towards the inevitable bottom, representing the uncertainty of the coming months and years after 9/11. Embodying America's "what comes next?" crisis, one character in *Falling Man* declares, "I don't know this America anymore ... There's an empty space where America used to be" (DeLillo 193). Marilyn Charles says of post 9/11 writers like

DeLillo, “At times, however, novelists attempt to give voice to this realm of the uncanny, to speak to something that feels vitally true but as yet has no words. In DeLillo’s (2007) *Falling Man*, the reader is offered such an experience, invited in as witness to a story characterized by the fragmentation, repetition, and lack of coherence of the traumatic narrative” (428). Although some of DeLillo’s characters do display signs of traumatization, I believe *Falling Man* goes beyond the typical trauma narrative—especially if one is to explore this intense focus on the physical body. In her major work *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Cathy Caruth discusses the significance of the body saying, “When the body reenters philosophy as a figure for its own knowledge, it is not only a moving body but a moving organic body, and ultimately a moving *human* body: a body that is a series of articulated parts” (79). Using the framework of postmodern theorists such as Jameson and Baudrillard, and incorporating Caruth’s study of the traumatized body as a reference, I will explore how DeLillo uses the body as “a philosophical source of knowledge” for the main characters Keith and Lianne, who now are both living in an era of confusion and unease. Also, I will investigate the ways in which DeLillo incorporates Caruth’s notion of the body as being both “organic” and “articulated,” as the human bodies of both American citizens and foreign terrorists have become susceptible to certain mutations and disarticulations.

In similar fashion to Caruth’s theorizing the body and trauma, it also interesting to reexamine what Mark Seltzer similarly described in 1997 as the “wound culture” of the previous decade. Seltzer describes the nature of this culture as “the public fascination with torn and opened bodies and torn and opened persons, a collective gathering around shock, trauma, and the wound.” Several years previous to 9/11, authors like Caruth and

Seltzer were discussing emerging societal and philosophical changes concerning private and public space, the deconstructed body vs. the whole being, and the overall desire to publically share witness to human suffering. American's obsession with injured bodies in the 1990's was seemingly insatiable, and by referring back to Seltzer's theories concerning "wound culture" and the human body as spectacle; and Caruth's inquiry into the power of bodily symbols, we can turn again to the image of a "wounded" American body, and ponder its significance in this new age of terror.

In a strange mix of bodily distresses including viral infections, detached faces, and the unique phenomenon of organic shrapnel, DeLillo reexamines the significance of these controversial bodies six years after the attacks, inserting them back into the American mind via *Falling Man*.

## Sacred Bodies

DeLillo's *Falling Man* reinserts a shocking media image from 9/11 back into the American consciousness six years after the event and reevaluates its meaning by using a fictional narrative that is steeped in real events. In 2007, America was a country involved in two wars in the Middle East, the realities of which were dictated and distorted by the American cable media. America had become a society which felt connected to political life through a screen in the living room, a world full of lawn signs and bumper stickers commanding to "support the troops,"—America could have been diagnosed with the disease of an image-induced numbness of the national conscience. Because the print and cable media decided that showing the images and videos of falling bodies was disrespectful and insensitive, over time, the connection of these images to the ensuing wars easily faded from the American conscience. The final, unimaginable result of the constant proliferation of American neoliberal global domination and exploitation throughout the world was that the bodies were piling up at home under the metal and rubble of our own now undeniably destructible, structural creations. Most of the bodies were not recovered, as they were either turned to ash, or buried forever.

Following the events of 9/11, classifying literary works as "trauma narratives" became a way in which to discuss and perhaps help "diagnose" American's national wounds as victims/survivors of collective emotional injury. Sonia Baelo-Allue states:

According to Cathy Caruth, psychic trauma is a wound inflicted upon the mind that breaks the victim's experience of time, self and the world and that causes great emotional anguish in the individual (1996: 3-4). In the

case of 9/11 the degree of traumatic psychic response was different for those that watched it on TV, those that witnessed it live outside the towers and those who were inside the towers ... Many people experienced 9/11 as both individual and cultural trauma and, in the aftermath, the difference between these two types of trauma was blurred. ("9/11" 64-65)

Although the 9/11 terrorists performed calculated attacks specifically against the Pentagon and the World Trade Center (and assumedly, the White House), political rhetoric following the attacks defined *all* American citizens as "victims," as the events of 9/11 were quickly heralded as being the catalysis of a shared national trauma. The rhetoric of George W. Bush's most famous speech reinforced this collective victim/survivor mentality. Nine days after the attacks, the President addressed the nation saying, "Tonight, we are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom. Our grief has turned to anger and anger to resolution. Whether we bring our enemies to justice or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done" (Bush). According to this speech, *we* shared a common wound, and also, *we* shared a common enemy as a collective body.

Sonia Baelo-Allue argues that "*Falling Man* is a psychic trauma novel that reproduces fragmented traumatic memory and that follows many conventions of the genre" ("9/11" 76). Similarly, when discussing post-9/11 novels such as DeLillo's *Falling Man* and Deborah Eisenberg's *Twilight of the Superheroes*, Richard Gray concludes that "Certainly, what is notable about those texts that have attempted

to confront the dreadful events of 9/11 and its aftermath directly is the presence of, and in fact an emphasis on, the preliminary stages of trauma: the sense of those events as a kind of historical and experiential abyss, a yawning and possibly unbridgeable gap between before and after” (130). This particular genre of criticism, centering on the notion of “cultural” or “psychic” trauma is indeed interesting, but because it focuses on the American experience after 9/11 by adhering to a specific theoretical framework, it ignores other possible interpretations of novels like *Falling Man*. Using Freud’s psychoanalysis as a base, Cathy Caruth defines the survival of trauma as, “not the fortunate passage beyond a violent event ... but rather the endless inherent necessity of repetition, which ultimately may lead to destruction” (62). Caruth’s analysis is based in the psychoanalytic teachings of Freud, and though *Falling Man* does include characters who exhibit lost or broken memories, flashbacks and nightmares, and obsessions with senseless repetition, labeling DeLillo’s novel as simply a narrative of “trauma,” is a limited interpretation in which to classify this text. Specifically referencing *Falling Man*, Gray also states, “the structure is too clearly foregrounded, the style excessively mannered, and the characters fall into postures of survival after 9/11 that are too familiar to invite much more than a gesture of recognition from the reader” (132). It would indeed be unfair to argue that the main characters in DeLillo’s *Falling Man* have not suffered any emotional trauma as a result of these horrific events, but since DeLillo has chosen a photograph as the basis for his novel’s title—it seems pertinent to examine the many examples of startling images and visual performances that directly impact his character’s lives.

As suggested in this chapter, the images of anguished bodies that have been exposed as a result of collapsing global space can create room for other textual interpretations. In fact, these images may even rescue this novel from being categorized as a typical allegory of trauma altogether. Fredric Jameson discusses the process of the commodification of postmodern literary works, and contemplating these new modes of classification he says, “This is why it has seemed to me that today, in postmodernity, our objects of study consist less in individual texts ... It is now the cultural production process (and its relation to our peculiar social formation) that is the object of study” (“Symptoms” 408). Further inspection of DeLillo’s inclusion of so many anguished bodies in *Falling Man* may help one avoid the impulse to designate this novel as a typical 9/11 trauma narrative. If so many Americans were convinced that they had all been “victims” of a collective trauma on 9/11, one may conclude that blanketing cultural themes such as “shared victimhood” could just as easily be produced on a large scale. The commodification of trauma narratives is a good example of Jameson’s argument, and by classifying DeLillo’s *Falling Man* into this particular singular mode of cultural production, it delegitimizes and ignores other meanings found in the text. One must wonder: how can “healing” ever begin if the trauma never stops? And, will we just be subject to the next commodification of this genre only as “After Trauma” literature? Elizabeth Anker defines melodrama as “a mode of popular culture narrative that employs emotionality to provide an unambiguous distinction between good and evil through clear designations of victimization, heroism, and villainy” (23). Anker points out not only the banality of the commodification of literary “genres” such as the “trauma narrative” and cultural “melodrama,” but she also recognizes the danger of adapting these certain



themes as collective modes of deciphering cultural events. Describing how the dramatic storylines of melodrama saturated the national narrative following 9/11 she states:

For most American news viewers, the media coverage of September 11 was the primary experience of the terrorist act. In recent scholarship, melodrama has been defined more specifically as a mode of popular culture that presents images and characters through hyperbolic, binary moralistic positions and arranges them within a plotline that restages the eternal battle between good and evil ... Melodrama, then, is a discursive practice that makes truth and justice legible by demarcating a clear boundary between right and wrong. (23)

In the days and weeks following the events of 9/11, the initial shock of the attacks was wearing off. The feeling of sadness and desperation was replaced by an overwhelming desire for retribution. After being accused of exploiting the images of the jumpers, the media was shamed into removing the images of actual victims who have suffered severe mental and physical trauma. The decision to turn away from the images of real bodies falling to their deaths removed any possible chance for viewers to feel “guilty” for looking at these images as well. According to Anker’s examination of this type of genre, there are five qualities which are needed to specifically define cultural melodrama: A locus of moral virtue signified by suffering, possibly increased through heroic action; the three characters of a ruthless villain, a suffering victim, and a heroic savior who often plays the victim/hero role; dramatic polarizations of good and evil; a combination of emotion and action meant to create suspense and resolve conflict; and the use of images, sounds, gestures, and the use of “nonverbal communication to illuminate moral legibility

as well as to encourage empathy for the victim and anger toward the villain” (24). The majority of people in the nation did not suffer a single physical wound as a result of the attacks, but in order to make premature military retribution seem justified, it was necessary to remove any empathy previously focused on the jumpers, and place it on the American body as a whole. A false, shared national victimhood is the result of the widespread absorption of this cultural melodrama narrative that was staged by the American media. In turn, this absorption lessened the victim status of actual victims, and created the narrative of a traumatized, victimized social “body.” In contrast to the far away military conflicts only experienced by a select few, this new traumatized national body felt the shock of being attacked in its own “home.” Violence committed against a person in their own private home is the most invasive type of attack, and actual victims of these types of crimes may be more likely to justify vengeance when they are convinced that their private lives have been violated. After 9/11, it is as if the concept of a private home is simply translated into the larger cultural sphere of melodrama where the idea of “home” is redefined as the national “homeland.” As a result of this faulty translation, the feeling of violation may also become magnified—leaving this supposed victim/hero (America) a rather large task to accomplish as a response.

Anker also adds to the discussion of cultural melodrama saying, “Pain is usually inscribed within the body of the suffering victim; one whose initial innocence has been shattered but can be restored through redemptive heroic action, for at the heart of melodrama is the principle that by virtue of suffering, one becomes good” (25). These jumpers have no chance to regain their innocence, nor will they ever have the chance to

become restorative heroes. They only become images of their former selves, disappearing into the background of this cultural melodrama narrative.

Has the continual overflow of American postmodern media and consumer imagery created such a lack of historicity for its citizens, that the image of an actual falling (dying) body is the only cure to separate the fantasy from the reality of human mortality? DeLillo addresses these questions by using fiction as a means to explore the previous era's obsession with the spectacle of the "wound," as *Falling Man* makes several attempts to relocate power back into the human bodily form.

When reading a novel like *Falling Man*, which has some themes of traumatized individuals trying to heal, it is imperative to search the story for underlying themes which not only push against this trauma narrative, but also try to illuminate other modes to help understand catastrophic events like 9/11. By including contrasting narratives in *Falling Man*, DeLillo finds a way to surpass these typical formalisms, and although often characterized as a novel about "personal trauma" experiences, the blending of the main characters' narratives with other rather subversive narratives in the text, offers the reader other interpretations of American life after 9/11.

DeLillo recovers and inserts several images of the body sustaining violence within this text, in return removing the concept of a collective (national) body of trauma from the forefront. Actual human bodies again become visualized and realized as the sites of terror. For instance, early on in *Falling Man*, after narrowly escaping disaster, Keith is described as having "glass in his hair and face, marbled bolls of blood and light" (DeLillo 3). Keith, walking the streets in a stupor after escaping the attacks, sees "people holding towels to their faces," "a man seated on the sidewalk coughing up blood," and "clothes

and bodies drenched from sprinkler systems” (3-4). DeLillo wastes no time exposing the damage to human bodies, as the spectacle of twisted metal and crumbling structures seems merely a backdrop to the visuals of human suffering.

