

**SVEUČILIŠTE U ZAGREBU
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9/11: EVENT, TRAUMA, NATION, GLOBALIZATION

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Introduction

Perhaps the dead can be reduced to fixed forms,
though their surviving records are against it.
-- Raymond Williams

On September 11, 2001, nineteen young men, most of them from Saudi Arabia, two from the United Arab Emirates, one from Egypt, and one from Lebanon, hijacked four US airliners on domestic flights. Then, they flew two of the planes into the World Trade Center towers in New York City, one into the Pentagon building near Washington, DC, with the last airplane, in which a fight between the hijackers and the passengers broke out, diving into a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania without reaching its intended target. Nearly three thousand people were killed in the attacks. The suicide bombings of the WTC buildings, taking place in broad daylight in one of the most densely populated areas in the world, were the most spectacular and visible of all. The instantly and repeatedly broadcast images of the planes hitting the towers and the tall buildings collapsing soon became a symbolic stand-in for the tragic loss of that day. What happened appeared like nothing the United States or the world have ever seen (calling to mind, perhaps, and uncannily, only the spectacular special effects of Hollywood disaster movies). What ensued—the various interpretations of the event, its many political consequences, cultural symptoms and social effects—is the general subject of this study.

The large number of academic and popular writing on September 11, 2001 proves how every attempt to understand 9/11 as a discrete event inevitably leads to complex inquiries into its meaning and place in history. The significance of 9/11 can, except in terms

of human loss, certainly be measured by the impact the event had both on a global scale and in the local context of the US political and legal system. Virtually all critics agree that in both respects the event occupies a significant position. One of the goals of my project is to understand how this position, often described in terms of a "watershed moment" or "turning point," was culturally and politically negotiated and constructed. In order to untangle these complex issues, in which questions of mourning and loss are joined by those of US global domination, I focus on a "9/11 archive" that, while having the September 11 attacks at its heart, also includes some representations of the changes that took place in the country in the aftermath of the event, as well as representations of the ongoing US-led war in Iraq, which was, at least initially, justified in relation to the September 11 terrorist attacks. While the central part of my corpus, which is itself only one segment of the archive, primarily consists of selected literary texts, on its margins it also includes media images, films and works of visual artists. This cultural work, that with various degree of explicitness refers to the 9/11 attacks, needs to be located within the larger 9/11 archive that also encompasses the cultural representations of a post-911 America and its debates about the "global war on terror."

These remarks clearly point to the problematic issue of limits that arises when approaching this historical event. The most obvious question, of where and when the analysis should begin and end, mirrors the difficulty of demarcating the boundaries of the event itself. The issue of limits is also ethical, and begs the question of how to approach an event that is fundamentally marked by others' suffering. While I do not pretend to offer definite answers to these problems, I think they can most constructively be approached by way of a layered analytical perspective, that could both set a heuristic framework for the unavoidable sense of expansion of the event and account for its concentric and palimpsestic contexts. The September 11 attacks, the death and destruction of their immediate impact, the modalities of

mourning, of the victims, their families, and the nation, the changes in US domestic legislation due to increased demands for security, the globalization of the event's impact through the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq—all these inevitably participate in the understanding of 9/11. The interest of this study might most accurately be described as being directed towards the processes through which this disruptive historical event is assimilated in its various contexts, which thus established hegemonic limits to the interpretive horizon of a historical present.

Inevitably, representation of violence—or, to borrow the title of Elaine Scarry's influential book, of "bodies in pain"—has been in many ways central to the organization of political space in the post-9/11 United States and informs one of the focal points of this study. The centrality of this topic in the 9/11 archive is hardly surprising, since this was an event of mass violence followed by, at the time of this writing, ongoing wars. However, it is hardly necessary to argue that the forms of cultural representation of violence do not simply reflect a violent reality, but are contingent on governing relations of power and its uneven social distribution. In what follows, I try to take a more specific view on the representations of violence in the 9/11 archive and approach it critically by way of the concept of trauma, a notion that was used variously (and perhaps somewhat indiscriminately) in many depictions of the event. Since talking about trauma means entering a quite large and contested critical terrain, I would like to offer a brief introductory qualification to my usage of the term, with more explanation in the chapters dedicated to the topic. Generally, in my usage throughout this study, the trauma of 9/11 refers not (only) to the physical and psychological injuries of the victims of the attacks, but to a specific cultural encoding of the historical event, or, in Dominick LaCapra's words "sociopolitical uses and constructions of trauma" (2004: 95). Arguing in favor of the pertinence of fundamental psychoanalytic concepts ("such as

transference, resistance, denial, repression, acting-out, and working-through") to the study of collectivities, LaCapra has claimed that these "undercut the binary opposition between the individual and society," making "their application to individual or collective phenomena [...] a matter of informed argument and research" (1998: 43). These concepts, with trauma included, are then intrinsically social, since they "refer to processes that always involve [...] orientation toward others" (1998 43). It is this socially, ethically and politically inflected aspect of trauma in its communal inscriptions that I look into in my analysis of the 9/11 archive, as subsequent chapters will illustrate. One of the more general questions posed here is also about the assumption that posits trauma as a foundational event or an originary moment that can unequivocally ground identity. In my view, it is useful to view this assumption in the context of the common conceptualization of violence, by which scar and injury affirm a straightforward materiality of the body, thus guaranteeing authenticity of historical experience. Although it is certainly reasonable to insist on the irreducible uniqueness of such experience, positing its more extreme forms—such as trauma—as the grounds for an isolated subjectivity inaccessible to others is an exceptional political strategy. That is why historical trauma, with its demand for representation of an unreachable kernel of experience, can be compellingly politicized. As the aggressive appropriation of 9/11 by the US government showed, such unconditional politics of violence can easily come to perpetuate violent politics.

The controversial developments in domestic and foreign policy of the United States that were justified in relation to the September 11 terrorist attacks—for which the USA PATRIOT Act and the war in Iraq are the most emblematic examples—inevitably introduce issues other than the one of national traumatization and its management in the analysis of the 9/11 event. If the tragedy was at once understood as being strictly national (despite the fact

that the dead of the WTC towers came from over one hundred nations), it was soon to become globalized through US military interventions in search for the perpetrators in the Middle East. It is now a well-known fact that 9/11 was blatantly manipulated by the Bush administration to serve as an excuse for the invasion of Iraq, which in turn makes the issues of US global military presence and global economic influence and interest a strand in the same historical narrative. Thus, the global aspect of the ongoing wars, as well as its involvement with a US-centered process of economic globalization, warn of the importance of including the problems of the contemporary US neoliberal state and its position in a global context in an analysis of the 9/11 archive.

The 9/11 archive does not offer a coherent or definite picture of the event. This archive, marked by mourning and loss, can perhaps best be understood as a process of what might be called the event's in-culturation or, simply, as encompassing the ways through which the event becomes part of US culture. What can be observed in it are two structuring forces that emerge as fundamental. On the one hand, the 9/11 event was defined by the centripetal force of US nationalism. The reconstitution of national homogeneity after 9/11 was supported by interpretations of the event that relied on the logic of what LaCapra calls "the myth of founding trauma," that, tied up with the social practices of mourning, bound national community together and worked to set it off from non-national/terrorist/immigrant others. On the other hand, the various processes of economic globalization exploded the limits of the presumably national event and connected it to a multitude of sub- and trans-national histories. The relevance of these processes for the understanding of the attacks was also registered in the US reactions to the event. As I will argue in the second part of this study, by centering on non-national contexts for 9/11, it is possible to approach it as a symptom of the globalization processes that destabilize the limits of the national community and necessitate its

reconstitution in the global context. Since globalization is a process in which the US nation-state plays a crucial role, it is also intertwined with a specific US national imaginary. The construction of this conflicted imaginary is what can also be detected in post-9/11 US fiction. In other words, two tendencies can be observed in the 9/11 archive, both implicated with a specific adjustment of American national imaginary to the changing global position of the United States (which includes a declining US hegemony): on the one hand, the archive speaks of a post-traumatic reconstruction of an imagined national wholeness; on the other, many 9/11 fictions also work to reconstitute US nationness within a planetary context. There are surely other fruitful ways of approaching the same corpus, as the volumes of critical writing surrounding the September 11 attacks clearly prove. This, however, is an analytical distinction I found to be useful in my reading of the 9/11 archive, and is further adjusted and qualified in the pages that follow.

This study proceeds by way of a series of thematic leaps, in order to unearth the active entanglement of the event with systems of meaning and power that create the conditions for its understanding. I highlight four of these in the title: event, trauma, nation, and globalization. These are laid out to form a composite screen for my reconstruction of the complex social reality that came to be remembered primarily through a simple iconic-numeric form. The general trajectory of my analysis follows the basic division sketched above. Although both the centripetal and centrifugal force operate simultaneously in all the texts under scrutiny, I try to focus first on the imploding, homogenizing symptoms of 9/11—its hegemonic inscriptions as national trauma—and then move onto a reading of works that situate the event in supranational contexts. The study thus moves from an analysis of the ways in which the event was symbolically encoded within the sphere of a traumatized collectivity to readings of texts that approach 9/11 as an opportunity to speak of its other

relevant histories. This analytical trajectory is backed by three (shorter) sections that serve to outline the general theoretical model supporting my readings of the 9/11 archive—on nation and historical event, trauma, and globalization—while the main (longer) part consists of quite traditionally structured close readings of some 9/11 novels. A strict division between "theoretical" chapters and their "application," however, does not hold here. Rather, the chapters dedicated to literary texts should be seen as both more extensive and more concrete discussions of issues introduced in the three framing sections.

In the first chapter, "Enduring Event: Telling Stories around September 11," I discuss the main ways in which the event was contextualized in the dominant US reactions to the attacks, looking into the hegemonic historical narratives employed to harness the event's traumatic impact. From the dominant, US-centric perspective, the event of 9/11 shattered the ostensibly linear progress of world history, creating a rupture that opened the possibility for the institution of a general state of exception. In an approach alternative to this tendency, 9/11 can be viewed in terms proposed by Walter Benjamin in his cyclic and revolutionary philosophy of history (cf. Benjamin 1988). Following Benjamin, it is possible to see this event not as a radical break and a beginning of a new, exceptional age, as the dominant contemporary narratives proposed, but as a moment in which existing historical tendencies are intensified, where various pasts explode the apparent homogeneity of the post-historical "now." In this line of thought, the event can only be considered in relation to the histories it draws on and that are drawn from it. As my readings of 9/11 novels will show, my take on Benjamin is to an extent indebted to the historico-political model offered by Ian Baucom, whose *Specters of the Atlantic* productively combines Benjamin's mystic-materialist historiographic vision with Giovanni Arrighi's Marxist history of the world system. In the second chapter, "Constant Replay: Community Building at the Site/Sight of Trauma," I look

into the interdependence between the discourse of the nation, historical trauma and the social work of mourning in the context of the hegemonic inscriptions of 9/11. There, I also emphasize the role of the visual media in the processes of national traumatization and post-traumatic reconsolidation. The visual aspects of the event are further explored in the two chapters that follow. "Common Ground: Melodramas of 9/11" deals mainly with Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, a post-traumatic family drama that efficiently registers the main modalities of mourning and communal consolidation after 9/11. That chapter also offers a discussion of the dominant generic frameworks active in the national response to the terrorist attacks, most notably melodrama. In "Shock & Own: Mediation and Expropriation *In the Shadow of No Towers*" I turn to Art Spiegelman's 9/11 comic which offers a trenchant critique of the role of the media in the aftermath of the traumatic event. Furthermore, Spiegelman's work strongly points to the necessity of expansion of interpretive frameworks in the national responses to 9/11, in order to be able to account for the political and economic forces regulating the life of the nation in a state of emergency.

Continuing from there, I try to situate the 9/11 event in the context of globalization, with an emphasis on the ambivalent impact of the globalization processes on a transitional turn-of-the-century US society. First, a discussion of the contested term is offered in "Globalizing (the) Nation," where I touch upon the questions of the role of the United States in the process of globalization and the main discursive props for the understanding of the processes contained by the term. Since globalization is a topic that cannot possibly be systematically dealt with within the limited scope of this study, I put a special emphasis on its temporal aspects. Namely, and Don DeLillo's 9/11 work illustrates well this point, it was the "end of history" thesis, claiming an absolute global supremacy of a US-centric economic and

political model, that governed the national response to the 9/11 attacks to a significant extent. The chapter that follows, "The Market Moves Us in Mysterious Ways," is meant to provide a more detailed exploration of this issue through a reading of Don DeLillo's 9/11 essay. Here, another important scenario of the 9/11 archive is introduced, that of fundamentalist Islamic terrorism. In DeLillo's writing, this problem is productively complicated by insistent comparisons and differentiations between the 9/11 terrorists and the organized opposition to global capitalism by the anti-globalization movement, which are seen as the only non-incorporated sites in a world globalized by the force of capital. "*Cosmopolis*: A Meditation on Deterritorialization" is a reading of DeLillo's first novel published after the September 11 attacks. Although not about 9/11, *Cosmopolis*, that DeLillo was writing when the attacks happened, set the main conceptual framework for DeLillo's essayistic response to the attacks. I see this (underappreciated) DeLillo's novel as registering an important, transitional moment in the history of the United States within the world capitalist system and try to read it as depicting the effects of that historical transition on the national body politic. After *Cosmopolis* came DeLillo's "proper" 9/11 novel, *Falling Man*, which is the subject of the chapter that follows, "Killing Politics: The Art of Recovery in *Falling Man*." While this novel summarizes many of the themes analyzed in previous chapters, in my reading I focus mainly on the processes of depoliticization of the US public sphere in the face of the trauma of 9/11 that this text effectively registers. In that sense, this novel, like *Cosmopolis*, betrays certain lateral transformative social processes of a society in (post-traumatic) transition. The last chapter, "Good Mourning, America: Genealogies of Loss in *Against the Day*" is a reading of a novel whose status within the 9/11 archive could be considered dubious. Thomas Pynchon's *Against the Day*, a novel dealing mostly with the late nineteenth and early twentieth century American labor struggles, apparently bears no connection to the event that is the subject of

my study. I argue, however, that the novel can be read as displacing some urgent post-9/11 issues onto a different, but related historical period in order to mourn the loss of historical political options that were further mitigated in the event's aftermath. Like DeLillo, Pynchon uses the subject of terrorism to speak of the (im)possibility of counter-hegemonic political action in a putatively post-historical and post-political world. As a novel about loss, I also see *Against the Day* and its politicized modes of mourning as critically participating in the culture of commemoration dominating the social landscape of the post-9/11 US.

Although the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States are by all standards still a recent event, the body of writing, both academic and literary, that takes it as its subject is considerable. Not all literary texts about 9/11, however, are included in this study. My focus here is on those works that I found to be more successful in grappling with the complexity of the event and more insightful in illuminating the social processes tied in with it. The variety of analyzed texts suggests that there is a gradient of narrative possibilities, or—considering the main theme of the archive—of modalities of mourning in US accounts of 9/11. As shown above, these texts range from documentary to allegorical representations of the event, and include photographs, media representations, melodramatic fiction, a comic book, as well as very different works by two high-postmodernist US authors.

One of the main problems I encountered while working on this project consisted in articulating the relations between the historical event, literary (and other) texts, and the wider social system. The approach and the structure delineated above, one that combines theoretical knowledge ranging from psychoanalysis and nationalism studies to philosophy of history and world-system theory, represents a sort of situationist response to the methodological challenge posed by the 9/11 archive. There is no easy or direct way to analyze the relationship between the "forming and formative" cultural processes and what

Raymond Williams called the "structures of feeling," and questions of community and political economy (cf. Williams 128 pp.). However, the need that these relations be critically examined is the task that the 9/11 archive poses as the most urgent one.

In terms of my reading method, I attempt to combine analysis of media coverage, close readings of novels, and what Franco Moretti calls "distant reading," a method where distance [...] is a condition of knowledge: it allows you to focus on units that are much smaller or much larger than the text: devices, themes, tropes—or genres and systems. And if, between the very small and the very large, the text itself disappears, well, it is one of those cases when one can justifiably say, Less is more. If we want to understand the system in its entirety, we must accept losing something. We always pay a price for theoretical knowledge: reality is infinitely rich; concepts are abstract, are poor. But it's precisely this 'poverty' that makes it possible to handle them, and therefore to know. (57)

Obviously, Moretti does not mind sacrificing the particularity of individual texts in order to gain a more general understanding of the (not exclusively literary) system. Bearing in mind Moretti's thoughts on the benefits of distance, here I try to embark on close readings of a small number of novels after preparing the ground for the readings through wider systemic contextualization. Unlike Moretti, however, I do not intend to discover laws of world literature. Against—or perhaps along with—the dominant current of contemporary literary criticism, I would like to rely on a distant reading so as to relate a national (US) literature to world events. While I consider this and other applications of the world-system theory (such as the inspiring project undertaken by Wai Chee Dimock) to be productive in the creation of a transnational model of literary studies, I consider it still significant to focus on problems posed by the real and imagined boundaries of the nation. In that, I try to keep in line with

Moretti's intention of going "against the grain of national historiography" (61), not by ignoring it, but by emphasizing its insistent presence and ambiguous position in a transnational world.¹

1 To be fair, Moretti admits that there is a limit to the application of world-system theory to the study of literature: "And probably, no matter what the object of analysis is, there will always be a point where the study of world literature must yield to the specialist of the national literature, in a sort of cosmic and inevitable division of labour" (66).

1.

Enduring Event: Telling Stories around September 11

On September 11 2001, the United States joined the rest of the world in a common history marked by death, suffering and mass violence—or so the dominant narrative would have it. The description of 9/11 as the event that "changed everything" is now a familiar formula that, not only for the United States, set the limit of the contemporary. The meaning of this change, however, can be variously interpreted. "History has called America and our allies to action, and it is both our responsibility and our privilege to fight freedom's fight," said President Bush in his 2002 State of the Union address, implying that for the United States "history" somehow began on 9/11. Similarly, the 2002 National Security Strategy talks about the "new world we [the US] have entered." For the 9/11 Commission, September 11, 2001 "was a day of unprecedented shock and suffering in the history of the United States. The nation was unprepared" (xv). Indeed, the official historical narrative of 9/11, the one promoted by the Bush administration and mainstream media insisted precisely on the status of 9/11 as a "watershed moment."

This assumption, according to which the United States was excluded from history up to the moment of violent foreign intervention on domestic soil, forms the backdrop for many fictional accounts of 9/11. Echoing the National Security Council's depiction of the United States entering a "new world," John Barth referred to the attacks as "TEOTWAW(A)KI 9/11/2001—The End Of The World As We (Americans) Knew It" (1). In a more elaborated version of the same rhetorical move, Ken Kalfus' novel *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* gives us Marshall, a survivor of the 2001 WTC attacks treated by a

doctor of immigrant background whose name he can't pronounce. The doctor, who is from "some mysterious country of the East" (57), makes the following statement, one that closely follows the dominant discourse of post-9/11 US: "*Now* you know what it's like to live in history" (58, my emphasis).

It is worth noting, for now only in passing, how this "call of history" is conflated with the violent intrusion of a foreign other into the national body politic: if we follow Bush's rhetoric through, the US entry into history is determined by the entry of the foreign terrorists into the US: on 9/11, history called, and the United States responded. Similarly, Kalfus' 9/11 survivor is ushered into history by a man who turns out to be from the "failed state" of Afghanistan. In this peculiar configuration, the subject able to guarantee the authenticity of the presumably newly-found US historical experience is an alien other. This is an interesting and persistent scenario in the 9/11 archive that I will return to later. For the moment, I would like to focus on the apparent neutrality and obviousness of the "now" that opens the above sentence. It is a "now" that implies transformation, a change from "before" to "after" that took place in an unnamed instance. That instance is implied because it is only too well known to Kalfus' readers: "now" starts with the terrorist attacks of September 11 2001. The inauguration of a distinctive post-9/11 "now," as I will argue, did not simply depend on the event of 9/11, but also on particular forms of its narration and politicization. In this chapter, I would like to broadly focus on the dominant discursive incorporations of this traumatic event and the social work these performed in the post-9/11 US.

The meaning of the claim that "now" the United States joined the rest of the world is ambiguous and carries with itself important political undertones. It can mean that 9/11 marks the end of American exceptionalism and the inclusion of the United States in the history of a "war-ravaged world," as Kalfus puts it (118), or show that the United States was

in fact never excluded from it but was living some kind of—now shattered—national ideological fantasy. The first assumption implies that, before the event, the United States was excluded from the realities the rest of the world faced on a daily basis (especially the Third World, as its most radical other). This position, reflected in President Bush's claim in the same State of the Union address that "we've been called to a unique role in human events," is in line with the classical narrative of US national exceptionalism and has been extensively researched and documented. The second explanation implicitly rejects the exceptionalist narrative and contextualizes the event by noting its entanglement with various other histories (e.g. the history of US imperialism, or the post-Cold War geopolitical context, and so on). In other words, whether the event will be interpreted as signifying an historical break (9/11 as the "end of innocence") or signaling underlying continuity (9/11 as a "response to US policies in the Near and Middle East") will depend on the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic narratives about the position of the US nation-state in a global context. For most US critics writing on 9/11, this apparently methodological question—how will the event be narrated?—became a matter of preeminent importance, not the least because the narrative about the United States entering a new age corresponded with its engaging in a similarly radically "new" "war on terror." As Mary Dudziak has argued, when approaching analytically this event, we have to account for "the political consequences of the construction of September 11 as a moment of change:"

Since September 11, the idea of change has been deployed to justify departure from past practices, from a new secrecy in detention and deportation of noncitizens to the preemptive use of American military power. This use of the idea of change to justify new policies requires that we examine critically whether the justification rests on a firm foundation, whether the idea of transformation holds up under closer scrutiny,

and whether any changes are of the sort that would justify these new government policies. (8)

The danger inherent in this kind of narrative, according to which a radical break occurred on September 11 2001, is that it virtually eliminates the need for previous histories, past experiences, different cultural memories and political agendas in a thus established "new American century." As Dudziak suggests, the dominant interpretation of 9/11 as an exceptional national catastrophe played a significant role in the manipulation of the event for the furthering of authoritarian domestic policies and its use as a justification for the 2003 invasion of Iraq. To be sure, 9/11 in many ways represented a cardinal event, especially so because of the histories that so violently converged in it and the existing tendencies it escalated. The problem inherent in any attempt to theorize 9/11 is precisely in the difficulty to simultaneously assert and reflect on its importance *and* refuse to confer on it the status of a "key event" that can unequivocally ground collective historical experience. The dominant narrative of 9/11 as a breaking point or a moment of radical change positions it precisely as a key, originary event in the "new" national history of the US, against which all subsequent actions and events are measured.

In line with Dudziak's warning, the notion of 9/11 as a breaking point already represents an interpretation of the event that needs to be approached critically. Did the event indeed inaugurate the United States into a new age? Although, as suggested above, the answers to this question can vary, the United States has undeniably undergone significant change that was either motivated or justified by the 9/11 terrorist attacks. After 9/11 and in response to it, the country witnessed a re-articulation of state power, a legal redefinition of American liberal democracy and the consolidation of an increasingly repressive biopolitical regime. Sociologist George Steinmetz has thus argued that the event created the conditions

for a political reorganization of the US state, now realigned to match more closely the still dominant, but somewhat altered post-Fordist economic model:

The political experimentation we are now seeing in the United States does not constitute a move away from post-Fordism, then, but toward a different brand of post-Fordism, one in which flexible specialization is conjoined with more explicitly imperialist politics and a more authoritarian interior order. [...] Specifically, it was the "historical contingency" of the attack on the World Trade Center (combined with the "accidental" election of George W. Bush) that allowed the U.S. state to implement the politico-ideological form that is probably the most suitable complement in structural terms to its globally dominant post-Fordist economy. (327)

Insisting on the reconstitution of a strong state in the public life of the US after 9/11, Steinmetz enumerates important interventions of the Bush administration in the domestic legal system:

The refocusing of political power on the level of the American national state has been most evident in the area of U.S. geopolitical strategy (unilateralism and preemptive military strikes), but much of the new regulatory activity has focused on the state apparatus itself and the "domestic" level of politics, with the creation of a huge new government agency (the Department of Homeland Security), transformations of the legal system (e.g., secret trials and arrests, indefinite detentions), and intensified domestic surveillance: first with the 2001 USA Patriot Act, which dramatically relaxed restrictions on search and seizure; then with the Total Information Awareness Program, which collects and analyzes vast amounts of data on private communications and commercial transactions; and most

recently with the proposed Domestic Security Enhancement Act of 2003. (329)

Obviously, changes in the domestic space of post-9/11 were numerous and complex. Legal and foreign affairs experts Christopher Eisgruber and Lawrence Sager argue that, because of the transnational character of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the state's response encompassed and blurred the line between domestic law and foreign affairs. According to them, there were three main areas affected by the state's antiterrorist measures: domestic intelligence operations (basically, spying of citizens), military detention (under the newly created status of "enemy combatant") and immigration proceedings² (which allowed for deportation and "indefinite detention" of noncitizens) (cf. Eisgruber and Sager, esp. 164-66). For Steinmetz, the political changes post-9/11 announce the inevitable (but, at the time of his writing not quite definite) changes in the existing post-Fordist economic model. The political changes, according to him, mark the emergence of a new state authoritarianism that is, after 9/11, supposed to provide institutional support for a coming, transitional economic model diverging from the one dominating the national economy since the 1990s. So, while the political and institutional frameworks are being reformed post-9/11,

there has been no significant change in the strategies for economic production—nothing comparable, that is, to the widespread embrace of flexible specialization by American (and European) industry a generation ago. Even if the new statism is concerned mainly with what some describe as security issues, and has not seen changes in, say, social provisioning, it marks a decisive break with the patterns of deregulation and decentralization pursued by both the Democratic and Republican Parties in previous decades. (329)

Working within the conceptual framework of regulation theory, Steinmetz here claims that

2 After 9/11, the US immigration debate was recoded in terms of national security. The newly created Department of Homeland Security was, among a vast number of other responsibilities, charged with the task of immigration control. For more information on this issue cf. Medina and Ong Hing.

the "new statism" after 9/11 actually represents a historical coincidence between the "regime of accumulation"—the post-Fordist economic base—and the "mode of accumulation"—the "politico-ideological form" implemented through the administrative reforms described by Steinmetz, with the economic "regime" not quite fully realized at the time (327). These claims possess a particular appeal viewed from a position after the beginning of the global economic crisis, which—and Steinmetz bases his speculation on this fact—started with a recession that began in the US. Thus, Steinmetz argues, 9/11 allowed for the dominant mode of production (post-Fordism) to finally, through state intervention, find support in its naturally matching ideological and institutional system. In a way, 9/11 made it possible for a globally dominant United States to successfully "come of age" by finding an appropriate politico-ideological form for its late capitalist material existence. Steinmetz's "fully realized" United States thus presents us with a grim picture of "hegemony, imperialism, and domestic authoritarianism." (329)

While I keep some reservations towards some other claims put forward in Steinmetz's article, such as the one concerning the absolute end of neoliberal hegemony, I want to embrace his emphasis on the reconstitution of a strong nation-state in the public life of the United States after 9/11. This strengthening of the ideological and institutional presence of the state in the public life of the United States and its relationship to economic policies of the Bush administration is, as Steinmetz argues, tied up with the "historical contingency" of 9/11. As I will suggest below, this strengthening of the state can also be detected in a renewed national homogenization after the September 11 attacks. This is important for several reasons. On the one hand, contrary to some early claims of the theorists of globalization, the world does not seem to be witnessing a decline of the state as the dominant form of political community, especially when the United States is concerned. (I will

return to this problem in the sections that deal with 9/11 in the context of globalization.) On the other hand, the nationalist revival that occurred after 9/11 cannot be simply seen as a spontaneous reaction to a collective traumatic event, but as a process contingent on a particular hegemonic discourse related to the internal reconstitution of the US public space and its position on the global geopolitical stage. It is this hegemonic construction of the event of 9/11, one that contextualized it primarily within the narrative of historical progress of the American nation, that I am interested in here. Moreover, the tension between the power of the traumatic event to unambiguously found a political community (as evidenced in the nationally focused perspectives on 9/11) and the community's ambiguous grounding in a complex, transnational economic system (that Steinmetz's article hints at) is an important structuring force of the 9/11 archive that will reappear throughout the course of this study.

Although the "call of History" on September 11, 2001 marked a violent unsettling of the boundaries of the nation-state and spectacularly evidenced its belonging to the world, the event was immediately assimilated into exceptionalist national narratives. Partly based in existing national mythologies and partly reinvented, these set interpretive frameworks for the understanding of the event, but also, to an extent, refashioned the national imaginary and thus set limits to the ways in which the national community was imagined. As suggested in the opening remarks, this reinvention went in the direction of refashioning the national self for a renewed global quest. Prasenjit Duara's general observation, that "the historical event may well represent the encounter between the local and the global, but it may be portrayed as national," (33) can thus be easily applied to 9/11. What remains a critical issue are the terms of such portrayal, as well as the social and political effects of such nationalization of the event. If, through the modes of the event's narrativization, 9/11 becomes tied up with the processes of national reconsolidation, strengthening of the state at home and imperialist wars

abroad, then the hegemonic modes of its narration become, as Dudziak warns above, a necessary object of analytical interest.

In his analysis of US state's discursive responses to 9/11, Donald Pease has argued that the mere shock of the destruction of the terrorist attacks of September 11 could not be assimilated by the existing "national metanarratives." Thus, new ones were formed: "the state's symbolic response to 9/11 replaced Virgin Land [...] with Ground Zero [...] and the Homeland [...] as the governing metaphors through which to come to terms with the attack" (2). For Pease, the attacks violated "the nation's foundational fantasy" of the United States as a Virgin Land inhabited by an essentially innocent people (6). What ensued in response to this violation was an orchestrated effort on the part of the Bush administration that "effected a shift in the nation's governing self-representations—from a secured innocent nation to a wounded, insecure emergency state" (3). This, Pease argues, eventually led to the expansion of establishment of this emergency state to a global level: "In designating Afghanistan and Iraq as endangering the Homeland, Operations Enduring Justice and Iraqi Freedom simply extended the prerogatives of the domestic emergency state across the globe" (7). What Pease insists upon is that the existing national metanarratives could not account for the traumatic advent of 9/11, which thus necessitated their reconstitution and resulted in the creation of new national ideologemes such as "Homeland" and "Ground Zero." However, it is important to note that these too relied on familiar mechanisms of nation-building that, as classical theories of nationalism suggest, paradoxically both strive on violent historical events and require they be creatively and selectively forgotten.

Ernest Renan has famously claimed that all nations are formed around a complex act of constitutive forgetting. But the kind of event to be productively forgotten is not randomly chosen. What nations need to forget are the "deeds of violence which took place at

the origins of all political formations, even of those whose consequences have been altogether beneficial" (11). This forgetting, however, is of a peculiar kind, as Benedict Anderson elaborates in his reading of Renan's influential text in *Imagined Communities*. The originary "deeds of violence" are not simply erased from discourse: through a "systematic historiographical campaign, deployed by the state," the national subjects are constantly reminded "of a series of antique slaughters which are now inscribed in 'family history'" (Anderson 201). Anderson uses the example of the American Civil War to explain this logic: had the Confederacy prevailed, it would be remembered as what for a brief while it indeed was, a war between two sovereign nation-states, and not a war between "brothers." In other words, national subjects are constantly reminded to forget certain aspects of historical occurrences that form the basis of the national consensus. It is in this recognition of what is left unsaid—in this silent understanding that "we" all know what happened *and* what cannot be said about what happened—that the national "we" comes about as, Anderson suggests, a "family."³ This double logic of simultaneous remembering and forgetting is necessary for a political community to take shape. For Anderson, the photograph illustrates this process of emergence: it "simultaneously records a certain apparent continuity and emphasizes its loss from memory. Out of this estrangement comes a conception of personhood, *identity* [...] which, because it can not be 'remembered,' must be narrated" (204). Anderson here suggests that any narrative of identity—such as a history of a nation—covers a constitutive lack, thus effectively producing identity. To put it in a different way, in the act of remembering, narrating or memorializing, the event is made into a reductive rhetorical vehicle for the emergence of the subject of history. This is an important insight for the discussion of the discursive nationalization of 9/11 as the moment in which a renewed US nation-state emerges

3 Here I am relying on Jonathan Culler's reading of *Imagined Communities* in "Anderson and the Novel" (1999).

on the world stage. Following Anderson, we might claim that the nationally-focused cultural inscriptions of the constitutive event fashion it so as to obscure what cannot be assimilated to the dominant model of national self-representation. In other words, the event is thus nationalized only for the nation to be able to survive it.

As Pease reminds us in his article, the event of the kind discussed by Renan, the one that the US nation needs to collectively remember to forget, is the virtual extermination of Native American populations that took place after the European settlement of the North American continent:

The foundational fantasy of the United States was organized around a traumatic element that could not be symbolized within the terms of the national narrative. In the United States, the fantasy of Virgin Land covered over the shameful history of internal violence directed against the Native populations. (2)

When Pease writes about the new metanarrative of the Homeland taking the place of the old one about the Virgin Land, he falls short of stressing that, like the previous one, it will need to cover up what cannot be integrated into the emerging image of the national self. However, Pease's article clearly proposes that the new narratives, while trying to account for the unprecedented event on the North American soil, obliquely remind the nation of the forgotten killings that marked the nation's beginning: "The transformation of Virgin Land into Ground Zero brought into visibility an inhuman terrain that the national imaginary had been constructed to conceal" (5). In that, Pease suggests that the national narratives surrounding 9/11 share this basic mechanism with the foundational myth of the American nation. This discursive procedure corresponds to the one described by Renan and reinterpreted by Anderson: through particular modes of its symbolization, a traumatic event becomes the basis for a re-constitution of national identity. Simultaneously, the narrative that allows for the

nation to emerge as the subject of history conceals important aspects of the foundational event.

The same discursive logic is eloquently summarized by Amy Kaplan in her analysis of three neologisms crucial for the post-9/11 US public sphere: Ground Zero, Homeland and Guantánamo. According to her, the term "Ground Zero," which originally referred to the sites of US nuclear bombing in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, serves to historicize the traumatic element in 9/11 by way of analogy and, at the same time, turn the event into an historical exception:

The term "ground zero" both evokes and eclipses the prior historical reference in using it as a yardstick of terror—to claim that this was just like the horrific experience of the nuclear bomb, while at the same time consigning this prior reference to historical amnesia. "Ground zero" relies on a historical analogy that cannot be acknowledged because to do so would trouble the very binary oppositions and exceptionalist narratives erected on that ground, between before and after, between being with us or with the terrorists, between the American way of life and the "axis of evil." (57)

The term "Ground Zero" establishes the site of attacks as analogous to the sites of nuclear catastrophe, thus conferring on 9/11 the status of an apocalyptic event. But, the term also eliminates the historical content of that analogy by effectively assimilating the term in a national narrative of a new beginning. The term "Ground Zero" thus condenses the discursive logic of the breaking point that instituted 9/11 as the dawn of a new national history as well as the basis for a new national homogenization. The logic of the process of national forgetting described by Renan is crucial for this term to function: it is the "antique slaughters" of Second World War that need to be both kept in mind (for the analogy of trauma to work) and

forgotten (for the narrative of pre-9/11 US innocence to stay intact). Through this doubling, 9/11 is established as a foundational traumatic event that allows the United States to, once again, enter world history for the first time.

Kaplan's article introduces an additional level to the argument about the nationalization of 9/11 proposed above. Like Pease, she insists on the moment of forgetting implicit in the new national metnarratives at the heart of the 9/11 archive. However, Kaplan's argument shows how the new metanarratives, introduced in order for the nation to cope with the unbearable trauma of the September 11 attacks, are not there only to somehow manage the psychological shock and physical injury to the body politic. They also—and for my discussion more importantly—discursively reorder and reduce the equally unbearable complexity of histories interweaving in the event: such as the long tradition of global US military presence, implicit in the memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, or early US imperialist expansion in Cuba, from which Guantánamo is a territorial relic. The presence of these implicit histories, that cannot be easily incorporated within the stories about "innocence" and "entry into history," also demand the creation of new narratives that, being limited by the interpretive horizon of the nation's imaginary, can easily obscure the event's other, non-hegemonic aspects.

As these remarks indicate, a certain view of history, one organized by the chronology of the nation-state, is implicated in the dominant narrative assimilation of the 9/11 event that, in turn, supported a homogenizing process of national reconsolidation. That the existence of the modern nation is bound to a particular understanding of time is one of the basic assumptions of Anderson's influential study of nationalism. According to Anderson, the idea of "homogeneous, empty time" is necessary for the representation of the simultaneity of the social existence of the polity that is nation:

The idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which also is conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history. (26)

To describe the time of the nation, Anderson borrows a phrase ("homogeneous, empty time") from Walter Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History*. There, the notion of progressive linear time that Benjamin equates with "historicism" and Anderson relates to the emergence of modern nationalism, works in opposition to the idea of "Messianic time," a time that is non-linear and eruptive. In Anderson, the homogeneity of the nation's time corresponds to a similar homogeneity of the national body politic, which here figures as a "solid community."⁴ This analogy suggests that the dominant narratives of 9/11, situating the event within a homogeneous time of the nation, support the consolidation of a similarly homogeneous US national imaginary. Catastrophically disrupted, both national time and national community "now" need to be restored to their homogeneous, normative form. Historical developments, some of which I refer to in the preceding paragraphs, have shown that the post-9/11 normalization required strong interventions on the part of a reinvigorated state. However, these normative narratives can certainly ill account for what Homi Bhabha called the "transgressive boundaries" and "'interruptive' interiority" of the cultural space of the nation (5). Thus, alternative conceptualizations of the event in historical time (some of which are analyzed in the pages that follow) can point to different possibilities of imagining community in the contemporary US. Starting with similar realizations, most American studies scholars responded to the newly proclaimed state of emergency by reconnecting the post-9/11 "now" with the histories that the dominant account of the present as the moment of exception

4 In the *Theses*, Benjamin does not show interest in the problem of constitution of communities. The remark that comes closest to articulating a relation between a vision of time and history and a notion of collectivity might be found in Benjamin's implicit comparisons between the "historical materialist" and the "revolutionary classes" (cf. Benjamin 1988: 261).

worked to occlude.⁵ In the context of this problematic, 9/11 could be understood precisely as Benjamin understood the historian's look into the past, as an opportunity to "seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger" (1988: 255). Following Benjamin's notion of "the time of the now" (1988: 263), we can think of 9/11 as a moment of historical eruption: a moment which is "shot through" with other histories, catastrophically displaying the variety of histories and discourses supporting the apparent homogeneity of contemporary historical experience.

Writing in response to the September 11 attack, Fredric Jameson has rhetorically asked whether nationality is "really so natural a function of human or even social being? Even more than that, is pity or sympathy really so innate a feature of the human constitution?" (2002). Contemplating the significance of the event, Jameson here questions the assumed naturalness of the flow of affect that renewed societal ties depend upon: how "spontaneous" was the US reaction to the catastrophe of 9/11 and how "normal" was the subsequent national homogenization? One (not the most likely) way to answer these questions is by turning to the post-9/11 writing of Judith Butler. I would like to draw on Butler's theorizing of the politics of affect in order to point to the significance of the affective component in the process of reconstitution of national community in the post-9/11 US. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind what has been argued above: that this reconstitution was contingent on specific discursive assimilations of the traumatic event. After 9/11, Butler has especially extensively theorized affect in relation to mourning as the basis for sociality. In one of her essays, she has argued that

each of us is constituted politically in part by virtue of the social vulnerability of

5 The sense of urgency that characterizes many American texts on 9/11 does not come without risks. In his response to Amy Kaplan's 2003 ASA Presidential address, Paul Giles has carefully warned of the danger of repetitively insisting on "indicting the Bush administration for the state of American empire" (2004: 20), and thus reducing the critique of a larger historical project merely to the confines of the contemporary US bipartisan political system (cf. Giles, Kaplan 2004).

our bodies—as a site of desire and physical vulnerability, as a site of publicity at once assertive and exposed. Loss and vulnerability seem to follow from our being socially constituted bodies, attached to others, at risk of losing those attachments, exposed to others, at risk of violence by virtue of that exposure. (20)

It is the work of mourning that establishes these ethical and social relations. Grief "furnishes a sense of political community of a complex order, and it does this first of all by bringing to the fore the relational ties that have implications for theorizing fundamental dependency and ethical responsibility" (22). Vulnerability is in this view the common sign of humanity, a "common *human* vulnerability" (30, my emphasis). There is, however, a social "hierarchy of grief," and there are bodies that do not count as grievable. In other words, the affects of grief and mourning do not simply flow to encompass "humanity," but are informed discursively: some bodies will be less grievable than others because they will be "derealized," "dehumanized" (34), omitted from public discourse. The discourses that establish the limits of the work of mourning rest on notions of familiarity. But, as Butler warns, the price to be paid for a grieving based on familiarity is the exclusion of various "others" from humanity (38). Without recognizing the "other" as vulnerable, no affective social tie can be established. The "norms of recognition," the complex set of cultural and social practices that establish the conditions for the recognizability of the other, now become the preeminent ethico-political problem. Specific cultural barriers, that depend on the operation of power, form the conditions for the establishment of the norms of recognition of other's vulnerability, and ultimately, for the establishment of affective ties that can be politicized and allow for community to be imagined. Butler sees the aggressive post-9/11 US nationalism and unilateralism as powerful barriers to the expansive ethico-political project she envisions:

I consider our recent trauma to be an opportunity for a reconsideration of United

States hubris and the importance of establishing more radically egalitarian international ties. Doing this involves a certain "loss" for the country as a whole: the notion of the world itself as a sovereign entitlement of the United States must be given up, lost, and mourned, as narcissistic and grandiose fantasies must be lost and mourned. [...] Unfortunately, the opposite reaction seems to be the case. (40)

Instead of using the opportunity to establish relations with others and recognize its place in the international community, Butler concludes, the United States has reacted violently abroad and supported the emergence of an "amorphous racism" against "Arabs" at home (39). Although Butler, unlike Jameson above, does seem to posit "pity and sympathy" that followed the tragedy of 9/11 as "innate features of human constitution," she, quite like Jameson, stresses the crucial role of the discursively regulated limits and modes of their distribution. That these corresponded to the limits of the nation, speaks to the continuing hegemony of the nation-state in a time described by many as post-national.

I find Butler's theorizing of affect, read along with Renan and Anderson, to be helpful in explaining the process of nationalization of events after 9/11. Why, and how do some events become national? While Renan and Anderson do not elaborate on how exactly the constitutive events are chosen for their historical role in nation-formation in the first place, they do offer some important clues. When offering a definition of the nation, Renan emphasizes its affective foundation in suffering and grief: "suffering in common unifies more than joy does. Where national memories are concerned, griefs are of more value than triumphs [...]" (19). For Renan, a nation is "constituted by the feeling of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future" (19). Anderson claims something similar when stating that nations have the peculiar power to

make people not only kill, but give their life for a community that is imagined. Moreover, he insists that the readiness for such "colossal sacrifices" is "the central problem posed by nationalism" (7). To this bewilderment we could add another one, more specific to the American case: namely the question of the readiness of US nationals for "colossal sacrifices" in far-away countries they know almost nothing about. This question points to a peculiar, "globalist" feature of US national mobilization to which I will return later.

Renan and Anderson suggest that the "daily plebiscite" (Renan 19) that defines a nation's existence is formed along a continuum of violence: a past, memorialized or repressed one, and a future, potential or projected one. "One loves in proportion to the sacrifices to which one has consented, and in proportion to the ills that one has suffered," writes Renan (19). In both Renan's and Anderson's conceptualization the nation is contingent on the memory of and a latent desire for violent events. To these observations it is only fair to add that not all violent occurrences will achieve the status of a historical event. It follows from what has been said above that a nation-centered history will obviously favor and elevate (and sometimes sacralize) certain violent occurrences and neglect others. Certainly, it would be unimaginable for an event such as 9/11 to be neglected or played down—however, what can and, given the event's impact and far-reaching consequences, should be critically analyzed is the cultural construction of its place in contemporary history. So, what I want to stress is that the above depiction of nationally constitutive events rests on a specific view of history: namely, history is here seen as a series of violent disruptions in the ordinary, uneventful everyday of sovereign nation-states that is itself a matter of hegemonic regulation.

Take the following example: In July 2007 President Bush decided to veto the State Children's Health Insurance Program, thus refusing to boost health coverage for poor children by \$35 million over 5 years. However, this does not, to paraphrase Butler, take place "on the order of

the event" (2004: 36). It seems reasonable to claim that denying a specific part of the population access to health care, and thus exposing it to an increased risk of bodily harm, qualifies for an instance of structural violence. But such violence is not the stuff of the history that the nation-state needs for its symbolic reproduction. In other words, not all violence becomes disruptive or "eventful." the emergence of events is to a significant extent contingent on the construction of the "normal" or the "everyday" life of the nation itself. If the imagined community of the nation needs to symbolically incorporate extraordinary violent events, then the hegemonic discourse of the national everyday, as this example suggests, regulates the possibilities for the emergence of eventful disruptions that could form the focal point for imagining other communities. The hegemony of the everyday thus cannot be excluded from the analysis of such disruptions. President Bush objected to the proposed program "on philosophical grounds," justifying his veto by privileging a "consumer-based system" over an "expansion of government" (Lee 2007). The language here is one of neoliberalism, the philosophy that has defined the basic direction for the economic policies of the Bush administration. Bush's move falls entirely within the logic of neoliberalism, a doctrine that insists on the privatization of assets and individualization of risk. Because of these general tendencies, critics have argued, a neoliberal state will be characterized by a "dissolution of social solidarities" (Harvey 2005: 69). But if that is so, how do we account for the strong US nationalism post-9/11 then, itself too a form of social solidarity? As David Harvey has shown, neoliberalism is philosophically inconsistent, since its demand for absolute deregulation cannot be achieved without sporadic but unavoidable state interventions in the functioning of the market (cf. Harvey 2007: pp. 64-86). Thus, Harvey concludes, neoliberalism is in effect an organized attempt at consolidation of class power that uses the mechanisms of the state tactically. Having that as its general aim, "the neoliberal

state [such as the US] is necessarily hostile to all forms of social solidarity that put restraints on capital accumulation" (75). It is no wonder then that the neoliberal trend has meant a further widening of the existing economic inequalities in US society, as well as a growing vulnerability of parts of the populace both to the uncontrollable movement of capital (as, for example, in the recent subprime mortgage crisis) and the controlled state interventions in the national economy (as in the above example). The dominant economic logic, defined by the maximization of profit for the few, here obviously functions as a force that constantly fissures the presumed homogeneity of the national polity. However, it is crucial that neoliberalism generally works against some, but not all forms of solidarity (only those, Harvey is careful to add, "that put restraints on capital accumulation"). In this context, it is possible to see how the appeals to national solidarity in the neoliberal US—the calls to national homogenization in face of the tragedy of 9/11—can actually work to occlude the fissures in the social body of the nation brought about by the neoliberal state itself. The quoted attempt by President Bush to restore a homogeneous national space after vetoing the State Children's Health Insurance Program relies on an appeal to the "normal," hegemonic national narrative: in this case, the narrative of the United States as a nation of consumer-citizens equally participating in a free market economy. This narrative, that takes the form of an executive decision, prevents this instance of uneventful, structural violence from turning into an event, thus mitigating its potential to form solidarities that would run against the dominant account of the US nation.

This might lead us to the conclusion that, as with the state's interventions in national economy, the state's interventions in national historical narratives—through Presidential addresses, commission reports and executive orders—are similarly not disinterested. The event of 9/11 cannot be viewed outside the hegemonic social contexts that prepared the grounds for its various articulations. Here, I only announced some of these

contexts—the event's positioning in national history, its dependence on the discursive and institutional regulation of the everyday—that will form the background for my readings of literary texts from the 9/11 archive and will be analyzed in more detail in the sections that follow.

Before turning to the reading of fictional accounts of 9/11, however, I want to elaborate on one of the most common concepts used to describe the experience of Americans on September 11, 2001, one already mentioned in the above passages—that of trauma. As I suggested, the traumatic event of 9/11 also served as an opportunity for a particular form of national consolidation. In the next chapter I would like to look more closely into the social mechanisms through which this consolidation through traumatization was effected.

2.

Constant Replay: Community Building at the Site/Sight of Trauma

One of the most pervasive conceptualizations of the September 11, 2001 attacks, as some of the already quoted critical works demonstrate, is in terms of trauma. In light of the actual experience of the victims, this is unsurprising. But trauma of the victim and the survivor is certainly not of the same order as the trauma of the victim's family, or of a whole nation. In fact, the possibility of talking about collective trauma should encourage us to distinguish it carefully from individual traumatic experiences. However, this move away from the individual toward the collective has certain implications. Namely, the analysis of trauma in its communal forms needs to be approached through a theoretical model that can also account for the material conditions for traumatization, such as economic and social inequality (often distributed geographically, or along lines of class, gender and race), the flows of power on which these conditions are contingent, as well as the modes of cultural inscription and transmission of traumatic historical events. For a cultural analysis of trauma, it is crucial to emphasize the societal mechanisms of traumatization, since in its collective form trauma connects extreme bodily experience to ambiguous, unfinished modes of communal narrations, thus informing societal and political ties. If, in one of its aspects, trauma can work to establish affective ties and thus support the formation of collectivities, the question arises about how the limits of this collectivity are set. In line with these theoretical questions, my concern in this section is how, and to what effect, the trauma of 9/11 traveled to encompass the nation.

By definition, a traumatic event defies understanding or representation at the

moment of its occurrence, but persistently returns in the form of traumatic experience after the event. Noting that there is no universally valid description of the term, Cathy Caruth understands trauma as "an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (11). This temporal delay, by which the event returns to haunt the subject in the form of fantasies, dreams and other symptoms, is caused by the inability of the subject to meaningfully register the traumatic event, and is a crucial aspect of the traumatic experience. The initial impact of the September 11 terrorist attacks, that most Americans experienced through the ordinary image of airplanes crossing a clear blue sky only to impossibly end up colliding with the World Trade Center towers, was in this sense indeed marked by traumatic incomprehension. Writing on Art Spiegelman's 9/11 comic—a post-traumatic account of the attacks that is the subject of a separate chapter—Kristiaan Versluys lists claims of different authors that define 9/11 as traumatic and, consequently, escaping meaningful representation at the time of its happening. In these pronouncements, 9/11 is "a sight without reference" (Star Black), "an encounter with something that makes no sense, an event that fits in nowhere" (Dori Laub), "nothing corresponding in language could stand in for it" (James Berger), it is "outside the bounds of language" (Jenny Edkins), "we do not know what it is and so do not know how to describe, identify, and even name it" (Jacques Derrida, all quoted in Versluys 986-7). All these authors point to a radically incommensurable split between the event and the representational systems available for its comprehension. While the event's unprecedented status, both in terms of its spectacularity and incredibility, contributed to a sense of a cataclysmic occurrence, it could be argued that the images that were constantly reproduced in the mass-media channels (and in particular on TV networks) effected the traumatic repetition through which the event

incessantly returned. Instantly nationally broadcast by the TV networks, the event seemed to take place live, thus apparently narrowing the experiential gap between the first-hand witnesses and the TV audiences. However, the shocking images emerged against an incomprehensive camera eye: without being able to offer any explanation, the media ceaselessly repeated the same images in expectation of "news" about the event.⁶ Although these images very soon traveled to an equally shocked world, I start with the assumption that they were seen differently by a national spectatorial community and outside of the US. This is due to the fact that the nation—identified as the subject of the attacks in the label "Attack on America" that accompanied many of the televised images—was immediately offered as the interpretive framework inside which to view these traumatic sights. The work of the media, it is worth stressing, is crucial for the existence of a national communal imaginary, as suggested by Anderson's insistence on the fundamental entanglement of the early newspaper mass-media with the emergence of national communities makes evident. The event's nationalization and, I want to argue, the related nationalization of its traumatic impact, were contingent on the initial response of the media and their continuing and constant replays of traumatic images.

That trauma can be related to community formation has been noted by a number of critics. In his "Notes on Trauma and Community," Kai Erikson explicitly claims that "trauma can create community" (185), "spiritual kinship," a "sense of identity" (188). In traumatic events, "shared experience becomes almost like a common culture, a source of kinship" (190). It is interesting to note how Erikson describes the shared traumatic experience both as being "artificially" constructed (in the phrase "a common *culture*") and "naturally"

⁶ Thus, the logic of trauma seems to be latent in the medium of live TV, which always displays/sees before it can explain. This logic is similar to what Walter Benjamin called the "optical unconscious" of the photographic camera: the camera catches a detail unseen at the moment the picture is being taken, but registered only at a later time, while the subject is looking at the photograph. This aspect of photographic memory of 9/11 is explored by Marianne Hirsch (cf. Hirsch 2003),

existing (in "spiritual *kinship*"). The fact that trauma, in its many theorizations, can cover the terrain from culture to nature points to an important, although not always explicitly acknowledged assumption underlying the common understanding of traumatic events: they seem to provide a peculiar link between what is perceived as the most immediately authentic and, in some cases, liminally unrepresentable experience, and culturally and politically constituted communities. However, trauma's relationship to the basic notions of subjectivity remains ambivalent. On the one hand, trauma destroys some presumed foundations of identity. In Kalí Tal's words: "An individual is traumatized by a life-threatening event that displaces his or her preconceived notions about the world. Trauma is enacted in a liminal state, outside of the bounds of the 'normal' human experience, and the subject is radically ungrounded" (15). On the other hand, trauma is seen as creating an identity of a different order. In the most basic sense, traumatic events constitute at least a community of victims, survivors or witnesses that are able to communicate the uncommunicable thanks to their shared experience (cf. Tal 16). However, since all social formations, even the ones relying on such liminal experiences, take place within the contested space of culture, there is always the possibility that trauma be politically managed for particular interests. Dominick LaCapra has particularly warned of the dangers implicit in this prospect. He sees the conflation of (structural) absence and (historical) loss as a rhetorical move that facilitates "appropriation of particular traumas by those who did not experience them, typically in a movement of identity formation that makes invidious and ideological use of traumatic series of events in foundational ways or as symbolic capital" (1999: 712). For LaCapra, the narratives that appropriate trauma in such a way "must be reductive, based on misrecognition, and even close to myth" and are "essential to all fundamentalisms or foundational philosophies" (1999: 701-2).⁷ For LaCapra, this foundational power of traumatic events is explicitly paradoxical:

7 For LaCapra's further discussion of the importance of the distinction between structural and historical trauma

This is an extreme and interesting paradox—how something traumatic, disruptive, disorienting in the life of a people can become the basis of identity formation. If you think about it, this probably happens in the lives of all peoples, to a greater or lesser extent. All myths of origin include something like a founding trauma, through which the people pass and emerge strengthened; at least they have stood the test of this founding trauma. The Civil War or, more recently, the war in Vietnam for the United States, the French Revolution in France, the battle of Kosovo in Serbia, and certainly the Holocaust in Israel (and for worldwide Jewry, and perhaps even more broadly at the present time) can be seen as in some way indicating that through a trauma one finds an identity that is both personal and collective at the same time. (2001: 161-62, cf. also 1991: 724)

The examples LaCapra quotes here relate the paradoxical elevation of traumatic historical events to the position of constitutional events in the history of a national community. This logic appears to correspond to the logic of community formation around grieving and loss that Renan and Anderson take as being fundamental for nation-building. LaCapra, however, carefully criticizes this malleable foundational potential of trauma:

[T]here has been an important tendency in modern culture and thought to convert trauma into the occasion for sublimity, to transvalue it into a test of the self or the group and an entry into the extraordinary. In the sublime, the excess of trauma becomes an uncanny source of elation or ecstasy. Even extremely destructive and disorienting events, such as the Holocaust or the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, may become occasions of negative sublimity or displaced sacralization. They may also give rise to what may be termed founding traumas—traumas that paradoxically become the valorized or intensely cathected

see also 1999: 722.

basis of identity for an individual or a group rather than events that pose the problematic question of identity. (2001: 23)

To the idea that trauma can be a "basis for identity," LaCapra offers a counterbalance in trauma's potential to pose "problematic questions of identity," thus emphasizing the basic indeterminacy of potential outcomes of traumatic experiences.

With these important qualifications in mind, I want to stress that the affective orientation of the traumatized subject towards others—be it survivors or witnesses—represents a crucial moment in the traumatic experience and posits it, paradoxically, as a potentially socially productive or homogenizing act. It is precisely this process, a process of reconstitution of the national body through a cultural encoding of traumatized individual bodies, that can be seen at work in the reading of the 9/11 archive, particularly where the event is narrated explicitly in terms of trauma. LaCapra's ethical imperative, that trauma "should be seen as raising the question of identity," I see as being replicated in Judith Butler's demand after 9/11 that "our recent trauma" should have been "an opportunity for a reconsideration of United States hubris and the importance of establishing more radically egalitarian international ties" (40). In other words, despite the apparent scandalous nature of such a demand—to look beyond one's own experience in the face of the traumatic event—these authors see the moment of the most extreme undoing of the subject as an opportunity for an ethical opening towards others. Thus, Butler argues that the affective ties established through mourning need not be contained by the existing "norms of recognition." However, this is precisely what happened after 9/11 in the US: through the establishing of new metanarratives that inscribed the event primarily in national history, the traumatic event was effectively nationalized.

In reality, of course, such univocal nationalization has to face the plurality of

social forces and histories that cut across any absolutist attempt at social homogenization. The interference caused by this plurality permeates even the most hegemonic of encodings of national trauma. For example, Donald Pease's claim, that the advent of 9/11 caused the emergence of a new set of national metanarratives that were meant to provide a frame of reference for the unrepresentable event, echoes the dynamics of trauma, both in his insistence on the inability of the subject to symbolically account for trauma, and in that the subject's response to the event is delayed. Moreover, Pease argues that the new narrative of the Homeland "recalled the suppressed historical knowledge of the United States' origins in the devastation of Native peoples' homelands" (5). The new framing of the event that ushered the nation in a newly created state of emergency thus also returned the nation to its historical beginnings, with the terrorist attacks functioning as a traumatic repetition of the founding national trauma of the US. This foundational trauma is akin to the sort of violent historical events that the nation needs to be reminded to forget and around which, as Renan and Anderson argue, the national imaginary is consolidated. But such a complex traumatic return also reveals another, interfering past. Inspired by the state's repressive domestic response to the September 11 attacks, some street vendors in the United States started selling t-shirts with an old photograph of Native American warriors and the label "Homeland Security: Fighting terrorism since 1492." This conflation of the "now" with the traumatic past—in which the European settlers are equated with the 9/11 terrorists through a subversive play on the new hegemonic national narrative—represents a parodic take on the post-traumatic national reconsolidation post-9/11. This example clearly shows how the new national metanarratives, that worked to reconsolidate and homogenize a wounded national body politic through a traumatic return to national foundations, could do so only at the price of covering up the contentious processes marking its past and present. The event's encoding as *national* trauma,

obviously, already represents one strategy of trauma's "cultural codification" (Tal 6).

Precisely because of its "unrepresentable" character, the traumatic event was encoded—even in what Pease sees as "new metanarratives"—in culturally familiar, although not quite unproblematic terms.

The unavoidably contentious process of nation-building at the site of trauma was revealed at the memorial site of Ground Zero itself. After long negotiations between city authorities, real-estate investors and the families of the 9/11 victims, a middle ground was reached that was supposed to settle the conflict arising between the families' demand for the memorialization of the losses of September 11 and capital's demand for further accumulation through real-estate investment. As a result, an underground memorial called *Reflecting Absence* will be built on the site of WTC attacks as a part of a larger commercial complex, within which a "Freedom Tower" will also be erected.⁸ The final outcome represents a hybrid, but telling compromise. The 1776 feet high commercial Freedom Tower with an underground memorial site is meant to contain several meanings: the sacredness of the site of trauma (the memorial), the symbolism of the nation (with the height of the Tower referencing the year of the Declaration of Independence), as well as satisfy the relentless logic of capital (with the complex's function being consistent with the one of the previous World Trade Center towers). The underground location of the memorial, however, might suggest that the World Trade Center site will again be first of all a monument to a unique combination of global capitalism and national, US power. Thus, the monument erected at the site of trauma both attempts to heal a traumatized community and acknowledge that community's foundational principles, capitalism and nationalism. Clearly, this process of post-traumatic community rebuilding is

⁸ An extensive analysis of public memorialization on the site of WTC attacks is beyond the scope of this study. For further reading about the contested forces involved in the act of memorialization I recommend Devin Zuber's excellent article "Flanerie at Ground Zero: Aesthetic Counter-memories in Lower Manhattan" and David Simpson's *9/11: The Culture of Commemoration*, especially the chapter "The Tower and the Memorial."

marred by the conflicting desires of that community's constituents. What is especially interesting is that the debate over the Ground Zero memorial site could be understood as a debate about ownership and property. Who does the site of trauma belong to: the owners of the land on which the tragedy took place, or the "owners" of the traumatic experience? The trauma of the families' victims here interfered with the existing economic relations, introducing a disruptive affective component in an urban landscape organized strictly along lines of private property.

The problematic process of seaming together the national, local and personal in the act of memorialization became evident in the immediate aftermath of the event, even before the intervention of business interests in the Ground Zero site reconstruction. One of its aspects is noted in Diane Taylor's testimonial essay about a personal experience of 9/11 and its aftermath, "Lost in the Field of Vision." There, Taylor notes how the New Yorkers spontaneously started building peculiar photographic monuments after 9/11: "The entire surface of lower Manhattan was wrapped in images of the missing—the missing towers, the missing people" (245). She describes this spontaneous public act as a "spectacle" "competing" with the official control of the site of the tragedy, since both access to Ground Zero and circulation of information about the site were strictly supervised after the attacks: "Only designated images would circulate, only professionals allowed to photograph." Only "permitted images, the permissible stories" could be distributed (241). Thus, Taylor feels, the individual experience and personal testimony were marginalized through an ubiquitous appeal to the nation and its security. With New York becoming "suddenly [...] part of 'America'" (251), "unsigned testimonials" in newly created official journals "invoked, yet hid, the seeing 'I'" of the interested witness strolling the city streets (241). In this process, Taylor writes, "[m]edia as vehicle of consumerism partly surrendered to its other, only somewhat

less apparent mode: media as delivery system for state ideology" (241).

At first, the spontaneously created photographic clusters, such as the one on Union Square, were full of the pictures of the missing and were supposed to serve people to identify and eventually find their loved ones. As it became obvious that the search for survivors was in vain, these places were turned into memorials, places of mourning for those who have been lost. However, some photographs now started significantly disappearing: these were the pictures of undocumented workers that died in the attacks, whose relatives considered it dangerous to have the identities of the "illegal aliens" exposed in public. For those who were Mexican, the photographs were substituted for the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe, the Mexican national icon. Taylor's comment on this is succinct—"yet one more disappearance" (247)—but I would like to relate this symbolic act of secretive mourning to the problematic of nationalization of trauma discussed above. These impersonal, coded messages in the national photographic memorials further complicate the strictly national framing of the process of post-traumatic recovery. On the one hand, they register the undercurrent of non-national, others' histories embedded in the national body. In that sense, this example indicates how the exclusive encoding of 9/11 as national (or citizens') trauma creates "violence through omission" (Butler 34). However, the presence of the impersonal icons does not only disturb the imagined homogeneity of the post-9/11 US—it also exposes a homogeneity to which the nation has to putatively return after the traumatic break as already resting on an unacknowledged vulnerability of the other. The continuity of "before" and "after," obscured by the discourse of 9/11 as a radical break, becomes visible through the iconic, impersonal presence of the migrant worker, the invisible other of the national everyday. These icons can thus be understood as pointing to the scandalous potential of trauma emphasized by LaCapra and Butler, as the missed opportunity for an empathic

identification with the other in a situation where the limit of public mourning has been delineated by the exclusive boundaries of the nation-state. Moreover, what is disappeared from the ad hoc national memorials is not *any* non-national, but the undocumented worker, a member of the class on the margin of official existence, but on whose underpaid labor US economy is nevertheless relying extensively for normal functioning. However, the immediate aftermath of 9/11 saw a selective erasure of non-representative traumatized bodies from the symbolically charged site of national memory, a process that subsequent immigration legislation, reformed with a renewed stress on national security, established on an institutional level.⁹ The disappearing photographs of the dead also prefigured subsequent disappearances of non-representative bodies of other non-citizens, now redefined as "suspected terrorists."¹⁰ Again, the example bespeaks of the potential of the event to, in Butler's terms, shift the existing norms of recognition, in this case by making manifest the symbolically non-representative, but (for US economy) materially significant, presence of undocumented workers. Instead, the already existing experience of migrant workers within the national body was suppressed, and the trans-national aspect of the event safely contained within the boundaries of the nation. As I suggest above, the process of the nationalization of trauma evidenced in these examples was far from uncontentious and it revealed existing fissures—based on economic interest, class, ethnicity and nationality—in the presumably

9 The Border Protection, Anti-terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005 is considered particularly hostile towards immigrants. Human Rights Watch called on the House Judiciary Committee to oppose the act, remarking that the "legislation undermines basic due process protections, human rights obligations, and notions of fundamental fairness" (Daskal). A special issue of *CR: The New Centennial Review* entitled "Whose Homeland?" (6.1, 2006) critically documents the changes in immigration legislation after 9/11.

10 The Visible Collective's *Disappeared in America* project explores the relationship between "hyphenated identities and security panic." The project insists on establishing a prehistory for the post-9/11 detentions: "The majority of detainees in recent paranoia times are from the invisible underclass—shadow citizens who drive taxis, deliver food, clean tables, and sell fruit, coffee, and newspapers. The only time we 'see' them is when we glance at the license in the taxi partition, or the vendor ID card. When detained, they cease to exist in the consciousness. The impulse to create an insider-outsider dynamic with 'loyalty' overtones has a long pedigree: WWI incarceration of German-Americans; 1919 detention of immigrants in Anarchist bomb scare; WWII internment of Japanese-Americans; execution of the Rosenbergs; HUAC 'red scare'; infiltration of Deacons For Defense and Black Panthers; and the rise of the Minutemen" (cf. Visible Collective).

homogeneous national body.¹¹

As Taylor herself points out, these disappearances were symptomatic of an increasingly regulated political space in the wake of 9/11. What could be shown or seen became the focus of public attention and, consequently, the basis for national solidarity. The role of the media in this process of selective remembering is hard to overestimate. Taylor suggests that there was a certain affinity between the traumatic event and the "traumatic loop" in which the event was caught on the TV screens that obsessively replayed either the moment of the planes' impact or the collapsing of the towers (241). According to her, "the intensely mediatized seeing became a form of social blinding: percepticide, a form of killing or numbing through the senses" (244). Taylor here suggests, supporting the view I briefly propose in the introduction to this chapter, that these controlled and repetitive mediatic representations of the attacks reinforced the logic of trauma instead of alleviating its effects and generally had a socially repressive function. I would like to look more closely now into this traumatizing aspect of the media work in relation to 9/11, especially focusing on one controversial photograph.

First, let me note that the obsessive media repetition of a limited number of images—the moment when the planes hit the building, the collapse of the towers—can be seen as a controlled form of remembering of the traumatic event. In that sense, the media images reproduced the logic of trauma, since "the trauma as experience is 'in' the repetition of an early event in a later event—an early event for which one was not prepared to feel anxiety and a later event that somehow recalls the early one and triggers a traumatic response" (LaCapra 1991: 725). Psychoanalytic theory proposes that there are two basic ways of dealing with traumatic memory: an unavoidable, repetitive acting out of traumatic symptoms

11 This normative image of the nation also rested on notions of prescriptive heterosexuality. As Lisa Duggan has pointed out, the aftermath of the attacks saw official "announcements that the relief funds for families of those killed in the World Trade Towers would exclude same-sex domestic partners" (43).

and a productive working through that can eventually lead to the subject's recovery. The relation between the two, however, is more complex than mere automatic sequence. Relying on Freud's distinction between such a neurotic acting out of the traumatic memory and its productive working through, LaCapra suggests that acting out or repeating represents a prerequisite for working through, a first step towards a socially more productive way of remembering trauma. The second step consists in "socially engaged memory-work" that would stir mourning in the direction of "critical distance, change, resumption of social life, ethical responsibility, and renewal" (LaCapra 1991: 713). It is in this "socially engaged memory-work" that the media, as well as other representational practices, participate. If, as argued above, the traumatic event of 9/11 event contained both the potential for a hegemonic consolidation of established societal ties (a recovery of the shattered foundations of subjectivity) and a potential for a critical recognition of the inherently conflicted and porous character of the national polity (by posing "questions about identity"), then the realization of this potential must depend on the social work of mourning and remembering that was supported by various cultural practices. While in the subsequent chapters I turn to literary texts, here my main interest is in the work of the visual media that had a significant impact on both national traumatization and resuscitation post-9/11.

One particular image from the 9/11 archive gained national notoriety: the photograph of the "falling man." Before moving to some literary reworkings of this traumatic 9/11 scenario—and Foer, Spiegelman and DeLillo all use this same motif—I would like to briefly summarize its genealogy in the 9/11 public debate and its peculiar role in national reconsolidation after 9/11. The photograph of a man falling from the north tower of the WTC on 9/11 was taken by the Associated Press photographer Richard Drew and subsequently circulated through American and international news channels. The desperate act itself, which

was in the debate usually referred to as "falling" rather than "jumping," will probably remain the most traumatic moment for the witnesses of the event. In the US, Drew's photograph was published in national newspapers, but only once. (It appeared on the front page of the New York Times on September 12, 2001.) After the initial angry reactions from the readers, other US media generally decided not to republish the photograph, shunning it out of public memory. However, not everyone agreed with this act of suppression, considering it as an instance of self-censorship. Most notably, the journalist Tom Junod wrote an article in which he defended the publicizing of the photograph, calling it "our most intimate connection to the horror of that day" (Junod). After recapitulating the attempts at the identification of the man in the photograph, Junod concludes that "the Falling Man [...] became the Unknown Soldier in a war whose end we have not yet seen." The way in which a traumatic sight is here summarily incorporated into a militant national narrative is quite striking, and eloquently illustrates the logic of the cultural processes through which a body in pain becomes transfigured into an emblem of the national body politic.¹²

Despite these early suppressions, the photograph continued to appear in various forms, sometimes figuring as a form of opposition to the perceived political repression in the wake of 9/11: denied the possibility to see in the media what actually took place on 9/11, many visual artists reactivated the falling man scenario in their work. Gradually, this image achieved the status of an icon of dissent to the post-9/11 domestic policies of the Bush administration. In these reproductions by visual artists, unlike in some of the newspaper accounts, there is no attempt to identify the falling figure. Instead, the image is used in its anonymous, iconic form, the same one that for Junod could ultimately represent a fallen

12 The *9/11: The Falling Man* documentary contains interviews with Peter Cheney and Tom Junod, both journalists who tried to identify the man in Richard Drew's photograph. The documentary reconstructs in detail the early public history of the photograph and the attempts to identify the falling man, all of which remain inconclusive. The movie was shown on BBC Channel 4 on March 16, 2006 and a year later, on September 10, 2007, in the United States (Shattuck).

soldier defending his nation at war. Virtually all of these artistic reproductions of the censored media image, however, witnessed some sort of public rejection. Eric Fischl created a sculpture, "Tumbling Woman," which was briefly exhibited in 2002, then covered and after a couple of days removed from its original location at the New York's Rockefeller Center. Sharon Paz's installation of cutouts, "Falling: Window Project," exhibited at the NY Jamaica Center for Arts in Queens for the first anniversary of 9/11 attacks, received similar reactions and was removed.¹³ Performance artist Kerry Skarbakka began a series of photo shoots of himself falling from high places after seeing the 9/11 images of falling people¹⁴—again, his 2005 public performances upset many and were labeled by the New York City mayor Bloomberg "nauseatingly offensive" (BBC News 2005). The fate of the same image in literary texts was less troubled: Jonathan Safran Foer reproduced a falling man photograph at the end of his *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, the novel that most explicitly deals with September 11 in terms of trauma. Don DeLillo's *The Falling Man* borrows its title from the forbidden image and includes the character of a "falling man" performance artist reminiscent of Skarbakka's work. Both the cover and the pages of Art Spiegelman's 9/11 book *In the Shadow of No Towers* are full of falling figures, including the figure of the author himself.

The fact that the literary reworkings of the falling man scenario were considered relatively unproblematic suggests that something more than simple repression is at work in the constitution of the 9/11 archive. This is the point made by Susan Lurie in her extensive analysis of the falling man photograph. Lurie claims that the "sights of heretofore unimaginable dangers on US soil instigate what we might call a trauma of spectatorship" (46). In her analysis, 9/11 signifies a break between a "before" in which the sense of US national safety was established exclusively through seeing the suffering of foreign others, and

13 More information on the commemorative art on 9/11 can be found in Swartz.

14 The photographs from the series *The Struggle to Right Oneself*, *The Struggle Continues*, and *Life Goes On* can be seen at the artist's website, www.skarbakka.com.

a "now" in which the safety depends on a "transformation of horrifying sights into reassuring ones" (47). In her account, the images of falling people had to be seen, but in order to be replaced by more "tolerable ones" (50). Lurie sees this transformation from traumatized to "safe spectatorship" in the displacement of the falling man photographs by the images of ruined buildings that eventually came to cover the whole event. Lurie argues that the vulnerability represented by the falling man photograph in its most extreme form is needed in the 9/11 archive as the beginning of the narrative of an "indestructible national body" (59) that is ultimately able to repress its vulnerability as "intolerable."

The logic of the media attempts to write the story about the identity of the falling man (only one out of many victims of the attacks) follows a similar assimilatory pattern. This search for identity might be understood as an effort to make sense of the trauma, to turn the unspeakable occurrence into a familiar narrative of personal tragedy, one man's life and tragic, but heroic death. These personal stories of loss and consolation thus work to reduce the incommensurable traumatic event to a manageable size. But, since the falling people could not be identified in the images, they became empty signifiers pointing to the fundamental unrepresentability of the traumatic event. In what is perhaps the most cited American study of politicization of bodily injury and violence, Elaine Scarry argues that the "body in pain" poses inherent problems to representation. Her focus is on war and torture, two topics that have featured prominently in the post-9/11 US public sphere through the national preoccupation with the war in Iraq and its preeminent scandal, the torture at the US-controlled military prison in Abu Ghraib. Her conclusions, although sometimes resting on problematic ahistorical assumptions, are relevant for the discussion of 9/11, where bodies in pain are selectively made to disappear from representations of the "war on terror." As Scarry writes, "the act of misdescribing torture or war, though in some instances intentional and in

others unintentional, is in either case partially made possible by the inherent difficulty of accurately describing any event whose central content is bodily pain or injury" (13). Scarry talks about a "fluidity of the injured body's referential direction" (117). According to her, the meaning is connected to injured bodies through "unanchored verbal constructs" (139) that inscribe them into larger narratives, be it one of waging war for the nation/country, or torturing in search for information. Scarry argues that these narratives are fundamentally "unstable" and "fictional" and that, to gain substance, they need to be anchored in the materiality of the human body. I introduce this line of reasoning in order to shed light on the troubling nature of the images of people falling from the WTC towers. Because of their anonymity, they had a disorienting effect in relation to the dominant narrative that represented the event as a wound in a body politic defined by a strictly national imaginary after 9/11. The vulnerability they inevitably display is not only traumatic, but also, in Scarry's sense, "fluid." However, as Junod's concluding remark indicates, it is their fluidity and anonymity that came to serve as a prop for discursive nation-building.

Lurie shows how the photographic lexicon of 9/11 posits vulnerability not as something that can provide the grounds for empathic identification—across the national borders and through intranational divides—but as "intolerable vulnerability" (51), a defect of the national self. However, her correct assumption that the notion of a safe US citizenship has been always established against the vulnerable other does need some qualification. Namely, it is a normative ideal that is established through the act of seeing the suffering other, and it seems logical to ask whether this holds true for all national spectators. The answer will inevitably point to an already fragmented, asymmetrical national body, full of vulnerable communities and individuals whose invisibility is equally necessary for the constitution of an imagined homogeneous national safety.¹⁵ Taylor's example of disappearing photos of dead

¹⁵ I return to these issues in my reading of DeLillo's writing after 9/11.

immigrant workers inside the WTC reveals this dynamic. It is seeing the suffering of foreign others, and not seeing the equally real suffering of the others within national boundaries, that guaranteed the assumed (normative) sense of national safety.

In Lurie's analysis, the event of 9/11 both marks a break that causes a "trauma of spectatorship" and signals continuity, since the break serves as the starting point for the renewal of the old exceptionalist narrative of an absolute and ahistorical US national safety. Inside this national framing, Lurie suggests, the images of falling people can function either as a point of disidentification and national repudiation of vulnerability, or a point of identification with the vulnerable bodies that will lead to a redefinition of the national body as always vulnerable. In either case, the traumatic event is couched in familiar terms: whether attacking, criticizing, reinventing or supporting a specific idea of the US nation, the trauma is established primarily as national, and the nation already constituted as unproblematically identical to an implied fantasy of wholeness and safety. Here, the mediatization of the traumatic event establishes a community assumed to be already existing, by providing a distinct focus for the national gaze.

It was my intention here to show how the processes of traumatization, mourning and memorialization after 9/11 implied a hegemonic, although ultimately indeterminate reconstitutions of societal ties. If trauma shatters the foundations of identity, it also demands their restructuring. The answer to the question about what kind of community will be recovered after a traumatic event will thus depend on various cultural practices implicated in the process of communal recovery. In the next two chapters I turn to literary works that, as acts of post-traumatic mourning, evidence and further complicate some of the issues touched upon here. While, in the most general sense, they reproduce the hegemonic cultural and

political frames of the national community, they also point to other, sub- and trans-national forces operating within the 9/11 archive. These other forces are the subject of the chapters that follow.

3.

Common Ground: Melodramas of 9/11

As I have argued in previous chapters, the narrativization of 9/11 in terms of a radical break or a historical turning point can be seen as having contributed to its political instrumentalization on the part of US government. Indeed, in the post-9/11 US foreign and domestic policy the event figures as the fundamental reference point that marks the threshold of a new age. In this hegemonic narrative, 9/11 represents the historical moment in which the main protagonist, the US nation, breaks up with a past that is equated with a state of almost childlike innocence and is made to, somewhat reluctantly, take action and thus "enter history." The fact that, in this case, entering history implied taking military action in geographically distant territories of Afghanistan and Iraq, shifts the strictly national framing of the event. In other words, although encoded primarily in terms of *national* tragedy, the event was used, on one important level, as a basis for the claim to the right of the United States to "become" an agent of *world* history. In that sense, 9/11, a moment that expanded into the infinite "now" of the "global war on terror," functioned also as a point of spatial, for many imperialist, expansion. I will return to this transnational aspect of the 9/11 narratives. For now, let it suffice to say that in Jonathan Safran Foer's novel that I focus on in this chapter, the events that interrupt the family history—the bombing of Dresden, 9/11—function also as points of symbolic integration of the affected subjects into the larger history of US presence in other parts of the world (Europe, the Middle East).

9/11 as an end or a beginning, as a point of profound change, a decisive moment—these are the tropes that pervade most post-9/11 US fiction as well as the dominant political

discourse. In this chapter I would like to address what is perhaps the most common mode of cultural inscription of the event. Despite the unquestionable global impact of the attacks, contemporary US fiction remained entrenched in one specific cultural genre for the encoding of the 9/11 event: that of family drama. Here, the event figures primarily as a turning point in the private lives of the protagonists. Novels such as Julia Glass' *The Whole World Over* (2006), Wendy Wasserstein's *Elements of Style* (2006), John Updike's *Terrorist* (a 2006 novel that does not deal with 9/11 directly, but is unimaginable without it), or Claire Messud's *Emperor's Children* (2006), all deal primarily with family relations, putting special emphasis on children or adolescents. More (Messud) or less (Glass) ironically or critically distanced from their familial subject-matter, these narratives often inscribe the WTC attacks as a decisive moment in the process of a character's personal growth. In the case of children characters, who literally pervade the pages of the popular post-9/11 fictions, this moment marks a break in the protagonist's development towards full subjectivity, a desire for autonomy realized through a symbolic rite of passage. Lauren Berlant has convincingly shown how in the closing decades of the twentieth century, children came into the focus of the US public discourse, achieving a status of "national supericonicity." As Berlant puts it: "the fetal/infantile person is a stand-in for a complicated and contradictory set of anxieties and desires about national identity" (6). Taking on Berlant's cue about the centrality of the intimate sphere for the constitution of national politics, I want to emphasize how the basic narrative logic of many 9/11 fictions corresponded with the hegemonic emplotment of the event. Through the correspondence of these histories, the individual (often traumatized) body and the national polity emerge as naturally contiguous.