Before 9/11 “the mass attraction to atrocity exhibitions, in the pathological public sphere, takes the form of a fascination with the shock of contact between bodies and technologies: a shock of contact that encodes, in turn, a breakdown in the distinction between the individual and the mass, and between private and public registers” (Seltzer). After the images of the jumpers were pulled from public view, the new media narrative focused on images of airplanes, structural rubble, terror alerts, American flags, and other such symbols of American patriotism and fear. The news coverage after 9/11 became focused on simplified reasoning (the terrorists attack American’s “freedom” and “democracy”), and the invisible enemy was “terror,” perpetrated by Middle Eastern Muslims: But which ones?

Did these images selected by the media give us “collective satisfaction” enough that we no longer wanted (or needed) to see the human body in distress? The images of bodily violence must still maintain some political impact if some photos are deemed to be exploitative, and although the videos and images of the jumpers are just copies of the original event, they are evidence that violence against the human (American) body had definitely occurred. Sonia Baelo-Allue touches on the importance of authors recovering these hidden images saying:

The media favored other more hopeful images, such as a photograph taken by Thomas E. Franklin showing three firefighters raising the U.S. flag at ground zero: it came to represent loyalty and resilience ... Franklin’s

image turned something uncontrollable and frightening into a standardized narrative of patriotism. Literature recovered those images that had been hidden, those narratives that could only be imagined ... and used them to emphasize the need to overcome our fears rather than hide them. (“The Depiction” 191)

DeLillo not only recovers the banned image of the Falling Man, but he also tells the story of the street performer “The Falling Man” from the perspective of the characters (Lianne and Keith) who witness these events in real time. A terrorist attack on U.S. soil, the eventual result of compressing global space, has pushed out evidence of the body’s existence—in fact, it has pushed it right out of the upper windows of the World Trade Center.

The description of Drew’s “Falling Man” is a bodily image that can be recognized as part of the American landscape—it is a man in a suit appearing against a skyscraper located in New York City’s financial district. But, strangely, in the photo, he is upside down. The people, who jumped from the burning towers, although choosing the manner of their inevitable deaths after an external force (cause) was enacted, become bodies with limited options. By choosing to jump, the manner of their death becomes visible and controversial to any Americans who witnessed this moment live (both in the streets and on television). In other words, these jumpers *choose* to display the act of dying publically, instead of disappearing into the fire and rubble. By making this choice, they have in turn inadvertently forced others to watch the human body fall against the backdrop of the burning towers. Drew’s “Falling Man” photograph is a moment frozen in time, and without a narrative added to the image, the body appears to be not in motion,

but calmly still. Knowing the events of that day, Drew's photo causes a certain type of discomfort in the fact that the person is obviously in the process of dying, yet it encapsulates what seems to be a peaceful moment outside of the 9/11 events.

DeLillo's *Falling Man* opens with the scene of the main protagonist, Keith, who is walking down the street in a daze, covered in blood and ash, having just narrowly escaped from Tower 1 after it is hit by the first plane. He is unable to understand his own conscious presence in the chaos around him, being barely able to respond to people trying to give him water, asking him if he needs help. The narrator describes the moment, saying, "It was not a street anymore but a world, a time and space of falling ash and near night ... The roar was still in the air, the buckling rumble of the fall. This was the world now ... He wore a suit and carried a briefcase. There was glass in his hair and face ... The world was this as well, figures in windows a thousand feet up, dropping into free space" (DeLillo 3-4). Keith's observation alludes to the definitive moment when the concept of shared space, a space simultaneously occupied by both the terrorists and their alleged global oppressors on American soil, is exposed by time, a suspended moment of terror—September 11, 2001. He sees people "dropping into free space," those trapped individuals, forced to jump from collapsing, burning towers—the spectacle of falling to an impending bottom. At this critical point, the buildings are falling, people are falling from them, and ash is falling and covering New York City and its inhabitants. The airplanes have deconstructed the former image of the World Trade Center and it becomes just falling particles of its former self.

In these opening moments, Keith recognizes that he is physically in the world around him, but not of it. The narrator describes what Keith is seeing around him as if he

is only a pair of eyes in the street, saying, “They ran and then they stopped, some of them, standing there swaying ... he saw two women sobbing in their reverse march, looking past him, faces in collapse” and “There was something critically missing from the things around him. They were unfinished, whatever that means. They were unseen, whatever that means ... Maybe this is what things look like when there is no one here to see them” (DeLillo 4-5). DeLillo paints Keith in a way which mirrors American citizens’ immediate inability to identify the possible negative influences that their own country’s military actions have created in other parts of the world. Perhaps the fact that U.S. foreign policy makers were not blamed for their secretive, yet direct contributions to the rise of global terrorism is because there was “no one here to see them” making these political and military strategies, and therefore, no one here felt obliged to stop them. The bodies that jumped from the buildings were there for everyone to see that day though, as they were falling from the sky as visible evidence of *something*.

At this point in the novel, Keith is in a confused state, he can’t yet ask why he was attacked, because he is still unaware that it is terrorists that have nearly killed him. DeLillo paints a picture of the shock and unease established through acts of terror, and since most average Americans have little or no knowledge of (or interest in) the U.S.’s previous involvement in other countries (Iraq, Afghanistan), it is an unexpected, non-interpretable event for most Americans. In other words, there is no reference point to help explain the motivations behind these atrocities of terror—the bodies of both the jumpers and the terrorists then become the glue that adheres all of these groups together.

The second chapter of *Falling Man* opens with the narrator describing Lianne’s interpretation of her marriage to Keith. She says, “It wasn’t just those days and nights in

bed. Sex was everywhere at first, in words, in phrases, half gestures, the simplest intimation of altered space ... She sat thinking about this. Her mind drifted in and out of this, the early times, eight years ago, of the eventual extended grimness called their marriage” (DeLillo 7). After so many years estranged from her husband, Lianne is shocked to find that he has made his way to her apartment flat where she lives with their son, Justin. He arrives covered in blood and dust, and after Lianne walks him to the hospital, he becomes a new resident in her home. Most of what the reader learns of their relationship comes from Lianne’s mother, Nina, who already has her doubts as to the repercussions of her daughter’s newly renewed relationship with Keith. When Lianne tries to defend her decision to not force Keith to talk, Nina replies by saying, “Reticent ... I’ve always admired that about him. He gives the impression there’s something deeper than hiking and skiing, or playing cards. But what?” (DeLillo 10). These opening scenes are a great starting point for trauma narrative critics to begin their analysis, and Bob Batchelor says, “DeLillo creates characters that stand in for the wash of emotion the nation felt following the terrorist attacks. Keith, the survivor, represents victimization. He copes but is out of sync with those around him, basically falling into a monotonous trance. The routines he develops give him a mechanism to survive, but he is too emotionally wired to manage” (180). I would argue that Keith’s “monotonous trance” is not caused by trauma he has endured, but is his natural state of being, as he has always had the reputation for being too emotionally vacant to care about anything. His emotional ambivalence is only amplified after 9/11, as he has already become involved in an affair days after reuniting with Lianne, and eventually opts to move to Las Vegas to continue his risk taking and obscurity. Nina at one point exclaims to Lianne, “There’s a



certain man, an archetype, he's a model of dependability for his male friends" (DeLillo 59). Keith, definitively a "man's man," is dedicated and loyal to his male friends.

Treating each other like brothers, they spend much of their time gambling, working, and playing sports together. Nina also says, "Keith wanted a woman who'd regret what she did with him. That is his style, to get a woman to do something she'll be sorry for. And the thing you did wasn't just a night or a weekend. He was built for weekends" (DeLillo 12). Women like Lianne then become either a side note to Keith's life, or simply, an annoyance.

The reader is already aware of Keith's traumatic experiences on 9/11, but Lianne admits to have suffered personal trauma in her life as well, as we learn that her father shot himself in defiance of the dementia that was consuming his brain. Scared by the fact that her stoic father chose the final act of suicide to prevent and avoid inevitable cognitive regression, Lianne, in an attempt to try to "save" her memory and keep her brain alert, becomes obsessed with maintaining her memory by going to the doctor to have her brain functions evaluated. While at the medical center, doctors make Lianne perform a task which involves counting numbers. The narrator says, "She counted down from one hundred by sevens"(DeLillo 187) and "it made her feel good, the counting down, and she did it sometimes in the day's familiar drift, walking down a street, riding in a taxi" (DeLillo 188). It is evident that her fears are also self-created as it is noted that, "She was troubled by memory lapses, steeped in family history. She was also fine. Brain normal for age" (DeLillo 187). Lianne suffers from the fear of forgetting, which may help explain her obsession with the media and other people's thoughts and emotions. As I will discuss later, her emotional attachment to the world is always contingent upon the absorption of

images and impressions of other people. The trauma that affects Lianne is not derived from the events of 9/11, but is a result of unresolved emotional issues stemming from her father's suicide years earlier. By becoming a willing participant in the notion of national "collective trauma," Lianne is able to avoid her own personal demons—and becomes subject to the ambiguity of media images and narratives as a way to ignore her own fears.

Keith too exhibits some of the traits of a trauma victim discussed in Caruth's study of psychoanalysis: he displays repetitive compulsive actions like memorizing and maintaining exercises for his healing broken wrist, even long after it is necessary. These are actions that become uselessly performed and repeated out of sheer conditioning. He is a man with signs of a broken memory, slowly trying to piece back together in his mind the horrible events of that morning. By the end of the novel, if this is a trauma narrative, it appears that Keith has worked through his trauma, accepting the reality of his involvement in the horror of 9/11 and now able to move on to a "new" life. I would argue though, that the "new" Keith is simply an amplified version of his former self: he takes bigger risks (joining the World Poker Tour in Las Vegas), is even more bothered by the obligations of being involved in emotional relationships, and he puts even more physical space between himself and those who love him. Even after the emotional damage he has habitually caused his family, Keith's gruesome experience of being trapped in the burning towers allows Lianne to overlook his failures as a family man. As a matter of fact, in the first few weeks following 9/11, Keith is sleeping with a woman named Florence who also survived the attacks; while leading Lianne to think that he desperately wants to mend their marriage, he is also sneaking around already behind her back. The affair starts after Keith returns Florence's briefcase, and later, when Lianne asks him

about it, she notice that he said “he’d *actually* returned it.” This reply rings a bell in her head as she thinks, “It was the word *actually* which made her think about what he said ... this was the word he’d use so often ... when he was lying to her, or baiting her, or even effecting some minor sleight” (DeLillo 105). Keith at one point considered telling Lianne about his affair, internalizing his possible confession; seven consecutive paragraphs begin with the line “He would tell her about Florence” (DeLillo 162). These repeated statements are followed by several of Keith’s imagined responses such as “she would get a steak knife and kill him” and “she would send him to hell with a look and then call a lawyer” (DeLillo 62). His mode of thinking shows that he never really takes Lianne’s feelings into consideration, but simply plans for a possible form of punishment, and his confession would be just an excuse to get out of their revitalized relationship.

At this point, Keith is now just going through the motions, attempting to appear to be a better version of father and husband. He sleeps next to Lianne every night and holds her hand, plays catch with his son in the park, and to the outside world—he gives the illusion of real emotion. Keith’s insecurities as father and husband are on constant display throughout the novel, and even assuming that Keith may be traumatized; underneath this superficial damage is the same apathy and “reticence” he exhibits towards life. Keith has a limited interpretation of “manhood,” and still failing in his familial roles, Keith willingly accepts his emotional detachment. Ruth Helyer discusses the style in which DeLillo chooses to address the issue of masculinity saying, “Literature can potentially aid the embedding of social conditioning ... It can also provide a critical purchase from which to scrutinize social norms ... This is what DeLillo’s writing does in its treatment of masculinity. Rather than replace one defunct cultural narrative ... it

displays the insecurity of masculinity, without offering a facile replacement” (125). Once most of Keith’s poker buddies are killed on 9/11, his definition of “manhood” is in question as he is placed back into the domestic setting that he previously removed himself from. For Keith, “manhood” is no longer measurable in a domestic setting, and he is lost without the structure and order of his “brotherhood.” The only thing that changes in Keith after 9/11 is the intensity of his emotional ambivalence.