In these melodramatic fictions the 9/11 event is represented as a critical moment in which a personal, familial, or national history takes the turn towards self-realization. In one

sense then, these texts represent 9/11 as an ethical moment, a point in which a decision about how to act in the world is made. This ethical aspect of the event finds its most eloquent elaboration in Neil LaBute's play *The Mercy Seat*. In the play, Ben accidentally escapes death in the WTC building, since instead being at work during the attacks, he is with his lover and boss, Abby. The play takes place in an extended moment after the attacks, when Ben has to make the decision about whether to call his family and let them know that he survived, but also admit that he is having an affair, or run away with Abby and start a new life. LaBute's play, premiered in November of 2002, registers the ethical potential of the event and plays it out, significantly, as a matter of personal relationship. In the words of the author, "this is a 'relationship' play, in the purest sense" (ix). But LaBute also points to the national framing of his protagonist's ethical dilemma when remarking that the play examines "how selfishness can still exist during a moment of national selflessness" (x). At one point, Ben gives a speech that virtually summarizes the official political position after 9/11:

[W]e're [...] gonna rebound from this [...] I'm saying the country as a whole. [...] We'll do what it takes, go after whomever we need to, call out the *tanks* and shit, but we're gonna have the World Series, and Christmas, and all the other crap that you can count on in your life [...] I'm saying the American way is to overcome, to conquer, to come out on top. (16)

The ensuing Abby's comment compares Ben to the World War 2 propagandist painter Norman Rockwell, thus drawing on the most common post-9/11 historical parallel between the aftermath of 9/11 and the "good war." Accordingly, Ben's character can be read as a "good subject" of post-9/11 US, one faced with a difficult choice in the face of radical historical change.¹⁶ Abby

¹⁶ The same moment is elsewhere (in Foer, Spiegelman) elaborated in terms of trauma, i.e. as a traumatic moment that opens the possibility of ethical choice.

wants Ben to call his family and let them know he is leaving, something he was supposed to do "before." Abby's position, and she is the authoritative and dominating boss, here takes the form of a moral imperative: despite the possible consequences, her lover has to keep the continuity with his old life and make the phone call that would reconnect him to his family. Ben, on the other hand, sees 9/11 as "opportunity," "possibility," as having "unlimited potential" (11), a "meal ticket" (12), and radically reinscribes the meaning of 9/11 to suit his purpose: "[i]t's different now," (63) "this disaster [...] makes what we're doing [...] possible" (65). However, he remains passive and does not act out his fantasy of a new life, but stays in the realm of socially permissive, normative behavior. The final scene has Ben staring at a ringing phone, unable to act and answer the post-9/11 "call of history."

"Hypocrisy" and "weakness" are perhaps not the right terms to think about Ben's position. His can be seen as an impossible choice: any act will be destructive towards someone, and simultaneously sever and consolidate existing affective ties—either to his family or to his lover. The question is then one of coping with ineluctable loss: what will he renounce, what will he agree to lose? In this reading, the play can be seen as enacting an ethical drama about the subject's reluctance to accept loss and his impossible desire to remain "whole." Indeed, the event did provide an "opportunity"—Ben is actually right in recognizing its revolutionary potential. However, his inability to mourn the necessary loss inaugurated by a historical contingency leaves him trapped in a perpetual "now." At the end, he sits in the same chair and in the same position as at the beginning of the play, with the phone stubbornly ringing. This reenactment of the initial situation suggests that Ben is trapped in a paralyzing post-traumatic pattern of repetition. Read in this way, somewhat generously perhaps, as an allegory of the politico-ethical moment inaugurated by the events of 9/11, the play speaks not only to the ethical potential of trauma, but also to the ambivalent value of hesitation.

Similar to other post-9/11 fictions, LaBute's play maps national obsessions onto the domesticity of the family circle. The avoidance of a clear sense of closure distinguishes the play from other popular fictions published after 9/11, which more often than not rewrite 9/11 in terms of emergence of a "new" subject. Claire Messud's *The Emperor's Children* is exemplary in this respect. In one of the several story-lines of the novel, Bootie, a teenager trying to free himself from the constraints of the family circle in order to become an autonomous individual, happens to escape death in the Twin Towers by sheer luck, while everyone thinks he died (a situation quite similar to the one of LaBute's Ben). On September 11, 2001, the collapsing towers for Bootie coincided with the moment of his illumination: he realizes that the man he had idolized (the "Emperor" from the novel's title) is just one of many "false idols," and describes the catastrophic and, paradoxically, liberating sight before him as "the Tower of Babel tumbling" (392). Since for him the destruction of 9/11—again, a moment of opportunity—simply means that "you could [...] change the world," (395) Bootie changes his name to Ulrich New and decides to start a new life. Messud's irony is certainly always there to signal to the reader that this new life is far from the idealized expectations of personal fulfillment, but the *figurative* power of the event—its openness to inscription into various personal narratives—nevertheless remains the structuring force of the novel. Other characters, too, see the catastrophe primarily as an event that figures primarily in their own lives, be it as a metaphor for the end of a love relationship (Danielle), or the end of a business career (Ludovic).

It is important to emphasize that the traumatic event is in these popular fictions inscribed as a crucial moment in an often narcissistic and melodramatic personal or familial story. In these narratives the event figures as a turning point in the story, and is narrated primarily in relation to the dominant subject-position and its imagined telos. Before moving

to the novel that I find especially interesting in this context, I would like to make a couple of general observations in order to provide the basic coordinates for my reading. Namely, I would like to point out the particular implications of the narrative assimilation of 9/11 as a backdrop for family drama.

On the one hand, I consider this rhetorical move to be in line with the general tendency in the post-9/11 United States to reduce the event to familiar contexts. Family here functions as a sometimes troubled, but always desirable and representative unit of US society, and it is certainly not insignificant that most families in these fictions live comfortable upper-middle class lives. The familial contexts for 9/11 that these novels establish echo the media attempts to familiarize the national audience with the identity of the anonymous falling people and situate these traumatic sights in family and national history: both represent efforts at familiarization of trauma through domestic melodrama. In Judith Butler's terms, these fictions, like most of the media after 9/11, set affective limits to the norms of recognition of others' vulnerability: these are contained within the boundaries of the most familiar—inside the family. Melodrama is here the central genre that works to translate the political into personal. Such translation is also, it is worth noting, a central rhetorical strategy of the dominant ideology of neoliberalism, which always displaces the site of agency onto the individual and rewrites systemic issues in psychological and private terms. In a neoliberal state, as David Harvey reminds us, "[t]he social safety net is reduced to a bare minimum in favour of a system that emphasizes personal responsibility. Personal failure is generally attributed to personal failings, and the victim is too often blamed" (2007: 76). In this specific historical context, the personalization and individualization of the political is to a significant extent effected through the employment of the melodramatic mode.¹⁷ On the other hand, these narratives repeat and reinforce the rhetoric of the break that dominates the 9/11 discourse.

¹⁷ I return to this problem in my reading of Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*.

This break is always situated in a narrative of individual development, which is in the novelistic tradition commonly couched in some version of the Bildungsroman genre. It is in the novel of formation, which provides one of the basic generic frameworks for the novels under discussion, that we can start to detect the same underlying evolutionist historical consciousness that is also at work in the writing of national history. This developmental narrative, that backs both the 9/11 personal/family dramas and the hegemonic narrative of the US nation, makes these two spheres appear not only comparable, but compatible.

A nation's linear progression through historical time is an idea Benedict Anderson has related to the emergence of modern nationalism. An ancient history of the nation is always imagined in retrospective, as a justification for the contemporary claims to sovereignty. The "historical linearity" of national histories is thus modeled, Prasenjit Duara argues, on "an evolutionism in which the species is replaced by the nation, whether constituted by race, language, or culture" (26). Duara adds to this observation by pointing to a more general underlying narrative logic at work: "Even multicultural histories reproduce essentially the same evolutionary narratives, identifying a subject of history that gradually gathers the self-consciousness that will enable it—be it gays or an ethnic group—to claim its rights" (26). Writing about the Bildungsroman genre in a different, although not unrelated context, Joseph R. Slaughter summarizes the basic qualities of the genre: fundamentally driven by a "social-preservationist" impulse and resting on a "progressive temporality," the novel of formation enacts a "process of subjectivation" usually described in terms of "socialization, apprenticeship, assimilation, acculturation, and accommodation." Slaughter reminds us that the social work of this "reconciliatory genre" is historically connected to the consolidation of modern nation-states: "The genre provides the normative literary technology by which social outsiders narrate affirmative claims for inclusion in the franchise of the

nation-state, the story form of incorporation through which the historically marginalized individual is capacitated as a citizen-subject [...]" (1411). This incorporative logic is in line with Duara's description of the evolutionist narrative, where "gays" and "ethnic groups" represent the "marginalized individuals" in the process of social integration. For Slaughter, "Bildungsroman" is not "the name of some typologically consistent literary artifact [...], but [...] the name of a function, the generic label that good reformists repeatedly give to texts that perform a certain kind of incorporative literary social work" (1411). Slaughter also points to a "logical and temporal twisting of the developmental structure" typical of the genre, which he terms an "impossible tautological-teleological developmental complex:" the formation of the protagonist depends on "the narrative process through which the *Bildungsheld* retroactively becomes responsible for the plot of personality development and so for fate and state" (1412).

Here I would like to part with Slaughter, who goes on to explore the connections between this paradoxical structure of the Bildungsroman and the discourse of human rights. What I want to stress is an overlapping between the basic structure of the novel of formation and that of a nation's history. The same "impossible" structure that Slaughter sees as operative in Bildungsroman is at work in the writing of national history as described above by Duara: as with the hero of the Bildungsroman, "[h]ere a contemporary nation that 'causes' the narrative posits itself as an effect of it" (Duara 29). In most general terms, these evolutionary narratives with a paradoxical temporal structure act as justifications for an already existing subject-position by imagining an organic, or natural foundation for its historical existence: the citizen thus emerges through the socialization of the uncivilized, more "natural" social outcast, as the nation-state is formed through the narrative incorporation of a pre-existing, "organic" nation.

I would like to focus on this structural correspondence between the

Bildungsroman and the linear history of the nation in my reading of Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. I understand Foer's text as a post-traumatic novel of formation that enacts the process of the nation's restorative mourning. Inscribed in such a developmental narrative, the trauma of 9/11 becomes a point of suture between the personal and the communal, between the body in pain and the body politic.

Foer's 2005 book explicitly treats 9/11 in terms of trauma. A novel about a dis-integrated subject, it performs the work of social reintegration through a process of post-traumatic mourning. In psychoanalytic terms, it can be read as a story of post-traumatic acting out and working through. The process of social healing and reestablishment of affective ties is in this text embedded in the "imaginative mode" (Brooks) of melodrama and, since this is in large part a story of coming-of-age, in the historical genre of the novel of formation. Foer's text uses many narrative devices common to the 9/11 fiction in general: the growth of a child hero (or an infantile character: LaBute's protagonists have been described by a reviewer as "eternal adolescent[s]", cf. Brantley), the focus on family relations (disintegration and reconstruction of the family), historical references to the Second World War and the Holocaust—all are wrapped up in a narrative clearly leaning towards the "mode of excess" that Peter Brooks recognizes as melodramatic. However, Foer is an author with an already established "higher" literary status, a literary wunderkind with a very successful first novel, *Everything is Illuminated*. In terms of narrative structure, Foer's text incorporates a variety of visual material: in particular, he makes an apparently controversial move in including the often censored photographs of people falling from the WTC on September 11, 2001. Using canonical post-modernist pastiche techniques, and, unlike a lot of sentimental prose that employed the motif of WTC attacks, less bound by rules of genre, Foer's popularity is also due to the fact that his novel is generally more accessible than, say, Paul West's dense,

philosophical-essayistic *The Immensity of the Here and Now*.

In a short 2005 interview, Foer commented on the appropriateness of art about the tragedy that took place on September 11. In a move that is typical of other authors of 9/11 fiction, Foer starts by drawing a sharp distinction, if not an outright opposition, between the media and artistic representations of the event:

It troubles me when people ask if it's too early to make art pertaining to September 11. No one asked, in the moments after the attacks, if it was too early for Tom Brokaw to report it. Do we trust Tom Brokaw more than we trust, say, Philip Roth? His wisdom, his morality, his vision? I don't. I appreciate that Tom Brokaw and Philip Roth do entirely different things, both necessary. I wouldn't want Roth giving me my information about what happened on a given day in Baghdad, and I wouldn't want Brokaw giving me my information about what it felt like. Journalists traffic in biography. Artists traffic in empathy. We need both. (Hudson)

Information and feeling, biography and empathy—these are, for Foer, the clearly distinct grounds on which the division of labor between media and literature can be carried out. Having in mind the large number of critical studies of US media coverage of 9/11 and the ensuing wars, and the common contention that their work was based on a long-standing tradition of playing up an "emotionalized patriotism" (Jeffords and Rabinovitz 23), such clear demarcation between the spheres of "fact" and "feeling" can hardly be sustained. Although the author is clearly intending to set off his work from that of journalists, I consider Foer's novel as employing some basic representational strategies that also characterize US media, in particular after 9/11.

Generally, critics recognize melodrama as the "impermeable deep structure" of

US corporate media reporting (Solomon 1590). Alisa Solomon calls it "America's national dramaturgy" (ibid.), and traces the roots of its hegemony in the US media space to the "first imperial adventures in Cuba in the name of rescuing the native women from the Spaniards who would defile them" (1591). Analyzing the media representations of the first Gulf War, Robyn Wiegman also stresses the role of melodrama in national homogenization in times of war: "it is through the melodramatic plottings of family trauma, separation and loss that a reluctant citizenry ultimately distinguished between the war and its soldiery in order to align itself overwhelmingly 'in support of the troops'" (173). Relying on Peter Brooks' classical study, Wiegman argues that melodrama—a genre that functions to secure "essential and uncontradictory truths," and "a stable moral order" (181)—"achieves its reassuring effect not only by collapsing the public into the private but by negotiating that collapse through the figuration of the masculine and its crisis of socio-symbolic location" (181-82). The melodramatic is thus a central cultural discourse. Actually, it could be argued that the melodramatic mode provides the implicit framing for all "news" or "information" that reach various US constituencies. This is especially so, Wiegman's and Solomon's essays suggest, where the news concerns catastrophic and violent occurrences:

Experience emerges as epistemologically central, relying for its truth on the emotional texture of lived extremes. For this reason, melodrama privileges the psychic contexts of suffering, fear and the tragedy of the unforeseen. A genre critics have often traced to the social convulsions of the French Revolution, melodrama encodes an implicitly bourgeois social organization, dependent on interiority and individualization. (178)

The fundamental social work of melodrama thus consists in the translation of social and political issues into private and individual terms. It is my contention that melodrama is the

imaginative mode containing both most of the media coverage and a large number of fictional accounts of 9/11, including, despite the author's proclamations, Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*.

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close is the story of Oskar Schell, a nine year old boy who lost his father in the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center. Traumatized by the experience, Oskar hides the tape with his Dad's last phone calls in a family closet. After accidentally finding a key in an envelope with the name Black written on it, Oskar presumes that it belonged to his father and embarks on a quest for "Black," hoping to learn some mysterious and important truth about his dead father. Apart from this central first-person narrative, there are two more: one consisting of the unsent letters that Oskar's grandfather Thomas is writing to his son, Oskar's father (who is also called Thomas), and the other consisting of the letters Oskar's paternal grandmother is writing to Oskar. (Oskar is also writing letters, to famous people.) All of these series of mostly failed communications revolve around loss: grandfather's letters tell the story of his life in Germany before and during the Second World War, and of the loss of his first love in the firebombing of Dresden. After fleeing to the US, he marries his dead love's sister, Oskar's grandmother. However, unable to cope with the traumatic memory of his lost love, he leaves Oskar's grandmother after she gets pregnant and thus never meets his son, to whom the letters that we learn the story from are addressed to. He eventually returns only to see the terrorist attacks on TV, then moves in back with his wife, who keeps his presence hidden from Oskar. Grandmother's letters deal with the loss of her husband, who leaves her, and her son, who dies on 9/11. There are many other stories of loss in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, that we learn about when Oskar meets various Blacks in search for the owner of the key.

The short plot outline clearly demonstrates that *Extremely Loud and Incredibly*

Close is first of all a family story encompassing several generations of Schells. Moreover, family history is here reduced to a history of trauma and loss. The central allegory for the novel's conceptualization of history and subjectivity can be found in the story of the sixth borough of New York City (222). In this story, that Oskar hears from his father, New York inexplicably lost its sixth borough, of which only one part was saved, the Central Park. Now, the lost sixth borough is wandering around the world with a hole where Central Park used to be. Significantly then, an essential, iconic part of New York points to a loss, and thus makes the tracing of loss constitutive of the city's identity. Trying to cope with his personal traumatic loss, Oskar hides the phone with the recording of his father's last phone-call: that secret "was a hole in the middle of me" (71), says Oskar, echoing the allegory of the sixth borough. Trauma here functions both as a disrupting and a formative moment that points to an identifying, central part (as in "Central Park") of the subject's being.

Furthermore, Oskar constantly reenacts his trauma by listening to the tape of his Dad's last phone call on 9/11 (207). Unable to mourn and let go of the lost object of his affective attachment, Oskar is a melancholic: his acts of self-injury reflect the "impoverishment of the ego" and "self-abasement" that Freud finds to be typical for melancholia, a condition characterized by an "overcoming of the drive [...] which compels everything that lives to cling to life" (Freud 205-6). At the same time Oskar is, in Freud's terms, "taking satisfaction from self-exposure" (2005: 207) and is unable to stop talking, writing letters, or asking questions. Oskar's defiance of the reality principle is ultimately obvious in his desire to dig up his father's grave. This defiance is by definition melodramatic. According to Peter Brooks, melodrama represents a "victory over repression:" "The melodramatic utterance breaks through everything that constitutes the 'reality principle,' all its censorships, accommodations, tonings-down." It provides the possibility to say what is in "real

life" unsayable and thus "achieve the full expression of psychological condition and moral feeling in the most transparent, unmodified, *infantile* form" (41, my emphasis). As I have argued above, melodramatic infantilization, taking the form of a focus on children characters, is a constant mark of post-9/11 fiction.

There is a potential methodological complication here that needs to be addressed. Brooks warns that psychoanalysis is "a systematic realization of the melodramatic aesthetic." (200) Is it then a tautology to read melodrama through a psychoanalytic lens? Doesn't that, following Brooks, ultimately boil down to a reading of melodrama through melodrama? Brooks stresses the common imaginative background behind both representational modes: "Melodrama and psychoanalysis represent the ambitious, Promethean sense-making systems which man has elaborated to recuperate meanings in the world" (202). This recuperation of meaning is for Brooks linked to the fact that melodrama historically emerges after the French Revolution, "the moment that symbolically, and really, marks the final liquidation of the traditional Sacred and its representative institutions (Church and Monarch), the shattering of the myth of Christendom, the dissolution of an organic and hierarchically cohesive society [...]" (15). These pronouncements, that relate the melodramatic mode to the "loss" of the Sacred and a "dissolution" of "organic" community, suggest that melodrama is one possible reaction to historical trauma that destroys the presumed foundations of communal experience. It would appear then that the apparent methodological tautology can be productive: a psychoanalytic term, trauma, can help understand the social work of melodrama. If we agree that "[m]elodrama starts from and expresses the anxiety brought by a frightening new world in which the traditional patterns of moral order no longer provide the necessary social glue," (Brooks 20) then melodrama can be read as a conventional cultural mode of post-traumatic restoration.

In Foer's melodrama of 9/11, the trauma is worked through to the effect of renewing affective ties inside an already existing community. The family that is the protagonist of the novel provides the reader with a model for a cathartic exercise of empathy. Thus, I argue, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* participates in the culture of national commemoration of 9/11 by providing a narrative of successful mourning through melodramatic closure. However, the social ties restored by the process of mourning are in the novel firmly anchored in the body, and the historical continuity of the affective community is consequently predicated on the transmission of genetic material. Such physical or organic grounding of the social unit in mourning—the family and the nation—sets certain limits to the affective attachments they solicit, reducing them to familial and familiar contexts.

Different forms of traumatic loss both sever and reestablish family ties in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. This is true even literally: after a long silence, the absent grandfather sends a letter to his wife on the day of their son's death, September 11, 2001 (233). The same event, and the search for the origin of the key that ensues, is also what finally leads Oskar to meet and get to know his grandfather. Apart from the family, Oskar meets other citizens of New York during his search, thus establishing himself as a member of the national community, of which the random sample of US citizens, united in their particular grieving, is representative. The trauma of 9/11 then, paradoxically, at once destroys the normalcy of family life and restores the interrupted continuity of family history through providing an intergenerational link between Oskar and his grandfather. Through the experience of trauma, Oskar, the central consciousness of the novel, becomes inscribed in the overlapping histories of the Schell family and the US nation.

Crucial for the continuity of these histories is an Oedipal line of repetitive identifications rehearsed at several points in the novel. The crisis of the masculine, that is

according to Wiegman typically melodramatic, occurs on 9/11 with Oskar's father's death. Identifying with his dead father, Oskar tries to keep close to his memory through a compulsive listening of the hidden tape with his father's last phone call. Here a vicious circle of Oedipal identifications begins, where everyone recognizes as familiar that which is already part of the family. When the long gone grandfather hears Oskar's voice for the first time, he hears his "own voice, and [his] father's and grandfather's" (276). The reason the grandfather gives to his son when trying to explain why he left them is that "you [his son] could be you." (277) Eventually, however, his son, Oskar's father, becomes uncannily similar to his father despite this apparent request for autonomy. His melancholic attachment is reinforced, similar to Oskar's obsession with the tape with his father's voice, by an obsessive rereading of the only letter his father sent him (277). This overwhelmingly powerful Oedipal history of the Schells suggests that sons "become themselves" through an identification with the lost/absent father, and that way secure the continuity of family history. Consequently, the trauma of 9/11 is in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* represented not simply as a family crisis, but a crisis of family history: the continuity that Foer's fragmentary narrative reconstructs depends on the potential of trauma to establish affective ties, to integrate, and not only shatter societal common ground.

Oskar is finally "healed," and the family unit restored to normal, after several tasks are completed: when he can accept both his father's death and allow his mother to "fall in love again," (324) when he is reconnected to the family history through meeting his grandfather, and when the family history achieves a closed narrative form. It is important to stress that the Schell's historical experience is not only one of trauma, but also one of their successful assimilation, as German Jewish immigrants, into the US body politic. One of the consequences of grandfather's Second World War traumatic experience—again, as with 9/11,

narrated as an intimate story of personal loss—is his relocation to the US. While writing letters about loss, grandfather Thomas also tells the background story of a particular gain; namely, of how the Schells became successful US citizens. Although the story about his Dresden experience is both traumatic and tragic, as the condition for its narration it contains a story of success; namely, the story of grandfather's immigration and his family's eventual assimilation into US society. In other words, the Schells' family history is at the same time an integral part of the history of the United States as a "nation of immigrants."

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close thus narrates 9/11 as a familial trauma that can be successfully worked through, and as a formative moment in the development of an individual: after a mourning ritual, in which he is reconnected with both his grandfather and, symbolically, his dead father, the socially dysfunctional Oskar is successfully assimilated into society. At the same time, however, the traumatic experience allows Oskar to meet his grandfather and become part of the masculine line of family history. Through a traumatic experience, then, the individual is inscribed in a larger history—of the family, of the US nation—that itself achieves continuity through material embodiment in its "newly" integrated subject. Significantly, the "new" subject that enters history thanks to the trauma of 9/11 is a child, an innocent victim, outside the history that inexplicably happens to him and displaces him only in order to have him safely re-placed.

The narrative of the Schells traumatic family history thus enacts a polyvalent process of integration: familial (through the restoration of the heteronormative family unit, with Ron as an acceptable substitute for Oskar's father), social (with Oskar ultimately becoming able to function as a normal child), and national (as the last non-assimilated Schell, the grandfather, apparently returns to a normal life in the US). At the beginning of all of these integrations is the traumatic event—it functions as a point of emergence of an at first

disoriented, but ultimately reformed and socially assimilated subject. The reformation is engendered through a process of symbolic working through, as in the scene in which we find the grandfather and Oskar reunited in the dead father's grave, returning to the common ground zero of their traumatic experience.

As I already suggested, the history that needs to be reestablished after the traumatic break of 9/11 is a history that is already founded on family ties: the community that *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* restores is always already there, it only needs a narrative form that would give it continuity and coherence. For example, Oskar can tell about how he recognized his grandfather, but is unable to recognize why he recognizes him: "To be honest, I don't know what I understood then. I don't think I figured out that he was my grandpa [...] But I must have understood something [...] because why else would I have opened my left hand" (322). Oskar is here mimicking the mute communication of his grandfather, who does not speak, but has a "yes" and "no" tattooed on the palms of his hands. It is through this physical act of repetition, one that Oskar performs without real understanding, that the family history is reestablished. (At the end of the novel, I will argue, the readers also inscribe themselves in the mourning community through the repetition of a physical act.) The same process of automatic recognition is present in the scene when Thomas Jr (Oskar's father), after a long search, finds his father, Thomas Sr (Oskar's grandfather). In a letter, Thomas Sr explains that at that moment he simply knew that the man in front of him was his son, although he never saw him before: "'But if he didn't tell you he was your son, how did you know?' 'I knew because he was my son'" (28). The "norms of recognition" of the other are here established genetically: recognition is possible because it is encoded in an aspect of the subject's being that is both fundamental and out of reach. In these scenes from Foer's novel, "family" emerges as the code word for an organic, trans-historical

communal tie that is recreated through traumatic experience. Trauma provides the material basis for the hence established affective community because of its status as the liminal, and thus presumably most authentic bodily experience.

The rhetoric of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* thus echoes the logic through which the body in pain becomes representative (even allegorical) of the nation: through a process of its healing and restorative mourning after a traumatic event. This event is foundational, since it allows for the community reestablished at the site of trauma to become grounded in the materiality of the ostensibly most unquestionable (because psychically most extreme) bodily experience. *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* can be read as a post-9/11 national allegory because it gives narrative form to the cultural affinity between the notions of organicity of national polity and authenticity of trauma, an affinity that was politicized and arguably instrumentalized in the wake of 9/11. This affinity is often realized, LaCapra reminds us, in the myth of foundational trauma, where trauma unproblematically becomes the basis for communal identity. What the restored familial histories of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* share with this myth is the assumption that "special truths can manifest themselves in traumatized bodies [...]" (Douglass and Vogler 12). *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* thus participates in such "[discursive] practice [of which trauma studies is, these critics argue, typical] of grounding concepts and reality in the body" (ibid.).

The process of authentication of communal ties through a reference to their bodily foundations (or, simply, the community's "anchoring" in the body) is illustrated in the scene in which Oskar is opening his father's grave. Oskar wants to dig up the coffin because "it's the truth, and Dad loved the truth" (321). Oskar is here looking for the traumatic, and consequently authentic core of his subjectivity. The fact that he knows the coffin is empty and

finds "the dictionary definition of emptiness," (321) supports Brooks' contention that melodrama (a response "to the common concern, in a search for the common ground," 200) "at its most lucid" "recognizes the provisionality of its created centers, the constant threat that its plenitude may be a void [...]" (200). But if Foer's melodrama recognizes the fact that the common ground of sociality is ultimately void and open to inscription, it also argues that this void must be filled in, or covered up. The inscription of the void common ground that *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* proposes as the basis of both sociality and history seems to rest on notions of genetic continuity and organic community. When Oskar and his grandfather fill the grave with the letters Thomas Sr never sent to his son, Thomas Sr is symbolically reconnected with his son (by way of the letters), Oskar reunited with his father (by keeping on his hands the dirt, material trace of his father), and the continuity of the masculine family history is restored. The grave becomes the site of social and historical recuperation: through the ritual of a symbolic encounter with his father, Oskar is ultimately freed from the melancholic attachment and is able to re-socialize, while through the equally ritual, but real encounter with his grandfather, he becomes reconnected to family history. By refusing to wash his hands after the visit to the graveyard, Oskar attempts to stay physically connected to his dead father, hoping that some "microscopic material would be there forever" (323). The novel suggests that successful assimilation into society needs such an unseen, but present and material basis of communal ties. The traumatic event of 9/11, that destroys the everyday world of Oskar's family circle, at the same time serves as the condition for his integration into a larger, generational family history and his development into a normally functioning member of society. In general, the family history is in this novel based on traumatic interruptions and losses that allow its protagonists to become subjects of history.

In her *Trauma culture: the politics of terror and loss in media and literature*, Ann

E. Kaplan concludes that "art that takes trauma for its topic but does not allow the spectator so easily to 'survive' the protagonist's death or wound, refuses the safe closure that melodrama perhaps vainly seeks" (125). This remark warns of the social work of post-traumatic fiction that, if melodramatic, turns into a fiction of illusory safety. This sense of national safety that *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* nostalgically attempts to recreate should be understood in the context that I point to in my discussion of Susan Lurie's analysis of the falling man photographs. Basically, I see the melodramatic tone of Foer's novel as being in line with the novel's socially restorative function. Through *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, the traumatized national body politic is given an opportunity to work through the traumatic communal experience by way of narrative closure.¹⁸ I have already said something about the foundations and limits of the communal and historical experience that the novel, through its innocent child-protagonist and a familial emplotment of 9/11, imagines. A closer look at the melodramatic closure that the novel—Kaplan would argue—"vainly seeks," can perhaps make it into something more than an illusory search for imagined transcendence, and provide us with a further insight into the social mechanisms of communal traumatization and recovery after 9/11.

The crucial event of Oskars re-socialization takes place in the scene when he is digging up his father's grave. This moment marks the beginning of transformation of the anti-social Oskar into a socialized child. This change is marked in another way: before the turning point, Oskar is obsessed with the photograph of the man falling from the north WTC tower, the same one that Lurie analyzes in her article and that got revised and reproduced in various forms after 9/11. Oskar's intention is very simple: he is looking for any clue that would

¹⁸ This procedure is very different from the fragmented, non-linear narration in Spiegelman's *In the Shadow of No Towers* or the fundamentally disintegrating narrative mode in Pynchon's work. Obviously, even if melodrama might be the conventional cultural expression of post-traumatic societal recovery, it is certainly not the only one.

suggest the man in the photograph is his father, and thus—in a move echoing that of the media attempts to identify the falling man—provide him with a sense of closure. He manages to let go of the obsession to recognize his father in the image only after digging up his father's grave and thus, as I argue above, successfully assimilating into family history. After that, Oskar tears the pages containing the sequence of images of the falling man out of his notebook (entitled *Stuff That Happened to Me*) and reorders them reversing their chronology. By flipping through the pages, Oskar can now get the impression that the man is falling up, towards the safety of the tower. This temporal reversal makes him imagine what would have happened if time could fly backwards. The novel ends with a sentence that concludes this exercise in nostalgia: "We would have been safe" (326). After the last sentence of the novel, the sequence of fifteen shots of a person falling from one of the WTC towers follows in reversed order, the same one, we presume, reordered and then flipped through by Oskar.

The content of the "we" in the last sentence appears unproblematic. I consider it to pose the central problem of Foer's narrative of 9/11, that I read above as a national allegory of social restoration. The safety Oskar desires thus echoes the general emphasis on national security and safety after 9/11. Safety is an issue Oskar has to deal with throughout the novel: he wants to take jujitsu self-defense classes, imagines ways of flying out of falling skyscrapers by help of birds, avoids the subway fearing another terrorist attack. The conditional form Oskar's nostalgia takes starts from the moment when the safety of a communal "we" is destroyed, suggesting that the safety is now, after a period of crisis, reestablished. The final series of images of the falling man summarizes the restorative logic of the novel: time is moving backwards, as the narrative restores societal ties to the imagined (pre-traumatic) state of safety. Thus, the novel suggests that social restoration in the face of historical trauma necessarily implies a nostalgic return to an idealized past. In that sense, it

appears logical that Oskar's final manipulation of the image, that signals his return to social and psychological normalcy, takes place after a difficult but ultimately successful process of reconciliation with his family, society, and history.

The reader, who automatically repeats Oskar's action by flipping through the last pages of the book, enacts the same restorative/nostalgic ritual of turning back time. Here, Oskar and the reader take the same (infantile) position and reverse time, restoring safety/normalcy through a manipulation of the media image. That image has played an important role in the post-9/11 debates about national traumatization, proper ways of commemorating the tragedy of 9/11, and the troubling role of media images in those processes. As Susan Lurie has argued, that same image of falling people effected a nationwide "trauma of spectatorship" that functioned as a cohesive force in the face of the traumatic event. The closing sequence of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* thus connects both Oskar and the reader to the mourning community that, Lurie argues, finds its sense of safety through an act of distancing from the traumatic media image. By making its readers repeat this final act of working through, the novel grounds its restorative power literally in the body of the readers, making them into participants in the processes of successful national mourning that it enacts, and the resuscitation of an already existing community that it narrates. Moreover, in making the readers revisit the site/sight of trauma, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* points to the crucial role of the media in the process of both vicarious traumatization (Oskar cannot stop looking for a sign of his father in the image) and normalization (through the final manipulation of images). The end of the novel thus fulfills a basic post-9/11 US desire: to return to a presumably innocent age of familiar safety. This effect is anchored in two bodies: an observed (dying) one and an observing (living) one. The mute closing sequence does not, however, simply thematize this desire, it also dramatizes the

conditions of its fulfillment: it turns out that the enactment of the desire—for a full subjectivity, for an organic community—is possible only through manipulation of media images.

In the interview quoted at the beginning of this chapter Foer talks about his mixing of the textual and the visual in his 9/11 novel, and claims that talking about 9/11 "requires a visual language" (Hudson). The material used for the construction of a mixed-media language in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* is nevertheless mostly unproblematic. I now turn to a different kind of work that explores precisely the role of US media after 9/11 and complicates their visual language.

4.

Shock & Own: Mediation and Expropriation *In the Shadow of No Towers*

There is a general agreement about the preeminence of images as the structuring force in the 9/11 archive, and, indeed, in the emergence of 9/11 as *the* event. The fact that the television images of the WTC attacks appeared and were disseminated globally during the attacks themselves certainly contributed to the event's exceptional status. It is as if the event literally took place "live:" the massive mediation that surrounded it seemed to put the viewer in the position of a witness, an uncomprehending passer-by; and simultaneously confer on the act of mediation the status of an accident. Unable to account for the event's meaning and driven by the requirements of the genre, the television networks could merely incessantly repeat the traumatic images. But, as I tried to show in the second chapter, the mediation surrounding the event was not unproblematic. In retrospect, the first televisual loops of the planes crashing in the WTC towers can be considered as the first in the series of violent images that would follow in the period after the attacks. The intensity of mediation and the controlled hypervisibility of destruction on 9/11 and the wars that ensued lead critics to draw comparisons between this event and the historical role of US media in times of war. Nicholas Mirzoeff has thus argued for the emergence of "a militarized form of the image" during the 1990s (73). Insisting on the fact that the military creates and disseminates a vast number of images of war, Mirzoeff claims that "the weapon-image overcame its opponents by sheer relentless persistence." The "weaponized" character of these images, "designed [by the US military] to overwhelm any response" (74) of the viewer, thus echoes the traumatizing power of the 9/11 terroristic imagery witnessed by US spectators. I already pointed to the role of

some iconic images from the 9/11 archive in the process of post-traumatic communal consolidation. A more detailed analysis of the role of images in post-9/11 US, however, would also have to include an analysis of their militarized or "weaponized" uses and include in the 9/11 archive the images from wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, with a special emphasis perhaps on what seem to remain the most "scandalous" ones, the photographs of torture in the US military prison Abu Ghraib in Iraq, that were published in late April 2004 and that caused heated debates in (and about) the US public sphere. The overwhelming, traumatizing persistence of media images of violence and war and the issue of their involvement with the historical forms of US imperialism is an important issue in the visual text that is the subject of this chapter.

An uncanny moment in Spike Lee's 2006 heist thriller *Inside Man* illustrates the structuring force of the traumatic images from the 9/11 archive in the contemporary US imaginary. In a movie with a few direct references to the contemporary political context, primarily in the treatment of a Sikh taxi driver by the NYPD, the iconic post-9/11 images emerge in an opaque form, providing a spectral background for the main line of action. These images appear as flashes in a linear sequence. First, we see the main characters, a policeman and a "fixer," played by Denzel Washington and Jodie Foster respectively, talking in front a jumbo-poster modeled on the American flag. The repeated phrase "We will never forget" forms the stripes, whereas the stars corner is taken by an image of the Statue of Liberty with the Twin Towers in the background. A couple of minutes later, while the policeman (Washington) is being searched by a masked and uniformed bank-robber, the camera suddenly switches angle, giving the viewer an unmotivated bird's view of the scene which now reproduces the silhouette of the infamous "hooded man" photograph from the Abu Ghraib torture scandal. A few minutes after that, the bank robbers are showing to the police a

video of a (fake, it will turn out) execution of a hostage. The video, with the grainy image of a hooded victim being shot in the back of the head, directly references various videos of Iraqi insurgents killing enemy soldiers or civilians, that were disseminated as a part of their war effort. These three iconic moments—9/11, Abu Ghraib, filmed executions in Iraq—are positioned so as to form a continuous backdrop for the ordinary, genre story of the bank robbery. Far from functioning as traumatic interruptions, these images are discretely put on display so as to emphasize the connectedness between the generic, everyday American life and the otherworldly violent history in which the ordinary is at the same time implicated and against which it is defined.¹⁹

These flashing images of trauma can be cited by Lee because by 2006 they have already achieved an iconic status in the US popular visual vocabulary and are easily recognized by the spectatorial community. These images too, like the iconic ones of the WTC attacks, work to reestablish a community of spectators by directing the communal gaze. However, in *Inside Man* a subversive moment occurs with the realization that the homogenization of national community after 9/11 had traumatic consequences for other, non-national subjects, whose traumatic experience is either omitted from US public discourse or represented in decontextualized ways.²⁰ As I have argued above, the re-establishing of

19 The flashes can also be seen as Spike Lee's commentary on Hollywood's involvement with the US military. It is now a well-known fact that soon after September 11 attacks a meeting between filmmakers and defense strategists took place at the Institute for Creative Technology of the University of Southern California: "Among the participants were names such as Steven E. Souza, the manuscript writer behind *Die Hard*, Spike Jonze, the director of *Being John Malkovich*, and David Fincher of *Seven*, *Fight Club* and *The Panic Room*. [...] Aimed at 'imagining' the possible targets of terrorism, the meeting illuminates how the US military can use Hollywood's 'patriotic' help in the war against terrorism" (Diken and Laustsen).

20 The Abu Ghraib torture scandal provides a vivid example for the latter. As Lila Rajiva has passionately argued, the extensive US public debate about torture of Iraqi prisoners took two basic forms, "forensic drama" and "pulp drama": "On one hand we have reports, so numerous, detailed, and specialized that public attention has been lost among them; on the other, singular acts of hostage-taking and beheading [Nick Berg case], which portrayed violence inundating the country whose victims most of all are Iraqis themselves, create the illusion of symmetry in suffering and turn the victimizer into the victim. Abu Ghraib is seen in split screens—one limited and lurid, finding its way to well-publicized court-martials, and the other so encumbered with legal documentation that it seems arcane and politically motivated. What is finally obscured is the broad outlines of a deliberate criminal policy" (158).

communal ties in the United States after 9/11 worked through a particular mediation of trauma: in that sense, the national polity is re-established as the community of the traumatized. Obviously, such conceptualization of collectivity must rest on some variant of "vicarious" or "secondary" trauma. The concept is explained by Ann E. Kaplan: "the reader or viewer of stories or films about traumatic situations may be constituted through vicarious or secondary trauma. Indeed, most of us experience trauma in the 'secondary' rather than direct position, for good or ill" (39). In other words, it is not necessary to experience an event first-hand in order to be, in some way, traumatized by it. Since this process necessarily involves the work of media, Kaplan also acknowledges that the images of trauma can be easily manipulated. The media images of the Iraq war, for example, are "fragmented" representations of human suffering that do not provide any analysis of the complex context that caused it (Kaplan 95). As such, they produce "empty" empathy, i.e. empathy that is not grounded in any kind of deeper understanding of the represented events. She links this kind of empathy to sentimental representation, one that insists on individual stories and leaves the systemic causes of traumatic events unexplained (94-95). The decontextualized and sometimes sentimental images of suffering, however, always function inside some kind of narrative or interpretive frame, be it the story of US heroism, national tragedy, or personal loss. The interpretive framework, supported by various representational practices from mediatic to literary ones, sets the limit for the constitution of traumatized communities. It is this problem that I want to look into in my reading of Art Spiegelman's autobiographic post-traumatic comic book *In the Shadow of No Towers*. Spiegelman's 9/11 book focuses on the hegemonic role of the media in the process through which individual traumatic experience is translated into communal vicarious trauma, a state of the nation which, Spiegelman vigorously argues, functioned as an affective basis for repressive domestic and aggressive

foreign policies that effectively instrumentalized human loss for the material interest of American power-elites.

The reactions of US media after 9/11, as numerous studies show, were for the most part uncritically over-patriotic and in line with the aggressive policies of the government. Renowned journalists Christiane Amanpour and Dan Rather, for example, talked about "self-censorship" in the US media coverage of the "war on terror" after 9/11 (BBC News 2002). To a large extent, the public debate about the limits of dissent in the time of war took the form of a contention over representation. Thus, the censorship of certain images (the "jumpers" of September 11, US casualties in Iraq) for many pointed out the complicity of the mainstream/corporate media with government policies. Once again, it was made obvious that the terrorist act consisted not only in killing and material destruction, but also worked through a hijacking of the media in a spectacle of violence. But if the terrorists, as Jean Baudrillard claimed immediately after the attacks, used "[the system's] real-time images and their instantaneous global diffusion" (412), this exploitation was possible only because of an already existing systemic power of media images to affect national and global subjects. The fact made evident on September 11, that the media simultaneously produced information and traumatization, only showed the full force of their potential for subjectivation, or, in other words, their implicit political power. The retaliatory wars in Afghanistan and Iraq that followed the 9/11 attacks stressed further the already recognized military force of the visual media (leading Mirzoeff to theorize the emergence of the "weaponized image"). Although this recognition was brought to new levels by the general technological advancement (that is more often than not related to military expenditures), the intimate connection between the workings of US media and US war machinery is part of a long-standing tradition. It is my contention that Art Spiegelman's 9/11 comic book *In the Shadow of No Towers* works

primarily as an attempt to rethink, on the one hand, the critical potential of the visual media, and, on the other, its complicity with the contemporary politics of violence and the history of US imperialism. Far from representing 9/11 as a radical break, an end of US innocence, or a beginning of a new age, the event is in Spiegelman's account a moment of traumatic repetition in which past histories erupt with a force that shatters any simple notion of uniqueness or homogeneity of the present.

Immediately after 9/11, most US comics joined the nation in mourning. Some of them, reusing the familiar superhero figures, responded to 9/11 by issuing a call for retaliation and playing up the image of a strong, militarized and predominantly masculine national body.²¹ It was a graphic volume of a different kind that most blatantly marked the encounter between the medium of comics and the official account of 9/11. The graphic adaptation of *The 9/11 Commission Report* represented another step in the attempt to disseminate the official truth about what for many remained an inadequately explained event. Whatever opinion about the findings of the Commission one might have, it is undeniable that the graphic version remains rather faithful to the original (cf. Jacobson and Colón). There is, however, a new, didactic aspect that the graphic adaptation adds to the Commission's narrative: more than anything else perhaps, it teaches its readers the simplicity of recognizing a terrorist. The graphic adaptation of the Report, not unlike like the controversial film version, *The Path to 9/11*, relies on old orientalist stereotypes in order to depict the 9/11 terrorists. By explicitly racializing the enemy, these visual versions of the Report simultaneously demonize the racial and cultural other. In fact, a certain degree of narrative simplification that aims at ensuring easy reception is what characterizes both the majority of 9/11 comics and the graphic version of the *9/11 Commission Report*. This tendency towards simplification was matched only by the scope of the Report's dissemination: the book was not

²¹ For an overview of post-9/11 US comics production cf. Jenkins.

only a national bestseller in 2004, but saw also two different film versions and is available for free download on the Web.²² What the visual versions of the Report offer is certain knowledge: be it about what exactly happened on 9/11 and why, or, more indirectly, who the enemy is and how to recognize him. While Art Spiegelman's 9/11 work is wary of any direct engagement with particular representations of 9/11, it aims at a general critique of the role of US corporate media in relation to the September 11 attacks and the subsequent wars in the Middle East. The alternative comic author, even after gaining canonical status with his *Maus* in the early 1990s, thus remained distanced from the world of mass-market sensibility, national superheroes and certain truths.

Spiegelman gained his popularity and critical acclaim after the publishing of *Maus* in 1986 and 1991, a two-part graphic novel about his father's experience during the Holocaust. *Maus* dealt with its topic, one often described as unrepresentable, with what critics generally described as an unparalleled degree of narrative subtlety. One of the problems Spiegelman continues to work on in his 9/11 book was also present in *Maus*; namely, the role of the visual media in the transmission of traumatic memories. In *Maus*, Spiegelman often directly cites archival photographs from concentration camps, juxtaposing them to the wavering and fragmented tale of the survivor. The two elements, the reused documentary image and the personal narrative, work together in the process of reconstruction of a personal history through a specific employment in Spiegelman's image-text. Marianne Hirsch has argued that Spiegelman's recontextualization of archival documents in *Maus* is an essential

22 The films based on the Report are *The 9/11 Commission Report* (2006) and the two-part miniseries *The Path to 9/11* (2006). *The Path to 9/11* would certainly deserve a separate and more detailed analysis, if for nothing else, then because of the controversy this "docudrama" caused in the US, with some members of the 9/11 Commission issuing statements criticizing the movie's historical accuracy. Nevertheless, the movie was aired with no commercial interruptions on ABC and was supposed to be offered to elementary schools as material for history teaching. The latter plan was abandoned after pressures from the public. This, however, should not prevent us from recalling that, for Benedict Anderson, the subjects of a nation are formed through "a systematic historiographical campaign deployed by the state mainly through the state's school system" (201). For more information on the issue see McKinley and Think Progress. The Think Progress blog's special coverage of the controversy can be accessed at <<http://thinkprogress.org/?tag=Path+to+911>>.

part of "a postmemorial working through" (238). However, *In the Shadow of No Towers* does not easily harmonize images of trauma with a linear narrative. Indeed, linearity itself is disrupted by the event, suggesting that for Spiegelman 9/11 destroyed, among other things, the narrative continuum of history. Nevertheless, the text does on various levels recontextualize the media images of 9/11, thus countering the tendency towards what Ann Kaplan has termed "empty," decontextualized empathy, with a historically informed, although fragmented and often allusive visual narrative.

In the Shadow of No Towers represents a challenging reading experience already at the level of structure. It is a book composed of the author's thoughts on September 11, 2001 and the post-9/11 American present in the form of a narrative essay. The central part of the book consists of Spiegelman's one-page series of comics published serially in *Die Zeit* (and later other European magazines) after 9/11. According to Spiegelman, American newspapers, *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times*, were reluctant to publish *In the Shadow of No Towers* at the time of its inception, between 2002 and 2003. In the Fall of 2003 *The New York Times* did include some of the images from *In the Shadow of No Towers* in one of its issues, but Spiegelman considered this to be a case of too little and too late, an offering to the ritualistic pre-election US public debate. The only American paper that regularly published Spiegelman's 9/11 work was *Forward*, a small Jewish newspaper (cf. "The Sky is Falling!" section in Spiegelman). The second part of the book opens with another essay, Spiegelman's introduction to "The Comic Supplement" in which he reproduces some turn of the twentieth century US comics that played an essential role in the establishment of the new medium. The old comics are also cited in almost all of the *In the Shadow of No Towers* plates, in which characters from "The Comic Supplement" are found in contemporary, post-9/11 situations.

This connection to another historical moment is crucial for Spiegelman's 9/11 book and is evoked already on the opening flyleaf, where Spiegelman reproduces the front page of Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World* from September 11, 1901. Across the yellowed newspaper page, the title of the volume and the image of the burning north WTC tower are layered. The *World* headline reads: "President's Wound Reopened; Slight change for Worse." The president in question is William McKinley, who was shot by the self-proclaimed anarchist Leon Czolgosz and eventually died of the wounds. The analogy between 2001 and 1901 established through this reference is not accidental. As Hilary Chute has suggested, Spiegelman here "unmoors the trauma of 9/11 from 2001," and points out "McKinley's sustained relevance to our current President in matters of empire: McKinley was the president who assented to the U.S.'s first imperial interventions in Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Phillipines" (240). Spiegelman is aware of the imperialist history that emerges as the literal background for his critical account of 9/11. He brings the two historical moments together explicitly when referring to the birth of US comics in Pulitzer's and Hearst's newspapers:

About a hundred years and two blocks away from Ground Zero, Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst, the twin titans of modern journalism, gave birth to the newspaper comic strip as a by-product of their fierce circulation war (a competition that led to actual war when their papers inflamed public outrage over what may well have been the accidental sinking of an American ship in Cuba). Their distorted reporting of the Spanish-american War—America's first colonialist adventure—would have made Fox New proud. ("The Comic Supplement" in Spiegelman)

The figure of McKinley allows Spiegelman to establish the initial connection between the present day US military presence in the Middle East and what are generally seen as the

formative years of the overseas expansion of US power. Moreover, it allows him to point to the history of the complicity of US media in the same imperialist project. By 1890, Richard H. Miller writes, "the United States was politically, socially, and economically prepared to accept the blessings—and burdens—of imperialism. All that was wanting was the proper time and circumstance, that favorable opportunity usually (and improperly) described as an accident of history" (6). The "accident" arrived with the sinking of the battleship *Maine*, which, although to date unexplained, served as a justification for the US invasion of Cuba in 1898 under McKinley's leadership. For Christopher Sharrett, "[t]he *Maine* episode is especially important in the post-9/11 period as a model of how corporate news and popular culture can use a provocative incident to enforce state doctrine" (127). As with 9/11—that Spiegelman at one point describes as being "hijacked" by "brigands suffering from war fever" (4), accompanying the text by an illustration of Bush and Cheney flying an American eagle—the *Maine* incident too was constructed as the "key event" in retrospect, as the presumed cause of what turned out to be an ongoing imperialist project. In truth, in both historical instances the event did not significantly change the power relations already in place, but provided an opportunity for the execution of existing tendencies in US foreign and domestic policy. There are other illuminating parallels²³ between the post-9/11 Bush administration policies and "America's first colonialist adventure," but Spiegelman's main interest lies elsewhere—it is the involvement of the media with war politics that is, in various ways, brought to the foreground in *In the Shadow of No Towers*. Spiegelman constantly distances himself from the work of US media: in the introduction, when complaining about the "complacent tone" of *The New Yorker* after 9/11 and his decision to publish in Europe, and

23 One such parallel is drawn by historian Joseph Smith: "According to the Joint Resolution and the Teller Amendment of April 1898, the United States had entered into war with Spain to bring peace and freedom to the Cuban people. [...] However, the McKinley administration had paid minimal attention to postwar planning" (216). Similar "liberatory" discourse was used by the United States after it became clear that there was no connection between 9/11 and Saddam Hussein, as the rationale for the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

throughout the book, in his attempt to reconstruct his memory of the day against the overwhelming and traumatizing presence of the media images.

Clearly, one crucial problem of *In the Shadow of No Towers* is the mediation of the images of violence. In pointing back to the Spanish-American War and the role of *The World & The Journal* in soliciting public support for the war, Spiegelman stresses the close, mutually supporting relationship between the US mass-media and imperialist politics. During the Spanish-American War, according to Jeffords and Rabinovitz "the [media] effort was not so much one to convey public information as to produce an emotionalized patriotism" (23). The fact that these authors are drawing parallels between the *first* Gulf War and the reporting of Hearst's and Pulitzer's journalists speaks to the historical persistence of the media-military involvement, for which, Jeffords and Rabinovitz suggest, the war of 1898 set the standards.²⁴ Uncritical "emotionalized patriotism" is the narrative mode *In the Shadow of No Towers* openly works against. Indeed, the book can be seen as an exploration of the possibilities of a more critical public discourse about traumatic historical events and their aftermath. Obviously, Spiegelman is no newcomer to such a topic. Unlike in *Maus*, however, Spiegelman's narrative is this time more directly political and marked by a clear sense of urgency. The traumatic event in *In the Shadow of No Towers* becomes an opportunity for an elaborate meditation on the social work of popular visual practices.

There are several moments in the text which point to the construction of an alternative mediatic strategy in *In the Shadow of No Towers*. Spiegelman's distancing from the media is an initial move through which the authenticity of his own position is established:

²⁴ In this context, it is interesting to read Charles Brown's remark on the position of journalists in the Spanish-American War: "Some of those who covered the war afterward recognized it as marking the end of the golden age of the free-wheeling correspondent." Brown goes on to quote Richard Harding Davis' complaint about the end of free war reporting: "[It] does not mean that in the next great war men who write for the newspapers will not accompany each army, but their position is over, likely to be that of prisoners of war, and what they will write will be so severely edited and censored, that it may not 'furnish information to the enemy,' be so long withheld from publication that it will furnish information neither to the enemy nor anyone else" (Brown, vii).

"I wanted to sort out the fragments of what I'd experienced from the media images that threatened to engulf what I actually saw" ("The Sky is Falling" in Spiegelman). Here, Spiegelman establishes an opposition between his witnessing of the event and the media images, which are understood as a social force that destroys the authenticity of immediate experience. For Spiegelman, the "pivotal image" of 9/11 is the image of the burning north tower just before it collapsed. Significantly, it is an image that "didn't get photographed or videotaped into public memory" ("The Sky is Falling!" in Spiegelman). The protagonist "first saw it all live—unmediated" (1). On the other hand, "public memory"—based on which, as the theorists of nationalism argue, communities are imagined—is to a significant extent produced through the work of the media. The realm of the personal, defined by the intimate, first-hand memory of the traumatic event, appears in Spiegelman as a refuge from the inauthentic world of a second-degree, manipulative mediation. The exposing of media inauthenticity is perhaps most obvious in the episode on plate 10, where the author gets kicked out of a TV station after refusing to conform to the post-9/11 displays of public patriotism. Spiegelman constantly stresses the distinction between those who experienced trauma, either as victims or witnesses, and those who only saw it on TV. This distinction is for the most part mapped out on the opposition between New York City residents and the rest of the US. Apart from insisting on the local, sub-national character of the event, this differentiation points to the inherently problematic moment of mediation between the local and the national. In other words, it is through this distinction that the role of the media in nation-building also becomes visible.

It is crucial to note that, despite Spiegelman's fierce attacks on the work of the media, there is no attempt in *In the Shadow of No Towers* to assert a possibility of non-mediated memory or to withdraw to a private space through a melancholic rejection of the

public world. Instead, as suggested above, there are hints in *In the Shadow of No Towers* to the existence of a possibility of an alternative, historically informed representational practice. Spiegelman offers his vision of the comic book as an ideal medium for such a project. The structure of the page in the first part of the book is exemplary in that respect. The unusually large, one-page format of comics gives the readers a sense of simultaneity of temporal and spatial layers spread over the page. On virtually every page the content can be divided in the same way: there are scenes from the US everyday, moments of critique of government response to 9/11, bits and pieces of media images, the omnipresent ghostlike image of the burning WTC tower, all wrapped in a testimonial account of personal trauma. Moreover, nineteenth- and twentieth-century comics constantly reappear as an intrusion of the past into the present, at one point described as a "source for [the contemporary] dominant metaphor" (1). Indeed, the past is in *In the Shadow of No Towers* a necessary screen for the understanding of the present-day trauma. The traumatic event, then, does not figure simply as a disruption of the present; it is represented as a historical moment that allows for an insight into the various structuring forces of the contemporary US everyday. At several points, Spiegelman suggests that the medium of comics provides the means through which such complex conceptualizations of history can be represented: for him, TV is "a medium *almost* as well suited as comics for dealing in abstractions" (1, my emphasis). What makes such contentious authorial statements possible, Hilary Chute argues, is the fact that Spiegelman's project is supported by a structural correspondence between the comic book form and the psychic content of trauma:

[I]f the twin towers are traumatically "tumbling structures," and he [the author-protagonist] is in a paranoid "shattered state," the comics page is uniquely equipped to register that fragmentation. [...] Confronting the discourse of history

with the discourse of art, Spiegelman interrogates the ontological status of the past. In *No Towers*, comics are presented as the only way to organize the fragmented, discursive structure of paranoia and trauma. (236) [...]

No Towers suggests that comics provides a political and/or ethical shape to trauma by making its processes graphically legible—that is, readable—on the page. (240-41)

Chute emphasizes the convenience of the comic form for representation of traumatic experience and relates its ability to register the shattering, disorienting effect of trauma to a historiographic interrogation of the "ontological status of the past." This intersection between the experiences of trauma and history is not accidental, and, as Chute's observation and Spiegelman's work evidence, can be related to the essentially dislocated temporal structure of traumatic experience.

Thus, Spiegelman's claim that "[t]ime stands still at the moment of trauma" (2), supported by the effect of simultaneity of the one-page format, where past and present are mapped onto a single fragmented surface, speaks also of a moment of rupture in the texture of history. The above line of thought suggests that the format of Spiegelman's work corresponds not only to the arrested time of trauma that Spiegelman explicitly mentions, but also registers a particular historical consciousness at work. This consciousness, that underlies Spiegelman's visual historiographic narrative can be productively related to what Walter Benjamin in his *Theses on the Philosophy of History* refers to as "materialistic historiography" (1988: 262). The underlying idea of Benjamin's philosophy is that history does not unfold according to a course or progress towards an imagined goal that would provide the point of reference for the emergence of past events as "historical." Instead, Benjamin insists, every "now" is a possible event, a possible decisive turn, with each

historical moment possessing a revolutionary, illuminative potential. Benjamin is interested in a "present which is not a transition, but in which time stands still and has come to a stop" (1988: 262). In this arrested moment, Benjamin claims, the historian establishes a "unique experience with the past," "blast[s] open the continuum of history" (ibid.), and "grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one" (1988: 263). In this view, history, not unlike in Spiegelman's account of 9/11, is not underwritten by notions of progress or causal continuity, but defined by the eruption of the past into the present, following a pattern of cyclic repetition. 9/11, as conceptualized in Spiegelman's book, translates Benjamin's "moment of now," in which history is being written, onto the fragmented and layered surface of the comic book page. At the same time, Spiegelman's work associates the experience of trauma with a view of history by which the significant past erupts into the present. Benjamin adds: "[...] no fact that is a cause is for that very reason historical. It became historical posthumously, as it were, through events that may be separated from it by thousands of years" (1988: 262). Here, past events are recognized as "eventful" because they form a "constellation" with the present moment. To see this constellation for Benjamin means to bring the past into a generative dialogue with the present. In other words, past events are recognized only in relation to another, present event. In my reading, Spiegelman's 9/11 text shows how a Benjaminian, non-linear and anti-teleological approach to history can highlight the conceptual historiographic potential of one particular aspect of trauma: the belated temporality of traumatic experience. Trauma is always recognized in retrospect ("posthumously," to use Benjamin's phrase), through another occurrence that triggers the traumatic memory and links the present moment to the past, traumatic event. Like Benjamin's present moment, then, the moment of the return of the traumatic event also implies the emergence of a significant past.

This view of history can help explain why the turn of the twentieth century comics erupt into the post-9/11 present. As I suggested above, by recontextualizing the early comics that were published in New York newspapers that participated in the creation of a pro-war public opinion a hundred years ago, Spiegelman draws parallels between the two historical moments. This, however, only partly explains the narrative strategy of *In the Shadow of No Towers*. The productive, Benjaminian move of the image-text is in the recognition that the past emerges as meaningful through the traumatic experience of the present, as the century-old comics that Spiegelman reproduces and comments upon are brought into dialogue with the post-9/11 moment. In such a constellation, the Happy Hooligan's Arab adventure can be read as an allegory of 9/11 (Spiegelman IV), the WTC towers can be recognized in Nemo's adventures in Slumberland (Spiegelman VI),^f and Ignatz the mouse from Krazy Kat can become Osama bin Laden. In turn, Spiegelman often transforms himself and his family in the early comic characters from "The Comic Supplement," in order to criticize present-day US policies. At one level, this procedure could be read as a symptom of post-traumatic disorientation, a displacement of contemporary personal trauma onto distant and unrelated histories. However, the existing historical parallels suggest otherwise.

Spiegelman shows that the traumatic "new normal" is far from unprecedented or exceptional: the historical allusions and eruptions of the past suggest that there is a history to the post-9/11 policies in the US. As a reviewer has noted, "[a]t the end of his book Spiegelman reproduces early 20th century comics that deal with many of the same concerns coloring his own panels: rampant patriotism and nationalism, fears of falling buildings, declarations of war, and large waves of immigration" (Anker 13). The assumed radical newness of the post-9/11 state of emergency is thus exposed as being based on an act of

deliberate forgetting of the past. In the last plate of Spiegelman's 9/11 comic, this forgetting is tied up with the acts of public memorialization: "Nothing like commemorating an event to help you forget it," writes Spiegelman about the 2003 national commemoration of 9/11. The act of memorialization is thus represented merely as an opportunity for national homogenization or, in Spiegelman's words, "jingoistic strutting" (10). The process corresponds to the logic of nation building which, as Renan and Anderson argue, rests on an act of constitutive forgetting of a violent, often traumatic past event. According to David Simpson, such forgetting is typical of the general logic of commemoration: "All verbal commemorations and material monuments [...] put into place what they claim is already there, and in so doing preempt the possibilities for alternative acts of memory" (31). Such political uniformity of public memory in the service of nationalist politics after 9/11 is precisely what Spiegelman's text refutes, insisting on the partiality of the inscription of the historical event that is used as a justification for government policies. At the end of Spiegelman's comic-book reflections on 9/11, the event is made to disappear through the acts of corporate mediation and national memorialization: "The Towers have come to loom far larger than life... but they seem to get smaller every day... Happy anniversary" (10). What begins as an inscription, ends with erasure from history. The social work of such ambivalent memorial logic supports the emergence of the protagonist of public memorialization; here, this position is taken in the first place by a reconsolidated national body.

However, contrary to this homogenizing tendency of national memorialization, Spiegelman's traumatized narrator-protagonist constantly resists any determinate narrative position. Haunted by an at once trivial and significant history, Spiegelman can speak about his traumatic experience only by employing past voices, assuming alien forms and reproducing other media, such as TV screens, photographs, comics, posters, and ads. This

procedure suggests that it might not be possible to adequately speak about historical trauma in one voice, or from a presumably fixed temporal position. The past, here reincarnated in old comics, functions as a screen for a narrative about the traumatic present. That way, the introduction of the historical dimension in this post-traumatic narrative of 9/11 functions as a statement about the impossibility of monologic and self-centered national being.²⁵ Through references to another historical moment, with which Spiegelman's image-text establishes a formative relationship (because it is this historical constellation with the past that allows him to speak about the present), *In the Shadow of No Towers* expands the limits of the event around which it revolves. However, this interpretive expansion is not only temporal: the return of the century-old comics from sensationalist newspapers that, Spiegelman stresses, saw their economic interest in supporting an imperialist war, also points to the post-9/11 disturbance in the imaginary geography of the US nation-state, since this return implicitly references the history of the nation's aggressive presence in other parts of the world. But, although Iraq, as the main site of the post-9/11 US military intervention, gets mentioned often by the comic's protagonist, it never becomes the subject of direct visualization. This is certainly due to Spiegelman's reluctance to rely on media images which he sees as participating in the commodification and instrumentalization of 9/11. This reluctance of an opponent of the war becomes especially understandable in the light of Mirzoeff's contention that the only images of the war available in the United States are the ones recorded by the cameras embedded in and distributed under the strict control of the US military (74-75). The war, however, does appear in *In the Shadow of No Towers* in an oblique, allusive form. On plate 8, there is an image of the Statue of Liberty being pulled down by ropes, with President Bush wielding a sledgehammer in the foreground. This is a pictorial paraphrase of the much

25 This procedure is similar to Pynchon's temporal dislocation of post-9/11 issues roughly to the same period Spiegelman refers to in *In the Shadow of No Towers*, although in Pynchon's *Against the Day* the form of the novel allows for a more of an analytical-allegorical approach.

televised image of one of the most iconic moments of the war in Iraq, the carefully staged toppling of Saddam Hussein's statue in Baghdad in April 2003. The position of the Statue and the presence of a hammer clearly echo the Baghdad scene. Through the spatial dislocation of a military image, that was at the time of its broadcast meant to symbolize American victory in Iraq, Spiegelman figuratively brings the war home. (This procedure is quite similar to the translation of war icons into US everyday that was mentioned earlier in relation to Spike Lee's *Inside Man*.) Through this spatial and temporal overlap, identity is established, and the actions of the United States in Iraq are shown to have equally destructive consequences at home. The same procedure, however, reveals the limits of Spiegelman's vision. In his insistent reliance only on personal experience, his representation must remain contained within the national sphere. Indeed, it seems that for Spiegelman, despite the fierce critique, the war in Iraq remains primarily an American tragedy. Even if Spiegelman's counternarrative of 9/11 does warn of the existence of troubling histories illuminative for the current state of the US, it remains trapped in the traumatic reenacting of the traumatic event (9/11, Iraq). What *In the Shadow of No Towers* does manage to provide for, in the first place to an American reader, is a set of new interpretive frameworks within which the traumatic event can be contextualized, and, perhaps, worked through.

There is an insightful passage in the introduction to the volume, that speaks about the primacy of the US-proclaimed "global war on terror" in Spiegelman's perspective on 9/11. There, Spiegelman explains his initial idea for the book: he intended to draw a story about how he drove to retrieve his son from school on 9/11, and broke down in tears when finding him; about his daughter being told to dress in red, white and blue for the first day of school after the attacks; about "the rumors of women patriotically rushing into the wreckage to give comfort to rescue workers at night" ("The Sky is Falling" in Spiegelman). All of these ideas

were abandoned after, as Spiegelman puts it, "the government began to move into full dystopian big Brother mode and hurtle America into a colonialist adventure in Iraq" (ibid.). In other words, Spiegelman changed his mind about his 9/11 book—topics that dealt primarily (although not exclusively) with personal relationships, familial affection, and individual comfort after the tragedy were either altogether left out or adapted to a more overtly political, critical and satirical representational mode. Spiegelman claims that *In the Shadow of No Towers* was informed not only by the trauma of 9/11, but also by the government response to 9/11—surveillance at home and war in Iraq in the first place: "all the rage I'd suppressed after the 2000 election, all the paranoias I'd barely managed to squelch immediately after 9/11, returned with a vengeance. New traumas began competing with still-fresh wounds and the nature of my project began to mutate" (ibid.). From an intimate, family story of trauma and fear, *In the Shadow of No Towers* became a preeminently political comic about the traumas of the "new" everyday, where the post-9/11 US domestic policies functioned as a trigger for the return of the traumatic event that was used to justify them. This dynamic betrays the belated character of trauma: the first trauma (of 9/11) is reawakened by an equally traumatic post-9/11 government repression. The later experience thus gives shape to the first one and acts as the precondition for its return. This mutuality is reflected in Spiegelman's assertion that he is "equally terrorized by Al-Qaeda and by his own government" (2). I would like to emphasize this shift of focus from the initial familial to the public and political in Spiegelman's plans for *In the Shadow of No Towers*, since I see it as a way of situating the 9/11 event within more expansive, political and economic contexts.

The familial, personal and local aspects of the event are however not eliminated from Spiegelman's narrative. The sporadic insistence on his mental state (the author's self-diagnosed PTSD) and the experience of his family is contrasted to the media images that

surround them. The mass-media, it is worth stressing again, are in *In the Shadow of No Towers* the hegemonic agent of communal/national homogenization. But, Spiegelman does not altogether refuse the communality of traumatic experience in order to completely withdraw into a story of family fear and reunion. On the contrary, in the statements like "[n]othin' like the end of the world to help bring folks together" (7), he stresses the power of the traumatic event to create expansive communal ties. The target of Spiegelman's critique is a particular translation of individual trauma into communal experience performed by the US media, not the process of the constitution of the traumatized community itself. Opposing the New Yorkers' experience of 9/11 to a "small town [he] visited in Indiana" that is "draped in flags," Spiegelman insists on the local character of the event and realizes he is not a "rootless," but a "rooted cosmopolitan" (4). The combined traumas of 9/11 and post-9/11 produce in him a new realization, about "the depth of my affection for the chaotic neighborhood that I can honestly call home. Allegiance to this unmelted nugget in the melting pot is as close as I comfortably get to patriotism" ("The Sky is Falling!" in Spiegelman). In an attempt to critically distance himself from the media-supported, nationalist government policies, Spiegelman grounds his traumatic experience on a subnational, local level, simultaneously keeping in sight the possibility for a trans- or inter-national framing of the historical event and the subject of traumatic history. Thus, in Spiegelman's text, unlike in the more melodramatically inclined ones like Foer's, we witness a politicization of what is initially introduced as an individual traumatic experience. This politicization occurs in an attempt to reflect on the wider social implications of the traumatic event (growing nationalism, radicalization of the American political scene, economic recession, imperialist war) and thus move beyond the strictly personal or familial frame of reference. This move exemplifies an alternative to the dominant narrative of 9/11 disseminated through mainstream

media. Through an emphasis on historical continuity, a simultaneously local and transnational recontextualization of the event, and politicization of personal trauma, *In the Shadow of No Towers* creates a counternarrative that productively illustrates the inherent complexity of the historical event and the impossibility of its reduction to a single interpretive framework.

The localization of traumatic experience is in *In the Shadow of No Towers* related to the presence of another significant historical layer. According to Kristian Versluys, the Holocaust is "the unwritten intertext or hidden substratum for [Spiegelman's] 9/11 interpretation" (983). In Versluys' view, Spiegelman's first-hand experience of 9/11 is conditioned by his second-hand experience, his "postmemory" in Hirsch's terms, of the Holocaust. The trauma of 9/11 thus provides Spiegelman with an opportunity for reflection on his identity, a process illustrated in his transformation into a character from his Holocaust book, *Maus*. This view finds support in Spiegelman's words: "I *finally* understand why some Jews didn't leave Berlin right after Kristallnacht" (4). 9/11 here revives the trauma of the Holocaust, and functions as a condition for its deeper understanding, suggesting that if the Holocaust is a "conceptual screen" for the understanding of 9/11, as Versluys claims, it is also—in a Benjaminian moment of illumination—the other way round. It is interesting that Spiegelman's recognition of his Jewishness is brought about in relation to a post-traumatic sense of local belonging. It is the attachment to a specific place—"a pang of affection for his familiar, vulnerable streets" (4)—that makes this identification viable. It is possible to view this return of the Holocaust in Spiegelman's account of 9/11 as a return to the "founding trauma" of his Jewish identity. In the moment of traumatization, when the foundations of the self are shaken, we witness the return to the "authentic" core of subjectivity—both for Spiegelman as a Jewish American, and Spiegelman as the author who deserved world fame through his work on the Holocaust in *Maus*. But, this quest for authenticity and grounding of

identity is balanced by the call for a more expansive community. After noting that there is "[n]othin' like the end of the world to help bring folks together," the author-protagonist imagines what it would be like if a globe, and not the American flag "sprout[ed] out of the embers of Ground Zero" (7). Trauma hence does, as the common theoretical view has it, historically and geographically ground the traumatized subject, thus laying the foundations of authenticity for a collapsed sense of self. However, *In the Shadow of No Towers* shows that the return to the foundational potential of trauma does not necessarily imply the emergence of a feeling of national belonging. Spiegelman's text, through a process of complex spatial and temporal layering, displays the potential multivalency of affective attachments in the face of trauma.

Spiegelman's work thus explicitly criticizes and works against the national homogenization as enacted through the traumatizing media images after the September 11 terrorist attacks. But, if the amnesiac hegemonic regulation of affect post-9/11 can be resisted through a historically informed resuscitation of various sub- and supra- national commitments, as Spiegelman's book suggests, there are other points of regulation that, the book also intimates, prove to be far more inflexible to representational subversion. At several points in the book, Spiegelman registers the tendency towards commodification of the trauma of 9/11. In the immediate aftermath of the attacks, the "quiet Soho street was filled with *paparazzi*. And camera crews remained on their corner, at the perimeter of Ground Zero, for days after..." (4). This exploitative process, however, and the work of the media involved with it, has to be viewed in the context of the general logic of the ruling economic model. When contemplating the first commemoration of the attacks, Spiegelman observes: "I can still *vividly* remember the horrors of Ground Zero on September 11... 2002! I was an *eyewitness* to the bombardment of kitsch on sale that day... and I almost became a participant!" (10).²⁶ Here,

²⁶ Commodification of the national tragedy, especially through memorialization, is the subject of Dana Heller's

Spiegelman's language suggests an overlap between the past trauma and the present events that followed it: an eyewitness to the horrific tragedy of 9/11, he now witnesses the horrors of the commercial exploitation of 9/11. These seem to contribute to a post-traumatic sense of disorientation, with the trauma now being revived in the form of souvenir commodity. The protagonist's unstable and shifting state of mind is thus also a result of his inability to approach the traumatic event on his own, so to speak, foregoing the apparently inevitable assimilation of most personal experience into the dominant channels of communication and economic transaction. In this context, the constant overlapping between temporal, spatial and existential levels in *In the Shadow of No Towers* is not only a symptom of a post-traumatic disorder, but also a textual suture connecting what are normally perceived as disparate spheres of human experience. The matter of commodification of trauma, that Spiegelman hints at, in particular helps illuminate not only the complex textual mechanisms of Spiegelman's work, but some neglected aspects of trauma in its theoretical elaborations.

In his extensive and informed analysis of representation of trauma in *In the Shadow of No Towers*, Kristiaan Versluys stresses Spiegelman's resistance to the media appropriation and political instrumentalization of the event:

The media stars have appropriated the event, even while it happened. They have reduced first-hand experience to the level of a news show and cheapened trauma into mere sensationalism. That is, they have immediately *expropriated the real owners* of the event, those who underwent it personally or watched it from close by. (1997, my emphasis)

It is certainly necessary to distinguish between the first-hand survivors and witnesses of the traumatic event and those trying to manipulate specific traumas for particular interests—this is precisely what Spiegelman accuses the US government of doing, with the help of corporate

and Marita Sturken's books.

media, with 9/11. From a slightly different perspective, however, it is worth noting how often the subject's relationship to the traumatic event is formulated in terms of property and ownership. Versluys' "expropriation of the real owners of the event" repeats the conventional conceptualization of experience in terms of ownership, a more general discursive move certainly not limited either to Versluys or Spiegelman. In support of his observations about Spiegelman's critique of the government's instrumentalization of 9/11, Versluys refers to Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub's claim in their influential *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, that the "literature of testimony [such as *In the Shadow of No Towers*] puts into action a question of belonging. To whom do the dead belong?" (997). Jonathan Safran Foer's 9/11 novel operates with a very similar conceptual apparatus. Oskar is upset by the fact that he can't see the photographs of the falling people in US media, and has to look for them on foreign Internet sites: "It makes me incredibly angry that people all over the world can know things that I can't, because it happened *here*, and happened to *me*, so shouldn't it be *mine*?" (256). Again, the traumatic event *belongs* to the ones closest to it, and they articulate what LaCapra calls "fidelity to trauma" in terms of ownership and property. Here, expropriation and ownership emerge as virtually the only terms in which traumatic loss can be articulated. Since a part of trauma studies is concerned with the political instrumentalization and commodification of trauma, the persistence of proprietary language would seem to point to a potential contradiction: if the critics are concerned with the possible commodification of trauma, why do they insist on conferring on it the status of property in the first place? Does the notion of owning an experience create the condition for (and imply a certain degree of) its commodification, or can it work to preclude it? And finally, does fidelity to trauma have to be formulated in economic terms? The only answer to these questions that I dare propose is that traumatic memory seems to bring with

itself a form of affective copyright, an imaginary protection against the instrumentalization or redistribution of affective, traumatic property. (I briefly hint at this aspect of trauma in my previous discussion of the memorial Ground Zero site.) The dominant, capitalist political economy, with its fundamental notion of private property, here appears as the unarticulated limit of the debate about the traumatic event. In other words, even if liminally un/representable, the traumatic event has to belong to someone, and has to be owned. Trauma needs to be represented, and there is contention over the possible or proper modes of its representation; but there is a single discursive mode that appears not to be a matter of representational choice: trauma is always represented in terms of property and ownership. The common conflict over ownership of traumatic experience inserts a neglected aspect into the discussion of trauma, what we might term the economy of experience or affect.

This apparently unavoidable limit functions as a discursive ground zero to which the language of trauma always returns, and it points to the wider politico-economic context in which the historical traumatic event is inscribed. That context, in which a relatively small economic elite closely connected with political structures literally owns the largest part of national wealth, should also be related to the nationalization of trauma 9/11 for particular—in many interpretations primarily economic—interests. Spiegelman is quite explicit in his critique of the contemporary US invasion of Iraq, which he sees as a distraction from foul domestic economic policies: "You rob from the poor and give to your pals like a parody of Robin Hood while distracting me with your damn oil war!" (5). The domestic economic injustice—Spiegelman, writing in 2002, is alluding to the Enron scandal—is here obscured by the spectacle of a war waged with the aim of regenerating the exploitative economy at home. The brief, condensed narrative-visual mode certainly does not offer any analytical insights, but does warn of the existence of a connection between the WTC attacks, an

economically motivated "oil war," and the domestic economic system that breeds social inequality. In my reading, Spiegelman's visual interpretation of 9/11 makes more easily discernible the outline of the processes through which affect can be turned into asset for further enterprises. Spiegelman does not hesitate to point out the link between 9/11, the local site of historical trauma, its instrumentalization through controlled media representations, and the war in Iraq that is led hand-in-hand with a US-managed privatization of Iraqi economy.²⁷ Through its post-traumatic narrative-visual mode, in which the traumatic event opens to a series of interpretive contexts, *In the Shadow of No Towers* warns of the processes through which the mediatic regulation of the local flow of affect works to translate it into a flow of capital. Following this line of reasoning, the language of ownership in accounts of trauma does not appear accidental. On the contrary, it shows the extent to which dispossession as the dominant logic of neoliberal economy can take over the domain of the presumably unrepresentable experience.²⁸ The traumatic event is in *In the Shadow of No Towers* the object of intense political management and commodification, and is ultimately linked to particular economic interests. Spiegelman's work points to the processes through which the experience considered to be most authentic—the traumatic event that sets the limit to the authenticity of experience—turns out to be the site of most crucial and contested cultural codification.

27 On the issue of the Iraq war and privatization of Iraqi economy cf. Harvey 2007: 214-215.

28 I turn to questions of what might be termed political economy of the 9/11 event in the chapters that follow.

5.

Globalizing (the) Nation

In my readings of Foer and Spiegelman I suggested that, apart from variously recovering the traumatized national body politic, these fictions of 9/11 also work to renegotiate the boundaries between the space of the nation and that of the world in the US national imaginary. Indeed, as I propose in the Introduction, the national/global binary is one of the central preoccupations in the 9/11 archive. Viewed as an intrusion of a radically foreign element within the body of the nation, the event entails a disturbance of boundaries separating the nation from an ostensibly dangerous and alien world. Such a view, however, leads to questions about the forms and functions that these boundaries—that are political, cultural and economic—assume under the pressure of globalization processes. It is my contention that the narrative of "entry into world history" on 9/11 should be understood in the context of US re-positioning in the processes of globalization, of which the traumatic event is perceived as being symptomatic. First, I would like to offer an introductory discussion of America's position in relation to the globalization processes. Then, I want to extend that discussion by looking into Don DeLillo's 9/11 texts, since they offer valuable insights both into the trans-national structuring forces in the 9/11 archive and the transitional moment that this event marked for the US.