Issues of “manhood” certainly arise in *Falling Man*, especially in the manner in which DeLillo describes Keith’s involvement in private poker games with his friends, most of who perished in the towers. DeLillo paints a scene of a typical poker night involving Keith and his friends from the World Trade Center towers—calculated, organized, cold, and repeatedly inundated with new ridiculous rules designed to define “manhood,” these poker games are quite indicative and representative of the war games used by neo-conservative American ideologues, before, during, and after the event of 9/11, and by an inevitable connection, the private investors who willingly and knowingly support this political agenda. DeLillo describes the bizarre atmosphere of the poker games that Keith shares with his friend Rumsey:

In the beginning they played poker in a number of shapes and variations, but over time, they began to reduce the dealer’s options ... All the action was somewhere behind the eyes, in naïve expectation and calculated deceit. Each man tried to trap the others and fix limits to his own false dreams ... They used intuition and cold-war risk analysis. They used cunning and blind luck. They waited for the precise moment, the time to make the bet based on the card they knew was coming. There were

elements of healthy challenge and outright mockery. There were elements of one's intent to shred the other's gauzy manhood. (DeLillo 96-97)

The above quotes can be directly correlated to the actions of those on Wall Street who have for years been taking risks by betting in a global market that not only sells and proliferates the machinery of war, but often benefits from the commodities gained by cultural exploitation and speculation based on those calculated political and military agendas. He makes references to "cold-war tactics," calculated rules and boundaries that were designed by the U.S. government under Reagan to maintain the "superpower" status—a status it claimed not only for itself, but one it demanded that the rest of the world to adopt too. Samuel Cohen discusses the notion that the 1990's were a "retrospective" decade which was attuned to a pre-terror triumphalist narrative, insisting that, "The end of the Cold War fit nicely into this story for many, confirming the superiority of capitalism and liberal democracy, confirming the idea that history made sense and the West was its winner ... showing that the world had reached the end of history, insofar as history was driven by ideological struggle" (374). After 9/11, the notion of America as triumphant is obliterated, and the falling human body becomes evidence of the American government's failure to keep its citizens safe from harm.

Keith's all-male posse is a type of American brotherhood categorized here by "the business writer, the adman, the mortgage broker" and "the bond trader, the lawyer, the other lawyer," all emblems of Wall Street and financial elitism, and all undoubtedly dressed daily in a similar fashion to the man in Drew's "Falling Man" photo. Mention of these poker games pop in and out of the narrative, and as Keith is slowly remembering their gambling nights of freedom, there is then the grim realization that only two of these

men are still living after the planes hit the towers. In the latter sections of *Falling Man*, it becomes glaringly obvious that the card (war) games rules that Keith's club countless enacts and employs are soon to be made obsolete by another type of brotherhood – one that cares for neither chips nor money. Exposing the logic behind their specific acts of terror on 9/11, one learns through the narratives of some Afghani men involved in a terrorist sleeper cell, that there is another brotherhood that seems destined to physically collide with Keith's.

As the novel progresses, Keith again drifts away from Lianne and Justin, and begins playing in travelling poker tours, eventually ending up in Las Vegas on the popular televised World Poker Tour. Keith is once again fading into a backdrop of ambivalence and calculated risk, relying on the same attributes that fuel his apathy towards others: “He had memory, judgment, the ability to decide what is true, what is alleged, when to strike, when to fade ... Then, always, in the crucial instant ever repeated hand after hand, the choice of yes or no ... the choice that reminds you who you are” (DeLillo 211). Keith's choice to remain emotionally distant from others is definitive of the kind of person he truly is, and turning back to a passage from the beginning of the novel we know that upon returning to his apartment to get some things, in a daze Keith remembers his poker nights with his buddies, “It was the one uncomplicated interval of his week, his month, the poker game—the one anticipation that was not marked by the bloodguilt tracings of severed connections” (DeLillo 27). The “bloodguilt” that taunts Keith is his own family—the ultimate victims of his incessant apathy.

While in Vegas, even though he is participating in an often televised event, Keith's desire to remain emotionally disconnected and detached from others is a

reflection of the emptiness exuded by the overall landscape. In *America*, Jean Baudrillard describes the condition of America as being a strange landscape filled with postmodern paradoxes. He says:

Gambling itself is a desert form, inhuman, uncultured ... But it too has a strict limit and stops abruptly; its boundaries are exact ... Neither the desert or gambling are open areas; their spaces are finite and concretion ... a privileged, immemorial space, where things lose their shadow, where money loses its value, and where the extreme rarity of traces of what signals to us there leads men to seek the instantaneity of wealth. (128)

For Baudrillard, the desert is an “inhuman landscape”—not in a sense that it is void of any actual human beings, but because it is void of the typical notions of the “necessities” of American modern life. Baudrillard also believes that the desert is the only place in America where the normal concepts of space and time cease to exist, perhaps then making it the only place whose features can be paralleled to the distortion of time and space during the morning of 9/11. It seems as if DeLillo has embodied the writings of Baudrillard about emptiness in the character of Keith who chooses to find comfort in the strange marriage of desert and light, able to easily disappear into “immemorial space.” Keith admits, “The money mattered not so much. The game mattered ... he wasn’t playing for the money he was playing for the chips. The value of each chip had only hazy meaning. It was the disk itself that mattered ... he wanted to rake in chips and stack them” (DeLillo 228). If Keith’s seemingly empty desires *are* then an allegory for those who purport U.S. global domination, it seems even more appropriate that DeLillo would place him in this desert landscape. After the cold war, the U.S. decided then declared that

the new enemy would be fought under these same scenarios—except that their preferred desert would be the Middle East, and it wouldn't be neon, but bombs that light up the night there.

Something significant happens to Keith while he is in Las Vegas though, for in the last chapter of *Falling Man*; which ultimately highlights a most disturbing scene, Keith is able to remember exactly what he witnessed on 9/11. Returning to events from chapter one, Keith's first description of an actual falling man is quite vague and confusing. Just as he escapes the tower he notices "There was something else then, outside all this, not belonging to this, aloft. He watched it coming down. A shirt came down out of the high smoke" (DeLillo 4). As his memory is slowly coming back throughout the novel, Keith becomes able to form a better analysis of what he is yet to regard as an actual body in the process of tumbling to its death. Until he moves to Vegas, he has only been able to recall being thrown against the wall in his office after the first explosions and can only identify in his mind some of the things in the building: a man kneeling in a doorway, falling objects, funneling smoke, the smell of jet fuel, and a vague image of his friend Rumsey slumped over in his office chair. At the conclusion of the novel when Keith is living in Las Vegas, he is eventually able to recall the awful images that have finally repositioned themselves in his memory as he recounts his last moments with Rumsey. Trying to carry Rumsey out of the rubble, Keith realizes that his efforts are futile when, "He looked at Rumsey, who'd fallen away from him, upper body lax, face barely belonging. The whole business of being Rumsey was in shambles now. Keith held tight to the belt buckle. He stood and looked at him and the man opened his eyes and died. This is when he wondered what was happening here." It is in this same unsettling



scene that Keith also remembers a more clear image of the “thing” falling past the office window and he can recall that “He could not stop seeing it, twenty feet away, an instant of something sideways, going past the window, white shirt, hand up, falling before he saw it” (DeLillo 242). In these horrid moments on 9/11, Keith has witnessed not one, but two bodies trapped in the throes of violence. The moment of impact is the collision of ideologies in space, and the result is that the targeted buildings are crumbling internally and quickly collapsing. Regardless of the immediate difficulty to separate the original causes (forces) of this act of terror, the result is the same—bodies are visibly falling over and falling down.

Keith’s overall malfunction is one of apathy and ambivalence, but Lianne’s is certainly one of disillusion and fear. For Lianne, it becomes routine that “She read everything they wrote about the attacks ... she read stories in newspapers before she had to force herself to stop” (DeLillo 67). While standing in the living room with Keith, Lianne’s obsession becomes apparent, “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 the ice blue sky, this was the footage that entered the body, that seemed to run beneath her skin. She knew she never felt so close to someone, watching the planes cross the sky” (DeLillo 134). Lianne finds comfort and reassurance in the constant barrage of media images and stories, in fact, it becomes the only way in which she still feels connected to others. It is an artificial mode of survival as the images are just recreated simulacrum of actual events—“feelings” are then interjected into these images through the media’s insertions of narratives to match the picture in the frame. For Lianne, the image of a body falling then jolting irks her because it becomes synonymous

with her father's imagined body—as both the jumpers and her father felt forced to choose between a slow painful death and suicide.

As another example of Lianne's obsession with recreations, in order to find comfort for her own demons, Lianne volunteers part time leading a writing group for Alzheimer patients. It is notable here that Lianne's traumatic memories of her father do seem to be amplified after 9/11, and her weekly sessions with an Alzheimer's reading group is not only therapeutic for her, but she has to be reminded by the program director that "It's theirs ... don't make it yours." (DeLillo 60). Lianne never shares her own thoughts with this group concerning the events of 9/11 or her father's story, but we are told that "Lianne encouraged them to speak and argue. She wanted to hear everything, the things everybody said, ordinary things, and the naked statements of belief, and the depth of feeling, the passion that saturated the room. She needed these men and women" (DeLillo 61). Sadly, Lianne is concerned that soon these patients will have no short term memories at all, just minimal, if any, repetitive recollections of a very distant past. Eventually, all of these patients will not be able to recognize themselves, which is the same fear that perpetuated Lianne's father's suicide. She understands that for these patients "The truth was wrapped in slow and certain decline" (DeLillo 125), but she cannot see that her own conscious "truths" about the world are just illusions. Fredric Jameson explores the issue of "manufactured" feelings created by the media saying, "to get at that emotional reaction, one would have to make one's way through its media orchestration and amplification. People don't appreciate a theoretical discussion of their emotions (Are you questioning the sincerity of my feelings?). I suppose the answer has to be, No, not the sincerity of your feelings; rather, the sincerity of all feelings" ("The Dialectics" 297).

Jameson later concludes, “What we feel are no longer our own feelings anymore, but someone else’s, and indeed, if we are to believe the media, everybody else’s” (“The Dialectics” 299). By obsessing over the “feelings” of others in the news, she eliminates the possibility for her own interpretation of events. Perhaps Lianne appreciates mediocrity because she is afraid to feel *anything* that attaches her to her own reality.

One could easily see how those analyzing *Falling Man* as a trauma novel could include these sections about Lianne in their arguments as she understands these patients to be “the living breath of the thing that killed her father”(DeLillo 62) while exposing her fear that “The truth was wrapped in slow and certain decline” (DeLillo 125). Another possible interpretation could be that Lianne’s intense interest in the writing group itself is an allegory for America’s consumer media addiction, as she routinely derives a sense of being and comfort solely by living vicariously through the stories and writings of others. Fact and opinion then become blended into a daily mix of words and images, coming complete with their own preconceived narratives. In *Channels of Desire*, Stuart and Elizabeth Ewen describe this phenomenon clearly, saying, “As the *word* or the *image* is reproduced, again and again, it becomes *fact*, known simultaneously by strangers, a common, if sometimes deceptive, bond. It is the life blood of a mobile world-system employing standardized meanings and requiring uniform understandings. *Fact* ... when it is stored ... becomes a history, a common heritage” (192). As discussed later in chapter two, the “deceptive bond” that consumes Lianne’s conscience, is one of manufactured anger and fear towards anyone who might be tied to Islam, leading Lianne to actually perform violence against someone else’s “suspicious” body.