Texts that represent 9/11 as the moment that signals the US entrance into world history (or onto global stage), basically posit it as a break through the boundary separating the national from the global sphere. By way of this persistent chronotope in the fictions of 9/11 that inscribe the event as a radical break or a turning point, temporal rupture is also translated

into spatial expansion: in Foer, the trauma of 9/11 opens up the narrative to the violent familial and national histories taking place overseas, in Germany and Japan. As I suggested earlier, the parallels between 9/11 and the Second World War signal precisely America's reiterated claim to agency inside world history. Significantly, Foer chooses Dresden and Hiroshima, both sites of catastrophic displays of US military power that would dominate the century, as the ground for his reconstruction of interrupted American genealogies. In Spiegelman, the trauma of the attacks gets reactivated both by the post-9/11 domestic policies and the 2003 invasion of Iraq. As we have seen, this disruptive temporal marker signals not only the moment of a familial and national trauma, but also the reaffirmation of the overseas US imperialist advance; not only a break, but also, as Spiegelman's reference to the Spanish-American War makes clear, a historical continuity.

The specific encoding of the event as a traumatic break, apart from engendering a discursive reconsolidation of national polity, thus marks a spatial or territorial shift from national to world presence, brought about by an intrusion of a radical otherness into the national body politic. The representational focus in many of the 9/11 fictions, however, seems to be fixed on the temporal dimension of the event. In other words, the event is in these texts primarily encoded in temporal terms, thus somewhat obscuring the expansive spatial moment. Nevertheless, as I argued in the previous chapter, the belated temporality of trauma that underwrites some of these fictions can also support a specific historiographic consciousness. Spiegelman's interruptive post-traumatic discourse especially makes visible the century-long lineage of US imperialism, suggesting that the attacks of 9/11 cannot be understood as an isolated event. For Spiegelman, the motives behind US actions after 9/11 are nothing but obvious: it is the economic gain of the corporate machinery that both fuels and feeds on capitalist imperialist wars such as the one in Iraq. The talk of democracy and

freedom used to justify the endeavor is for Spiegelman, as many other critics on the left, pure ideological falsity: Spiegelman's United States is one that, in David Harvey's words "conceal[s] imperial ambition in an abstract universalism" (2005: 50).

It might be argued, however, that the critical edge of Spiegelman's indictment of American imperialism is dulled by the contemporary shift in the status of the term in US public discourse. In her 2003 address to the American Studies Association, Amy Kaplan warned about the neutralization of the critical potential of the term "empire" and its transformation into an unmarked signifier describing the normative geopolitical position of the contemporary US. In her analysis of the mainstreaming of "empire" after 9/11, Kaplan points to what seems like a significant parallel, between the current shift in the value of "imperialism" and "the way the word *capitalism* shifted after the Cold War from a subversive critical term used by socialists and Marxists to an apolitical word taken for granted" (2004: 2). Kaplan here refers to the end of the Cold War as the moment when the term "capitalism" lost its political charge: this neutralization thus appears to be related to the event that was by many readily interpreted as the ultimate sign of the global victory of the Western liberal democracy and the consequent loss of other political options. This interpretation got its most influential formulation in Francis Fukuyama's article "The End of History?," first published in *National Interest* in 1989 and subsequently expanded into a book. The general idea Fukuyama proposes, that "[a]t the end of history, there are no serious ideological competitors left to liberal democracy" (1992: 211)—which, it is important to add, always goes hand in hand with an "economic liberalism" (1992: 48)—is echoed in the official documents of the US government, public debates, and, as I will try to show on DeLillo's example, some works of recent American literature. If Kaplan's parallel between the destiny of "capitalism" and "empire" is indeed functional, it would seem that the normalization of formerly "subversive"

terms comes about after the realization that historical alternatives have been exhausted and that we are indeed witnessing a Fukuyaman "end of history." The "language of exposure," that Kaplan finds to be "part of the current discourse of empire," would then be a symptom of such an imagined post-historical moment (2004: 3). It is crucial to note, however, that the idea of the end of history in Fukuyama's famous elaboration applies strictly to the global West, while the rest of the world remains "mired in history," until the final coming of the universal historical telos of liberal democracy to the less developed regions (cf. Fukuyama 1989). The "language of exposure," that, as Kaplan shows, applies both to "capitalism" and "imperialism," thus appears to be part of the discursive normalization of US global domination after the fall of the USSR and a marginalization of anything to which a West-centric narrative of modernity does not neatly apply (this normalization, it is important to note, certainly does not guarantee domination). The language of exposure, then, together with the "end of history" discourse on which it relies, is imperialist in its intention to either subsume or eliminate the global margins incompatible with its totalizing logic.²⁹ The powerful discourse of the "end of history," I want to argue, is grafted onto the narrative of globalization in one of its variants. As the phrase itself suggests, the "end of history" thesis inscribes the complex globalization processes in simple temporal terms. Before moving to the analysis of DeLillo's post-9/11 writing, which represents globalization as a catastrophic conjunction of disparate temporalities, some introductory remarks on the troubled concept of "globalization" are in order.

For the moment, let me set aside the question of temporal aspects of globalization and focus on the social processes usually associated with it. While there is no general agreement on a single definition of this complex process (or processes), several lines of

²⁹ Can the thus militarized "language of exposure" be compared to the "weaponized images" of US military that Mirzoeff analyzes: the images of US-induced violence openly broadcast into a mortified global public sphere?

thinking about globalization can be distinguished. The first one sees globalization as part of the history of the capitalist world system, or, as Frederick Buell puts it, "as a new stage in the narrative of capital, one named variously as late capitalism, a regime of flexible accumulation, and disorganized capitalism" (549). This narrative often insists on the changed position of the nation-state in the new global order. The nation-state can then be seen as becoming increasingly irrelevant, primarily thanks to the transnational surge of capital, which, through the interventions of transnational corporations and international monetary institutions, disintegrates national borders and diminishes national sovereignties (in the cited article, Buell warns against the uncritical adoption of this view). The other narrative focuses on the increasing global flow of information, based on the development of communication technologies. According to Buell, "[t]his approach extends the discourses of nationalism, postcolonialism, and internationalism into different kind of transnationalism, one that privileges new transnational communications networks as key mechanisms" (550). The emphasis in the second view is on the emancipatory potential of globalization which, in the more optimistic versions of the argument, ultimately results in the creation of a global civil society. Fredric Jameson's view roughly corresponds to Buell's, as both critics take the distinction between the economic and the cultural aspect of globalization as defining the main lines of argument in the debate. In Jameson's formulation, the cultural is the celebratory discourse on globalization, and it posits the process as emphasizing difference, opening the global public sphere to the voices of the subaltern, leading to intercultural dialogue, cultural pluralism, and popular democratization. The economic perspectives, on the other hand, stress the increasing identity and global uniformity as unavoidable outcomes of economic globalization, a process now seen primarily as a forced integration of diverse localities into a global market (Jameson 1998: 57). To these, it is possible to add a third aspect of

globalization that has come into critical focus especially after the publishing of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's influential and contested study *Empire* (2000): the question of sovereignty. While this issue is clearly related to the problem of national sovereignty eroded by transnational capital, its central preoccupation is the emergence of a new form of non-national, global sovereignty that would correspond to a post-national world dominated by transnational corporations—a form of sovereignty that Hardt and Negri term "Empire."

While all of the above positions can provide productive insights into the current state of the world, to me it seems particularly useful to relate globalization to the emergence of what Immanuel Wallerstein calls the modern, capitalist "world-system." Following this line of thought, Walter D. Mignolo states that "globalization could be linked with Western expansion since 1500 and cast in terms of either Immanuel Wallerstein's world-system or Norbert Elias's 'civilizing process'" (32). Even if we locate the beginning of globalization in a different point in time, this view is valuable because it stresses the fact that any consideration of globalization cannot be divorced from the historical fact of global expansion of capitalism. Since this expansion—and history is unequivocal about this—was often carried out by force (both through "soft" and "hard" power), discussions of globalization unavoidably conjure questions of colonialism and imperialism in their various historical forms. It is certainly true that world-wide economic connections and cultural contacts existed throughout recorded history, but it was only the advent and advance of capitalism that allowed for the emergence of some of the features that we nowadays commonly associate with globalization. These include expansive communication networks, space-time compression, a putative homogenization of "world culture," and, particularly in the neoliberal phase of globalization, rising economic and social inequalities, both within individual nation-states and in the global distribution of wealth (cf. Harvey 2007: 12-19) . If we agree that there is such a thing as

globalization—and agreement is by no means universal—we must conclude that it is fundamentally uneven in its effects, negative or positive. This unevenness is not accidental; it is the key to the logic of the social processes that fall under the term "globalization." In order to underscore the inherent imbalance of the process, to the above descriptions I would like to add the one offered by Boaventura de Sousa Santos, who purposefully sets aside the question of historicity in order to emphasize the progressive unevenness of globalization processes: "globalization [is] the process by which a given local condition or entity succeeds in extending its reach over the globe and, by doing so, develops the capacity to designate a rival social condition or entity as local" (41). This definition has the advantage of stressing the asymmetrical effects of globalization processes and their dependence on local, often national power centers—a feature that can be obscured by unconditional appeals to "transnational" or "global" forms of consciousness, sociality or sovereignty.

Somewhat against the grain of Hardt and Negri's original argument, it was the problem of national sovereignty that became particularly prominent after the 9/11 attacks and the unilateral US military action in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as other US covert overseas operations in the "global war on terror" (especially in relation to the so called "secret renditions" and "black sites"). These events seemed to fuel arguments against any definite notions about the disappearance of national sovereigns and add support to the view of the United States as a "supersovereign state" (cf. Esmeir 1546). It turned out that even in terms of the erosion of national sovereignty globalization is an uneven matter. Critics have argued that, despite claims to the contrary, we are still witnessing American hegemony on a global scale. Moreover, as Atilio Boron writes in his scathing critique of *Empire*, this hegemony is unattainable "without considerably reinforcing the state-based national sovereignty of the USA and its effective organs of international operations, mainly its armed forces" (Boron 12).

When considering this aspect of globalization, it would seem that the nation-state, particularly the American one, is indeed alive and well. But this position needs careful qualification, especially in a time when the United States seems to be experiencing the most serious economic crisis in decades. A globally dominant United States, at this time, certainly does not appear to be winning the economic race. It is nevertheless hard to argue against the view that the United States acts as a globally sovereign nation. In support of this thesis it is enough to consider the number of US military bases around the world and compare the US military budget to that of other world countries.³⁰ Moreover, we should recognize that US sovereignty, although global in its reach, is not without its limits and is overdetermined by a host of factors, from economic to political and military ones. This global sovereignty is, however, transnationalized, or, perhaps, "deterritorialized," if by "territorialized" we mean limited by national borders. Like the multinational corporation in Boron's analysis, the United States achieves "global reach" from a "national base."

Such a situation points to a distinctive, although transforming role of the United States in the present moment of globalization. Its dual aspect is of considerable importance. In "Where in the World is America?" Bright and Geyer remind us that globalization is a process "that is read, by some as the Americanization of the world and, by others, as the deterritorialization of U.S.-American sovereignty" (74). This ambivalence is a critical point to insist upon, since it registers precisely the contradictory processes inherent in globalization, and the ambivalent role of the United States within it. This role has been extensively described as that of an (often, declining) imperialist power. The logical question, then, would be: What is the relationship between American imperialism and globalization? Is the United States a globally hegemonic imperialist state and is globalization simply the name

³⁰ A special project of the *Mother Jones* magazine provides extensive up-to-date coverage on these issues (cf. Perry).

for its historical advance? For David Harvey (and Neil Smith) the answer to these questions is affirmative:

From the late nineteenth century onwards, the US gradually learned to mask the explicitness of territorial gains and occupations under the mask of a spaceless universalization of its own values, buried within a rhetoric that was ultimately to culminate, as Neil Smith points out, in what came to be known as 'globalization.'
(2005: 47)

Jameson implies the same when, in his analysis of the GATT cultural policy, refers to globalization as "what used to be called—when it was a far more limited phenomenon—Americanization" (Jameson 1998: 59). Even if we accept this well-argued view, at least as a description of the contemporary historical moment, I consider it useful to distinguish between US imperialism and globalization, if nothing else, then because the globalization processes will certainly continue after the decline of US global hegemony (which, according to Immanuel Wallerstein, is already heavily under way), as they indeed did exist before its rise.

In connection with the above remarks it is important to stress, especially in the context of the analysis of cultural inscriptions of 9/11, that US imperialism and globalization, although not identical, are related. In order to better understand the ambivalent position of the global hegemon it is useful to turn to Harvey's elaboration of Arrighi's distinction between "territorial" and "capitalist" logics of power (Harvey 2005: 27). Harvey explains the ambivalent and relatively unstable position of the American global hegemony by describing the United States as a "capitalist imperialist" state. "Capitalist imperialism," for Harvey, entails a "contradictory fusion" of state power (which implies control over territory and resources) and economic power (control over capital) (cf. 2005: 26). Harvey insists on the difference between the two logics of power: one, territorial, is based on political decisions

(however conflicted these might be), the other, capitalist, depends on chaotic ("molecular") and more or less unpredictable movement of capital (2005: 28-29). The crucial question here is,

how can the territorial logics of power, which tend to be awkwardly fixed in space, respond to the open spatial dynamics of endless capital accumulation? [...] Conversely, if hegemony within the world system is a property of a state [e.g. the US] or collection of states [e.g. the G-8] , then how can the capitalist logic be so managed as to sustain the hegemon? (2005: 33-34)

Basically, the limitless flow of capital (both in spatial and financial terms) needs to be controlled by a state-actor (or a state-like actor) that would thus territorially ground the "capitalist empire," in order for its hegemony to be sustained (2005: 33). The conclusion for Harvey is that the relationship between the two logics is "problematic and often contradictory (that is, dialectical)" (2005: 30). It is this contradiction, one inherent in capitalist imperialism, that can help us understand the changing role of the US nation-state in globalization and the contradictory view of globalization as comprising both a loss of American sovereignty and its global expansion.

This contradiction has to be placed in the context of what Harvey terms the "neoliberal hegemony" of the US, spanning from 1970 to 2000 (2005: 62 pp.). Historically, the turn to neoliberalism was a response to the crisis of capital accumulation in the 1970s (cf. Harvey 2007: 14-19). The implementation of neoliberal policies, with their request for virtually no state intervention in national economy and a growing demand for expanding markets, contributed to the erosion of the sovereignty of the nation-state. With the varied, but steady world-wide applications of this economic model in the process of globalization, the growing power of often US-based transnational corporations become more and more evident.

At the same time, the capitalist logic of power required "territorial" support, primarily in the opening up of world markets and deregulation of national economies. It is here that US coercive actions abroad enter the picture. At certain points, the institutions of the US state, acting in corporate interests, have been instrumental in creating the conditions for the emergence of "neoliberal states." The first "experiment in neoliberal state formation," in David Harvey's words, occurred after Augusto Pinochet's US-backed coup in Chile on another September 11, that of 1973.³¹ Apart from showing that, contrary to the claims of its theorists, neoliberal economy does require state intervention, this historical development suggests that the institutions of the US state acted (and still act) as the coercive apparatus of neoliberal globalization, both at home and abroad. A large body of literature suggests that this process depended on an expansion and deterritorialization of US sovereignty in the form of world-wide covert actions, secret fundings, or military interventions. The aftermath of the September 11 attacks, in which the United States embarked on a controversial military adventure in the Middle East, should be viewed in this context. Both Harvey (2007) and Klein (2007) make direct comparisons between US-backed pushes towards neoliberalization in 1973 Chile and the economic reforms implemented during the 2003 occupation of Iraq. Harvey, for example, notes how in Chile everything was privatized except "the key resource of copper (rather like oil in Iraq)" (2007: 8). While these examples are certainly not enough to argue for an absolute domination of the United States globally, they do provide evidence for an argument about its central position, as a nation-state, in the globalization processes. In other words, the global and selective expansion of US sovereignty did work to support the global implementation of a single economic model.

Here De Sousa Santos' warning, that "the discourse on globalization is the story

31 Cf. Harvey 2007: 7-8. This event also plays a central role in Naomi Klein's informative book on the rise of neoliberalism, *Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*.

of the winners as told by the winners" (41), becomes significant. In line with his definition, we can view globalization in terms of universalization of certain local historical phenomena, such as free market capitalism and Western liberalism, or even national, US sovereignty. The "end of history" narrative can easily be grafted onto the discourse of globalization because it imagines a particular historical development as the universal telos of world history, to be visited upon the world through the globalization of the above mentioned economic and political local conditions. The "end of history" narrative is also a story told by "the winner," perhaps in the first place to itself. The introduction to the 2002 US National Security Strategy, a document that sets the US foreign policy with a clarity that is matched only by its appeal to the nation's ideological foundations, clearly follows the end of history thesis when stating that "[t]he great struggles of the twentieth century between liberty and totalitarianism ended with a decisive victory for the forces of freedom—and a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise." Typically, the story of national success, US global leadership and implementation of free market economy are here conflated through an appeal to the "end of history" after the Cold War.

The idea of a universal planetary history inevitably leads to a vision of a fractured global time, with certain temporalities localized, unable to catch up with the post-historical West. This idea, however, does not account for the fact that the global capitalist system both needs and creates inequalities (e.g. in regional development) in order to be able to expand and reproduce itself. As Harvey writes,

The wealth and well-being of particular territories are augmented at the expense of others. Uneven geographical conditions do not merely arise out of the uneven patterning of natural resource endowments and locational advantages, but, even more importantly, are produced by the uneven ways in which wealth and power

themselves become highly concentrated in certain places by virtue of asymmetrical exchange relations. It is here that the political dimension re-enters the picture. One of the state's key tasks is to try to preserve that pattern of asymmetries of exchange over space that works to its own advantage. (2005: 32)

The role of the national state is thus crucial in the maintenance of global "asymmetrical exchange relations." This asymmetry of the globalized world and its dependence on national centers of power point to the centrality of the dynamic between local and global illuminated in De Sousa Santos' definition, one that puts stress on the *process* of globalizing in the discussion of globalization. In an exclusively temporal discursive construction of globalization, such as the one based on the notion of the end of history, various forms of global inequality and difference are reductively translated into a historical immaturity of the other. The asymmetries of globalization, that are results of complex social processes, thus achieve a fixed quality. This post-historical narrative, one employing the "language of exposure" analyzed by Kaplan, thus glosses over the logic of the system it describes by representing its effects as essential historical givens. Since it neglects the procedural aspect of the globalizing process, the end of history thesis leads to a notion of globalization as temporal leveling, homogenization, and to the marginalization or repression of other, non-Western, or more to the point in this context, non-US temporalities. But, as I will try to show in my reading of DeLillo, uneven temporalities of globalization do register the fact that economic globalization itself proceeds asymmetrically—precisely by producing new and exploiting existing inequalities.

In the chapter that follows, I intend to show how the temporally slanted narrative of the end of history formed the backdrop for the dominant American view of the 9/11 attacks. From a post-historical point of view, these could be interpreted as a symptom of the

incompatibility between the post-historical United States and the pre-modern forces of Islamic religious fundamentalism.³² In an often cited *New York Times* article entitled "World War III," published immediately after the September 11 attacks, Thomas L. Friedman rephrased Fukuyama's ideas for the new age of the "global war on terror." Following the basic logic of the "end of history" discourse, Friedman depicts the attacks as the revenge of a jealous Third world, unable "to master modernity," on a post-historical US. By the same logic, however, the American intervention in Iraq, with its publicly announced rationale of democratization and liberation and the parallel, but significantly less public, neoliberal restructuring of Iraqi economy, can be also seen in Fukuyaman terms as a form of bringing about the "end of history" in less fortunate parts of the world.³³ A particular interpretation of 9/11 thus reinforced, as Amy Kaplan also suggests, "a [unitary] fantasy about [American] national identity" (2004: 8), as well as "fantasies of a global monolithic order extending outward from a national center" (2004: 7). The questions of the nation's position in a globalized world, as I will try to show, were not new to the post-9/11 moment. Indeed, the newness and singularity of 9/11 should not overshadow the fact that the event, in the words of Paul Giles, "resonated as a symbolic culmination of the various kinds of deterritorializing forces that had been gathering pace since the Reagan years" (2007: 51).

It is these issues that I find to be urgent in Don DeLillo's recent fiction. The uneven temporalities of globalization, elaborated in DeLillo's post-9/11 work, speak of the

32 America's own, domestic religious fundamentalists, who also resort to acts of terrorism, still elicit much less media attention, which certainly bespeaks of a particular cultural construction of the "terrorist" (cf. Pozner). I offer some remarks on the role of this construction in the post-9/11 US national imaginary in the subsequent chapters.

33 In an interview about Arab anti-Americanism, American historian Rashid Khalidi briefly mentions the military and political goals of the US occupation of Iraq, and adds: "But something more radical is happening to the Iraqi oil industry, to the health care system, to education and to the economy in general, in the form of privatization" (Shohat 121). Admittedly, privatization is not the first thing that comes to mind when talking about the putative "post-historical" victory of "freedom" and "democracy."

ambiguous effects of an ongoing economic colonialism from the position of the shaken, but still powerful US hegemon. This position is itself complex, both propelling economic processes of globalization and trying to balance the uncontrollable domestic effects of its actions abroad. DeLillo's fiction, that I turn to next, provides a fruitful ground for the discussion of the dynamics of the globalization discourse in the United States, as well as its historical continuities and discontinuities that were uncovered by the September 11 terrorist attacks. In a way, it is the United States that "now," after 9/11, needs to "catch up" with a "global time" moving towards history's end—a time driven not by liberal democracy, but the elusive capitalist logic of power.

6.

The Market Moves Us in Mysterious Ways: Don DeLillo on 9/11

In DeLillo's literary vision, the world is globalized by the unlimited expansion of capital. Spatially, nothing is too far away now, thanks to a world-encompassing mediatic reality made viable through a technological development that this author often represents as being almost transcendental. Nevertheless, DeLillo's "one world" bears marks of various local histories and is fractured by multiple temporalities. This temporal discontinuity is in DeLillo's writing a sign of a global economic system gone wrong. Its symptoms, however, are still predominantly national. Although arguably fundamentally pessimistic, DeLillo's fictions of globalization are conterminous with the changing perception of the process in the US.

As Miyoshi shows in his summary of the rise of "transnational corporatism," the downsizing of US companies and outsourcing of US labor—both national symptoms of globalization—had unpleasant consequence for a large number of Americans in the 1980s and 1990s (Miyoshi 254-58).³⁴ It is no wonder that, in the dominant cultural construction, "globalization" was at first seen as an alien and perilous force in the US. In turn, the growing concern with the global resulted in a specific restructuring of the national imaginary. Frederick Buell argues that US nationalism was reconstituted throughout the 1980s and 1990s primarily in relation to globalization, that was seen either as a threat to the nation or an opportunity for transnational solidarities. At first, Buell writes, "globalization produced in the United States both a proliferation of discourses of shock at undermined foundations and a contentious polarization between a nationalist right and a left that was increasingly

³⁴ Detailed statistical data on the rising economic inequality in the United States during the neoliberal 1980s and early 1990s can be found in Danziger and Gottschalk.

developing postnationalist positions and alliances" (552). Subsequently, this changed when the "global" became itself a significant mainstream discourse—and, under Clinton, a site for combining nationalism with postnationalism, right with left, by reinventing a kind of national culture for postnational circumstances. This reinvention, though it is easy to identify it with the Clinton presidency, is something that has been accomplished by a variety of actors in a variety of different spheres, including neoliberal politics, corporate policy and public relations, the media, and even a variety of the newer intellectual and social movements. (552)

Thus, Buell claims, although at first inimical to the project of multiculturalism, US nationalism eventually assimilated it in order to adapt to the changed position of the United States in a globalized world. US nationalism thus reinvented itself in a "post-national" form, spurred by the national and global advance of neoliberalism in the 1990s. That way, "American identity [was] advantageously [refigured] for the global economy" (Buell 561). Buell is careful not to draw any final conclusions about the "fragile construction" (561) of the new form of US nationalism, but he does insist on its dependence on the American discourse on globalization, which, being significantly US-centered, posits a "future-oriented global mission" for the United States (561). In its post-national nationalist variant, "American multiculturalism appears world-influential, soothing anxieties about and familiarizing Americans with the idea of a new, supposedly interdependent, interactive global economy" (Buell 561).

The underlying assumption of this chapter is that the vicissitudes of globalization in the US national imaginary can be detected in some recent fiction of Don DeLillo. More importantly in the context of this study, DeLillo's writing on 9/11 unambiguously places the

event in the context of globalization. The ambivalence of the US positioning in a globalized world, a particular construction of globalization, its effects on the US—these problems form the backdrop for DeLillo's response to the national trauma of 9/11. Before turning to his post-9/11 work, I would like to briefly discuss two DeLillo's books that deal with globalization and stand in a dialogic relation to the dominant US discourse on the process. These set the stage for DeLillo's responses, both fictional and essayistic, to the September 11 attacks. In DeLillo's 1984 novel *White Noise*, both a multicultural US society and the effects of globalization are represented as sources of disorientation and fear for a caricaturally average suburban America. In *Underworld*, published in 1997, globalization is an overwhelming historical force whose disastrous effects are now visited upon a broadly depicted and culturally heterogeneous national polity. This shift, I think, corresponds to the change in US national imaginary described by Buell, although globalization, with the economic and technological changes it brings, remains for DeLillo a general threat.

There is a general strain in the US imaginary that reserves mass-scale suffering for TV broadcasts of geographically remote natural and human-made catastrophes. It could be argued that this changed after the two traumatic early twenty-first century events, the 2001 terrorist attacks and the disastrous advent of hurricane Katrina in 2005.³⁵ However, both of these events were received with a shock culturally registered in ways that support Susan Lurie's argument that an imaginary sense of safety is a fundamental element of US national ideology. The work of Radhika Chalasani, a native New Yorker and professional photographer, who took pictures of New Orleans graffiti after the city was devastated by hurricane Katrina, is illustrative in that respect. In the notes to a 2006 exhibition of her

35 What will be the effects of the current economic crisis on US culture still remains to be seen.

work,³⁶ Chalsani writes: "I've spent my career photographing disasters in other countries. I could never have imagined a sight like this in the U.S.; an empty city and desolate coastline. Tragedy on that scale was *always 'elsewhere', not here at home*" (my emphasis). This equating of disaster with an unspecified elsewhere—that should be read against Chalsani's previous photographic engagements in Vietnam, Sudan, and Uganda—echoes numerous accounts of the state of New York City after 9/11. In his essay published immediately after 9/11, Don DeLillo talks about Ground Zero as "the area [that] is bedraggled and *third-worldish*, with an air of permanent emergency, everything surfaced in ash" (2001). Now, the United States is put on display as the site of disaster: the media images no longer bring foreign sights of horror to the American public, they terrorize the national audience by facing it with its own vulnerably body. Catastrophe in these two instances functions as a switch between a national space imagined in terms of safety and the perilous rest of the world. The trauma is in both cases registered through a discourse—echoed in many 9/11 fictions—about the end of US national exceptionality and the discovery of the nation's worldly vulnerability.

The notion of an endangered sense of national safety, that became pervasive after 9/11, was already present, as Frederick Buell shows, in the 1980s US public discourse focused on globalization. Buell claims that "[c]oncern with the 'global' began with the alarmed perception that the United States was slipping from a position of global centrality, that the 'American century' was ending, and that, for many, the United States was in danger of slipping into 'Third World' status" (552). This fear of national decline was classically satirized in Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (1984), a novel that subverts domestic safety through a dislocation of remote disaster. In *White Noise*, the effects of globalization threaten a homogeneous US nation imagined in terms of safety. Significantly, the fall of the United States into "Third World status" is brought about through anonymous, and for the

36 At the Dumbo Art Under the Bridge Festival, October 13-15, 2006.

protagonists mysterious globalization processes.

White Noise is the story of the Gladneys, a model white middle-class American family that, after a toxic spillage in an unspecified nearby facility, has to evacuate and thus find themselves in the position of the suffering third-worlders they used to watch on TV. In *White Noise*, the disaster is metaphoric, and it refers both to a contamination of an imaginary homogeneous national body politic and a traumatic experience of the consequences of unchecked technological and industrial development related, I want to argue, to globalization. The incomprehensible disaster that DeLillo relocates from the TV screen to the safe world of suburban America refers to the destabilization of the structures supporting the existing US power relations: these are racial and national—the novel depicts the American suburb as being increasingly inhabited by people from unrecognizable immigration backgrounds—and economic, because the safe United States is suddenly stripped of its First-World privileges. By way of ironic analogy, DeLillo links the looming national catastrophe to the processes of economic globalization that destabilize the imaginary and material limits of the national space. The authoritative Viking Critical edition of *White Noise* suggests that DeLillo's descriptions of the ecological accident in fictional Blacksmith was inspired by the world's worst industrial disaster thus far, the leakage of poisonous gas in a pesticide factory in Bhopal, India, in 1983 (Osteen 1998). The factory in question was owned by Union Carbide, a US company. The said edition cites extensively the *Newsweek* coverage of the event, and there are indeed some similarities there to DeLillo's depiction of the suburban American toxic event. The *Newsweek* articles also seem to function as a good model for the discursive logic dramatized in DeLillo's novel, one typifying the US national sense of safety:

For millions of Americans, the Bhopal catastrophe raised a frightening question: could it happen here? So far the worst industrial accidents have tended to occur in

the Third World, where population density is higher and safety measures often fail to keep up with the spread of technology. By contrast, the U. S. chemical industry can boast of a strong safety record. (Whitaker 353)

The cited media coverage, however, does not point out the fact that the US corporation in whose factory the catastrophic event took place was responsible for poor security conditions: as more recent analyses have shown, Union Carbide was indeed in control of the design and running of the plant, despite its attempts to put the blame on its Indian subsidiary (cf. MacKenzie 2004). Instead, the coverage suggests that there is an unconditional link between economic status and personal safety, without questioning the existing power structures on which the global economy—of which the Bhopal situation is exemplary—relies. Simply, "[t]hose wealthy enough to own cars gathered their families and tried to escape" (Whitaker 355). The discursive strategy operative here is the same one the main protagonist of *White Noise*, Jack Gladney, employs when dealing with imminent disaster which his media-conditioned look can attribute exclusively to economic and national others. *White Noise* can thus be read as a text that realizes the fears of "millions of Americans" by transferring the suffering of others from the TV screen to the viewers' and readers' neighborhoods. By thus displacing his readers' everyday experience, DeLillo puts the normally viewing American audience in the position of the image on TV that, in *White Noise*, corresponds to the position of suffering alien others. Moreover, in *White Noise*, Susan Lurie's notion of visually constructed sense of national safety finds further support: the catastrophic intrusion of otherness comes about as an ironic inversion in subject positions conceptualized in visual terms: the spectators of disasters become the victims, the ones safely watching become the watched. After being evacuated to Iron City, the Gladneys, just like the victims of televised disasters, are now economically deprived, territorially fixed and spatially confined. A family

of Sikhs, observing the refugees from a safe distance, can be metonymically related to India, the country that is in the novel represented as the place with "tremendous potential" for televised disaster that remains "largely untapped" (66). The Bhopal case—as a tragic moment in the history of US economic outsourcing—shows that what is "tapped" are India's (or more generally, Third World's) economic resources and their status in relation to the economic interests of US-based transnational corporations.

The result of this ideological configuration is an unconditional conflation of economic status and national belonging. American economic safety is in *White Noise* related to the vulnerability of others that is a direct consequence of narrow US economic interests realized through Third-World outsourcing ("narrow," because outsourcing also affected the position of US labor). It is a US-led globalization then, of which the Bhopal incident is symptomatic, that produces disasters for the televised others. However, the globalization processes, that through increased immigration from Third-World countries bring changes to the demographic structure of the American suburbia, imbue the American protagonists of the novel with a pervasive sense of disorientation. DeLillo's displacement of Bhopal to the United States thus plays on the early American fears of the effects of economic globalization on US economy and national identity in the 1980s. But the novel does not merely reflect a national anxiety: through the ironic displacement of a historical disaster and its consequences within the national limits, that ostensibly guarantee economic safety to US subjects, it hints at the uneven material conditions for traumatization which support the spectacular suffering of others.

It is important to note that DeLillo relates the disaster of globalization to a particular economic system that is being applied both at home and abroad. This aspect of DeLillo's view becomes more apparent in his 1997 novel, *Underworld*, where the story spans

a nearly post-apocalyptic world of landfills and nuclear waste. At the end of the last part of *Underworld*, titled *Das Kapital*, the nun Sister Edgar remarks that a South Bronx ghetto—an iconic part of the United States—looks "worse than the first [decade of the century] [...] like another century in another country" (811). The novel abounds in scenes of catastrophic consequences of late-twentieth-century neoliberal economic policies: the image of tenants of an impoverished New York ghetto who watch stock exchange reports on TV plays up the system's fundamental social discrepancy that, the novel suggests, results in systemic traumatization (813-14). These images of American impoverishment are in *Underworld* mirrored by the rise of wild capitalism in a disturbingly envisioned post-communist Russia. This global span of the narrative contributes to the sense that the contemporary economic processes, with the unequal and at some points irrational accumulation of wealth, selectively bring nations to the edge of catastrophe. Indeed, as the rape and murder of a twelve-year-old homeless girl at the end of the novel suggests, the consequences of the economic inequalities result in a decrease in national safety, making traumatic, but unspectacular events a part of everyday life. The proclamation that "[a]ll terror is local now," sounds like DeLillo's final grim word on globalization (816).

Globalization, as depicted in DeLillo's novels, comes both to the United States and to the world in the form of a disastrous event. The closing pages of *Underworld*, with the dead Sister Edgar entering not heaven, but the cyberspace of the World Wide Web—a technological representation of the globalized world—suggest that the world is now both spatially and temporally flat, or post-historical: "There is no space or time out here, or in here, or wherever she is. There are only connections. Everything is connected" (825). Sister Edgar now inhabits a virtual version of history's end, looking back at the catastrophic images of the past. While this moment might bring to mind Benjamin's angel of history, who in

looking back doesn't see a "chain of events," but "one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage," it does not seem to carry with it a corresponding messianic or redemptive quality (Benjamin 1988: 257).

Based on such depictions of a quasi-total capitalist homogenization of the world, and the puzzling ending of the novel in particular, DeLillo has been criticized for offering a distorted portrayal of globalization. In his *Fictions of Globalization*, James Annesley criticizes *Underworld* for giving too simplistic a view of contemporary economic actualities. For DeLillo, Annesley claims, globalization is an "irreducible reality [...] that the novel is powerless either to interrogate or to resist" (68). Annesley further sees DeLillo's writing as echoing "the views held by a broad range of commentators of globalization," including the ones from critics as ideologically divergent as Milton Friedman and Naomi Klein (68). Instead of regarding globalization as an "unquestionable condition of contemporary life," Annesley argues, the task of the writer and critic should be to interrogate the "material conditions upon which the globalization thesis rests" and approach it not as a totalizing system, but as a "network of contradictory and unstable forces and discourses" (69-70). Although DeLillo in *Underworld* insists on a (for Annesley "narrow") vision of a totally integrated world, the unsatisfactory ending of the novel proves that this project "falters": "*Underworld*, an epic attempt to map these forces of integration, thus fails to bring the connections together and as a result ends up dramatising the problems with arguments that read globalization in terms of total coordination" (73). For Annesley this is problematic, since he sees the resistance to the totalizing fiction of the "globalization thesis" as a critical point for the recuperation of a more diverse world, uncontained by the equally totalizing forces of the market.³⁷

37 Annesley uses the term "globalization thesis" to describe an (erroneous) view of contemporaneity as totally homogeneous: "In simple terms, the globalization thesis argues that a combination of 'engines' or 'drivers' linked to technology, economics and politics are creating a world that either is, or appears to be, ever smaller

However, Annesley concludes his reading of *Underworld* on a more optimistic note, observing that the novel "ends up interrogating its own representations of an integrated world" (74). Focusing particularly on an ambiguous sign of transcendence—an episode in which the ghost of the dead girl appears on a billboard in the same ghetto where she was murdered—Annesley concludes that, after all, "nuance and diversity has not [...] been lost," despite DeLillo's more overt claims to the contrary (74). It is through its engagement with the ambivalent outcomes of capitalist incorporation, evidenced in the "processes that resist [...] closure," (74) that

DeLillo's novel also generates moments of critical friction that suggests not only that there are possibilities of resistance, but also that this resistance can be empowered by the recognition that the systems and structures of globalization are neither as stable nor as all-embracing as they first appear to be. (Annesley 75)

In this view, "resistance" to an oppressive, totalizing fiction of globalization starts with an alternative narrative of globalization, one that will provide the critical space for the emergence of a more hopeful vision of the contemporary moment.

I have quoted from Annesley's reading of DeLillo extensively because I find that he rightly points to the basically pessimistic and apocalyptic version of globalization found in *Underworld*, one that was announced in a more satirical form in *White Noise*. However, I would add, it remains questionable whether "resistance" can begin with a more optimistic vision of the present, as Annesley implies. While the form resistance to globalization-as-totalization can take is far from clear in the *Underworld's* mystic-nostalgic vision of history, it seems to me that, in this respect, ambiguous signs of change can be detected in DeLillo's writing after 9/11. Here, although remaining quite disillusioned about globalization's outcome, DeLillo does identify resistance to a totalizing expansion of capital in the historical and more homogeneous" (5).

turn-of-the-century anti-globalization movement. A new issue emerges, however, since DeLillo persistently complicates his view of anti-globalism by drawing distinctions and analogies between a loosely defined leftist opposition to economic globalization and the actions of the September 11 Islamic terrorists.³⁸ While the politics of the anti-globalization movement certainly represent a form of organized opposition to an exclusively economically driven globalization, terrorism, especially the one fueled by religious fundamentalism, is certainly not the "resistance" to global capitalist containment optimistically envisioned by Annesley in his reading of *Underworld*.

I would argue that in order to understand both DeLillo's pessimism and the troubling anti-globalization/terrorism analogy, we have to consider his fictions of globalization as nationally based ones. While in *White Noise* and *Underworld* the United States falls victim to economic globalization, after 9/11 the globalized world is a neutral end-of-history site whose center is hegemonically occupied by the US. Furthermore, after 9/11, globalization is in DeLillo's writing increasingly inscribed in temporal terms—a development that should be related to a revival of the end of history discourse I referred to in the previous chapter. A continuity can be detected in DeLillo's post-9/11 texts, too: read in the context of the novels mentioned above, the traumatic event of the 9/11 attacks appears to be yet another disastrous symptom of globalization. As in his earlier works, the disaster of globalization post-9/11 can be related to the intrusion of the economic and cultural other into the presumably safe national space of the US. To further elaborate on these points, I now turn to DeLillo's essay written in immediate response to the events of September 11, 2001.

³⁸ The anti-globalist opposition to capitalist globalization in DeLillo remains fairly vague. That said, I want to stress that my discussion of the anti-globalization movement similarly does not take into account the many differences among its multiple, often contradictory local forms, but is primarily limited by the status and meaning the new social movement acquired in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks.