Lianne experiences her life after 9/11 through these shallow connections—she’s always editing someone else’s creative books, listening to Alzheimer patients’ stories, or absorbing the media’s newspapers. Several of her patients are talking out loud after Lianne encourages them to explore their thoughts about 9/11, and in consecutive order, two people say “I wanted to see that, the ones who were holding hands” and “When you see something happening, it’s supposed to be real” (DeLillo 63). One has to wonder if Lianne refuses to participate in these activities because she is aware of her inability to formulate her own thoughts and perspectives, especially when contemplating her anger towards the actual terrorists. She listens to a survey of the group’s responses in order to gauge whether or not her feelings of fear and rage are “normal.” Essentially, she is concerned as to whether her brain’s physical functions are “normal.” Lianne, only used to reading about “something happening,” is later overwhelmed with raw emotion as she comes face to face with the performance artist, David Janiak.

Drew’s “Falling Man” photo embodied stillness, horror, and suspension, but in the case of the people who actually witnessed the jumpers take their plunge, it was surely a shocking moment of violence and oblivion that an image could never recreate. The word “falling” implies action and continual movement, a transition from high to low, the perpetual state of being trapped in the present, as “falling” signifies that an object exists somewhere *between* two points. It is not yet dead, but is approaching an inevitable impact. At a moment which defines the start of her conscious awakening, Lianne describes her first encounter with Janiak as she was waiting for her mother at Grand Central Station:

She'd heard of him, a performance artist known as Falling Man ... He brought it back, of course, those stark moments in the burning towers when people fell or were forced to jump ... There were people shouting up at him, outraged at the spectacle, the puppetry of human desperation, a body's last fleet beneath and what it held. 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 coming down among us all. (DeLillo 33)

In this instance, Lianne is only witnessing the crowd's reaction to his stunt as he has already jumped and is simply hanging by the time Lianne makes her way through the crowd to the scene. The crowd's reaction suggests that something has significantly changed since Seltzer's critical analysis of "wound culture." Seltzer stated, "To the very extent that private and public communicate in the opening of bodies and persons and in the gathering around the wound, one detects a radical mutation and relocation of the public sphere, now centered on the shared and reproducible spectacles of pathological public violence." The negative reactions of DeLillo's characters towards witnessing Janiak's performance may suggest that a certain level of repulsion or guilt may have been injected back into the minds of those drawn to participate in the public spectacle. In this case, the bodily spectacle is instead forced upon the crowd; the performance of bodily violence is used to make spectators aware of their intrusive "pathological" collective space. In this case, the body becomes the intruder, and the witnesses become the victims of a simulated shocking event. What Seltzer deemed to be the "pathological public sphere" was the end result of "the crossing point of private fantasy and collective space."

One facet of American postmodernism is the obsession with generated fantasy, but as the “collective space” becomes “collapsing space” after 9/11, actual falling bodies are bound to disrupt these fantasies, forcing spectators to examine their own guilty desire to view the suffering bodies of their fellow Americans.

The timing of Janiak’s performances are calculated in a way to ensure a sizeable audience, and his street theatre forces people to become active spectators in what they first perceive to be an actual suicide. In discussing the political impact of this performance, John Duvall exclaims:

With the trauma of 9/11 so fresh, Falling Man’s art is an outrage. One might say that Falling Man is a terrorist of perception ... Janiak’s art ... is not primarily representational; rather, it carries with it an element of witness precisely because of its effect on his unsuspecting audience; Janiak’s art, in other words, allows his viewers themselves to become witnesses of the horror. (185-186)

Although certainly a simulacrum of sorts, Janiak’s performance is more than just a copy, as his art moves his audience from their everyday lives of “feeling” a collective trauma through the media images and narratives, to the cognitive realm of “being”—they are together bearing live witness, recognizing the visible horror of a body in the perceived process of dying. The fantasy of the “collective space” has been replaced here, as Janiak’s bodily simulation creates real horror in his audience.

Later in the novel, Lianne is able to experience a sense of “being” for herself finally, as she finds herself alone on the street, directly below where Janiak is preparing to jump. Lianne is at first confused when she comes across Janiak in a poor, rather vacant

section of town close to train tracks and a nearby station. It appears to Lianne as a place which appears to have no audience, and therefore, no purpose. At one point she sees Janiak above her preparing to jump, and after pondering his odd choice of location; she understands the purpose of his delay. She realizes that he is waiting for a train full of passengers to appear out of the tunnel, engines slowing their pace as it approaches the nearby station. She internally ponders his reasoning for this location thinking, “The people had not seen him attach the safety harness. They would only see him fall out of sight. Then she thought, the ones already speaking into phones ... all would try to describe what they’ve seen ... There was one thing for them to say, essentially. Someone falling. Falling Man” (DeLillo 165). Lianne lives in a postmodern world where emotional experiences, ones like Janiak’s performance, are only created to then be recreated and sold as simulated “experiences.” The impact of Janiak’s performance piece is lost when it is recorded, repackaged, and then passed along in the media as simply a second-hand experience.

Witnessing his jump becomes unavoidable as she has waited too long for someone else to arrive and share the moment of horror with her. Though she knows that he is eventually going to jump, she is unprepared for what follows. The narrator describes Lianne’s reaction to this terrifying act saying:

The fall was not the worst of it ... The jolt, the sort of midair impact and bounce, the recoil, and now the stillness, arms at his sides, one leg bent at the knee. There was something awful about the stylized pose, body and limbs, his signature stroke. But the worst of it was the stillness itself, and

her nearness to the man, her position here, with no one closer to him than she was. (DeLillo 168)

She says that “The fall was not the worst of it” because Lianne is suddenly able to internalize the powerful, painful jolt that passes through Janiak’s body as the moment of inescapable violence—his body now seems to be the only thing visible in this space. Janiak thus forces Lianne to experience in full view—brutality inflicted onto a vulnerable body. She finds his physical presence to be not only alarming, but she mentally cannot escape what she has just witnessed without the overwhelming feeling of fear and dread—quickly running away. America’s curiosity to view images of violence often seems insatiable, and in *Alone in America*, Robert Ferguson says, “Memory and entertainment cross in morbid conformation of what happened. Curiosity wants its horror vicariously. It craves the wonder in disaster from the sanitized distance of television” (214). Without the inundation of media narratives to distract or influence her, Lianne feels terribly alone, and without another witness to tell her what she should be feeling, she quickly becomes lost and confused.

“Muzzle blast” (DeLillo 41) is the phrase that reminds Lianne of her father—it is the memory of a sound which replaces the unimaginable image of her father’s suicide. Witnessing the artist’s body “snap” into a finalizing pose reminds Lianne not of the sound of gunfire, but the feeling she gets from the thought of a bullet entering a body. She had no one else near to her to share this experience with—it is therefore a rather raw, nontransferable moment. After Janiak jumps she says, “This was too near and deep, too personal, all she wanted was to share a look, catch someone’s eye, see what she herself was feeling” (DeLillo 163). When left alone with Janiak, Lianne has been forced to face a



body performing the motion of dying, leaving her feeling vulnerable. After 9/11, Americans were experiencing a similar dread, for the images and videos of the jumpers were banned *after* they had already been viewed by many who would agree that they are the most jarring images from that morning.

By the end of the novel, both Keith and Lianne have regressed to their estranged beginnings, prophetically becoming strange Jamesonian reruns of an original episode. Keith is disappearing into his new habitat of risk and ambivalence and Lianne is content having been reduced to experiencing Keith as just an image on a TV show. The images of bodies of loved ones, strangers, and even artists have a strong influence on DeLillo's characters, and it is a rather strange notion to believe that there is hope in witnessing the reality of a dead or dying body.

Though Keith and Lianne's relationship doesn't stand a chance, both characters have substantial emotional reactions from witnessing these violent acts of falling, therefore suggesting that one day reflection and introspection could replace apathy and disillusion. Lianne's view of 9/11 and American life in general has always been from the outside looking in, living under the banality of a media-clouded world. Until she experiences Janiak jumping from above her head, she has never felt the intensity of forming her own thoughts and feelings.

In opposition to Lianne's, Keith's view of the consequentially "wounded" body is from the inside looking out. Object becomes subject as the blurred image of a white shirt floating in smoke is eventually realized to be a human body, a falling man in the process of dying as he passes by Keith's window. DeLillo recognizes a problem in a society where the images of falling men are removed from America's view, becoming unnoticed

as visible, violated subjects—in the hope that they will just be reduced into forgettable objects. DeLillo resurrects a body that has been buried in America's past, as evidence of something gone terribly wrong.

### **Bodily Parts and Pieces**

Beginning in the first few days after 9/11, there were several racially motivated attacks against Muslim Americans as tensions were high. There were anti-Muslim protests, burnings of the Quran, and heated arguments over whether or not to allow an Islamic cultural center to be built near Ground Zero. The administration created the Department of Homeland Security as a means of preventing possible future terrorist situations, and America became obsessed with monitoring itself and others. These “others” were people who were not yet guilty of any crime, but who assumedly possessed the *potential* to commit acts of terror. Preemption and presumption became the new national solutions after 9/11, with collective fear and new technology fueling the fires of aggression.

In discussing ontological security and Anthony Giddens’s notion of space-time distanciation, Eli Zaretsky says that, “the emergence of the world as a single space time unit increased the necessity for, and changed the character of, *trust*” (99). This question of trust arises because this new global society replaces face-to-face relations. It now forces people to trust long distance strangers. Zaretsky insists that at the core of Giddens’s argument is the necessity that the global forces of trade, labor, and new technology be examined as the sources that make the world more susceptible to terror and violence. If these forces of “progress” are only imagined as existing in their own separate space from that of the global, it becomes easy to then place blame on the other culture, assuming that those perpetrating terror are simply evil and uncivilized. Zaretsky then states, “When we encounter an act as brutal ... as the attack of September 11, we are inclined to trace it to

backward social systems: the poverty and lack of education of so much of the Arab world, the opportunism and cowardice of its undemocratic regimes, the worship of death and violence that characterizes so many of its young people” (100). In correlation with this argument, it could also be said that many Americans have had a strange detachment from the realities of their own foreign policy engagements, and there is also the fact that America maintains its own contradictions by also including a cultural “worship of death and violence” within society. Violent video games, movies, and television shows have become media staples to young Americans, and the internet has opened up several new avenues in which to view (and comment on) others’ suffering and pain. Our national worship of death and violence becomes even more evident when one examines the amount of glee many Americans exude when glorifying war as a heroic American pastime, and not the horrific, often unnecessary end that it is for many soldiers.

Zaretsky’s analysis of Giddens can be directly correlated with Lianne’s escalating anger towards her downstairs neighbor, Elena, whom she assumes to be insensitive to America’s trauma and vulnerability. Lianne no longer sees Elena as a private, American citizen. To Lianne, Elena is no longer just a physical *body* passing by in the stairwell or apartment hallways. After 9/11, Lianne only recognizes Elena as the *embodiment* of Islamic revolt.

Inundated with fear and anger, Lianne lashes out towards anyone who reminds her of the terrorists. She admits to her mother’s boyfriend, Martin, “People I know, they read poetry to ease the shock and pain ... I don’t read poems. I read newspapers. I put my head in the pages and get angry and crazy” (DeLillo 42). Lianne embodies one of the common facets of the melodrama narrative: Once the “victim” has been humiliated and

hurt, the only way to regain stability is for the “victim” to become the “hero” who is hell-bent on defending American freedom and democracy. Lianne’s downstairs neighbor, Elena, has been playing music that begins to bother and anger her. Lianne thinks, “Maybe Elena was Greek ... but the music wasn’t Greek. She was hearing another set of traditions ... music located in Islamic tradition, and she thought of knocking on the door and saying something” (DeLillo 67). Lianne refers to Elena’s music in terms of “traditions” and not sounds, associating terrorism *as* Islamic tradition. For Lianne, Elena now starts to represent the Muslim otherness that she hates and fears. In the past, Lianne barely notices Elena in their shared apartment building, but after 9/11, we see that Elena suddenly seems like an intruder to Lianne. Elena is assumedly raised by a lower class of people as Lianne complains “they didn’t own, they rented, like people in the Middle Ages.” Lianne is allotted several pages in which she contemplates walking up to Elena’s door to either “Ask her what the point is. Adopt a posture. This is retaliation in itself. Ask her why she’s playing this particular music at this particular time” or to “just use the language of the concerned fellow tenant ... mention the noise. Don’t call it music, call it noise” (DeLillo 69). On the surface, Lianne appears to want to use the word “noise” as a way to avoid confrontation and deeper dialogue with her annoying neighbor. The words “music” and “noise” though, are two very different descriptions of the sounds heard coming from Elena’s apartment—“music” carries the connotations of a civilized form of expression, while the word “noise” implies a more primitive form of “sounds.” The word “noise” is often correlated with the feeling of nuisance, and it certainly does imply that no artistic or meaningful form exists in Elena’s music.