"In the Ruins of the Future" is the title of Don DeLillo's essay published in the December 2001 issue of *Harper's* magazine.³⁹ It is a text that, like so many others in the first days after the attacks, registers the traumatic impact of the event on the US:

This was so vast and terrible that it was outside imagining even as it happened. We could not catch up with it. But it was real, punishingly so, an expression of the physics of structural limits and a void in one's soul, and there was the huge antenna falling out of the sky, straight down, blunt end first, like an arrow moving backwards in time. (DeLillo 2001, all subsequent references are to the same text)

As this suggestive quote illustrates, DeLillo here moves beyond the attempt to give narrative expression to the trauma and post-traumatic recovery of an ubiquitous national "We." "In the Ruins" can be read as DeLillo's position paper on some topics already present in his previous novels, such as terrorism and capitalist globalization. The essay was written at the time DeLillo was finishing writing *Cosmopolis*, a novel that, although not concerned with the terrorist attacks themselves, can be read as the product of the same historical moment. Indeed, the "In the Ruins" essay clearly echoes DeLillo's novelistic elaboration of what he called "the last day of an era" (Barron). The 9/11 event thus appears in the essay as a culmination and intensification of histories preceding it, a final moment that for the United States signaled the entry into a different kind of historical territory. I propose to read the essay and the 2003 novel as matching parts of the same millenarian narrative. In effect, the essay functions as an interruption of the fictionalized meditation on the American end of history DeLillo was developing in *Cosmopolis* when the attacks happened and in which he subsequently felt a need to intervene. Since the essay was published before the novel, here I analyze it first, but always keeping in mind its ambivalent status as a disruption and

³⁹ DeLillo is not included in either of the two 9/11 anthologies that came out as a "response" to the terrorist attacks, *110 Stories: New York Writes after September 11* and *September 11, 2001: American Writers Respond*, both published in 2002 (cf. Baer, Heyen).

continuation. DeLillo's 9/11 essay is marked by an unusual figurative complexity, to which the title and the opening paragraph strongly point to. In my reading, I would like to pursue the essay's meandering strains of meaning in parallel, so as to map out as widely as possible the imaginative (and ideological) terrain supporting DeLillo's 9/11 fictions.

"In the Ruins" starts where *Underworld* ended: with an image of a post-historical "global" world homogenized by "the surge of capital markets." In DeLillo's version of the end of history narrative, up to the terrorist attacks the United States lived "permanently in the future, in the utopian glow of cyber-capital." The event thus interrupted the progressive time of Western capitalism that found its ultimate realization in "globalization." It is interesting to note here that an analogy could be drawn to the nationally focused narratives of 9/11. Those, as I tried to argue, situate the event firmly within the teleology of the exceptional nation. Like in the national histories, here too time appears "homogeneous," to use Benjamin's and Anderson's term. But in the historical narrative implied in the "Ruins" essay, time is homogenized not by a national spirit reflecting on its emergence, but by the force of capital. This homogeneity of time, based on a teleological notion of history, gives the global world its internal consistency, but also points to its local grounding in a conspicuously Western narrative.

The debris of the World Trade Center, abstracted into the ruins of the future, functions as a polyvalent metaphor. If the totalizing force of capitalism had brought about the "white-hot future" "we" were living in before 9/11, then the event signaled the end of the end of history. In this respect, 9/11 for DeLillo represents a radical break—not with history, but with post-history. The event of 9/11 is introduced in the first place as a disturbance within the post-historical time of a world globalized by the unstoppable forces of the free market. At the same time, the ruins suggest a return to the past and of the past. Indeed, DeLillo explicitly

identifies "[t]wo forces in the world, past and future," and equates them with the terrorists and the United States respectively. It is clear from these examples that DeLillo privileges temporality as the representational plane for his inscription both of globalization and of 9/11, thus reflecting the logic of the troubled end of history thesis. (This is a moment to which I will return in my discussion of *Cosmopolis* and *Falling Man*.) The post-historical rule of the free market that DeLillo laments in his introduction is paralleled by the images of the US multicultural variant of liberal democracy. In the conclusion to the essay, DeLillo insists on the openness of New York City as a transnational "cosmopolis" and, consequently, on a similar social heterogeneity of the national body politic. In the final image of the text, a Muslim woman praying in the crowded streets of a (somewhat indifferently) tolerant New York represents a sustained celebration of the city's and the nation's diversity. For DeLillo, all of these—capitalist globalization, American exclusion from history, and the "taken-for-granted greatness" of the US brand of multiculturalism—came under terrorist attack on 9/11.

The essay opens with the distinction between the global economy and national sovereignty: the 9/11 attacks—that targeted not "global economy" but "America"—brought back to life the nation-state after a decade of domination of multinational corporations responsible for the creation of a post-national present. While the introductory paragraph of the essay focuses on the 1990s and a neoliberal globalized world, in the second "America" appears on the world stage, with its "modernity," "technology," and "godlessness." All of these are targets, DeLillo claims, of the "medieval," pre-modern terrorist attack. The conditions for the reappearance of the US nation-state were thus, DeLillo implies, created by the appearance of the terrorists. In other words, if the terrorists "want to bring back the past," they do so by reviving its main protagonists: the nation-state and its history. The terrorists, then, resurrect the nation-state in a world that was complacently living in a global post-

historical and post-national future. In this configuration, terrorists become a metonymic force of history. Actually, they are the only historical force—besides capital, which brought history to an end—in a post-historical world where there is "no memory" and spatial limits are defined by the uncontrolled expansion of the markets. Indeed, in DeLillo's account, the events of 9/11 interrupted the advance of globalization—the cyber-capitalist future that were the *Underworld's* 1990s—returning historical time from post-modernity to modernity, from a globalized to a nation-state centered, pre-global age. The pre-modern terrorists, in other words, re-called the same modernity against which they wage war, and with it the ghost of American power. DeLillo does not dwell further on this, but his text does suggest that the post-national world does bear some marks of US presence. Both "the blunt force of our foreign policy" and "the power of American culture to penetrate every wall, home, life and mind" suggest that the influence of one nation in a presumably post-national world is still palpable.

The blurring of the spheres of "globalization" and "America" continues throughout the text. This important ambiguity is established at the beginning: even if they interrupt "global" time, the attacks are for DeLillo fundamentally anti-American. In its constant and ambiguous shifts of focus, from a world globalized by transnational capital to the signs of US sovereign power, DeLillo's text registers the silent contradictions of globalization and America's dynamic position within the process. Although some critics regard globalization quite unambiguously as "a euphemism for narrow corporate interests promoted under regimes of unequal and coercive trade enforced by the IMF, the World Bank, the [US] Department of Commerce, and the Pentagon" (Roberts 252), DeLillo only tacitly implies that what he calls "globalization" entails, to some extent at least, "Americanization." Nevertheless, this conflation is an important subtext for DeLillo's interpretation of 9/11, one

that becomes more obvious if we focus on another binary in the text, the one established through the distinctions and parallels between the 9/11 terrorists and the anti-globalization protesters. The insistent comparisons of the two betray a view that implicitly posits globalization as a form of US imperialist advance. Although DeLillo states that the *primary* target of the terrorists was not global economy, but "America," both the anti-globalization protesters and terrorists are in the essay positioned in relation to the globalization's promise of a permanent "future:" as "[t]he protesters in Genoa, Prague, Seattle and other cities want to decelerate the global momentum that seemed to be driving unmindfully toward a landscape of consumer-robots and social instability," they want to "hold off the white-hot future." The terrorists, whose actions have interrupted the permanent "future" of globalization, on the other hand, "want to bring back the past." The force against which both of these resistances are poised is globalization, with the difference among them being one of intensity, between slowing down the arrival of the future, and bringing back the past. (As I will argue below, the position of the anti-globalization movement in relation to neoliberal globalization is further sketched in DeLillo's *Cosmopolis*. *Falling Man* similarly juxtaposes the leftist terrorists from the 1970s to the contemporary Islamic terrorists.)

What is the enabling assumption behind this peculiar, but surprisingly common conflation of two radically different struggles, Islamic terrorism and the global anti-globalist movement? In DeLillo's essay, both are positioned primarily as forms of resistance to the advance of neoliberal globalization seen as a part of an inherently Western and US-led modernization project. The conflation thus betrays an end-of-history vantage point and a totalizing view of globalization (the one criticized by Annesley), that transforms the complex process into a singular leveling background for different kinds of anti-systemic politics. DeLillo's parallel, although sustained and insisting primarily on the difference between the

two, does resonate with the more general tendency after 9/11 to explicitly link anti-globalists and WTC terrorists. While the examples of this tendency are numerous and speak of the unsuspected global consequences of the event, here I focus only on a few. In the 2001 Annual Report of the World Economic Forum, the WEF's president Klaus Schwab stated that "[t]he past year has [...] been a tumultuous one for all of us, beginning with the threat of anti-globalization protest and ending with the threat of global terrorism" (World Economic Forum). The protesters and the terrorists are here reduced to the presumably common denominator of a "threat" to global economy, the general sphere of the Forum's activity. The cited Report announced the 2002 meeting of the World Economic Forum that took place in midtown Manhattan (that *Cosmopolis*' hero is passing through). As usual, the meeting was met with protests against neoliberal globalization that were covered extensively by the New York media. A press release by the US media watch group FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting) notes that "[m]ainstream New York City newspapers have tended to frame discussion of the [anti-WEF] demonstrations in terms of their status as a security problem," thus obscuring "the political debate over the WEF" (FAIR). Among other examples, the release cites the *New York Times* columnist Clyde Haberman who "described globalization activists as people 'less known for their deep thinking than for their willingness to trash cities,' saying 'some would say that New York needs this [protest] about as much as it needs another airplane attack'" (FAIR). Such conflation of anti-globalists and terrorists should be viewed in the context of the common inclination of national governments after 9/11 to use revamped anti-terrorist legislation for suppression of leftist opposition to neoliberal economic policies. One of the more infamous examples of this development comes from Germany, where a sociologist from the Humboldt University was arrested on suspicion of terrorism based on evidence such as his use of the words "reproduction," "political praxis,"

"gentrification" and "Marxist-Leninist" in his published work.⁴⁰ In this, as Neil Smith remarked, "Germany is hardly alone. The United States has recently seen multiple prosecutions of nonviolent activists and assorted innocents caught in the wrong place at the wrong time, and the British government recently threatened to use antiterrorist legislation against Heathrow climate change activists" (2007). As opposed to the described global situation, DeLillo's ambivalent parallel could be seen as a way of distinguishing between the two different forms of resistance to globalization. Nevertheless, similarity also persists in his suggestion that the terrorists' anti-Americanism is part of their violent anti-modernity, which is, in the essay, realized through their various opposition to globalization.

It would appear then that DeLillo's interpretation of 9/11 should be located within the context of his ambiguous understanding of globalization seen both as a universal post-historical force and a narrower, Western and US-based totalizing process. DeLillo's conflation of the terrorist's anti-Americanism and the anti-globalist's anti-imperialism signals this structural ambiguity of globalization, now revealed by the trauma of 9/11. It should be noted here that the claim that the attacks were anti-American is certainly correct. It is possible to view the attacks as a form of address, as DeLillo indeed does: the enunciated subject is "America," and the violent acts were addressed to the US nation-state. The "national" framing of the disaster was, in that sense, imposed by the attack. In this context, it is significant that Osama Bin Laden, the suspected mastermind of the attacks, addressed the people of the United States in a video broadcast before the 2004 elections, an act not dissimilar from the State of the Union addresses of US presidents (cf. Michael). From this perspective, the mediatic terrorist acts can be understood as intermittent displays of non- or trans- national sovereignty. However, the character of this sovereignty, and the terrorist's ability to enact a

⁴⁰ More information about the German case and the changes in the country's anti-terrorist legislation after September 11, 2001 is available at <<http://einstellung.so36.net/en/ps/392>>.

deed such as the one seen in September 2001, cannot be understood properly in terms of uncomplicated resistance to globalization. Contrary to DeLillo's overt statements, but in line with the contradictory implications of his essay, their relation to the globalization processes are more complex than simple opposition or "otherness."

The assumption about the terrorists as resisters to globalization depends on a strict separation between "us" and "them," one in which, as DeLillo writes in the "Ruins" essay, "[t]he sense of disarticulation [...] has never been so striking." DeLillo builds his account of 9/11 on the end of history thesis in which such strict separation is implicit: "we" (US) have reached the end of history, while "they" (the terrorists) still live in the violent grasp of the historical world; "we" are, for better or worse, globalized by a limitless capitalism, "they" live in a world of "cut-throat religion;" "we" live in the "future," "they" stand for the past. The author's puzzlement by the force of this disarticulation points to its problematic character: the terrorist others, and the event which they inaugurated, can equally be viewed as a product of the system that is responsible for the emergence of a putatively "postnational" and "post-historical" world. Namely, by representing the terrorists both as abusers and victims of US foreign policies, DeLillo implies that they are also subjects of US imperialism. Because of that, the claim that the attacks enunciated the US nation is incomplete, because it obscures the fact that the target of this lethal address is an imperialist nation-state able to enact its sovereignty globally. In Judith Butler's words, "U.S. imperialism is a necessary condition for the attacks on the United States, [...] these attacks would be impossible without the horizon of imperialism within which they occur" (2002: 182). But Butler further stresses the global reach of the formative power of US imperialism when stating that "to understand how U.S. imperialism figures here, we have to understand not only how it is experienced by those who understand themselves as its victims, but how it enters into their own formation as

acting and deliberating subjects" (2002: 182). In this view, those who feel the consequences of US foreign policy, the 9/11 terrorists and their American victims are all subjects of US imperialism, an expansive system that created the context for the violent encounter on September 11.

Other critics and historians have argued that a strict separation, as well as the view of terrorists as globalization's or modernity's others, does not hold. Similar to Butler's claim, they argue that the 9/11 terrorists and the histories of which they are part have to be seen as already involved in the system that produced the conditions for the occurrence of the traumatic event. The history of these involvements is too long and complicated for a detailed inclusion in this study, but even a superficial overview of relevant literature suggests that any notion of a homogeneous "Third World" standing outside globalization—a notion that both frames DeLillo's response to the 9/11 attacks and is implicitly questioned in it—dissolves under closer scrutiny. For example, in his summary of twentieth-century US policies in the Middle East, Timothy Mitchell argues that radical Islamic political movements often worked hand-in-hand with the interests of US oil companies. In his discussion of the US-assisted creation of Saudi Arabia (the country the majority of 9/11 hijackers came from), Mitchell stresses the fact that Wahhabism, a conservative reformist stream within Islam,⁴¹ rose to power parallel with the rise of the government of Abd al-Aziz Ibn Sa'ud, Saudi Arabia's ruler supported by Standard Oil of California: "The new state [...] transformed the movement into the instrument for enforcing an authoritarian moral order, employed to suppress political dissent and to prevent the organization of oil workers, those who demanded a political constitution, and other challenges to the regime" (96). Mitchell insists on the fact that the "twentieth-century political order in Arabia was the product of two forces working together,

⁴¹ A genealogy of Wahhabism and its relation to Bin Laden can be found in Khaled Abou El Fadl's informative article "9/11 and the Muslim Transformation" in Dudziak.

the American oil industry and a radical form of political Islam." Thus, Mitchell concludes, the accounts that portray these forces as opposites, "'narrowly conceived' tribal and religious movements on the one hand and the global power of capitalism on the other," are erroneous. In reality, these two forces worked together, "the Islamic reform movement [making] up for the weaknesses of American corporate capital and [helping] secure its control of the profits of oil." Mitchell labels the interaction of these two political forces "McJihad" (97). Slavoj Žižek claims the same in his book on "9/11 and related dates." Using his typical rhetoric of provocation, Žižek compares terrorist networks to the structure of multinational corporations:

are not 'international terrorist organizations' the obscene double of the big multinational corporations—the ultimate rhizomatic machine, omnipresent, albeit with no clear territorial base? Are they not the form in which nationalist and/or religious 'fundamentalism' accommodated itself to global capitalism? (38)

This "obscene" doubling finds support in DeLillo's implicit cue about global capital and the 9/11 terrorists as the only historical forces in a post-historical world. According to Žižek, the decentered terror networks do not interrupt the globalization process—they are inseparable, even mutually supportive. The "Muslim fundamentalists," he concludes, "are not true fundamentalists, they are already 'modernists,' a product and a phenomenon of modern global capitalism." Similar to Mitchell, Žižek argues that modernity came to Islam in the form of the Wahhabi movement, which is according to him an Islamic equivalent of Protestantism (cf. Žižek 52-53). In these analyses, the terrorist act of 9/11 is not the radical other of a US-led capitalist globalization, but a symptom of its own excess. In order to make a similar point in his article on the "dialectics of [the 9/11] disaster," Fredric Jameson focuses on the common, elite capitalist background of the members of the US government and Osama bin Laden, the person suspected for planning the 9/11 attacks. Referring to the fact that Bin Laden comes

from a rich family of Saudi entrepreneurs, Jameson observes that there is "something deeply ironic in the quizzical scrutiny of one group of wealthy businessmen by another" (2002: 302). Jameson warns about the danger of accumulation of military power in the hands of an economic elite, whose consequences were, not for the first time, made evident on 9/11. This power "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," Jameson writes, "that bin Laden is one of those people. Exotic trappings aside, 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" (2002: 302-3).

Even if we put aside questions of the economic status of the terrorists' leaders, the literature on terrorism suggests that, in general terms, the phenomenon always represents a symptom of inherent systemic contradictions and not an incursion from a putative "outside."⁴² David Slocum summarizes this position when claiming that "from the nineteenth century into the twenty-first, [terrorism] has become coemergent with the political and economic formations it has typically assailed" (3). Slocum is clearly alluding to the most common framing of the terrorism issue in the US public sphere after 9/11 (one also echoed in DeLillo's response) when stating that

[r]ather than being simply irrational or medieval or hateful, as it is often superficially cast, acts labeled as terrorism, upon closer review, appear as complicated inversions of the values at the roots of dominant Western society. The suggestion, then, is of an intricately related opposition of values that establish the terrorist as the doppelgänger of the citizen (as, variously, holder of

⁴² I will return to a more historical discussion of these issues in my analysis of *Against the Day*, a novel that, among other issues, deals with the problem of anti-capitalist terrorism.

rights, consumer, soldier, tourist, believer). (3-4)

Again, the emphasis is not on a strict separation (DeLillo's "disarticulation" among "us" and "them"), but the relational character of acts "labeled as terrorism," as Slocum cautiously puts it. What remains an issue, one that features prominently in DeLillo's 9/11 essay and the ensuing novels, is how a particular construction of radical otherness persists as an important element in the US national imaginary. Slocum's insistence on the cultural construction of the terrorist as the opposite and double of the citizen—an opposition whose ambiguity is registered in DeLillo's 9/11 writing—should thus be considered in the context of the post-9/11 US reorganizing of domestic immigration legislation in terms of national security and the parallel and related emergence of a new racial category.

In her article "The Citizen and the Terrorist," Leti Volpp has argued that the emergence of a racial category including those who appear "Middle Eastern, Arab, or Muslim" went hand in hand with an ideological exclusion of these categories of people from the national body politic. Analyzing these new forms of exclusion after 9/11, Volpp's argues that "post-September 11, a national identity that was both strongly patriotic and multiracial became consolidated" (151). This consolidation of national identity took place through a particular disidentification: "This expansion of who is welcomed as American has occurred through its opposition to the new construction, the putative terrorist who 'looks Middle Eastern'" (151). For Volpp, the very notion of US citizenship after 9/11 depended on an act of differentiation from the racialized "terrorist": "In the American imagination, those who appear 'Middle Eastern, Arab, or Muslim' may be theoretically entitled to formal rights, but they do not stand in for or represent the nation. Instead, they are interpellated as antithetical to the citizen's sense of identity" (157). The distinction between citizenship as "legal status" on the one hand and as a "form of interpellation" (or "identity") on the other is crucial here

(cf. Volpp 156). Volpp stresses that "[c]itizenship in the form of legal status does not guarantee that they will be constitutive of the American body politic. In fact, quite the opposite: the consolidation of American identity takes place against them" (157). The arbitrariness of the new racial category and its conflation with the "terrorist" was quickly satirized in the more popular forms of US cultural production. In David Rees' comic-strip series *Get Your War On*, nondescript clip-art characters participate in the following dialog:

- I'm a little confused. Are U.S. *citizens* allowed to kill suspected terrorists *now*?

- I think so. But you have to be sure the person is a suspected terrorist! So be super-double sure they make you nervous!

- Well, this dude standing by my desk is wearing a really fucked-up jacket—can I cap him? (October 14, 2001, my emphasis)

The strip relies on the same "US citizen" vs "terrorist" binary that Volpp detects as underlying the familiar "now" of the post-9/11 US. The joke here is on the arbitrariness of the signifier "terrorist"—an arbitrariness that for many proved to be far from humorous, as Volpp's article evidences.

DeLillo's reflections on a threatened and then recovered multicultural US society in his 9/11 essay, as well as in his later fictions, can be read in the light of this renewed national consolidation. These reflections have an important place in the "Ruins" essay. DeLillo insists on the fact that the people who died in the WTC towers belonged to a number of different ethnicities and nationalities. This multicultural mix is echoed in the improvised memorial in Union Square Park (the same one Diane Taylor mentions in her 9/11 article) that DeLillo describes like this:

The artifacts on display represent the confluence of a number of cultural tides, patriotic and multidevotional and retro hippy. [...] There are many people this

mild evening and in their voices, manner, clothing and in the colour of their skin they recapitulate the mix we see in the photocopied faces of the lost. (DeLillo 2001)

The passage, that is framed by DeLillo's introductory remarks about 9/11 as an attack both on America and on a globalized world, suggests that the US national polity is for DeLillo akin to Buell's notion of "nationalist postnationalism:" it is national, but also representative of the new, globalized era in world history. It is such a notion of Americanness, of a nation united in difference, that needs to be restored post-9/11. However, as Volpp's article and Rees' cartoon indicate, the multiculturalism of the post-9/11 is a strictly national matter, defined by the threat of foreign intrusion. It could be argued that the pervasive racial profiling and the general public attitude towards "Middle-Eastern looking men" after 9/11 eroded the idea of "nationalist postnationalism" as described by Buell. However, Volpp's argument supports the view that this took place with a parallel reconsolidation of the idea of American national polity. It should be noted here that Buell describes a general ideological tendency that he sees as operating in line with a corporate restructuring of the US national imaginary: if US nationalism of the 1990s adopted a post-national guise through its assimilation of certain strands of multiculturalism, that certainly did not mean that concrete social inequalities contingent on racial and ethnic identities disappeared. Volpp points to the same fragility of the new ideological construction of nationness when stating that

[o]ther people of color have become 'American' through the process of endorsing racial profiling. While we should note that racial policing continues apace in all communities of color, and we can anticipate that *this new multiculturalist national identity is a momentary phenomenon*, whites, African Americans, East Asian Americans, and Latinas and Latinos are in certain sense now deemed safe

and not required to prove their allegiance. In contrast, those who inhabit the vulnerable category of looking 'Middle Eastern, Arab, or Muslim,' and who are thus subject to potential profiling, have had to, as a matter of personal safety, drape their dwellings, workplaces and bodies with flags in an often futile attempt at demonstrating their loyalty. (151, my emphasis)

If we agree with Buell's contention about the "post-national" form of US nationalism in the 1990s, the "multiculturalist national identity" Volpp describes would not be "new," but restored after 9/11.

By taking into account both Buell's notion of a national identity organized along with the repositioning of the United States inside a global economy, and Volpp's description of national consolidation through exclusion after 9/11, we can see two important forces operating in the structuring of the US national imaginary. On the one hand, following Buell's lead, we can understand this imaginary as being reorganized against and in line with the processes of economic globalization; on the other, following Volpp, we can observe a constant need for definition of the national polity in relation to a foreign other. Below I will extend this initial observation and argue that these two are the driving forces of the plot in *Cosmopolis*. In the "Ruins" essay they appear less conspicuous, but their presence points to the status of the 9/11 event as a point of intensification and recuperation of existing historical forces.

In a radical move at the end of his 9/11 essay, DeLillo turns to Islam—its motives, rituals and customs—in order to speak of and discursively reconstruct what he perceives as the cosmopolitan openness of New York City and the United States, and the ultimate solidarity of humanity. To the "medieval," pre-modern character of the terrorists'

"cut-throat religion," DeLillo opposes the image of a Muslim woman praying in the streets of Manhattan:

I looked at her in prayer and it was clearer to me than ever, the daily sweeping taken-for-granted greatness of New York. The city will accommodate every language, ritual, belief and opinion. In the rolls of the dead of September 11, all these vital differences were surrendered to the impact and flash. The bodies themselves are missing in large numbers. For the survivors, more grief. But the dead are their own nation and race, one identity, young or old, devout or unbelieving—a union of souls. During the hadj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, the faithful must eliminate every sign of status, income and nationality, the men wearing identical strips of seamless white cloth, the women with covered heads, all recalling in prayer their fellowship with the dead. (2001)

The "accommodating" power of New York City, however, can also be interpreted as a discursive assimilation of cultural difference that would support the constitution of a uniquely American multicultural national tolerance. The conclusion of the essay is fundamentally ambivalent: DeLillo here both appeals to the values of humanity *and* figuratively drapes the Muslim woman's body in an American flag by representing her as an integral part of the US polity. Here, the praying woman becomes one with the culturally and racially mixed crowd of mourners on Union Square. In other words, the essay's shift of focus on the Muslim woman also represents a contribution to the construction of a specific notion of US nationness. This construction is based on an ambivalent, both local-national and global-transnational status of the United States in the contemporary world. Thus, the multiculturalism recovered by DeLillo both does and does not exceed the limits of the national community. DeLillo's appeal to inclusion of radical difference (that Islam came to represent post-9/11), although coming

from an essentially anti-capitalist position (as *Cosmopolis* acutely shows), echoes the market-based demand for a multicultural national identity in a globalized world described by Buell. In their social effect, it would appear, these two overlap, creating a particular globalist national imaginary. Indeed, DeLillo suggests that it is precisely the ability to accommodate all cultural difference that distinguishes "us" from "them." Coming apparently from "outside" of the globalized world, the terrorists are defined by their enmity towards the multicultural project that is emblematic of a global, cosmopolitan society. The ruins of the World Trade Center and the colorful streets of New York City are for DeLillo the sites of reconstruction of a traumatized national polity based on an unconditional accommodation of difference, a multiculturalism that is itself emblematic of globalization. Here, once again, we witness the discursive conflation of "US" and "globalization."

The closing passages of DeLillo's essay provide a glimpse into the logic behind this peculiar conflation. At the end of the essay, to the multicultural greatness of NYC, DeLillo opposes the leveling force of death brought to the New York streets by the terrorists: the "vital differences" are erased in death, there is no nation, no race, only "one identity." To further accentuate this image of the "union of souls" of the dead, DeLillo turns to religious imagery. The unity of the dead of September 11 is succeeded by the image of Muslim pilgrims who also erase differences among themselves when visiting the holy site of Mecca. In this they recall, DeLillo allusively writes, "their fellowship with the dead." But which dead are remembered here? The ambiguity seems to be the point. Death, the same force appearing on 9/11 as a devastating consequence of historical backwardness and religious fundamentalism, becomes the agent of an almost democratic equality at the Muslim holy site, as in the medieval allegories of the Dance of Death. This is a surprising ending for an essay focused on national trauma and the apparent clash of two disparate worlds. It also provides an

evocative and suggestive conclusion to a text that begins with statements that are rather specific and defining. Quite unlike the opening paragraphs, the final image offers a vision of human unity, of a world that is one. This apparent contradiction can be resolved if we read it in the context of DeLillo's other writing on globalization, where the religious imagery often goes hand in hand with things economic, such as the shopping-mall epiphanies in *White Noise*, or the final pages of *Underworld* in which a Catholic nun's death culminates in a post-apocalyptic vision of a globalized world. If we follow these clues, the unity through uniformity that is in "Ruins" ultimately linked to death oddly resonates with the homogenizing force of globalization that is introduced at the beginning of the essay. In *Das Kapital* section of *Underworld*, the force of capitalist globalization is described as erasing difference: "[c]apital burns off the nuance in a culture" (785) and creates "a certain furtive sameness, a planing away of particulars" (786). For DeLillo, it would seem, capital and death are united in their leveling power. (This idea is brought to its final conclusion in *Cosmopolis*, where capital becomes both destructive and suicidal.) Read in this context, the beginning of the "Ruins" essay, with its vision of a world globalized by capital, and the essay's conclusion, with the image of a world united in death, uncannily mirror each other. Again, what appeared as an extreme opposition, turns out to be ultimately laid out against one background.

Although the final image of unity is religious and carries significant universalist undertones, the force driving it is that of markets and capital. These examples suggest that although DeLillo insists on the radical disarticulation of "us" and "them," both poles display characteristics that position them as subjects of the same system. Whether we understand that system to be "globalization" or "US imperialism"—an ambivalence also registered in DeLillo's writing—is a matter of the debate I tried to sketch out in the introduction to this chapter.

The important lesson of DeLillo's 9/11 essay is that the "global," as the sphere of US economic influence and dependence, and the "national," seen as self-contained and excluded from the rest of the world, can hardly be thought in terms of strict opposition, even if they are posited as extremes. In effect, DeLillo's text (somewhat reluctantly) suggests that the national polity is constituted and re-formed in a dynamic and complex interplay of the two. This national/global nexus, underwritten by the formative power of capital, is the central problem of the novel DeLillo was caught writing when the 9/11 attacks took place.

7.

Cosmopolis: A Meditation on Deterritorialization

DeLillo's first novel published after the September 11 terrorist attacks, *Cosmopolis* (2003), was not "about" 9/11. According to the author, the attacks interrupted the writing of the novel, delaying the completion for a couple of months. During this interruption, DeLillo wrote "In the Ruins of the Future," and even a superficial reading shows that the novel was the source for many of the motives to be found in the 9/11 essay: both refer to anti-globalization protests, dwell on the global power of finance capitalism, and remain rooted in the streets of New York City. By so closely intertwining these two texts, DeLillo seems to imply that the conditions for the traumatic "now" of the United States reach back to the histories that preceded and converged in the limit event. In a 2003 interview, DeLillo had the following to say about the writing of *Cosmopolis*:

I'd been working on it for some time before I realized that the day on which this book takes place is the last day of an era. [...] It's that interval between the end of the Cold War and the beginning of the current era of terror. It's essentially the 1990s. The market began to falter when it does in the book, which is the spring of 2000. It happens faster in the novel because everything happens faster in a novel. And that's the reason behind the exaggerated reality. There's a sense of acceleration of time and of reality itself. (Barron)

Cosmopolis is thus a novel about—and coming out of—a moment of transition. It is also a novel fundamentally concerned with the power of that preeminent force of US social life: the market. As the above quotation suggests, DeLillo sees the market as the force that moves

history, its oscillations marking the end of one era and the beginning of another—an idea echoed in the opening paragraph of "In the Ruins of the Future." What is exactly that moment of transition underwriting *Cosmopolis'* vision? Here I'd like to take on the idea that the novel marks (and is marked by) a specific moment in the movement of capital and situate *Cosmopolis*, as well as its "now," in the history of capital accumulation. (As announced in the introduction, the historical model I partially rely on is based on Ian Baucom's productive reading of Arrighi's *Long Twentieth Century* and Benjamin's philosophy of history against and with each other.)

Working with and expanding on Wallerstein's world-system theory, Giovanni Arrighi developed a periodization of modern history based on "systemic cycles of accumulation." These are named after the bearers of the hegemony within the historical periods of the world system: Genoa, Holland, Great Britain and the US. The last of these cycles, the American one, encompasses the period from 1860 to the present, with the transition to a new, yet undefined cycle beginning in the 1980s (cf. Arrighi 6 pp.). The vision of history underlying Arrighi's theory is thus cyclical, and it repeats on a geopolitical scale the general formula for capital proposed by Marx:

The central aspect of this pattern is the alternation of epochs of material expansion [...] with phases of financial rebirth and expansion [...] phases. In phases of material expansion money capital "sets in motion" an increasing mass of commodities [...]; and in phases of financial expansion an increasing mass of money capital "sets itself free" from its commodity form, and accumulation proceeds through financial deals [...]. Together, the two epochs or phases constitute a *full systemic cycle of accumulation* [...]. (Arrighi 6)

Generally speaking, at the end of each cycle, when the power of the current hegemon is

waning, "capital accumulation proceeds virtually exclusively through 'financial deals!'" During this period of transition from one cycle to another, "finance capital exerts its dominance over an ever-expanding capital world system" (Baucom 27). The end of the twentieth century represents such a highly financialized period in the cycle of accumulation, one that, according to this theory, marks the end of US hegemony within the world system. Baucom sums up this cyclic, repetitive process and stresses its financialized phases:

[t]he period from the end of the sixteenth century to the beginning of the seventeenth; the mid and final decades of the eighteenth century; the decades spanning the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century; and the final few decades of the twentieth century thus define themselves as the highest moments of finance capital, moments in which capital seems to turn its back entirely on the thingly world, sets itself free from the material constraints of production and distribution, and revels in its pure capacity to breed money from money—as if by a sublime trick of imagination. (27)

This highly financialized moment is the historical context, I want to propose, in which we should situate the story of *Cosmopolis*' hero bent on self-destruction through reckless financial speculation. (The plot of Thomas Pynchon's *Against the Day* takes place on the other end of the cycle, in the years of the American rise to hegemony in the capitalist world system.) The story is set in the "post-historical" present of the end of twentieth century US, on an April day in 2000, the same year that marked the ongoing downward trend in US financial markets. This beginning of the free fall of the free market serves DeLillo as the background for an extended meditation on the effects of a global, but nationally based economy of financial speculation. The global movements of capital are in the novel propelled by a main character whose movements are, for the moment, constrained by various local

conditions. The plot revolves around a day in the life of Eric Packer, a young, excessively rich currency trader, who controls the global flow of capital from his limousine stuck in a traffic jam in midtown Manhattan. There is more than economy to *Cosmopolis*, however, although the novel remains primarily focused on Eric's existential questions elicited by the apparently unlimited reach and power of financial speculation. To the cybernetic present-day existence of Packer, DeLillo juxtaposes Eric's memories of childhood, to the smooth flow of financial capital, the chaotic movement on the streets of New York, and to the detached world of the cyber-capitalist class, the scarred foreign bodies Eric encounters on his day-long ride to the barber's. The novel continues DeLillo's preoccupation with the local, national effects of economic globalization and, as I already suggested, sets the stage for his essayistic response to the 9/11 attacks.

As we have seen, "In the Ruins of the Future" was centered on a particular negotiation of the national/global binary in which the national is defined against an external, pre-modern and anti-globalist threat that endangers the post-national US, itself a nation globalized by the flow of capital. In his 9/11 essay, DeLillo resuscitates an exclusive US national imaginary through the reconsolidation of a multicultural body politic against a violent intrusion of the remains of the non-globalized world. The same ambivalent resuscitation of a post-national nationalism sustained by the movement of capital can also be detected in *Cosmopolis*, especially if we read the novel against DeLillo's 9/11 essay. These two texts mirror each other in my analysis; and in this process certain common points are intensified.

We can read DeLillo's work in general, especially in its turn-of-the-century phase, as an extended narrative about the interplay between the transformative power of systemic,

economic forces and the US national imaginary. In order to explore this dynamic, I would like to further expand on the notion of the nationalist US post-nationalism that, according to Frederick Buell, emerged in relation to globalization processes during the 1980s, by juxtaposing it to Paul Giles' idea about the "deterritorialization" of American literature and national identity. Giles claims that "the nationalist phase of American literature and culture extended from 1865 until about 1980" (2007: 54-55). Since 1980, Giles argues, American literature has entered a transnational period, one quite similar to the early phase in the construction of the US nation, 1780-1860, "when national boundaries and habits were much less formed and settled" (2007: 55). At that time, Giles adds focusing on the emerging geography of the new nation, "the country's sense of national identity was as uncertain, as provisional, as its cartography" (2007: 41). This insight begs the question of the place occupied by boundaries and territorial presence in the American national imaginary.⁴³ It is obvious that a connection between the sense of national identity and a nation's territory is implied, although not elaborated in Giles' work. This is partly the case because of the "natural" relationship that is assumed to exist between national identity and territoriality, both of which are related to the notion of national sovereignty. In order to unearth the implications of this assumption, I want to return briefly to Prasenjit Duara's theoretical observations on a related matter, the challenge posed to national histories by transnationalism.

Duara emphasizes the importance of the socially homogenizing work of national histories: "Territorial boundaries delimit a heterogeneous space, which is projected back in time as the homogeneous space of national sovereignty. Periodization schemes bring temporal coherence to this dubious spatial entity by linking disparate meanings across and within periods" (27). But, Duara asks, if nation is thus "imagined," as Anderson famously put

43 For example, how is the American world-wide (mostly military) presence at the turn of twenty-first century incorporated into and supported by a national ideology? This issue, while not central, provides one background for the discussion in this chapter.

it, how come it is so central to history? His answer to this question is relevant for my present interest in deterritorialization by way of global capital flows:

Doubtless there are many factors [for the nation-centeredness of modern historiography], but a crucial one is that history becomes a principal means of claiming sovereignty in the emerging system of nation-states. Sometimes by the late nineteenth century in Europe, and thenceforth in much of the rest of the world, a discourse of rights emerged, involving a three-way relationship between a people, a territory, and a history. This relationship became the means of creating a historical agent or (often juridical) subject capable of making claims to sovereign statehood. A 'people' with a supposed self-consciousness of themselves as unified, developed a sovereign *right* to the territory they had allegedly originally or continuously occupied. Written histories represent this collectivity.

(27)

This means that the construction of an identity (a "people") and the delimiting of a territory are tied in a nation's ability to claim "sovereign statehood" in the international political system. In Duara's elaboration, sovereignty encompasses three aspects: people, territory and history, and we can ask how and to what extent these are being transnationalized and deterritorialized in a world of transforming national sovereignties. In other words, Duara's definition of modern sovereignty can help us understand what exactly "deterritorialization" of US national identity at the end of the twentieth century implies. Indeed, the fear of the loss of national identity in the face of globalization, that is at the heart of contemporary nationalist politics of various kinds, poses the problem of (modern) national sovereignty as central. As I suggested in the previous section, it remains at least dubious whether, and in what ways, US sovereignty is threatened by globalization. As the cited theories of US capitalist imperialism

or global hegemony in the cycle of accumulation posit, US sovereignty is indeed being "deterritorialized," not by disappearing, but by being exercised in various ways—through economic influence, military presence—outside the national borders. Thus, as Giles' argues, globalization processes result in a restructuring of the national imaginary due to the transformations that affect all three aspects of national sovereignty. When I take on Giles' idea about the "deterritorialization" of American literature and national identity, and Buell's idea of "nationalist post-nationalism," I consider these as being closely related to, or part of the transformations US sovereignty is undergoing through globalization (since sovereignty also includes a "people" and a "territory"). In other words, Giles' historical moments marked by a "deterritorialized" sense of national identity can be seen as moments of a sovereignty that has not yet been fully consolidated (in the early days of the republic) and a sovereignty that is transforming under the pressures of economic globalization and "capitalist imperialism" (at the end of the twentieth century).

There is a further point to be made here. Economy is conspicuously absent from Duara's formula for modern sovereignty, and it is precisely a transforming economy that undoes national sovereignty in the age of globalization. In this respect, it is significant that in his use of the term "deterritorialization" Giles relies on Deleuze and Guattari's theorization (in *Anti-Oedipus*) of "the flows of desire that traverse the boundaries of distinct, separate territories." "Deterritorialization" of the social body is for these authors, as Giles' also makes clear, "the most characteristic and the most important tendency of capitalism" (Deleuze and Guattari in Giles 2007: 46). My point is simply that the "deterritorialization" that Giles applies to American literature and national identity was a term originally used precisely to describe a "tendency of capitalism." This relation between the economic and the social and political spheres is still active in Giles' elaboration, since for him the cultural change occurs

along with a transformation in the economy: the global circulation of capital made possible and enhanced by communication networks. While such a dynamic between these spheres is an enabling assumption of my reading, it is equally important not to use it reductively. Giles warns about such danger of reducing the whole of social life to economy when stating that "the actual experience of deterritorialization manifests itself as much more jagged and fractious, bound up with tensions and inconsistencies that cannot be subsumed merely within global systems or regimes of capital accumulation" (2007: 48). This important qualification is something to keep in mind in the pages that follow: to the deterritorializing effect of global capitalism, I tentatively oppose the reterritorializing power of the traumatic event in its hegemonic cultural inscription. The US position in a globalized world, as I have already argued, appears shifting and ambivalent, indeed "transnational:" both exercising an imperial sovereignty globally, and feeling the effects of the global flight of capital at home.