Throughout this particular section of narrative, DeLillo chooses to add certain behavioral observations about Lianne. He insinuates that her manufactured anger is coming to a boiling point; thus, causing Lianne to contemplate confronting her neighbor. DeLillo offers clues such as, “She reads newspaper profiles of the dead” and “She told people she wanted to leave the city” (DeLillo 67). The narrator includes these occasional observations of Lianne to help explain why she feels the need to not only fight to protect the dignity of those who have already perished on 9/11, but to also protect future possible victims of terror. Elena’s body is also representative of the military reactions of the U.S. following the events of 9/11. Elena becomes the embodiment of the questionable “other,” while Lianne embodies the quick response of the U.S. Government that immediately invaded Afghanistan (with little reserve), and eventually, Iraq. After 9/11, Americans wanted answers, and also, vengeance. It was “our” space that had been violently invaded; therefore, someone was going to pay.

Lianne does think about Elena’s body, but only as a possible source of violence, and finally, her anger leads her downstairs to have an argument. Lianne confronts Elena and yells, “The music. All the time day and night ... It’s fucking loud ... The whole city is ultra-sensitive right now. Where have you been hiding?” Elena responds by saying, “It’s music. I like it, I play it. You think it’s so loud, walk faster on your way out the door.” A physical fight ensues, and as both women now have their hands in each other’s faces, Elena defensively declares twice “It gives you peace.” As she is leaving, Lianne realizes that she is losing her mind as she is hearing the dog bark over “the sound of a solo lute from Turkey or Egypt or Kurdistan” (DeLillo 120). Lianne’s irrational behavior

has moved from paranoia to actual physical violence, given citizens like Elena reason to intentionally hide their own bodies from view of those obsessing over revenge.

What is most interesting about this scene with Elena is that immediately preceding the fight, Lianne has been pondering her old studies in school, exposing that somewhere along the line she has managed to lose both her sense of self, as well as the understanding of her relation to others in the world. These “others” are those individuals whose physical appearance bears no resemblance to hers. Reminiscing, Lianne admits that “She read and reread into deep night in her dorm room, a drifting mass of papers, clothing, books, and tennis gear that she liked to think of as the objective correlative of an overflowing mind. What *is* an objective correlative? What *is* cognitive dissonance? She used to know the answers to everything then, it seemed to her now” (DeLillo 118). Cognitive dissonance is defined as is the discomfort caused by the existence of two seemingly opposing beliefs or viewpoints at the same time, and as Lianne succumbs to her angry emotions, she can no longer accept the idea that both “peace” and “Islamic tradition” can exist together in Elena’s music. At one point though, Lianne admits that she is conscious of her own experience of cognitive dissonance, exclaiming, “They’re the ones who think alike, talk alike, eat the same food at the same time. She knew this wasn’t true. Say the same prayers word for word, in the same prayer stance, day and night, following the arc of sun and moon” (DeLillo 69). In this phrase, Lianne now proves that she is making a choice to be angry about Elena’s assumed intentions, or anyone else’s intentions for that matter. Lianne is attached to the idea that national pride in America was impossibly synonymous with national anger, and based on Lianne’s violent, unsubstantiated actions, she is dangerously close to losing all control.

When Keith asks Lianne what will happen if she must pass Elena in the hall, she says, “I don’t apologize, that’s what happens,” and when he tells her that the music is playing again downstairs, all Lianne can say is “I guess that means she wins” (DeLillo 124). In these instances, Lianne also challenges the notions of “collective” space mentioned in Seltzer’s wound theory. She perhaps reveals even scarier behaviors than the ones exhibited by those people included in Seltzer’s “pathological sphere,” in that she is willing to commit violence without the need or desire for an audience’s approval. When the crowd is removed from the spectacle, there is no possible interference to stop the ensuing violence.

It’s not that Lianne doesn’t remember the definition of cognitive dissonance, but it is that she has never had the revelation that this particular theory has applications in real life. It is insignificant at this point any way, as her anger has clouded her ability to reason. Adding to this discussion, Maria Elisa Cevalco asks Fredric Jameson to elaborate on his writings on cognitive mapping, a skill that Lianne clearly needs to adopt. Jameson states that “We have a special problem in the United States: it is not only that we are a huge country like Russia and China, but we never think of the outside. There is a certain blindness of the center that makes it hard to understand conditions in other countries and the meaning of cultural and political acts” (“Imagining” 87). Like many Americans after 9/11, Lianne has a hard time imagining that a historical past existed before the morning of the terrorist attacks. It was commonplace to hear the phrase “everything has changed” echoing throughout the nation following the initial shock of the attacks, and the Jamesonian notion of a “lack of historicity” was elevated to a whole new level of disconnect.



Nina has travelled the world, and experiencing new cultures has been a lifelong education for her. Nina admits that she has been quite critical of her daughter's worldview for several years. She says, "Lianne's studies were meant to take her into deeper scholarship ... She'd travelled ... but it was tourism in the end, with shallow friends, not determined inquiry into beliefs, institutions, languages, art ..." (DeLillo 46). For example, while she is travelling and touring with a large group of people in Cairo (a graduation gift from her mother), we learn that Lianne becomes easily separated from her American friend, Debra, in a massive festival crowd. The reader learns that Lianne has an interesting experience while on this trip:

What she began to feel, aside from helplessness, was a heightened sense of who she was in relation to the others, thousands of them ... She became her face and features, her skin color, a white person ... She thought of crowds in panic, surging over riverbanks. These were a white person's thoughts, the processing of white panic data. The other did not have these thoughts. Debra had these thoughts ... somewhere out there being white. (DeLillo 184-185)

In this one instance, Lianne was able to "feel" her otherness, and in a bland daze of tourism and cheap trinkets, it should have been a profound life-changing moment. But, aside from this unique experience, it becomes obvious that Lianne has always been somewhat naïve, because years later, she still has a false sense of what it feels like to actually experience and address the cognitive dissonance that so irks her worldview. What she received from her own supposed education was an "experience" that involved sitting in a room alone, merely reading about cognitive dissonance theory. Lianne then

visits the world not as traveler, but as an American tourist. She becomes exemplary of American's nationalistic world view—unable to separate the peaceful religion of Islam from a faction of extreme fundamentalist terrorists.

After 9/11, every “strange” face in a crowd became a possible “suspect.” Perhaps some of Lianne's fear is unconsciously derived not from media images and narratives, but is created by the dark reality that terrorists were able to live here unnoticed on American soil, and that they were also trained and “armed” by our own schools and institutions. Global space had collapsed so much after 9/11 that there was not only the memory of the violence and horror of 9/11 left to obsess over, but the notion that on a quiet Sunday, the man standing in line ahead of you at the grocery store could possibly be a terrorist.

Immediately after 9/11, images of the bodies of the victims of terror were trumped by the images of “faces of terror,” as the former “invisible enemy” was reduced to only an articulated part of its whole. Kelly Gates explains that pre-9/11; there already existed the notion that technical solutions could be properly applied to improve all governmental problems, especially by means of networking and interactivity. Describing these new competing technologies of facial recognition as an “ongoing set of experiments,” she goes on to note:

The idea of automated facial recognition seemed uniquely suited to identifying the terrorist threat embodied in the mug shot images of Arab men paraded across media screens and the pages of print. These fetishized objects were simultaneously ‘unidentifiable’ and readily identified by their characteristic ‘faces of terror’, a contradiction repeated across the

field of post-9/11 chatter, from security industry white papers, press releases, and promotional materials to agency briefings, congressional hearings, and newspaper headlines. (418)

These “faces of terror;” an ambiguous phrase to say the least, were displayed all over in the media after 9/11, giving Americans the false pretense that terror could now be prevented through technical advancements. These “faces” were nothing more than images that trapped a single moment of expression. The phrase “faces of terror” reduces the imagined body into to just one of its parts—a grin, a turban, or a beard, now all vaguely encapsulate the possibility of terrorism. In a very bizarre example of combining playing cards and war, after the Iraq invasion started, the U.S. government issued decks of cards to troops that displayed Iraq’s “55 Most Wanted.” Although the deck only contains 52 cards, one could go to the Department of Defense website to see the missing three “terrorists,” and also, curious visitors can view which “cards” have been checked off of the list (Kozaryn). Perhaps because facial recognition technology fails to significantly assure that it can defend American’s safety, these “face” card images with slashes through their pictures (slashes noting deadness) exude a false sense of reassurance that the rules of American “war games” had not just been exposed for their failures.

There is an obvious flaw within facial recognition technology. It has the capability to capture photos in real-time, and it can recognize faces, but without any photographic reference point of originality, the technology is rendered useless. It is perhaps the most accidental resistance to the American postmodern desire to recreate images—as the terror then lies in the fact that without any authentic photo, there can be no copy. It also exposes the fact that the harm done by the “Americanization” of the

world is inconsequential to most Americans, and that our reliance on copied images as cultural reference points is disrupted by the notion of an “invisible enemy.”

The induction of the “faces of terror” into the national media was one way in which to deny the agency of the terrorist’s body. Suicide bombers can easily be thought of as men uselessly and aimlessly wasting their lives, and as evil men with no convictions about the sanctity of human life. As a counter narrative to this notion, DeLillo decides to take a risk and include the narrative of Hammad, one of the terrorists living in a sleeper cell in the United States. DeLillo is radical in the manner that he encourages the reader to investigate the motives and inner thoughts of terrorists in a time when those who searched for the truth about the terrorists’ reasoning, were chastised for “siding with the enemy.” Hammad falls outside of the trauma narrative, and if one were to simply consider him to be the “cause” of the trauma, it would be to overlook his own struggle to evaluate the worth of others (Americans), as well as Hammad’s realization that he in fact has become increasingly tied to those others. He is not just a copy of an image of a terrorist from a TV screen or newspaper, but in *Falling Man*, he is given a voice—one that both exposes global atrocities from the perspective of the oppressed, and also questions the intrinsic value of human life. In other words, he is not just a madman obsessed with killing innocent people. Psychoanalyst Deborah Serani describes the motives of terrorists this way: “The unconscious psychological motive of terrorism is to destroy good objects because they are sources of unbearable feelings of envy ... the terrorist’s virulent, malignant projective identification serves as a defense against the collapse of his sense of self in the face of tremendous grief, hopelessness, and depressive anxiety” (2). Serani really only offers a generic evaluation, and by doing this, she denies

that some terrorists may have different or more complicated motives. Hammad is more critical than envious of American life, and also questions the morality of his involvement in terrorist activities. When all other negotiations have appeared to fail, Hammad is willing to sacrifice his own body as a means to bring awareness about his ideological stance against American globalization. By using a passive/aggressive response to the terrorists' actions, the U.S. administration defines the reasons for their attacks in simplistic terms that intentionally blur America's past involvement in Middle Eastern affairs. In essence, not only are the dead bodies of the terrorists ignored, but their voices are as well, for the agency of the self-destructed body of the suicide terrorist *is* the counter narrative.

DeLillo's first introduces Hammad as standing under the doorframe of a building with a group of men waiting to go up to an apartment, one of the several meeting places used for these private meetings of discussion and plotting. Agitated slightly by the conversation around him, Hammad: "kept thinking that another woman would come by on a bike, someone to look at, hair wet, legs pumping" (DeLillo 78). Though a distraction from planning his terrorist plots, he takes delight in the visions of women's exposed bodies. This is not only in defiance to his terrorist brotherhood, but Muslim tradition in general. "Hammad knew a woman who was German, Syrian, what else, a little Turkish. She had dark eyes and a floppy body that liked contact. They shuffled across the room toward her cot, clamped tight with her roommate on the other side of the door studying English. His dreams seemed compressed, small rooms, nearly bare, quickly dreamt" (DeLillo 81). After having had the pleasure of enjoying something meaningful in life outside of his brotherhood, Hammad is aware that another kind of life is attainable, one

that allows for personal satisfaction and intrinsic meaning. His desire is to erotically visualize female bodies without feeling shame; a desire to see women's bodies a source for inspiration and love. Unfortunately though, Hammad is later uneasily subdued back into the life of terrorism. Within these scenes, there is evidence that Hammad may not share the same amount of anti-American resentment that his fellow conspirators do, and he is also questioning the demands from their leader, Amir. Amir commands all of the men to grow beards and Hammad thinks it seems absurd, saying, "This is not normally recommended" (DeLillo 79). Questioning the brotherhood's "rules" is looked down upon though, as Amir at one point scolds Hammad, saying, "Being with a shameless woman, dragging your body over hers. What is the difference between you and all the others, outside our space?" This is a turning point for Hammad, as he internalizes Amir's commands and thinks "He had to fight against the need to be normal. He had to struggle against himself, first, and then against the injustice that haunted their lives" (DeLillo 83). Hammad is now in too deep at this point, and is willing to give up the chance for another type of life in which he would be free and willing to love another human being deeply. Hammad becomes obsessed with anger and resentment as he allows these negative feeling to rule his life, and they persuade him to take violent action. On 9/11, his bottled-up emotions become transferred to people like Lianne—permanently connecting terrorist and terrorized by the threads of misplaced anger.

Amir's actions certainly mirror those of a terrorist leader like Osama bin Laden. Bin Laden was a man who possessed unquestionable amounts of power, professed strong political and moral ideologies, and who had a charisma that was hard to ignore. Inevitably, the name Bin Laden has now become part of America's experience with

terrorism. Perhaps his love for control and violence though, was simply the product of years of American influence and intrusion. Amir not only recognizes his own place in global space as being one of those who are silently oppressed by the oppressor, but he wants the Western world to recognize their position within this space as well, saying, “The world changes first in the mind of the man who wants to change it. The time is coming, our truth, our shame, and each man becomes the other, and the other still another, and then there is no separation” (DeLillo 80). It appears that in both the Middle East and America, a certain small group of men hold a large amount of influence and power. “Separation” of terrorist and terrorized can only be achieved with the premise that American foreign policy can be dramatically altered—a possibility that is highly unlikely. For example, when discussing global capitalism, Jameson points to how Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush, by giving out massive tax cuts favoring the ultra-wealthy and private corporations, allowed for the centralization of most of the wealth and power into a few hands. These men perpetrated twisted economic ideologies which were directly tied to destructive, exploitative foreign policies. Writing in 2002, Jameson notes that as of yet, campaign finance reform has:

only lifted a modest corner of the veil on the true immensity of this financial power in private hands, which allows individuals to become something like a state within a state, and endows them with a margin of political and even military autonomy. It is crucial to remember that Bin Laden is one of those people ... he is the very prototype of the accumulation of money in the hands of private individuals and the

poisoned fruit of a process that, unchecked, allows an unimaginable autonomy of action of all kinds. (“The Dialectics” 302)

The sad realization concerning Jameson’s observation is that wars and unrest in foreign countries are exactly the kind of shaky environments that fund these American private interests. American foreign interventions and exploitations are *always* intentional acts, and as a result, so is terrorism.

At one point, Hammad, questioning his part in the upcoming terrorist plot, gets up the nerve to ask Amir, “What about the others, those who will die?” Hammad then tells us that “Amir said simply there are no others. The others exist only to the degree that they fill the role we have designed for them” (DeLillo 176). The correlations between American foreign policy and terrorism are tied together by a lack of concern for the other. The invasions and bombings of Iraq and Afghanistan, under the guise of defending America’s “freedom” and spreading “democracy,” led to thousands of civilian deaths, the destruction of infrastructure, the devastation of agriculture, and civil war. The desire for a global exploitation of resources is dependent on the silent destruction of the invisible others—even if those others may be innocent children. In response to these types of global exploitations, Amir convinces his men to question these acts, saying, “Everything here was twisted, hypocrite, the West corrupt of mind and body, determined to shiver Islam down to bread crumbs for birds” (DeLillo 79). Based on Amir’s exclamations, terrorism is then realized to be the only last useful response to these Western corruptions. What’s interesting to mention here, is that Amir has ignored the warnings of his elders who have seen the waste of young bodies in war. Hammad recounts the story of how one of these elders once had to repeatedly shoot at young boys carrying guns half their size,



stating, “He was twice regretful, first to see the boys die, sent out to explode land mines and to run under tanks and into walls of gunfire, and then to think they were winning, these children, defeating us in their manner of dying.” This elder also says that “Most countries are run by madmen” (DeLillo 78), exposing the dark truth that all leaders of any particular war have had no problem protecting their empires by convincing young martyrs to die for their causes, while never themselves standing on the actual battlefield beside them. These young “martyrs,” convinced that their sacrifice is steeped in stoicism, are nothing more than disposable bodies to their leaders. Similar to the refuse mechanisms of consumer growth societies, terrorism also produces its own kind of bodily “waste.”

DeLillo reveals Hammad’s own inner conflicts of cognitive dissonance, saying: “The people he looked at, they need to be ashamed of their attachment to life, walking their dogs. Think of it, dogs scraping at dirt, lawn sprinklers hissing. When he saw a storm bearing in from the gulf, he wanted to spread his arms and walk right into it. These people, what they hold so precious we see as empty space” (DeLillo 177). What Hammad can’t seem to understand, is that he is giving up enjoying walking into a storm just as easily by committing suicide in the name of fundamentalism. Hammad, like many of his cohorts, fails to recognize that things like love and comfort are not only achievable, but are more fulfilling states of being. He is also blind to the fact that these emotional states of being equally stand in opposition to the rules of both the brotherhood of Americanization, and also, the brotherhood of Islamic fundamentalism. Feelings of love and desire are dangerous to the structures of fundamentalism, as they contain the potential to intervene and interrupt the acquisition of power.

To help possibly illuminate the meaning behind the inclusion of useless rules created by Keith and Rumsey, it is helpful to turn again to Fredric Jameson, and his understanding of economic theories of capitalism explored by Deluze and Guattari concerning axioms and codes. Jameson differentiates between what he calls the “barbaric” form of capitalism, a system regulated by codes and which only uses actual, tangible money as “capital and as purchasing power;” and the new global capitalism, a system that encourages deregulation, and brinks on absurdity with the inclusion of axioms (confusing disruptions) which demand that risk, and not rules, becomes the “power of investment and measure of exchange” (“Marxism” 398). We can apply these Deluzian theories to the card (war) games played by Keith and his friends, as codes then exemplify the mathematical rules of the card games. These rules cannot be changed, but the type of card game (five card stud, Texas hold ‘em) can be rotated. Changing the code does not change or impact any results of the game, just the manner in which it is played. For example, supply and demand is measurable, but the numbers can change and fluctuate, generally without wreaking too much havoc on the overall system. If codes are the means of control, then axioms are the means of power that disrupt that control by adding too many new immeasurable stipulations. For example, the derivatives market of buying and selling is not based on codes, but is based on speculation that can change in a matter of minutes. When too much time is then spent planning for profit gains, it leaves little consideration for the possibility of horrific responses such as the 9/11 attacks. A major terror attack against the U.S. could not be conceived because it wasn’t factored into the codes of globalization—the visual reality of Rumsey’s dead body is the end result of this failure.

Again, as mentioned in chapter one, Keith and his poker buddies use moves similar to the economic tactics of vulture global capitalism in the 1980's. They do this by reducing the dealer's options and "with the shrinking choice came the raising of stakes, which intensified the ceremony of check-writing for the long night's losers." In the following paragraphs, their new rule making can be paralleled with that of Amir's rules for the radical terrorist faction. DeLillo introduces this section by noting "There was a corresponding elevation of stakes," illuminating the fact that the Islamic radicals and the American exceptionalists, are both nothing more than private brotherhoods led by eccentric leaders with radical ideologies. The players argue over formalities of "excess," with Keith's friend Demetrius saying, "How disciplined can we be if we are taking time to leave the table and stuff our jaws with chemically treated breads, meats and cheeses." As a consequence of lectures like these, they then agree to focus only on the game, making exclusions like "No gin or vodka. No beer that was not dark." They employed these particular restrictions based on a story Keith told them about beer-drinking poker buddies who are buried in a circle together at a cemetery somewhere, a "beautiful story about a friendship and the transcendent effects of unremarkable habit." DeLillo concludes by noting "They played it safe and regretted it, took risk as and lost, fell into states of lunar gloom. But there were always things to ban and rules to make" (DeLillo 97-99). In order to disrupt the flow through which America's leaders were able to silently continue their own acts of global exploitation and control, the men behind the terror of 9/11 had to change the axioms of their war games. Jean Baudrillard adds to this notion saying:

By keeping for itself all the cards, it has forced the Other to change the rules of the game. And these new rules are more ferocious, because what

is at stake is ferocious. To a system to whom the very excess of power poses an insoluble defiance, the terrorists answer through a definitive act whose exchange reaches the same impossibility ... All the singularities (species, individuals, cultures) that have paid with their own death for the installation of a world circulation regulated by a single superpower avenge themselves today through this terrorist transference of the situation.

(“L’Esprit” 405)

Although not necessarily classified as typical suicide bombers, these 9/11 terrorists had died in the same space and time in which Keith had existed and survived. In the medical center, soon after the towers collapse, a doctor eerily decides to tell Keith about the weird phenomenon of “organic shrapnel.” Essentially, organic shrapnel is injury forced upon one’s body as a result of the physical destruction of another human. It is a common result of suicide bombings that “The bomber is blown to bits, literally bits and pieces, and fragments of flesh and bone come flying outward with such force and velocity that they get wedged, they get trapped in the body of anyone who’s in striking range” (DeLillo 16). In this situation, the terrorist’s body accidentally gains agency, as the human body itself becomes an unexpected weapon. The terrorist body still remains voiceless in these instances—but assuredly it will not be forgotten if its mutilated pieces are left festering under another’s skin.

In an interview with Fredric Jameson, Srinivas Aravamudan brings up the subject of suicide bombings, asking Jameson his insights on the following notions. Aravamudan suggests that there are at least three different possible influences which these bombers exemplify: the power of religious fundamentalism, a new form of anarchy (assuming the

possibility of killing oneself without changing things), and military asymmetry.

Aravamudan defines the latter in dichotic terms suggesting that “if you can’t have a proper war ... the only way to impose violence is through breaking a network by way of attacks that are futile or suicidal from one perspective, but significant from another”

(227). In response, adding another layer to these effects, Jameson says:

The other thing ... is the role of the body. There is a dialectic between the smart bombs and the airplanes that can’t even see the populations on the ground and this mobilization of the body as such ... In general, this kind of weapon is part of an informational politics that you have to use because precisely you do not have an army that can match the one in the field.

(227)

This body can be observed in some sense here, as last-resort weapon against globalization, as it forces those in power to witness the human waste that their policies have created. Being denied the expression of legitimate grievances, the “information” of the mutilated body is all that is left as a means to translate these global concerns and atrocities.

The concept of cultural waste has different meanings in different parts of the world, but for this argument, it is imperative to examine “growth societies,” as they tend to produce several types of noticeable refuse. On this particular topic Jean Baudrillard says:

The notion of utility ... needs to be revised in which waste ... takes on a positive function taking over where rational utility leaves off to play its part in higher social functionality—a social logic in which waste even

appears ultimately as the essential function ... the ritual uselessness of “expenditure for nothing” becoming the site of production of values. (*The Consumer* 43)

One can argue that the human body is ultimately the invisible “waste” of this global “expenditure for nothing,” as entire societies have had their lives destroyed in the fight for global domination. Suicide bombers are then recycling themselves from “waste,” and by doing this, they become reconstituted vessels of obliteration against the machines and institutions that threw them away in the first place. The people who are killed by their fragmented bodies are as inconsequential to the terrorist plots, for in this vicious cycle, the victims’ bodies simply become waste as well.