It is possible to further extend this methodological excursion by noting how closely Giles' thinking follows the time-line of Arrighi's cycles of accumulation: the nationalist phase of American literature thus corresponds to the US hegemony within the world system, while the "deterritorialization" of literature and national identity occurs at the beginning and end of the US cycle. This "deterritorialized" sense of US national identity thus maps closely onto two different historical periods: one of territorial consolidation of the US nation-state (1780-1860), and the other marked by the decline of US hegemony and the reconsolidation of a post-national imaginary in the face of globalization processes. My interest here lies in the second. Following the insinuation underlying Giles' thinking, what interests me in particular is the implication that the transnational flow of capital can somehow account for a "deterritorialization" of US national identity, starting in the 1980s. As Giles' states, "since about the 1980s the country has entered what we might call a transnational era,

one more centered around the position of the United States within global networks of exchange" (2007: 46). Clearly, this "deterritorialization" of national identity not only takes place at the same time when Buell diagnoses the emergence of the American "nationalist post-nationalism," but is equally contingent on the repositioning of the United States within the emergent processes of economic globalization. Read alongside each other, Buell's and Giles' work suggests that the global circulation and "deterritorialization" of capital is paralleled by the emergence of a transnational, globalist consciousness in the US. It is important however to keep in mind De Sousa Santos definition of globalization and understand that the imaginative work behind this transformation, although "transnational" and encompassing the globe, remains nevertheless locally, nationally grounded.

It is not my intention to claim that the above can serve as a universal model for the analysis of the dynamics of US social life. Rather, I would like to use this general framework as a point of departure for delving into the representations of the intricate connections between the historical economic cycles and the American national imaginary, the connections which go under the name of globalization. While a detailed exploration of these undoubtedly extremely complex relationships is beyond the scope of this study, I would like to stress their significance for DeLillo's inscription of 9/11. Following this line of thinking, I read *Cosmopolis* primarily as a novel that dramatizes the dynamics of the relationship between these two spheres: that of (global) economy, with its "deterritorialized," transnational movement of finance capital, and that of the US/national polity, understood as both multiculturally "post-national" and exceptionally "outside history." With its emphasis on these two forces, *Cosmopolis* not only sets the stage for DeLillo's 9/11 essay, but also allows for an insight into the structuring forces that to a significant extent governed the nation's response to the September 11 attacks.

The actual historical event of September 11, 2001 remains absent from the plot of *Cosmopolis*.⁴⁴ However, the absence on the thematic level does not mean that the impact of the event was not registered in the text. Commenting on the effect of the attacks on his writing of *Cosmopolis*, DeLillo said that "[m]aybe it had something to do with the writing itself. I did a curious thing at the outset, something I've never done before. I resolved to do tighter sentences. Sentences without dashes. Not to use analogy and metaphor to the extent I used to" (Barron). Thus, the text did register the traumatic occurrence, but its traces should be sought in the transformations in DeLillo's style, the same that has been criticized by reviewers as being too cerebral, dry, almost inhuman in its abstractness. John Updike thus described the novel's dialogues as being "terse, deflective, somewhat lobotomized." Michiko Kakutani wrote that DeLillo's depiction of New York City in *Cosmopolis* is "hopelessly clichéd" and "oddly generic" and his language "stripped-down, almost abstract." Another reviewer complained that "corporeal cerebral entities that populate the pages of *Cosmopolis* [...] aren't so much people as walking topic headings" (Kirn). All these critics note a changing style in DeLillo's writing (one that, however, started taking place already in the novel that preceded *Cosmopolis*, the *Body Artist*). In the context of the novel under discussion, the critiques are motivated by the fact that at some points in the text DeLillo uses an almost didactic tone, preaching about the ruthlessness of contemporary capitalism. These stylistic features do make the characters and their dialogues appear somewhat unrealistic: everything seems detached from everyday reality, elevated to a more abstract plane even in the most

⁴⁴ Similar to DeLillo's situation, William Gibson was writing his novel *Pattern Recognition* when the 9/11 terrorist attacks happened. Unlike DeLillo, he subsequently partly rewrote his novel and incorporated the event in the plot, although somewhat marginally (cf. Leonard). Although not subject of my analysis, *Pattern Recognition* would undoubtedly deserve a closer reading, with a possible emphasis on its temporality: it is a novel about the post-9/11 world, that Gibson started writing before 9/11, and then partly changed after the event took place. There are other similarities between *Pattern Recognition* and *Cosmopolis*, such as their common use of post-communist Russia as the ultimate proof of a global end of history.

banal of details. But these same stylistic features give the novel, and especially its main character, an allegorical quality. This too has been noted by critics. "Packer and his livery are globalization," states Jerry Varsava in his reading of the novel (95). This is undoubtedly so, and Varsava is right when claiming that *Cosmopolis* provides

a chilling portrait of a rogue capitalist running amok in the dying days of the stock-market bubble, a period marked by "pump and dump" investor frenzy that Federal Reserve Bank Chairman Alan Greenspan famously, if too understatedly, termed "irrational exuberance." (80)

However, I would disagree with Varsava's contention that Eric is simply a "rogue capitalist," the supposedly extreme, dark side of an otherwise well-balanced free market system. In my reading, *Cosmopolis* offers a further insight: apart from "being globalization," Eric is also what globalization is doing to "America." As the head of "Packer Capital," he embodies both the forces of neoliberal globalization (which are for DeLillo clearly perilous) and the ambiguous position of the United States as their hegemonic propelling center. In David Harvey's terms discussed earlier, we can view Eric as the incorporation of the contradictions of capitalist imperialism. Comprising both the territorial and capitalist logics of power, Eric is both the fatally territorially fixed center of control and, as the embodiment of the unbounded expansion of capital, out of control. In other words, through the character of Eric Packer, the novel explores the effects deterritorialization of capital has on the US nation-state and its dominant imaginary. In his extreme portrayal of Eric Packer, an almost grotesque representation of the contemporary finance capitalist, DeLillo keeps the conspicuous bias against neoliberal globalization that is also evident in his previous novels. That much has been noted by virtually all reviewers. But the other side of Packer, his status as an American, a nationally based center of the global flow of capital, has not been so much in the focus of

critical attention. (Such interpretive obscuring of Eric's national grounding by a totalizing reading of Eric as only globalized and deterritorialized is itself symptomatic of a narrow view of globalization—one to which DeLillo's work speaks eloquently.) If Eric Packer "is globalization" in his deterritorialized cyber-capitalist existence, he is also a New Yorker and an American, ultimately defined by the memories and histories whose power over him he tries so hard to deny.

The novel opens with an insomniac Eric Packer, twenty eight, the head of Packer Capital, isolated from the world in his Manhattan triplex, with "no friends he loved enough to harrow with a call" (DeLillo 2003: 5).⁴⁵ From there, we follow Eric's ride in his stretch limousine to Hell's Kitchen, his childhood neighborhood; there, he wants to get a haircut. His relationships with people he meets are detached, based on terse exchanges of sometimes disconnected lines of dialog. At one point, even the sex Eric has is disembodied and touchless: "The man and woman reached completion more or less together, touching neither each other nor themselves" (52). This situation will slowly change through the novel, as Eric searches for some kind of authenticating instance that would materially ground his cybernetic being. But at the beginning, Eric's spatially isolated and hyperprotected existence, his communicative and social detachment, all point to his utter inability to form affective attachments, and to a complete absence of any tangible basis of sociality. Eric, a currency trader, is all about information, and his experiential virtuality seems to replicate the virtual flow of financial capital under his control:

He understood how much it meant to him, the roll and flip of data on a screen. [...] It was shallow thinking to maintain that numbers and charts were the cold compression of unruly human energies, every sort of yearning and midnight sweat reduced to lucid units in the financial markets. In fact data itself was

⁴⁵ All subsequent references are to the same edition.

soulful and glowing, a dynamic aspect of the life process. This was the eloquence of alphabets and numeric systems, now fully realized in electronic form, in the zero-oneness of the world, the digital imperative that defined every breath of the planet's living billions. Here was the heave of the biosphere. Our bodies and oceans were here, knowable and whole. (24)

As this passage illustrates, the immateriality of Eric's labor is paralleled by an equal sense of immateriality of his own historical experience. At the same time, Eric's focus on "the world" and the "biosphere" stresses the global reach of his actions. The "we" that Eric so often uses to refer to himself ("We need a haircut") refers to the imperial character of his power and implicitly invokes the sociality the lack of which defines him. Although Eric clearly reduces the materiality and plurality of life to the immaterial sphere of financial speculation, the "unruly human energies," as the novel will show, cannot be eliminated: "How *things* persist, the habits of gravity and time, in this new and fluid reality" (83, my emphasis). These "things" are omnipresent in the streets that Eric is riding through. The street is filled with signs radically other to the novel's central consciousness: a beggar woman, who seems "rooted to that plot of concrete" (65), speaks an unknown language, black men speak in "African murmurs," and everywhere material commodity is being exchanged: "Cash for gold and diamonds. Rings, coins, pearls, wholesale jewelry, antique jewelry. This was the souk, the shtetl" (65). Bearing the signs of material production and exchange of actual commodities ("a form of money so obsolete Eric didn't know how to think about it" 64), the street is "an offense to the truth of the future" (65) represented by cyber-capital. Vija Kinski, Eric's "chief of theory," offers a philosophy of finance capital that closely corresponds to the above remarks from Baucom: "money has taken a turn. All wealth has become wealth for its own sake. [...] Money has lost its narrative quality the way painting did once upon a time. Money

is talking to itself" (77). The cyber-capital's power to collapse the present into the future is elaborated in terms that are almost identical to the ones found in DeLillo's "Ruins" essay: "Money makes time. [...] It's cyber-capital that creates the future. [...] The future becomes insistent. This is why something will happen soon, maybe today [...]. To correct the acceleration of time. Bring nature back to normal, more or less" (79). A theory of community is also implied in these pages of DeLillo's *Cosmopolis*: it is as if the face-to-face exchange of material commodity establishes and materially supports societal ties; while virtual and touchless financial speculation dissolves them. This community based on material production and exchange is for Eric historical, imbued with traces of the past. As the mention of the souk and the shtetl suggest, the street is foreign, even exotic, in the palimpsestic richness of its historical references.

The meaning of the passage deepens if read against the history of the cycles of accumulation discussed above. The street is an "offense" to Eric primarily because it displays the marks of the past in the form of material commodity and material labor. From Eric's post-historical perspective—the same one that is interrupted by the unimaginable act of violence in DeLillo's 9/11 essay—this obsolete materiality of history is out of place in a future-oriented, financialized present based on immaterial labor (such as Eric's own currency trading). These traces of commodity (traces of the past) are here an organic part of an image of chaotic polity shot through with markers of difference: a difference based on race, gender, religion, culture, and—above all—class. The isolated and unimaginably wealthy Eric is defined in strict opposition to everything that "the street" stands for. It is important to note just how radical the division between Eric and his others is. It is both spatial—he is in the car, they are in the street—and temporal—he lives in the present-future, and they inhabit the past. Eric thus occupies a contradictory position both inside the national polity (the urban, crowded

and jammed locality which restricts his movements), and outside of it (since he is safely enclosed in his limousine and can reach any place in the world virtually). This contradiction—one that we could call *the* contradiction of globalization—will escalate through the novel and culminate in the final, disastrous event. In the light of my introductory remarks, I read this peculiar configuration as a complex representation of the contemporary interplay between the globalized economic sphere and the US national imaginary. The deterritorialized capital that is still locally based (as Eric's positioning illustrates), is matched by a dissolution of societal ties represented in Eric's "touchless" existence and the bodily offense of the street. Moreover, the sharp class divisions that are evidenced in Eric's total separation from the life of the city speak of a further fracturing of the national polity under the pressure of a global economy.

DeLillo's equating of finance capitalism and the domination of immaterial labor with existential inauthenticity betrays the authors own view of the current state of global economy, one that is to a significant extent based on financial speculation, as having perilous effects for the majority of the population and—and this is the novel's focus—for the forms of sociality contingent on a deterritorialized economic system.⁴⁶ DeLillo's work rests on the assumption that the absolutely virtual and self-referential work of financial speculation, where "money breeds money," loses from sight the material basis of economy in human labor. This results, for the figurative carrier of the immaterial labor, in a disembodied sense of self and an inability to meaningfully relate to others. Eric's sense of existential inauthenticity, his lack of territorial grounding, his inability to establish affective attachments are thus all closely related. As I argued earlier relying on Butler's writing on the work of mourning, affect

46 In his article on virtue and virtuality in *Cosmopolis*, Russel Scott Valentino situates the novel (and the author's critique of a virtual economy) in the American tradition of basing polity in ownership of property, or a "manner of thinking about the republic as fortified by a body of virtuous property owners" (148). While this is undoubtedly an urgent aspect of *Cosmopolis* (especially at the time of this writing), I touch upon it only inasmuch as it frames my discussion of DeLillo's inscription of the 9/11 event.

can be viewed as the basis of sociality. In DeLillo's novel, however, it is labor in its different forms that emerges as the background against which affective ties are either established or dissolved, and community is consolidated or undermined respectively. As I already implied, DeLillo's novel assumes the existence of a strong link between economic forms and the forms of sociality. (Indeed, as I will show later, *Comopolis* hints at the possibility of grounding community in labor, both in the sense of social activity and social force.)

Eric's sense of immateriality and detachment is emphasized in his encounters with scarred and racialized foreign others. To Eric, the focalizer of the narrative, these others function as a counterbalance to his immaterial, deterritorialized sense of self. Moreover, they function as authenticating instances, similar to the way in which the televised appearance of suffering others in *White Noise* works to constitute US subjectivity by emphasizing a sense of safety.

In a brief exchange between Eric and his wife at the beginning of the novel, Elise says that "[o]ne learns about the countries where unrest is occurring by riding the taxis here. I was never good at geography and I learn things by asking drivers where they come from." "They come from horror and despair" (16), replies Eric, noting that "[t]he Sikh at the wheel was missing a finger. Eric regarded the stub, impressive, a serious thing, a body ruin that carried history and pain" (17). The motif established here, of a foreign, non-national other who inhabits a body marked by a history defined by violence, will persist throughout the novel, culminating in Eric's own violent death. Another such figure is Danko, one of Eric's bodyguards, the veteran of "those wars in the Balkans" (112). Eric sees Danko as a person who "didn't live in his clothes, his turtleneck and blazer, but in a body hammered out of raw experience, things suffered and done to extreme limits" (125). Again, the body of the foreigner is marked by a violent history, bearing literal scars of history's materiality. I

announced the importance of the motif of the authenticating foreigner earlier on: in Ken Kalfus' *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country*, a doctor from Afghanistan welcomes the US subject who survived the WTC attacks into history. In the same novel, as in DeLillo's *White Noise* and Chalsani's comments on her Katrina photographs, US subjectivity is constructed out of the televised scraps of suffering of others. Consider, for example, this passage from Kalfus, in which a husband and wife are undergoing difficult marital times after 9/11:

"Feelings between Joyce and Marshall acquired the intensity of something historic, tribal, and ethnic, and when they watched news of wars on TV, reports from the Balkans or the West Bank, they would think, yes, yes, yes, that's how I feel about *you*" (7). Here, news of violent world events and the suffering they report are turned into metaphors that establish a relationship between Marshall and Joyce, that authenticate and give substance to their experience. But in the same move substance is taken away from the televised others: they are, so to speak, emptied of the same humanity that they provide for the viewing subjects. That way, the suffering others become merely an opportunity for an exercise in affect, raw material to be used in the affective body-building of the US self. The suffering of the other thus functions as a necessary material resource for familial/national consolidation (the necessity is marked by the emphatic "yes, yes, yes"). This configuration is certainly nothing new—it is actually the basis of the most common critique of the media representations of human rights violations, where an ahistorical suffering of the violated other becomes an opportunity for the sentimental education of the humane, usually Western self. In these texts, such critique gains support. The vulnerable others are pure images that provide meanings, affective material and ultimately social cohesion to the worlds of Kalfus' and DeLillo's protagonists. In line with my previous discussion of the spectatorial construction of US subjectivity, the mediatic ethical relations represented in these texts must be related to Lurie's argument that a notion of safety

constitutes an important element in an exceptionalist US national imaginary. Here, however, the others who support a sense of safe self are strictly foreign, non-national bodies. The "otherworldly" Ethiopian waitress in Kalfus' novel, "token of a war-ravaged world" (118-19), is similarly there to create the difference and the distance between the United States and the world. While these authenticating images of others' suffering are not an exclusive mark of the post-9/11 US fiction, they do seem to pervade the turn of the twentieth century US national imaginary. As my brief discussion of Chalsani's Katrina photographs and DeLillo's 9/11 essay suggest, this can be related to the two traumatic early twentieth century events.⁴⁷

In *Cosmopolis*, the authenticating others inhabit the streets of New York and provide the novel's hero with an opportunity for reflection on his own inauthenticity and exclusion from an imagined historical world. Like the Sikh's body that for Eric carries "history and pain," other scarred foreigners are in his imagination closely linked to a history that is envisioned as the site of formative violence and emerging subjectivity. Eric's progress is in the novel marked by a gradual transformation during which he destroys his possessions, puts himself in danger, kills and finally, as if in a realization of his deepest desire, gets killed. This narrative progression is paralleled by an equally gradual and ambivalent tendency of the main character to variously ground his immaterial being, in memories, in culture, and in violence. As his increasing bent towards violent behavior suggests, Eric can imagine his own immersion into the materiality of communal life—that is, his reterritorialization—and the respective escape from the disembodied existence of finance capital, only through acts of authenticating violence. I already remarked on the powerful cultural assumption that relates violent physical or traumatic occurrences to a notion of experiential and historical authenticity. As evidenced in other 9/11 novels, the trauma of 9/11 is often represented in

⁴⁷ At the time of this writing, a third catastrophic event is taking place in the US: in a twist of the familiar metaphor, the collapse of the financial system that started with the subprime mortgage crisis has already been described as "an economic Pearl Harbor" (cf. Foley).

terms of the US "entry into history." The same logic, one relying on "the [discursive] practice of grounding concepts and reality in the body" (Douglass and Vogler, 12), is in *Cosmopolis* embodied in Eric's relation to "historical" traumatized others. Eric's desire for such authentication through violence can be seen in light of LaCapra's notion of founding trauma: it is precisely such an event, one of sacralized liminal suffering, that Eric imagines as being able of ultimately materializing and historicizing his virtual and detached self.

While Eric consolidates his sense of self through an ambivalent relation to others, that remain alien and essentially empty screens on which Eric's fantasies of otherness are projected, in the process of his transformation the novel registers, if only fragmentarily, other possible societal grounding forces. (That these need exist, and that their absence is disastrous, is an assumption driving the plot to its closing catastrophe.) These variously imagined foundations of US polity are in *Cosmopolis* multiple, and can be read out of several scenes in which Eric suffers strong affective and experiential responses. I will briefly remark on three of these, since their progression culminates in the final violent event.

At the point when he is near the end of his journey, and entering Hell's Kitchen, Eric runs into the funeral procession of his late friend, Brutha Fez, the Sufi rapper from the Bronx. DeLillo's description of the funeral reads like a theatrical enactment of the cultural hybridity often celebrated as the positive effect of globalization. Brutha Fez's body is

lying in the spiral of his own vocal adaptations of ancient Sufi music, rapping in Punjabi and Urdu and in the black-swagger English of the street. [...] Then came the breakdancers, in pressed jeans and sneakers, here to affirm the history of the deceased, born Raymond Gathers in the Bronx. (133)

Here, foreign religions and cultures are grafted onto a distinctly American history, thus resulting in a multicultural mix that is, as the "world city" of New York itself, the emblem of

globalization. But there is also an undecided, emerging sense of community here: "the crowd was still learning how to mourn a singular rapper such as Fez, who mixed languages, tempos and themes" (134). The "work of mourning" occurring here prepares the ground for a potential consolidation of affect, in the sense elaborated earlier. This communal flow of affect revolves around the dead rapper who is himself an incarnated "adaptation" of other localities to the hegemonic, American one. Through this process of hegemonic adaptation the present locality in effect becomes "global." The community to emerge from this process of affective attachment (that is, DeLillo's phrasing suggests, still unresolved) is itself constituted as "global."

This ad-hoc community, which will allow Eric to feel at ease for the first time in a long time, is also clearly defined in class terms. The friends and family come in "thirty-six white stretch limousines," precisely the kind Eric owns. There is the mayor, the police commissioner, as well as "the mothers of unarmed blacks shot by police, and fellow rappers [...] media executives, foreign dignitaries, faces from film and TV, and [...] figures of world religion in their robes, cowls, kimonos, sandals and soutanes" (134-35). The crowd is composed, in other words, of the heterogeneous variety we associate with nations. Significantly, this nation of mourners—the "global" hybrid community overflowing the New York streets—collectively gravitates towards the focal point of its consolidation: a dead body defined by a form of empowering cultural adaptation intimately connected with financial gain (which arguably brings it close to expropriation). Eric becomes one with this hybrid *socium* and is genuinely moved by the spectacle: "He wept violently. [...] He wept for Fez and everyone here and for himself of course, yielding completely to enormous body sobs" (139). As a part of this post-national, but nationally grounded community, Eric feels "thoughtful acceptance" (139). As an image of post-national nationalism, this scene recalls Buell's notion

of a national polity reformed under the pressure of global flows of capital. It is no wonder then that Eric, the novel's figure for the contradictions of globalization, here feels at home.

There is another kind of multicultural community that Eric encounters, one that provides him with a model for reterritorialization towards which he is far more ambivalent. The barbershop he is going to is in the neighborhood where Eric's father grew up. Although claiming that "this had never been his home or street," Eric "was feeling what his father would feel, standing in this place" (159). This ambivalence, where Eric both recognizes his belonging to a particular history and purposefully rejects it, is significant, and marks a clear opposition to his willing sense of community with the global crowd at Brutha Fez's funeral. As Eric will state later on, "[p]ower works best when there's no memory attached" (184), and the hybrid community of Fez's mourners is based less on common memories than on the common participation in a spectacular event. The barbershop, on the other hand, is suffused with Eric's childhood memories. The old Italian-American barber, Anthony Adubato, who greets Eric "in his working outfit" (160), used to cut Eric's hair when he was a child, and is now telling stories of the working-class neighborhood as it once was. There is a third party in the room, Eric's (presumably) Arab-American driver Ibrahim Hamadou. Ibrahim, with a "collapsed eye" (164) and a scar, obviously represents one of Eric's others that function as bearers of materiality of history: "The man had a history evidently," Eric thinks, "[Ibrahim] looked wary and prepared, a disposition he'd learned on some sand plain seven hundred years before he was born" (168). Ibrahim's being is thus profoundly historical, it extends to an unknown but fundamental and violent past. In all these examples, Eric sees violence and its trace, the scar, as marks of historical being. It is important to resist the suggestive power of Eric's point of view and not read into the almost mute foreign bodies the violent histories Eric ascribes them. These histories are less founded in reality than in Eric's desire for authenticity

that is, as other examples of authenticating otherness illustrate, to a substantial extent shaped by media images. When asked about his eye, Ibrahim doesn't answer, which leads Eric to the following conclusion: "Maybe he [Ibrahim] felt an allegiance to his history. It is one thing to speak around an experience, use it as reference and analogy. But to detail the hellish thing itself, to strangers who will nod and forget, this must seem a betrayal of his pain" (168). This can be read as a reference to Ibrahim's fidelity to trauma, the presumably last site of resistance to Eric's expropriating, imperialist gaze. Indeed, Eric goes on to imagine Ibrahim's history in TV stereotypes: he was beaten and tortured, shot in the face in an army coup, and so on. In effect, Eric acts as the stranger "who will nod and forget," betraying Ibrahim's pain by stereotypically fictionalizing it. On the other hand, Eric has at this point in the novel already firmly decided to "escape" the totality of the market-system that imprisons him. This situation reinforces his desire for reaching out to the authenticating moment of violence as the only event that resists assimilation.⁴⁸ (To this I will return.) This scene takes place in the old barber shop where Eric faces his own past, his childhood memories, from which he remains disconnected, and does nothing to become a participant in the nostalgic narrative of the barber. Eric, the embodiment of cyber-capitalism, thus renounces his own past and denies his own rootedness in a territorially delimited history. But unlike with other scarred foreigners on Eric's journey, the silent Sikh driver or Danko who disappears in a rave party, Eric engages in a dialogue with Ibrahim, whose presence eventually facilitates Eric's newly found and immediately renounced sense of sociality. When Anthony and Ibrahim embark on an exchange of common immigrant memories, it turns out they both used to be taxi-drivers at some point in their lives. While the two are conversing about common memories of labor, Eric falls asleep:

⁴⁸ It is also tempting to read the above passage as DeLillo's oblique reference the "hellish thing" of 9/11—a trauma coeval with the novel, so close as to be unrepresentable, impossible to narrate directly.

In time the voices became a single vowel sound and this would be the medium of his escape, a breathy passage out of the long pall of wakefulness that had marked so many nights. He began to fade, to drop away, and felt a question trembling in the dark somewhere. What can be simpler than falling asleep? (165)

Two important moments should be noted in this passage: the voices of Anthony and Ibrahim become "a single vowel"—a community is consolidated here, but of a different kind than the funeral crowd. At the same time, Eric intimates his own death. As opposed to Eric's expropriating and/or violent attempts at establishing societal ties, barber and driver consolidate an affective community through a dialogue that significantly focuses on their common memories of labor. Clearly, the communal tie is here established along class and gender lines. Eric's renunciation of his memories thus corresponds to his renunciation of a particular form of labor and the corresponding class position. In this scene of solidarity, DeLillo opposes masculine, working-class grounds of communal consolidation to the deterritorializing powers of global capitalism. Eric at first feels "safe" in the barbershop, he confides in the men and temporarily finds refuge in the past, only ultimately to abandon it in order to continue his quest for "authenticity." Like the doctor from Afghanistan who welcomes the 9/11 survivor into history in Kalfus' novel, here the scarred and historical Ibrahim hands Eric the gun that is supposed to help him meet his destiny. At that moment, Eric can feel "the depth of Ibrahim's experience" (170).

In my reading, these two scenes, the funeral and the barbershop, represent two modes of community building or reterritorialization in the face of deterritorializing globalization processes. One is post-national in Buell's sense, and is created in the interplay of local and foreign elements, finally resulting in the creation of a "global" community of consumers of otherness. This hegemonic community is nevertheless clearly nationally based

and, as argued above, fundamentally underwritten by the transnational force of capital. The other one, which in DeLillo's writing appears far more fragile, is equally multicultural, but based on a nostalgic revisiting of locality that is backed by common memories of material labor. This is why, I think, *Cosmopolis* can also be read as betraying a nostalgia for the age when capital had a more distinct territorial basis and was firmly embedded within an economically vigorous US nation-state. The novel is thus also a lamentation about the loss of US economic sovereignty due to irrational expansion of financial capital. While registering this sense of loss, *Cosmopolis* also offers an insight into possible common foundations of societal ties: these are ultimately found in the memories of labor, in the waning traces of the materiality of production. This, however, is not the path Eric, the "citizen of the world with a New York pair of balls" (26), will take. In an attempted reterritorialization of his disintegrating being, Eric—whom I tried to read as a literary figure for a "capitalist imperialist" US state in Harvey's sense—is going to end his life in a catastrophic event.

The novel ends with Eric's murder, which is represented as an event brought about by Eric himself and the system he stands for. Considering the historical moment in which the novel was written, I deem it important to focus on the process of the production of the event in *Cosmopolis*, and on the conditions for the possibility of its emergence. This question is even more urgent in the light of DeLillo's "In the Ruins of the Future" essay, in which the ideas elaborated in *Cosmopolis* form the background for the inscription of the trauma of 9/11.

In the barbershop scene quoted above, Eric refers to the newly found—and soon to be rejected—community as "the medium of his escape" (165). Ultimately, he will escape his virtual existence in death. But before that, during his journey crosstown, he catches several glimpses into and meditates on possible alternatives to the totality of the financial

market system that defines him. Like in the opening section of DeLillo's 9/11 essay, in the "post-historical" *Cosmopolis* too "the market culture is total" (90). The character of a ruthless Russian businessman is DeLillo's definitive sign that nothing is left outside the total system of global capitalism. Even the anarchist protesters in the streets of New York are "a fantasy generated by the market. They don't exist outside the market. There is nowhere they can go to be on the outside. There is no outside" (90). This is the post-historical world globalized by capital that is going to be ruptured by the 9/11 terrorist attacks. In DeLillo's 9/11 essay, the terrorists apparently do come from an outside, although, as I argued in the previous section, their position in relation to the system is not as clear-cut as DeLillo would have it. *Cosmopolis* takes place before the limit event, and tries to imagine this unimaginable breach from a nonexistent outside.

While watching the anti-globalist protesters taking over the streets, Eric senses "a shift, a break in space" (97). This spatial rupture will signal the presence of an event that will lead Eric to acknowledge for the first time the possibility of resistance to the totality of the market system: "Now look. A man in flames. [...] And all action was at a pause" (99). Contrary to his chief of theory's proclamations about the unoriginality of the burning protester's act, Eric thinks that it changed "[e]verything [...]. The market was not total. It could not claim this man or assimilate his act. Not such starkness and horror. This was a thing outside its reach" (99-100). The spectacular sight of the horrifying act of self-immolation, even if dubious in its political efficiency, makes Eric change his mind: the market is now no more all-encompassing, as if the radically violent act could create a radically other space outside the existing totality of the world.⁴⁹ Eric comments on what he just saw: "He did a serious thing. [...] He took his life. Isn't that what you have to do to show them that you are

⁴⁹ Eric tries to identify with the burning man, and imagines his preparation for the act—these brief passages seem to announce the longer pages that will depict the everyday life of the 9/11 terrorists in *Falling Man*.

serious?" (100) This fascination with the spectacular suicide announces Eric's own suicidal quest for authentication through violence. As suggested in his remarks on the burning man, Eric's final suicidal act will represent an attempt to escape the absolute power of the market that defines his existence.

As the plot of *Cosmopolis* shows, the threat to the totality of the capitalist system ultimately comes from Eric's suicidal speculation with the Japanese yen, and not from the streets teeming with the merely symbolic violence of the anarchist protesters. (If there is a terrorist force in *Cosmopolis*, Eric Packer is its figure.) Eric's self-destructive moves in the sphere of speculation are paralleled by his desire to experience something real and authentic outside the virtuality of currency trade. Thus, Eric acts in opposition to the arguments raised in the offhand lectures of his "chief of theory," and against the advice of his security staff who warn him about the existence of a serious threat to his life: "the credible threat was the thing that moved and quickened him. [...] Now he could begin the business of living" (107). Instead of keeping off the streets, Eric pursues the clues that eventually lead him to his would-be assassin. Their encounter in the final scene is another moment in which class features prominently in the novel. Eric's killer is his former employee, "generic labor" (60), as he is described at one point. Benno Levin (or Richard Sheets), who worked for Eric as a currency analyst, confesses before shooting Eric that "your system is so microtimed that I couldn't keep up with it" (191). Benno is thus a victim of the future-oriented rush of capital. DeLillo seems to be adamant about the fact that the killer is the product of the system that Eric represents, or, in other words, that the system created the conditions for its own destruction. Although Benno Levin appears deranged, his actions must be understood in this light, as a violent and impersonal return of the system's reject. The conditions for Eric's death are ultimately created by the tensions that he actively works to exacerbate: by defining himself

against the laboring foreign others, by rejecting his childhood memories of a working-class life, and finally by refusing to view the mad assassin as a product of the system Eric embodies.

Despite the obvious differences, Benno Levin to a certain extent functions as Eric's double. The two are intimately connected. As Russel Scott Valentino has remarked, in the final scene the confronted characters are nearly indistinguishable from each other: "The referent [...] is at times ambiguous, making it unclear which is original, or at least unclear enough to require specification," (153) as in the sentence, "The man fired a shot into the ceiling. It startled him. Not Eric; the other, the subject" (187). Although starting from different premises, from the opposite extremes of the corporate food chain, so to speak, Eric and Benno share the same vision of the decisive moment. This is Benno writing on his final act: "This is the vision of the new day. I am determined finally to act. It is the violent act that makes history and changes everything that came before. But how to imagine the moment?" (154). Benno's thoughts on the event that will change everything thus reflect Eric's desire for the authenticating event. "Everything in our lives, yours and mine," Benno/Richard says, "has brought us to this moment" (189). The event is thus envisioned as a moment of convergence of disparate life-stories. Thus far, the narrative has been neatly divided into larger segments belonging to Eric and shorter "Confessions of Benno Levin" that interrupted them without interfering. At the end, however, the catastrophic event is brought about through a conflation of these separate narrative temporalities. This is emphasized in Eric's ability to literally see the future, while Benno/Richard, in his written fragments, remains focused on his past life. Before being shot, Eric looks at his digital watch, which is also a camera that is now recording the event: "There was an image, a face on the crystal, and it was his" (204). Then, he sees "a body now, facedown on the floor" (205). But the sight is incomprehensible:

"Whose body and when? Have all the worlds conflated, all possible states become present at once?" (205). Here, in a hyperbolic outburst of his future-oriented, speculative imagination, Eric sees his own death, and, after that, the ambulance picking him up, his vault, his unidentified body in the morgue (206 pp.). Eric experiences his own death ambivalently. On the one hand, it represents the realization of the liberatory promise of disembodied cyber-capital: "He'd always wanted to become quantum dust, transcending his body mass, the soft tissue over the bones, the muscle and fat" (206). The future-oriented labor of financial speculation here achieves evolutionary force: "It would be the master thrust of cyber-capital, to extend the human experience toward infinity as a medium for corporate growth and investment, for the accumulation of profits and vigorous reinvestment. But his pain interfered with his immortality" (207). Although capital in Eric's final vision guarantees transcendence, it does not seem to be able to overcome the ultimate material limit that resists its disembodiment: the body. Eric lists material, everyday, bodily stuff that defines him, concluding: "He'd come to know himself, untranslatably, through his pain" (207). Here, in the final culminating scene, bodily pain is posited as the limit to the deterritorializing expansion of capital. Material, bodily life in its barest form becomes for Eric the oppositional territorializing force, an obstacle to the smooth flow of global capital. But, DeLillo seems to suggest, at the moment capital reaches its final limit and meets its radical otherness—no matter how disappointing or unexpected its actual form might be—disaster occurs.

Despite all its meditations on the ontology of global capitalism, *Cosmopolis* is not a political novel in any real sense of the term. Benno does not represent any kind of real political opposition to Eric's capitalist imperialist actions. He does present Eric with a vague and formulaic anti-globalist argument, saying that Eric has to die "because [he is] a figure whose thoughts affect everybody, people, everywhere. [...] For the limousine that displaces

the air that people need to breathe in Bangladesh" (202). However, the force of the argument is lost in the general confusion surrounding Benno's psychological state, a confusion that at moments indeed becomes ontological, and has lead others to speculate about whether he is only a character in Eric's dream (cf. Valentino 153). DeLillo thus imagines the novel's ultimate event as a climax in the progressive accumulation of impersonal forces, and not a revolutionary moment brought about by organized political action. The fundamental driving force that culminates in Eric's murder is the speculative economy supporting his existence, an economy resting, as the novel constantly emphasizes, on a temporal split in the present moment, a movement that constantly transposes the materiality of experience to an imagined future. As the narrative structure of the novel suggests, this temporal fracture culminates in destruction. The ultimate violent event is thus a consequence of the apparently irresolvable contradictions inherent in a deterritorialized, global capitalist system.

This structural division in the narrative of *Cosmopolis* corresponds to the equally disastrous temporal split in the globalized world that opens DeLillo's 9/11 essay. As I suggested in the introductory remarks to the brief chapter on globalization, I see this temporal disjunction as a representation of the fundamental unevenness of the process of globalization. DeLillo's writing on the subject implies that, if carried out as a hegemonic project of economic homogenization, this process easily creates a system laden with dangerous contradictions. It is in this way that *Cosmopolis* prepares the ground for DeLillo's response to 9/11. In the novel, DeLillo develops a narrative that allegorizes the emergence of the conditions for the occurrence of the catastrophic event in the global capitalist system. The emergence of the event is overdetermined by a variety of factors, but still, as *Cosmopolis* indicates, deeply embedded in the texture of a world shaped by the deterritorialized and

detached power of finance capital. Unlike the 9/11 essay, which posits the terrorists as coming from a pre-modern, past world—a newly discovered "historical" outside to the "post-historical" global system—the novel implies that the violent event, although imagined to exist outside of the system, actually results from the contradictions fundamental to it. The "Ruins" essay, however, ends in an ambiguous vision of a world that is one, thus questioning its own initial assumption. In his writing on 9/11, DeLillo inscribes the event in the context of previously existing historical tendencies as a moment of their radical intensification. These tendencies are, in *Cosmopolis* and "In the Ruins of the Future," defined by a newly consolidated US power and the process of economic globalization. In DeLillo's "proper" 9/11 novel, *Falling Man*, the WTC attacks are represented precisely as a moment of convergence of disparate temporalities. As a consequence of the radical temporal disjunction that is an inscription of the unevenness of globalization, the 9/11 event appears as a disturbance in the structure of the globalized world. At the same time, as I argue above, DeLillo's writing allows us to see the event as being symptomatic of a transitional moment the United States is undergoing within world history. As such, the event of 9/11 interrupted DeLillo's allegorical account of the extended moment of American transformation in *Cosmopolis*. But, as "In the Ruins" essay clearly illustrates, that moment of traumatic rupture was swiftly, although not unproblematically incorporated in the narrative of transition that it apparently disturbed.

8.

Killing Politics: The Art of Recovery in *Falling Man*

To a student of immediate post-9/11 American contemporaneity, DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007) offers a familiar inscription of the period's dominant themes: "These are the days after," muses one of the novel's characters, "[e]verything now is measured by after" (DeLillo 2007: 138).⁵⁰ The novel focuses wholly on the "after" that defines the post-9/11 "now." *Falling Man*, I want to argue, constitutes DeLillo's attempt to write the unfinished, transitional present moment of the early twenty-first century United States focusing primarily on its domestic social mechanisms. The novel operates with the staple inventory of the 9/11 archive: trauma, family, memory, American "entry into history," the intrusion of a quasi-demonic terrorist other, the power of media images, as well as indications of oppressive domestic policies of the state. In other words, and reviewers were quite unequivocal about this, *Falling Man* is rather unoriginal in terms of literary material. In its execution however, the novel probes the limits of the post-9/11 US public discourse defined by formulaic approaches to the "national drama."

As I argued in the section on 9/11 melodramas, virtually all 9/11 fictions displace political issues onto the domestic sphere of family life. This private sphere is normally (and normatively) self-contained, economically safe, post-historical and marked by a childlike innocence. Indeed, children in these fictions figure for the national body politic itself, with Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* providing perhaps the most distinct example of such a trend. That family should function as the representative site of

⁵⁰ All subsequent references are to the same edition.

national politics is certainly not a peculiarity of the post-9/11 moment. I already referred to Lauren Berlant's well-argued contention about the insistent transposition of politics onto the domestic sphere in the closing decades of the twentieth century. She explains how this development took place through a process of fostering "a nationalist politics of intimacy" during the Reaganite (neoliberal) revolution, where "normal intimacy" defined in sexual, racial and economic terms came to set the limits of the proper practice of US citizenship (7). In short, the United States is now defined "as a place where normal intimacy is considered the foundation of citizen's happiness" (8). For Berlant, this hegemony of the private sphere as the site of national politics is unambiguously disastrous, eventually leading to the death of a democratic public sphere. Berlant emphasizes the "extremely complicated" use of intimacy in regulating national economic relations and suggests that the privatization of politics must be related to both national and global class relations. In a similar vein, Lisa Duggan notes an analogy between neoliberal political economy, with its emphasis on privatization, and what she sees as the cultural politics of neoliberalism, defined by a radical personalization of responsibility: "These terms [privatization and personal responsibility] define the central intersection between the *culture* of neoliberalism and its economic vision, in the U.S. and abroad" (Duggan 12). Although a detailed analysis of the interplay between political economy and cultural politics of neoliberalism that these claims demand and inspire is beyond the scope of this study, I would like to stress the involvement of the cultural representations of national politics (such as the ones in family dramas of 9/11) with the wider context of political economy.