The events of 9/11 took the idea of a “suicide bomber,” a singular something (or “someone”) which invisibly happens far away, and raised it to a new frightening level. The terrorists managed to employ a new way to increase the significance and agency of suicide bombings, a type of “informational politics” which far supersedes the bombings previously considered to be “primitive” offences. They attacked the WTC as a collective group of suicide bombers, and armed with America’s own technologies, they minimized space into ash. It was no longer the image of a single madman blowing himself up in a small crowd. For Americans, the reality of the possibility of grand-scale terrorism on American soil was now unavoidable, especially when realizing that our own hijacked machines were used as weapons against the icons of global machinery themselves.

Two things that Hammad and the 9/11 jumpers have in common is that they both commit suicide against their own will to live, and they also both choose the manner of their own deaths. On the subject of bodily agency, Joanne Faulkner notes:

The image represents a decision ... that, from the perspective of a claim to innocence, conceived of passive and guiltless is difficult to comprehend ... as a “proper” comportment of an innocent. The falling man reveals and embodies a traumatic horror ... the horror of choosing the means of one’s own particular death in the face of a less certain but more protracted demise at the hands of another. (68)

In the final moments of the novel, we know that Hammad is now committed to his act as he has made it through security and has already boarded the airplane. After the plane has been hijacked, Hammad is accidentally cut badly with a box cutter and while bleeding, he has a revelation that “The air was thick with the Mace he’d sprayed and there was somebody’s blood, his blood, draining through the cuff of his long sleeved shirt ... he welcomed the blood but not the pain, which was becoming hard to bear.” In this instance, the reader cannot help but to see Hammad as a suffering body—he bleeds from a cut like anyone else would. But his thoughts quickly change as “he thought of something he’d long forgotten. He thought of the Shia boys on the battlefield in Shatt al Arab. He took strength from this, seeing them cut down in waves by machine guns ... wearing red bandanas around their necks and plastic keys underneath, to open the door to paradise” (DeLillo 238). Like Lianne, Hammad too suffers from the uneasiness created by cognitive dissonance as he is simultaneously experiencing terrible physical pain while receiving pleasure from the thought of young boys dying in war. He has no time to sort out these feelings though, as in the next moments, his life ends as it collides with Keith’s.

DeLillo combines the narratives of Keith and Hammad in a single paragraph that is perhaps the ultimate example of compressing space. It reads as follows: “A bottle fell

off the counter in the galley ... a water bottle, empty ... he watched it spin more quickly and the skitter across the floor an instant before the aircraft struck the tower, heat, then fuel, then fire, and a blast wave passed through the structure that sent Keith Neudecker out of his chair and into a wall” (DeLillo 239). In this particular moment, DeLillo pits human body against human body, as well as the “body” of a machine against the “body” of a structure. It is the ultimate impact of the by-products of American foreign policy meeting their makers. In this instance, what is left to ponder is the power of a body in motion. As one body voluntarily crashes into the World Trade Center, it forces another to jump from it. It is an equation that produces unimaginable results.



## The Body Infected

Societies, like individuals, go through many stages of development before becoming enlightened to the importance of critically evaluating their own involvement in significant political and historical events. In order for any important revelations to take place, people must employ self-reflection as a means for positive future growth and change. September 11, 2001, is no longer just another day on an old calendar, but a life-altering event that challenged the foundations of American society. Sometimes when a foundation's structures crumble, it is necessary to seek alternative means in which to sort through the pieces. In chapter thirteen of *Falling Man*, Lianne suggests that Drew's photo, the "Falling Man," may have other archetypal connections:

She thought it could be the name of a trump card in a tarot deck, Falling Man ... the figure twisting down in a stormy night sky. There is some dispute over the position he assumed during the fall, the position he maintained in his suspended state. Was this position intended to reflect the body posture of a particular man who was photographed falling from the north tower ... a man set forever in free fall against the looming background of the column panels in the tower? (DeLillo 221)

The Tarot is a metaphorical system based in (Jungian) archetypal symbols and is used as a spiritual tool to provoke reflection, meditation, and self-awareness. Much like fiction, one may use the Tarot a tool to decipher other possible meanings of personal and cultural events. The twenty-two Major Arcana cards in Tarot deck represent major life events occurring along the path of personal growth. Starting with the Fool card (representing

new life and new perspectives) and ending with The World (representing total harmony and well-being), all of these cards possess some major archetypal significance. There are two Major Arcana cards in the Tarot deck which both satisfy the descriptions above given by Lianne. The first is the Tower card which signifies the collapse of a structure (a way of life, natural disasters, divorce ...), or the shattering of former beliefs. It also often exposes a moment of truth. The actual image on this card is disturbingly similar to some of the controversial images of 9/11. It is a picture of a tower on fire and collapsing, and from the upper windows, people are seen flailing their bodies and falling to their deaths, “twisting down in a stormy night sky.” It is the view of terror and horror from afar, not a single caption of a human body, but an entire environment decidedly in the process of crumbling. The Tower card represents a life-changing event—and as these American architectural Towers now become the epicenters of collapsing space and the crisis points of structural flaws, all that is left for America is a sense of bewilderment and shock. These are moments which require a sense of retrospect and introspection because personal and cultural norms have just been shattered and people felt that “There is no next. This was next” (DeLillo 10). Rachel Greenwald Smith states, “Just as trauma is understood to entail a sudden break with the subject that one once was, catastrophes are understood to entail a sudden break with history ... Our present moment therefore is characterized by a surprising intimacy between ostensibly world-changing catastrophes and the expansion of existing political policies” (158-159). Historically, a tower was often constructed as a means of protection from plagues and invading armies, as well as being the structural representation of wealth and power accumulated by privileged members of society. The Tower card also implies that there is a potential for positive

events—it can insist that there is hope that a new space may be created after significant demise, offering the opportunity to rebuild new values and traditions. But, since the archetypal significance of the Tower card is the moment of consequence colliding with violent reality, it could also be representative of the shattering of the empire’s image. America the “superpower” had its status revoked in front of the world for it failed to keep its own citizens safe. Existing political policies should have been exposed as failures, but instead, America began its “War on Terror,” marching on the same path towards the next big catastrophe.

The other Major Arcana card also pertinent to Lianne’s interpretations in *Falling Man* is The Hanged Man. The Hanged Man card is almost identical to that of both Richard Drew’s photo “The Falling Man,” and Janiak’s final pose, as it illustrates a man dangling from a branch, suspended upside down, arms at his side, with one leg bent. Unlike the Tower; a card that is inundated with several symbols, the entire frame of the Hanged Man card is taken up by the image of a single body. When this card appears in a spread – the body *is* the reference point for all psychic inquiries.

Lianne describes Janiak this way, “A man was dangling there, above the street, upside down. He wore a business suit, one leg bent up, arms at his sides. A safety harness was barely visible, emerging from his trouser at the straightened leg and fastened to the decorative rail of the viaduct” (DeLillo 33). There is a subtle, yet definite difference between the interpretations of these two subjects. The Hanged Man card does not represent falling, but rather, suspension, which is the eventual position of the artist Falling Man after his jump and descent. The suspension of the Hanged Man is meant to symbolize a need for self-reflection, new perspectives, enlightenment, and reevaluation

of values and beliefs, attributes that Lianne could adopt to combat her obsession with the media. There are no actual expectations tied to the meaning of this particular Tarot card, as there are also no expectations tied to Martin. In essence, the Hanged Man card suggests that one should withhold all future actions, and instead focus on one's present state of "being" in the world. Also, if like Lianne, the U.S. fails to adopt the meditative state of The Hanged Man, then at least there is Martin's insightful perspective to serve that purpose.

Martin has been Nina's lover for over twenty years, and he is quite an interesting mystery. He is described as "an art dealer, a collector, an investor perhaps ... He spoke with an accent and had an apartment here and an office in Basel. He spent time in Berlin. He did or did not have a wife in Paris." Lianne says to him "Somewhere in Europe. This is how I think of you," and throughout the novel, Martin's narrative often articulates the negative opinions of other industrialized nations towards America (DeLillo 42). Martin is a docile man who likes to calmly argue politics over beer and wine, and because he maintains a rather bland appearance, he effortlessly blends into the New York City masses. He is "overweight but did not appear ripe with good living. He was usually jet-lagged, more or less unwashed, in a well-worn suit ... He was not quite bald with a shadow of gray bristle on his head and a beard that looked about two weeks old" (DeLillo 43). Martin doesn't appear threatening because he looks "American" enough, and he is involved with seemingly upper class professions (ones that make lots of money, anyways). Martin would "pass" America's facial recognition technology scans based on these physical descriptions. His "otherness" lies solely in his accent. Martin projects a very damning commentary about the state of America after 9/11, but Lianne still values

his opinions as he poses no real threat to her identity. He is part of this global space as well, and he is able to see the image of America from both inside and out. Lianne says to him “I think of you coming from a distant city on your way to another distant city and neither place has shape or form.” Martin replies “This is me, I am shapeless” (DeLillo 42). The terrorists who attacked on 9/11 were also “shapeless” before they were later discovered on airport cameras or as mug shots in the media. Jameson again address the idea of shared global space saying, “The economic interdependence of the world system today means that wherever one may find oneself on the globe, the position can henceforth always be coordinated with its other spaces (“The End” 701). One has to wonder: If Americans can’t even imagine that other types of spaces exist beyond their own, how can they then imagine the existence of bodies in those spaces as well?

When arguing about the terrorists’ motives, Nina says, “Dead wars, holy wars. God could appear in the sky tomorrow ... It’s sheer panic. They attack out of panic ... There are no goals they can hope to achieve. They’re not liberating a people or casting out a dictator. Kill the innocent, only that” (DeLillo 46). By assuming that all terrorists’ motives are singularly based in shared archaic religious beliefs, she is denying the innocence of those in the Muslim world who do not condone these terrorists’ behaviors. She cannot separate the bodies of the terrorists from the “body” of the entire Islamic world, and similarly, many extremist terrorists do not realize or accept that many American citizens are disgusted by their own country’s foreign policies.

Martin, on the other hand, has a different interpretation of terrorism. He insists, “They think the world is a disease. This world, this society, ours. A disease that’s spreading” (DeLillo 46). At a later point in the novel, arguing again about this same

subject, Nina again simply blames Islamic religion as the cause of terrorism, saying, “You tell us to forget God...But we can’t forget God. They invoke God constantly. This is their oldest source, their oldest word. Yes there’s something else but it’s not history or economics.” Martin says in response, “We’re talking about the people, here and now. It’s a misplaced grievance. It’s a viral infection. A virus reproduces itself outside history” (DeLillo 112-113). Martin’s argument here is similar to a statement made by Baudrillard in response to 9/11:

Terrorism, like viruses, is everywhere ... The West can face up to any visible forms of antagonism. But the other with its viral structure, as if the whole system of domination secreted its own anti-apparatus, its own ferment of disappearance, against this form of almost automatic reversion of its own power, the system can do nothing. Terrorism is the shock wave of this silent phenomenon of reversion. (“L'Esprit” 406)

Before trying to discuss both Martin’s and Baudrillard’s interpretations of terrorism as a transferable sickness, it is important to take a moment to investigate the definition of a virus. A virus can be described in biological terms as:

An infectious organism that is usually submicroscopic, can multiply only inside certain living host cells and is understood to be a non-cellular structure lacking any intrinsic metabolism and usually comprising a DNA or RNA core inside a protein coat ... A virus is neither living nor nonliving. It cannot replicate on its own, so it must hijack another organism to replicate itself. (Collins)

A virus' sole purpose is to find a living host, with the intention to disrupt the host's codes (RNA and DNA). It will then manufacture a copy of itself inside the host, thus altering the host's makeup. As mentioned in chapter two, codes were defined as "the means of control." Essentially, in terms of capital, "codes" are the normal rules of the game. This transferable, now mutated virus has infected the bodies and minds of Amir's Muslim brotherhood, disrupting their original codes of identity. As their minds become infatuated with calculating counterattacks, they eventually decide to use their own bodies as weapons. This ruthless virus has returned to do what all viruses purposelessly do—it returns with the purpose of destroying another code, using its own mutated axioms. Nina may be correct then when she blames terror and fundamentalism on the "things men feel," as both American (Keith) and Muslim (Hammad) brotherhoods are experiencing the transference of infection from one "body" to another.

Failure to recognize one's own ability to infect other people stems from a refusal to believe that one is sick in the first place. Sickness implies weakness, and therefore, a failure or refusal to examine the self for possible infectious illnesses has the potential to create a mass production of future possible viral outbreaks. Alexander Dunst argues that when contemplating what will happen when the oppressed confront the oppressor, or in this case, when the infected confronts the original host, "The site of blame will be easily identified as lying outside of the nation. This outside is usually defined geographically and ideologically but may also take the form of an internal exclusion of certain groups – Muslims, so-called Islamist extremists or leftwing radicals" (59). The refusal to accept any blame for the transference of violence allows the virus to disrupt more codes. It becomes more and more mutated as it travels the globe, multiplying at increasingly faster

rates. What can be done then to prevent these ongoing infections? As a possible answer to this question, William Blum makes the argument that what is needed is an internal exam into the mutated mechanisms of the American global society. Blum says, “What, then, can the United States do to end terrorism directed against it? The answer lies in removing the anti-American motivations of the terrorists. To achieve this, American foreign policy will have to undergo a metamorphosis.” Since this type of global imperialism has been spreading deeper into the world’s tissues for many decades, perhaps the only way that the terrorists could imagine preventing further infection was to make the false assumption that they could simply kill the virus by killing the host. But the virus’s original host isn’t a person; it’s an ideology, something unseen, another type of “invisible enemy.” A virus is not a living thing, and since it cannot be destroyed, it leaves only one viable option: quarantine. These ideologies must be isolated as the only rational means of containment because the virus is still mutating and looking for new hosts. Within the philosophy of both the American and Muslim brotherhoods, the viral infection already lies dormant. Amir says, “Those who will die have no claims to their lives outside the useful fact of their dying” (DeLillo 176). Out of context, this quote could describe the ideologies of either brotherhood because both sides accept that bodily victims are a necessary waste product of both terror and global power.

Martin, well versed on the topic of terror as infection, has broken some codes as well. It is later revealed that Martin, living under the guise of “international travelling art dealer,” has been previously involved with a left-wing, European extremist group. He was a member of the collective called Kommune One: a group dedicated to demonstrating against the German fascist state. Nina says that “First they threw eggs.



Then they set off bombs. After that I'm not sure what he did. I think he was in Italy for a while, in the turmoil, when the Red brigades were still active. But I don't know" (DeLillo 146). Lianne becomes concerned, asking her mom several times why she doesn't know more details, wondering how Nina can be so comfortable sharing her bed with a man who could be a murderer. Like the Hanged Man, Martin (also known as Ernst Hechinger) has spent most of his own life in a suspended state of sorts. He is always waiting for the authorities to one day discover his true identity and location. He is the image of the American host as well, as he "defends freedom" through the use of global terror. He also makes one ponder the question: Is one type of terror or terrorist more acceptable than another?

In 2004, after most of the people have left Nina's funeral, Martin is alone with Lianne and he abruptly starts announcing his beliefs about the current state of American socio-political life. He says:

We are all sick of America and Americans ... For all the careless power of this country ... for all the danger it makes in the world, America is going to become irrelevant ... Soon the day is coming when nobody has to think about America except for the danger it brings. It is losing the center. It becomes the center of its own shit. This is the only center it occupies.  
(DeLillo 191)

In response to Martin's outburst, the library director who was listening in on Martin's rant walks over, places a sunflower in Martin's pocket, and returns the verbal favor with a prideful reply: "If we occupy the center it's because you put us there. This is your true dilemma ... despite everything, we're still America, and you're still Europe. You go to

our movies, read our books, listen to our music, speak our language. How can you stop thinking about us? ...What comes after America?" (DeLillo 192). America fails to see itself as anyone else's "other" as long as it perceives itself to be the center, the world liberator, the triumphalist "superpower." After the librarian make this snide remark, Martin quietly whispers, "I don't know this America anymore. I don't recognize it ... There is an empty space where America used to be" (DeLillo 193). The functionality of American modernism and its potential for innovation and creativity have been consumed by this new mode of global capital economics. Americans seems to be swallowed up by images, the media, and a deep desire to constantly pronounce global superiority. Even if U.S. citizens know that America has become "the center of its own shit," many will never dare to admit it. Sriviniwas Aravamudan asks Jameson to explain what was meant in his statement describing decadence as "the otherness of capitalism, something that precedes it, but also something that potentially comes after it" (225). Jameson clarifies his previous definition of "decadence" for Aravamudan, asserting the idea that middle-class society doesn't have to face the same sustenance and work related challenges of other populations. He says:

It's that picture of a smug and self-satisfied America which arouses both envy and resentment, and then offers a chance for Schadenfreude when horrible things happen to us ... Gas guzzlers, SUVs, consumerism in general – I would rather call such things collective addictions ... you notice that when this war on terror started, the one thing the president did not do was to demand sacrifices of the American people. (226)

During WWII Americans bought war bonds from the U.S. government not only as a way to pay for the war effort in real time, but it was also part of a plan to help stimulate the economy by increasing consumer spending after the war. To sway citizen involvement, posters illustrating bodily images of wounded soldiers, bodies in active battle, and other pictures connecting collective patriotism to the body, were often displayed throughout American communities. As a result, Americans went out and purchased bonds not only as a way to support the economy, but as a way to feel connected to a conscious social effort. It is now 2013 and not one bond has been sold to support either American war in the Middle East. After having completed several tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, many soldiers are coming home in need of serious physical and mental health care, only to find that their benefits are being used as playing chips in invented political crises. Blame over who created America's massive debt is clouded by political ideologies and media propaganda, while nothing substantial is resolved in Washington. America's blindness towards its own consumer addictions has allowed for the unthinkable to occur. The terrorists lived in America, used American aviation schools, survived on American food and culture, bought supplies on American credit cards, and ultimately, used American aircrafts as their weapons of terror.

In talking about the Frankfurt definitions of late capitalism, Jameson states that it has two concepts: "a tendential web of bureaucratic control ... and the interpenetration of government and big business ... As widely used today, late capitalism has very different overtones from these. No one particularly notices the expansion of the state sector and bureaucratization any longer: it seems a simple, 'natural' fact of life" (*Postmodernism* xix). Americans *do* sometimes notice the negative effects of late capitalism, but most

citizens have become too sentimentally “manufactured” by the corporate news media propaganda to care about these effects. The existence of an apathetic national attitude was a popular subject for Baudrillard in his book *America*, and perhaps Baudrillard’s writing was an inspiration for some of DeLillo’s novel. Baudrillard recognized this societal fault in 1986 declaring: “We fanatics of aesthetics and meaning, of culture, of flavor and seduction ... we who are unfailingly attached to the wonders of critical sense and transcendence find it a mental shock ... to discover the fascination of nonsense and ... to discover that one can exult in the liquidation of all culture and rejoice in the consecration of indifference” (123). In the years following 9/11, Americans put flags in almost every lawn. They watched “patriotic” movies and TV shows, they listened to “patriotic” songs about 9/11 and the war(s), and they “experienced” life politically through constant barrage of cable news media images and social networking. This was a manufactured “patriotism” though, as the only people directly affected by these wars in the Middle East were the families of soldiers sent to fight. As a matter of fact, something significant had been missing from this media spectacle, and that was the images of these fallen soldiers. This synthetic “patriotism” is indicative of an incomplete reality:

Since the 2003 invasion of Iraq, more than 4,200 flag-draped war dead have arrived at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware ... The arrival of remains of Staff Sgt. Phillip A. Myers, a 30-year-old supporting Operation Enduring Freedom, at Dover Air Force Base ... marked the first time that the transfer of any of the nearly 5,000 U.S. troops who have died in Iraq and Afghanistan was open to the media. (Kerley)

It is possible then, that the media itself is just another mutation of this virus—as its main objective is to make copies of an original. Another application of the word “virus” helps explain a new part of the commodification process. For example, when a “cultural object reaches an enormous audience simply by word of mouth, email or blog. Objects such as online videos become viral when widespread attention and popularity are achieved without commercial advertising ... viruses do exactly what marketers attempt to do: make a large impact on your audience, in a cheap, quick and effortless method (Collins). This is the same method used by cable news, although very little that was manufactured and repeated on FOX News or CNN ever told the true story of the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan. Those types of bodily images are reserved for the troops who have spent countless bloody tours overseas fighting the idea of a hidden, ever-multiplying enemy. Strangely, these soldiers are sacrificing their lives for an enemy that can never truly be “located.” The images of Iraqi children badly burned and missing hands and feet are “private” images, and are left for only their families to view. Those particular images of bodies must never appear in the media at all, as they tell a story far removed from the usual script.

### Conclusion

DeLillo's *Falling Man* has unearthed hidden images of 9/11 bodies, and by writing a novel centered on bodily possibilities and agency, DeLillo assures that the wounded body again becomes a source of reference and power in a time of trauma and terror. From organic shrapnel to suicide, and from viruses to bodily deconstructions, *Falling Man* is an interesting study of what appears to be a new reaction to death as public spectacle. *Falling Man* is also a useful measuring tool by which to expose the value of actual live performance and interaction versus the choice to live vicariously through simulated media constructions. Lianne decides to look up information in the library about David Janiak after he has died, and most of the initial descriptions she finds of Janiak are terribly negative such as "Heartless Exhibitionist" and "MAYOR SAYS FALLING MAN MORONIC," but this does not stop Lianne's curiosity. She then has a revelation when "She tried to connect this man to the moment when she'd stood beneath the elevated tracks, nearly three years ago, watching someone prepare to fall from a maintenance platform as the train went past. There were no photographs of that fall. She was the photograph, the photosensitive surface. That nameless body coming down, that

was hers to record and absorb” (DeLillo 219). American’s must enter into a different type of cognitive process that is not so steeped in media images and consumer saturation or else they will suffer more of the same cycles of war, greed, and domination. The reality of America as a “superpower” is also “falling”—the tormented bodies in *Falling Man* suggest that the current downward spiral, the dark realities of globalization rearing their heads on domestic soil, is a result of the failure of both American domestic and global foreign policy, coupled with a collective American indifference toward an inevitable bottom. America can no longer assume its victim/hero role after 9/11, but as long as people simply experience social and political life from their living rooms and offices, they are invariably doomed to repeat the same mistakes. America after 9/11 is reflected in the image of Drew’s Falling Man: It is tuck stationary, suspended, only conscious of being in the present—today is here, yesterday is already gone.

DeLillo’s *Falling Man* gives proof to the power of the visible human body, but the subject matter of this novel offers such a solemn, hollow feeling, thus making it a challenge to find hope in such despair. Near the end of the novel, there is a short-lived scene that appears to have a heightened level of positive energy. In 2004, Lianne takes her son, Justin, to a five hundred thousand member anti-war protest march in NYC “to allow him to walk in the midst of dissent, to feel and see the argument against misrule” (DeLillo 182). This protest is a live event with actual human energy and “police in riot helmets,” “coffins draped in black,” and “police helicopters ... beating overhead” (DeLillo 181). Justin enjoys interacting with the many types of people in the protest. He is an active participant as he chooses to speak to anti-war groups, or discuss pamphlets about Islam with Muslims.

Concerning postmodern literary endings, Samuel Cohen says, “Postmodernism ... has been especially invested in the connection between closure and contingency ... As a result, events that reawaken a sense of contingency and challenge already constructed narratives—in particular, historical traumas—can affect the shape of literary endings” (372). DeLillo creates a small bit of optimism at the end of *Falling Man* by including Justin in the anti-war protest, thus allowing the novel to begin and end with two very different scenes of bodies on the streets of New York City. DeLillo dedicates this small scene of hope in anticipation that the next generation of Americans will no longer accept banality and indifference as facets of American life, but will look to a photo like Drew’s “The Falling Man,” and regard it not only as evidence of our own mortality, but as “human beauty in the crush of meshed steel.”



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