My reading of Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* suggests that the situation described by Berlant, where children figure for a normative idea of citizenship—one that is moreover in need of therapy (cf. Berlant 8)—persists and is perhaps even intensified

after 9/11. Foer's Oskar is a good citizen who works through his trauma by reconnecting to a familial-national community and history. It seems to me that post-9/11 fiction consistently participates in the dominant cultural tendency described by, among others, Berlant and Duggan. The text of *Falling Man*, from which public aspects of the protagonists' lives are virtually absent, does not in itself provide enough evidence for an unqualified claim that this evacuation of the political and the public (what Berlant and Duggan link to "democracy") is symptomatic of the neoliberal cultural politics as sketched above. But if read in its historical context, defined by the hegemony of neoliberalism, and in the context of DeLillo's other 9/11-related texts, "In the Ruins of the Future" and *Cosmopolis*, the novel's relation to the dominant cultural politics of the period becomes an unspoken actuality.

In the familiar inscription of 9/11 as the moment of radical change, the event appears as a contaminating alien force that destroys the national-familial idyll and ushers US subjects into a world history marked by violence and pain. This loss-of-innocence narrative is reworked in DeLillo's *Falling Man*, a novel that both registers the event's traumatic impact and restricts itself to the hegemonic site of national politics, the family circle. However, unlike most other 9/11 family dramas, *Falling Man* resists easy resolution of the transitional moment it depicts and denies its readers safe closure that would return the national body politic to an idealized past. Instead, *Falling Man* insists on the traumatic monstrosity of the unfinished process of transition, without offering even an approximate vision of a safer future. This reluctance to provide closure has been read by reviewers as an absence of the authorial vision that normally characterizes DeLillo's writing, something close to the erasure of any utopian trace from the novel. *The New York Review of Books'* Andrew O'Hagan thus complained that DeLillo failed at creatively imagining September 11, whereas, for example, in *Libra* "the author enacted wonders the Warren Commission could never have imagined."

Falling Man is also guilty of being too far removed from the actual "real-life drama" of 9/11 and seems "incapacitated" compared to the 9/11 Commission Report.⁵¹ Neither factual nor imaginative enough, the reviewer concludes, "the current book is merely blank with shock, as if [DeLillo's] sense of awe and disbelief may only express itself in a fetish with the obvious" (cf. O'Hagan). The blank obviousness that O'Hagan finds to define *Falling Man* does not seem out of place if we read the novel as DeLillo's attempt to write trauma from the position of the traumatized subject. But while trauma is a fundamental concept for the understanding of the novel, it is important to stress that *Falling Man* also insists on the openness and unfamiliarity of the national historical moment, and refuses to painlessly work through the traumatic event by enclosing it in a definite narrative account. This, I suggest, although clearly qualifying the novel as an example of post-traumatic writing, can also be read as a mark of the unfinished transition of which the 9/11 event is in DeLillo's writing symptomatic (I point to the possibility of such contextualization in my reading of *Cosmopolis* and DeLillo's 9/11 essay.) Following this line of reasoning, *Cosmopolis* and *Falling Man* can be read as allegories of America's transformative transition into an uncharted historical terrain. (While this terrain might be uncharted for the US, it is certainly not so for the history of the capitalist world system, as Arrighi shows.) But while *Cosmopolis* operates in, at moments, grotesque extremes, *Falling Man* is all about subtle movements in the quotidian life of Americans after the end of the world. Still, the diegetic universes of both novels are backed by the same geopolitical imaginary. The author himself suggested this in an interview, when describing *Falling Man* as "an intimate story [...] encompassed by a global event" (Amend & Diez). I would like to take the cue from the above DeLillo's comment and focus on the constitution of the two spheres which set the discursive limits to *Falling Man*: the intimate

51 What would it mean for the novel to be more like the Commission Report? For one thing, it would certainly imply a certain compliance of writerly imagination to the quasi-fictionalized documentary practice of the state, an idea most definitely completely alien to DeLillo as an author.

and the global. If the intimate is the hegemonic terrain on which national politics unfolds in the 9/11 archive—thus continuing the trend of placing intimacy at the center of US political life as described by Berlant—*Falling Man* represents this terrain as irrecoverably dissipating in the face of the traumatic event. If 9/11 fictions can be read as representations of the contemporary state of the US nation, *Falling Man* suggests that its contemporary, traumatized political form is in need of reimagining, particularly against the increasing power of the state as the sole remaining force of communal life. As I will try to show, DeLillo's responds to the state's instrumentalization of trauma by asserting the possibility of a socially productive aesthetic practice.

In order to move on to these topics, a couple of remarks on the novel's narrative structure are necessary, since it significantly contributes to the idiosyncrasy of DeLillo's inscription of 9/11. *Falling Man* opens with Keith Neudecker leaving the scene of the WTC attack, only moments after the planes hit the towers: "It was not a street anymore but a world, a time and space of falling ash and near night. [...] This was the world now" (3). It is possible to read this opening in two ways. On the one hand, it can be understood as depicting a shrinking of the totality of experience to the local site of trauma: Keith's mind cannot get out of the moment he is experiencing, the life and the world are reduced to the traumatic moment; everything is frozen in the "now" created by the impact of the event. This is indeed how things will remain for Keith, who throughout the novel clings to the repetitive routines that bespeak of a post-traumatic acting out. Poker, the theme of Keith's pre-9/11 meetings with his friends, becomes now an obsessive and solitary activity. Keith is "not looking at people, seeing essentially no one" (198) and moves to Vegas because of the sensation of timelessness and repetitive "routine" that the city allows for (197). Keith lives in a prolonged, permanent "now:" "These were the times when there was nothing outside, no flash of history

or memory that he might unknowingly summon in the routine run of the cards" (225). Keith's withdrawal into a post-traumatic acting out is thus also significantly marked by a willing loss of memory and historical consciousness. On the other hand, in the light of my previous readings of the 9/11 fictions, the novel's opening paragraphs can be seen as marking the moment of a particular expansion, of the "worlding" of local experience: "this," the street, becomes "the world"—the traumatic moment thus marks a point of the US subject's entry into "world history," with all the implications of such a division discussed earlier on. This reading of the scene recapitulates my argument about the emergence of the United States as a subject of world history through the trauma of 9/11. But, this moment of emergence in *Falling Man* leads neither to national consolidation nor imperialist expansion. In effect, *Falling Man* stages the fundamental emptiness of such a traumatic emergence of subjectivity: instead of a renewed national body and a reconstituted community, the novel offers a vision of arrested life in a state of emergency.

In the post-traumatic "now" of *Falling Man*, the affective communal ties are being tentatively restored along with an increasingly palpable presence of a presumably post-political, post-ideological state. Similar to Spiegelman's *In the Shadow of No Towers*, which can be seen as a "response" elicited not merely by 9/11 but by repressive domestic policies in the aftermath of the event, DeLillo started writing *Falling Man* not as a direct reaction to the terrorist attacks, but as an "internal counterweight" to the re-election of George W. Bush in 2004, as he put it in an interview (Amend & Diez), and as a reaction to a photograph (to the latter problem I return below).⁵² While the novel does not dwell on the details of domestic

52 To the question "Can you still remember the moment when this picture [that prompted the writing of *Falling Man*] surfaced?" DeLillo replies: "Sometime in 2004. A couple months later, I started to work on *Falling Man*. I still remember this exact date: it was the day after George W. Bush's re-election in November 2004. I needed an internal counterweight. I did research, read articles and books on 9/11, and also discovered the photo that I'd just been carrying in my head up till then. It shows a businessman, in ashes and dust, with a bag in his hand. It appeared in many newspapers after the terrorist attacks. I asked myself: Who is this man? What's his story? And what about the bag he's got? I tried to answer these questions with the force of my imagination" (Amend & Diez). I treat the issue of DeLillo basing his narrative on a photograph in the closing

policies of the Bush administration, it does provide an insight into the depoliticizing potential of historical trauma of 9/11 in its hegemonic cultural encoding. As if reacting to the political instrumentalization of trauma by the Bush administration, DeLillo carefully evacuates politics from his inscription of the event. In this sense, I read *Falling Man* as DeLillo's attempt to reach beyond politics in the exploration of the 9/11 event. But, I want to argue, by radically privatizing historical experience (and turning intimacy into the measure of global history), the novel enacts a disappearance of politically informed social practice as a communal force in the contemporary US. This disappearance the novel represents as being accomplished through a process of traumatization of the national polity contingent both on a "global" clash of disparate worlds and domestic interventions of the state.

The temporal structure of the narrative both reflects the "disarticulation" between "us" and "them" that troubled DeLillo in his 9/11 essay and reproduces the basic mechanism of trauma. The narrative is composed of two main chronologies, both fundamentally related to the moment of the terrorist attack. One narrative line depicts the "after" that takes place in New York City and focuses on the story of an American family: Keith, his wife Lianne, his fellow survivor and (briefly) lover Florence, his son Justin, his friends. This part of the story depicts the Americans' attempts to restore their lives to the ordinary, pre-traumatic normalcy. As the above quotation about Keith's life in Las Vegas suggests, this "now" is in the process of becoming emptied of memory in history. This sensation is further emphasized by Lianne's work as a facilitator in a creative writing workshop for Alzheimer patients.⁵³

Parallel with this, we follow a narrative pre-history of the event, a "before" inhabited by the 9/11 terrorists. This part of the story focuses on Hammad, a member of

remarks to this section.

53 In DeLillo's depiction of US social life post-9/11, history is deflated as an authenticating narrative. The trauma is here thus not only depoliticizing, but also effects a disappearance of history as a socially productive discourse. I will return to this issue in my reading of Pynchon's *Against the Day*, a novel that immerses the post-9/11 contemporaneity in its various histories.

Mohammed Atta's group (in the novel Atta goes by the name Amir). In a sharp opposition to the American "after," the terrorist "before" belongs to a historical world defined by violence. The passage in which an old Iraqi baker in Hamburg tells Hammad of his memories of young Iranians dying in the suicidal human wave attacks during the Iraq-Iran War is exemplary: "the boys were sounding the cry of history, the story of ancient Shia defeat and the allegiance of the living to those who were dead and defeated" (78). The distance between the two worlds is emphasized when the 9/11 terrorists are described by one of the people in Lianne's Alzheimer group as being "a million miles outside your life" (64). The two worlds are here presented as being completely separate, thus dramatizing DeLillo's formulation from the "In the Ruins" essay, about "[t]wo forces in the world, past and future" (DeLillo 2001). Moreover, the strict temporal separation reflects DeLillo's end-of-history influenced notion of a pre-modern, "historical" terrorist force intruding into and bringing to an end the normal order of the post-modern, "post-historical" US. However, while the terrorist force is in *Falling Man* clearly marked by violent histories (memories of Iranian human wave attacks, Hammad's slaughtering of a camel in a training camp in Afghanistan), the outlines of the future that the United States is supposed to embody are far from clear. To the contrary, any defined notion of future is occluded by the return of the catastrophic event at the end of the novel. The two chronologies, that are both from time to time interrupted by flashbacks that remain within their respective worlds, collapse into the disaster that engenders the discursive "now" of the novel. Hence, although laid out in parallel, the two chronologies are not simultaneous, but contiguous (one taking place before, the other after the event). Indeed, the novel suggests they cannot exist simultaneously: they come in contact only once, on 9/11, and the contact is totally destructive, as if pointing to an irreducible difference between them. But, the parallel unfolding of the two stories in discourse allows the reader to observe how the two worlds

echo and mirror each other. In other words, apart from insisting on a radical separation, the novel makes it possible to look for uncanny connecting points between the disparate worlds.

The novel's final section, titled "In the Hudson Corridor," takes place immediately before the attacks, that is, immediately before the beginning of the novel, thus making the narrative come a traumatic full circle through the return of the ordinary event (237). This section begins with Hammad focalizing the action that takes place in the hijacked plane, depicts the moment the plane hits the World Trade Center, and then seamlessly—in the same sentence—switches to Keith's point of view. This is the moment when the story of Keith and his family will begin, the moment in which "before" becomes "after." But the post-traumatic "now" of *Falling Man* undermines the assumption that the United States unequivocally "entered history" on 9/11; instead, the Neudeckers remain trapped in a prolonged traumatic moment, trying to reconstitute their ordinary life out of bits and pieces of intimate memories. These fragmentary personal histories are embedded in a larger field of forces: the world with its disjunctive temporalities that encompass and streamline the individual lives that fall its victims. In that sense, it bears repeating, the novel does not narrate the process of emergence of a reformed subjectivity, but an uneasy national moment in the traumatic process of historical transition and internal transformation.

In *Falling Man*, DeLillo insists on the unreality of everyday life after the catastrophic event, on a post-traumatic sense of estrangement from the quotidian order of things. "The ordinariness, so normally unnoticeable, fell upon him oddly, with almost dreamlike effect" (51). This sentence captures the general tone and theme of the novel. The unreality of ordinary life and its persistent uneventfulness that *Falling Man* registers (so frustrating to some of the novels' reviewers) is a consequence, in Kalí Tal's words, of the "radical ungrounding" effected by the traumatic experience (15). But this explanation begs

some questions about the preexisting grounds of subjectivity: what exactly is the subject ungrounded from? And what are the possibilities for the recovery of the foundations of subjectivity and sociality in the traumatized national polity? As an answer to the first question, *Falling Man* offers the focus on the intimate lives of its protagonists, typically playing out national matters in the domestic context of family drama. In the face of trauma, questions of history and politics, normally crucial to DeLillo's opus, virtually disappear. To the second question the novel significantly refuses to give an easy answer: there is no restorative resolution or melodramatic closure to the slow-paced plots of *Falling Man*.

Importantly, the family drama here does not follow the melodramatic pattern. Keith returns to his family immediately after leaving the site of the terrorist attacks, although he hasn't been living with them for years before. His reaction, that his wife Lianne tries to accept and support, seems like a mechanical acting out of the normative social routine, an attempt to reconstitute normalcy by playing the expected social role. Finally, this does not work, and Keith and Lianne again drift apart. (The final break up will actually help Lianne overcome her trauma.) Unlike in some other 9/11 fictions, in DeLillo's novel the trauma does not work to reconstitute normative affective ties that would guarantee social cohesion to a recovering body politic. Instead, the traumatic event ultimately returns to assert its force over the possibility of retrieval of a nostalgically evoked past, denying a simple resuscitation of polity's "lost foundations," however imagined. Rather than narrating a renewed possibility of sociality, *Falling Man* displays individual bodies in their radical vulnerability. In this, I want to suggest, the novel questions the idea that communal matters of national polity can or should be grounded in the intimate sphere. By refusing to offer a safe way out of historical trauma through the intimate sphere, DeLillo disallows a grounding of politics, as a social and communal practice, in the traumatized privacy of the citizens.

Instead of such a normative, "familial-national" recovery, *Falling Man* offers a depiction of the United States in the process of rediscovery of itself in the face of the global event. Following the question of the disappointed *New York Review Of Books* reviewer, "What is a prophet once his fiery word becomes deed?" (O'Hagan), we could read the absence of DeLillo's usual prophetic or visionary passages as a sign of the uncertainty of the outcome of the historical transition that 9/11 in the novel both engenders and stands for.⁵⁴ In order to address these issues I would like to focus on the constitution of the two conflicted worlds that are variously mapped onto distinctive sets of oppositions. Although not rigorously defined, the terms I start with are not quite provisional, and should achieve fuller meaning in the elaboration that follows. As I suggest above, the worlds that collide and run in parallel in *Falling Man* are those of the Americans and the terrorists, mapped respectively onto the spheres of the private-intimate and public-political, as well as the national and global. It could be argued that the oppositions between these spheres are in the novel deconstructed, but this happens only in order for the terms of discussion to shift, allowing for new questions about the post-9/11 historical moment to be opened.

In the geopolitics of *Falling Man*, the "global," non-American sphere belongs to terrorists: not only Islamic terrorists, Amir and Hammad, but also the German reformed ex-terrorist Martin, former member of Kommune 1 and the current lover of Lianne's mother Nina. Martin, now an art dealer, is the character providing the reader with what sounds like historically informed political commentary. To Nina's reductive interpretation of the terrorist attacks as based solely in a fundamentalist understanding of religion, Martin replies: "Forget God. These are matters of history. This is politics and economics. All the things that shape

⁵⁴ The reviewers in *The Nation* and *The New York Review of Books* especially posit 9/11 as a moment that was waiting for DeLillo and that DeLillo had been announcing in his previous novels. In O'Hagan's review, 9/11 is "the day of days for [DeLillo's] preoccupations as an artist and his brio as a stylist. If the twin towers could be said to have stood in wait for the Mohamed Attas of the world, then the Mohamed Attas of the world were standing in wait for Don DeLillo."

lives, millions of people, dispossessed, their lives, their consciousness" (47). The manifest generality of Martin's explanation is matched by the novel's description of the motivation of the terrorists. When Amir (Atta) speaks to his terrorist group, it is about "the feeling of lost history [...] being crowded out by other cultures, other futures, the all-enfolding will of capital markets and foreign policies" (80). It is only in the abstractness of their explanations for the attacks of 9/11 that the ex-terrorist and the terrorist can be compared. Although through the evidently very broad analogy between the 9/11 terrorists and the historical German left terrorism DeLillo echoes the hegemonic trend of conflating different social movements, Martin has really nothing in common with the 9/11 terrorists. More than anything else, Martin's character is there to point to the fact that Western terrorism is a thing of the irrevocable past (this is emphasized by his change of name from Ernst Hechinger to Martin Ridnour). Martin's own comparison between his own past violent politics and the current politics of terror is supported by the fact that he belonged to a terrorist cell that, like the 9/11 terrorists, counted nineteen members; in other words, it comes very close to ahistorical speculation. As Nina informs us, "He thinks these people, these jihadists, he thinks they have something in common with the radicals of the sixties and seventies. He thinks they're all part of the same classical pattern. They have their theorists. They have their visions of world brotherhood" (147). However, although offering "political" explanations, Martin is not as "political" as he used to be. When he first saw Giorgio Morandi's paintings, that feature prominently in the novel, he thought they were "empty, self-involved, bourgeois," and delivered, according to Nina, "a Marxist critique" (145). But, twenty years later "he sees form, color, depth, beauty" (145). To this, Lianne replies that "he also sees the money" (146). Martin thus underwent a process of depoliticization, here played out through the transformation of his aesthetic sensibility, an exchange of "politics" for "beauty." As Lianne's

commentary suggests, this loss of the political is closely related to the shift from an analysis of political economy to a practice informed primarily by personal economic gain.

All we learn about Amir, the character based on the actual terrorist Mohammed Atta, is his religious fundamentalist dedication to the terrorist cause. (Amir is probably the closest DeLillo will ever get at representing pure evil.) Amir is immersed in questions that are vaguely historical and systemic, justifying the terrorists' actions by recourse to notions that give the impression of being grounded in theories about American imperialism. But these pronouncements remain undefined and appear to be there only to distance the monstrous Amir from the basic humanity of other characters. While the Neudecker family is all about the attempts to recover their lost ordinary private lives, obsessively deliberating on personal matters, relationships and emotions, Amir is completely submerged in historical, political and economic—that is, by definition public—matters. This, I would like to suggest, shows how in *Falling Man* the focus on and the extent of the characters' involvement in the private sphere becomes the index of their humanity.

While the American characters and Amir occupy completely opposite sides in this configuration, Martin and Hammad function as mediators. I have already remarked on Martin's transformation from a terrorist to a normal citizen, his "humanization" through the rejection of Marxist critique of art and a shift toward the closely intertwined aesthetic and economic value of Morandi's painting. Martin's change, in other words, is defined through a rejection of politics. Hammad, the only 9/11 terrorist displaying signs of humanity, is a similarly liminal figure. In the context of my discussion, it is relevant that his humanity is represented through his reluctance to let go of his affective ties in the private sphere. He is actually scolded by Amir for hanging out with women, eating too much, neglecting prayers, and so on. As Hammad himself puts it, "[h]e had to fight against the need to be normal" (83).

Sexuality plays an important role here: while Hammad is depicted as being heterosexually "healthy," Amir is who he is, Hammad informs us, "maybe because he never fucked a woman" (176). Amir's celibacy, paralleled by his vague "anti-imperialist politics," is thus a sign of his general abnormality, the same way Hammad's sexual desire, that goes hand in hand with his constant doubt about the necessity of killing innocent people, is a sign of humanity.

This fact, that a character's performance in the private sphere becomes the index of normalcy or humanity is important, and indicates two things. On the one hand, it is related to the hegemony of the private sphere as the site on which political issues are negotiated (a characteristic of the US public sphere elaborated by Berlant above). On the other hand, it bespeaks of a related issue, a particular cultural construction of terrorism echoed in DeLillo's novel. Both of these—the privatization of the political sphere and the creation of a specific image of terrorists—are marked by a similar depoliticizing process. Terrorists' acts are in *Falling Man* explained in psychological terms—aberrant sexuality, blind hatred based on fundamentalist religious indoctrination—often with hints of orientalist clichés. Such rhetoric is not limited to DeLillo's 9/11 novel. In John Updike's *Terrorist*, the domestic teenage (would-be) terrorist Ahmad has to undergo a reformatory process contingent on a normalization of his sexual life and the acceptance of his school guidance counselor, Mr Levy, as a substitute for his absent father. The normalization of these two aspects of Ahmad's private life, his sexuality and his presumably equally dysfunctional single-parent family, form the necessary background for his re-socialization and rejection of terrorism. Indeed, throughout the novel Ahmad is called a "weird queer" and a "faggot" (Updike 16), as well as a "monster" and a "madman" (Updike 293).

In the light of the recent work on terrorism done by queer studies scholars Jasbir

Puar and Amit Rai, this can be read as a sign of a more general cultural development. In their analysis of US terrorism studies, Puar and Rai show how this hegemonic form of production of knowledge about terrorism, "takes the psyche [of the terrorist] as its privileged site of investigation" (Puar & Rai 122). They argue that in post-9/11 US "terrorist" becomes a fluctuating signifier contingent on discourses of otherness/difference, race, sexuality, and nationality. This rhetorical procedure works to "reduce complex social, historical, and political dynamics to various psychic causes rooted in childhood family dynamics" (Puar & Rai 124). In other words, the terrorist act is depoliticized through a focus on the abnormal private life of the individual. In her study of US representations of the Middle East, where the figure of the terrorist has an important place, Melani McAlister provides a historical background to this development when claiming that

In the 1970s and 1980s, policymakers and pundits had framed terrorism as a problem of hyper-politicization: terrorists destroyed the sacred private space of individualism by insisting that no space was free of politics. After 9/11, the problem was understood differently; terrorists might be speaking in political terms, but those terms were literally invisible, and so their acts became evidence of private pathology. (279)

Falling Man registers this depoliticizing shift both through the character of the reformed terrorist Martin and through its insistence on Amir's personal abnormality. This depoliticization of discourse on terrorism is not without its consequences. As McAlister warns in retrospect, "[f]ramed as an act of 'evildoers' who hated something as vague as 'freedom'—rather than, say, something as concrete and specific as U.S. foreign policy—the violence of September 11 seemed *incomprehensible* as a political act" (279, my emphasis). This view suggests that the incomprehensibility of the 9/11 event, so often culturally

inscribed as a consequence of an unrepresentable collective trauma, should also be related to a disappearance of the political and the emphasis on the individual and psychological in the media and narrative accounts of the event.

We can observe this depoliticizing shift in DeLillo's own writing if we compare *Mao II*'s terrorists to the 9/11 hijackers of *Falling Man*. In *Mao II*, published in 1991, despite DeLillo's usual philosophical excursions, the terrorists still appear as human and, also, political beings: they negotiate, they have political aims, they talk about historical events and precedents. Abu Rashid, for example, quotes Mao, and Americans tend to discuss actual history and politics of Lebanon. This, on the one hand, certainly has to do with the fact that these are "political," left-wing terrorists, not religious fundamentalists. But even with that qualification in mind, the difference from the 9/11 terrorists in *Falling Man* is dramatic. Here, the terrorists are stripped down to either bodily existence (eating habits, control of sexual desire) or engrossed in fantasies of bodily destruction (transcendence through violence and self-sacrifice).

I see DeLillo's evacuation of politics and emphasis on the body and the bodily experience in *Falling Man* as being related. In order to elucidate their relationship, I briefly turn to Walter Benn Michaels' reflections on "discourse of terrorism" in his "Empires of the Senseless: (The Response to) Terror and (the End of) History." In that article, Michaels argues that in the postmodernist "literature of terror" (of which Don DeLillo's *Mao II* is for him exemplary) "terrorism cannot be linked to any political position" (105). Moreover, he claims that this literature, symptomatic of a more general trend evidenced also in Hardt and Negri's *Empire*, prepared the ground for the US response to the terror of 9/11. The "irrelevance of belief" characterizing the terrorists of these fictions—a depoliticizing shift from "what terrorists believe in" to "what they are"—made possible a "war on terrorism

[which] remains rigorously indifferent [...] to the reasons terrorists might give for their acts" (106). In these discourses Michaels detects a general skepticism towards political alternatives, that results in the substitution of the ideological and political for the ontological. In literary texts in particular, this trend is evidenced in a "disarticulation of writing from representation" (110), or in what Michaels sees more generally as a postmodernist and posthistoricist "critique of representation." Like the terrorist act, the literature of terror wants to offer "the thing itself," turning bodily experience into the message and substituting signification for presence:

What this means in writing is a commitment to the transformation of the text into a thing, either [...] into the thing it seeks to represent (the word made flesh) or [...] into the thing that replaces the representation (the bleeding that replaces writing). The point both times is to turn a meaning that might be understood into an object or event that will be experienced. (110)

In Michaels' view, the "posthistoricist" "literature of terror" functions as a cultural equivalent to the terrorist logic of the "propaganda of the deed": both insist on the primacy of the bodily and the experiential, which is supposed to counterbalance the purported powerlessness of "merely discursive" representations. Read in this light, the persistent stress on the human body in *Falling Man* becomes a sign of a perceived loss of representational power, both in the political and artistic sense. This lack of faith in representation and the concomitant emphasis on bodily experience is a response to the traumatic terrorist act, but also, as DeLillo suggests in the quoted interview, a response to the state of domestic politics. The evacuation of politics through personalization (DeLillo's focus on intimacy) and a parallel evacuation of representation through traumatization (DeLillo's focus on non-referential bodily experience) thus betray the mutually reinforcing work of the existing trend of depoliticization of US

public life (described from different positions by Berlant, McAlister and Michales) and the hegemonic inscriptions of the national trauma of 9/11. *Falling Man* can thus be read as a representation of a specific social process that we could call depoliticization through traumatization. Here, it is important to emphasize that the trauma under discussion is "national," in the sense that it is supported by hegemonic cultural inscriptions and media representations, or "nationalized." As I argued in earlier sections, both critical and fictional literature on 9/11 recognize the paradoxical fact that the "nationalization" of trauma of September 11 was contingent both on the actual local event and its subsequent cultural and political management.

The emphasis on the "private pathology" or "abnormality" of the terrorist—that should also be viewed in the context of the privatization of the American public sphere—can be understood as a sign of the "posthistorical" disappearance of politics as elaborated by Michaels. Moreover, Michaels' argument can also be related to the loss of critical potential of terms "capitalism" and "imperialism" noted by Amy Kaplan, that I referred to earlier. Michaels' article, although starting from a different analytical position, allows us to relate this disappearance of the political to a specific representational mode in literary writing, one focused on the body and the loss of signification. In my reading, DeLillo's 9/11 novel suggests that the traumatic advent of terrorist attacks worked to reinforce the existing hegemonic trend of disappearance of politics from the US public life. The logic of terror that in *Falling Man* completely takes over the quotidian life—attested to both in its depoliticizing effect and its anti-representational disposition—is produced in a tension between the "global" terrorist force and the "national" technologies of the state. In other words, the depoliticization is in *Falling Man* not as total as it might appear: it is actually a tactic through which the sovereign power of the state is manifested. In order to further argue this point, I would like to

focus more closely on the functioning of the novel's traumatized bodies.

To an important extent, *Falling Man* is a novel about bodies: about how they fall, fail, become photosensitive surfaces for recording memories, how they come into violent contact with other bodies (as in the "organic shrapnel" phenomenon, cf. 16), about how they are penetrated by images. Instead of attempting to offer explanations or interpretations of the event, DeLillo focuses on how the event registers on the bodies of the novel's protagonists. These are above all bodies that are infiltrated by alien elements—images, other bodies—and become porous, malleable and permeable. In one sense, the fate of individual bodies is in *Falling Man* a metaphor for the intrusion of otherness into national body politic, here registered in literal ways on the bodies of citizens. The body becomes the site of traumatic historical inscription, so to speak, directly, immediately, apparently without discursive intervention. I already noted that I read the post-traumatic reinvention of America in *Falling Man* as a representation of the unfinished and formative process defining the "now" inaugurated by 9/11. But to claim that the trauma, and the traumatic structure of DeLillo's narrative, should be read as signals of the uncertainty of a moment of historical transition implies a certain abstraction of *Falling Man*'s traumatic subject matter. Indeed, I am suggesting that the historical trauma that DeLillo's novel depicts has a pronounced figurative aspect, to which it nevertheless must not be reduced. In this reading, that textual evidence gives support to, the inability of the characters to deal with the trauma of 9/11 becomes a figure for the disorientation of the national body politic in relation to a more general, extended moment of transition. (In the preceding chapters I relate this moment of transition to the end of the US cycle of accumulation.) The title itself supports such a reading: while the novel does deal with the actual horrifying sight of "falling men" on September 11, the phrase also becomes a metaphor for the general sense of disorientation post-9/11. "Falling" clearly

acquires metaphorical meanings in Keith's final vision of the post-9/11 world: "That's where everything was, all around him, falling away, street signs, people, things he could not name" (246). It is this added metaphorical value of trauma that perplexes the *New York Review of Books'* Andrew O'Hagan when he insists on the importance of identifying the man in Richard Drew's falling man photograph, and rebukes DeLillo's putative neglect and abstraction of biographical (i.e. historical) facts (cf. O'Hagan).

Contrary to such demands for factual accuracy, the writing in *Falling Man* suggests a broad dispersal of meaning. The title phrase, as well as the cited final reflection from Keith, are also echoed in Lianne's ruminations on the loss of memory, another recurrent motive in *Falling Man*. Commenting on the deteriorating mental state of one of her students, and preoccupied by the possibility of her ending up a victim of the Alzheimer syndrome like her father, Lianne thinks: "This was an occasion that haunted [her], the breathless moment when things fall away, streets, names, all sense of direction and location, every fixed grid of memory" (156).⁵⁵ The phrasing, that bears a striking similarity to Keith's post-traumatic vision, supports the view that the trauma in *Falling Man* should be read as pointing to a more general social anxiety boosted by the event of 9/11. In turn, statements not related to the traumatic event seem easily applicable to it: "From this point on, you understand, it's all about loss. We're dealing inevitably here with diminishing returns" (60). This is Dr. Apter talking about the Alzheimer patients, but the sentence could equally apply to the novel's depiction of the post-9/11 US. Similarly, the sentence "The truth was mapped in slow and certain decline" (125) opens a section on Lianne's Alzheimer group, but, again, is suggestive of other things: the decline of US power (in light of Martin's comments on "American

⁵⁵ The sentence also provides a hint for a different kind of reading. It is interesting to note how for Lianne the loss of memory is closely bound to the urban spatial imagery: the "grid" applies both to the street pattern of Manhattan and the work of memory, as if the loss of memory corresponded to the literal destruction of the city's geography on September 11, 2001.

irrelevance," cf. 191), or the deliberate falling of the WTC victims. The meaning in *Falling Man* moves in various directions, almost disintegrating under the pressure of multiple reference.

In this, the novel suggests the possibility of an ultimate loss of meaning as a consequence of trauma. Especially during her Alzheimer sessions, Lianne feels threatened by the possibility of the loss of memory, meaning and, in general, representational ability aggravated by the trauma of 9/11. At one point, Lianne meditates on the last sentence one of her students, Rosellen, wrote before succumbing to her illness. The sentence consists of "extended versions of a single word," that Lianne interprets as "a kind of protection perhaps, a gathering against the last bare state, where even the deepest moan may not be grief but only moan" (156). Here, Lianne glimpses the possibility of the loss of the faculty of representation. She constantly returns to this notion of life in a meaningless world where everything is reduced to pure physical/bodily manifestation ("moan"), without the affective component ("grief") that would make it intelligible. The emphasis on the affective component suggests that the loss of the representational ability implies the loss of societal ties, of a meaningful relation to others. This loss, as the quoted passage suggests, is played out through the dissociation of the body from the representational activity that would give it meaning, or, in short, through a sense of disembodiment.

This sense of disembodiment is most prominent in the characters of Lianne and Hammad. In both, it is related to an act of violence that they enact more or less reluctantly. Hammad, the almost-human, non-political terrorist, experiences a sense of disembodiment during the quotidian routines that occupy his days while preparing for the attacks: "He sat in a barber chair and looked in the mirror. He was not here, it was not him" (175). He is "looking past the face in the mirror, which is not his" (178). "[H]e got up and followed [two

women]. This was something that just happened, the way a man is pulled out of his skin and then the body catches up" (176). During the hijacking of the plane on September 11, Hammad cannot remember how he got cut: "maybe the pain had been there earlier but he was only now remembering to feel it" (237). The physical sensation of pain is meaningless without its history, as the terrorist act is in truth meaningless to Hammad, who constantly doubts, but ultimately succumbs to the sovereign will of the arch-terrorist Amir. (His doubt is emphasized by the fact that he questions Amir about the deaths of innocent people that will be caused by the attacks, cf. 176) Lianne experiences something similar. At several points in the novel, Lianne is bothered by the music played by her neighbor Elena. Whenever she hears the music—that Lianne describes as "Middle Eastern, North African, Bedouin songs perhaps or Sufi dances, music located in Islamic tradition" (67)—she feels racial stereotypes overwhelming her: "They are the ones who think alike, talk alike, eat the same food at the same time." At the same time she knows "this [the stereotypes] wasn't true" (68). Despite this knowledge, she hits Elena after failing to talk her into turning down the volume. When later retelling the incident to Keith, Lianne describes her sense of disembodiment at the time of the attack: "I could hear myself speaking. My voice was like it was coming from somebody else" (124). Like Hammad, Lianne experiences a feeling of disembodiment and acts against her better judgement. But while Lianne presumably acts as she does because of the trauma of 9/11, Hammad's actions are justified by his ideological indoctrination through fundamentalist religious beliefs. To both of them, things "just happen," since as subjects they are devoid of any control over their ability to act. Lianne's bodily reaction, that she has to fight off, like Hammad fighting off his need to be normal, is then a result of the 9/11 attacks: she attacks her neighbor because she associates her music with the Islamic terrorists. Moreover, Lianne's reaction is clearly represented as irrational, out of control—this is emphasized through her

loss of control over her body and voice. The scene reads like a figural sublimation of the social mechanisms of post-9/11 domestic anti-"Arab" violence. But the violence is here an aberration caused by the traumatic event, an act that cannot be controlled even if recognized as irrational and false: it is reduced to a bodily reflex. But how natural is this response, especially if viewed in the context of the post-9/11 policies of the state, that, in a similar way, acted "irrationally" against bodies marked as "other" (cf. Volpp)? The text suggests that the aggression or violence against putative foreigners in the national polity is a matter of affective excess, that Lianne's attack on Elena is a matter of pure bodily reaction, not, let's say, their ideological or political antagonism. In other words, this violence, although irrational, is a "natural" bodily reflex that cannot be checked.

Lianne's excessive/violent behavior is limited to the private, family sphere, which is the exemplary site both of the political and the personal. Elena's music intrudes in Lianne's own living space, an intrusion of otherness echoing the terrorist attacks. Here too parallel lives—like the one of Hammad and Keith—meet in a moment of violent spectacle. This procedure simultaneously reinforces the status of the violent event as a private matter of a temporarily unbalanced personality, and turns the private sphere into a site of national politics. Read in the context of the societal fallout of 9/11, the Lianne/Elena scenes ultimately reinforce DeLillo's belief in the normativity of multicultural tolerance as a feature of US social reality, evidenced in the fact that Lianne's intolerance is a reflex reaction to the foreign/terrorist disturbance: without it, it might have never had happened. It is not Lianne's, but the terrorists fault that Elena is being persecuted by the normative US subject, while Elena's ambiguous music choice—Lianne hears "a solo lute from Turkey or Egypt or Kurdistan" (120)—exemplifies the fluidity of the racial profile of the post-9/11 US citizens' antagonist, now racialized as vaguely "Middle Eastern, Arab, or Muslim" (cf. Volpp).⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Lianne's outbreak of intolerance is balanced by her public service work with an ethnically mixed group of

Although she does not mean what she does, Lianne does it anyway: her apolitical body paradoxically becomes a pure agent of the repressive policies of the sovereign state. Similarly, against his will, Hammad's body becomes the agent of the sovereign will of fundamentalist terror. In other words, if *Falling Man* shows at work the social process of depoliticization of trauma and its reduction to "pure" bodily experience, it also—through the body's compliance to the demands of the sovereign—shows how on this very process the instrumentalization of bodies depends. The terms "apolitical" and "depoliticization" can thus be somewhat misleading, and should be understood as pointing to a reassertion of the power of the state (or, more generally, a repressive sovereign) over the everyday life of its subjects, a situation suddenly revealed by the terror of 9/11.

DeLillo's own remarks about the motivation for his 9/11 book suggest that this unveiling of state power should be read in the context of the post-9/11 domestic response to the terrorist attacks, that I summarize in the first chapter (cf. Steinmetz, Eisgruber and Sager). As Linda Kauffman notes, the emergent authoritarian strains of US state after 9/11 are registered in *Falling Man* in the episode when a lawyer who was defending a terrorist suspect is arrested and charged with assisting terrorism (Kauffman 362-63). Moreover, while in my reading of "In the Ruins of the Future" I pointed to the danger implicit in the conflation of the very different struggles of anti-globalist activists and 9/11 terrorists, Kauffman's article suggests there might be another way to use the analogy. According to her, DeLillo's insistent analogy, in his "Baader-Meinhof" short story and in *Falling Man*, enforces "the parallels between German and American state repression" (362).

The trauma of 9/11 does away with Lianne's power of reflection and makes Lianne the subject that reflexively acts as an instrument of repressive state policies. Through

Alzheimer patients in East Harlem. This includes one Muslim man who is, like the rest of the group, trying to cope with the new situation through the act of writing. I discuss Volpp's article in more detail in the chapter on DeLillo's "In the Ruins of the Future."

their unwilling acts, Hammad and Lianne fulfill the desire of an exterior sovereign power (state for Lianne, Amir for Hammad). Thus, although *Falling Man* points to the instrumentalization of the traumatic historical event, in the process it effects an evacuation of politics as an important aspect of the social/cultural management of the traumatic experience. This evacuation of the political is instrumental in turning Hammad and Lianne into agents of sovereign power. Without denying the liminal status of individual/psychological trauma as a form of human experience, *Falling Man* stresses the fact that as a collective/cultural occurrence it is never a "purely" experiential or bodily event. In truth, it is its sublimation into a transcendental form of self-evident experience (trapped in a repetitive, self-referential traumatic loop) that makes the traumatic event into an object of political instrumentalization. Significantly, Lianne will reassert her autonomy by regaining the autonomy over her body by giving it a renewed meaning through religious experience. Her moment of epiphany takes place after her usual morning run: "It was just her, the body through and through. It was the body and everything it carried, inside and out, identity and memory and human heat" (236). On the other hand, Keith's post-traumatic state in which he remains captured is emphasized by his constant physical exercise—a traumatic repetition acted out through a repetitive movement of the body.

In the context of the above remarks, it is important to note how DeLillo's novel registers the recurrent presence of the state on another level, that of technology of its power. Lianne's trauma is, in Susan Lurie's terms, a "trauma of spectatorship" (46) or "vicarious or secondary trauma" in Ann E. Kaplan's (39). Namely, Lianne is traumatized by looking at the TV footage of the attacks: "The second plane coming out of that ice blue sky, this was the footage that entered the body, that seemed to run beneath the skin, the fleeting sprint that carried lives and histories, theirs and hers, everyone's, into some other distance, out beyond

the towers" (134). Similarly, the newspaper photograph of a man falling from the Twin Towers "hit her hard when she first saw it" (221). The passage distinctly points to the traumatizing potential of the media image: it injures, enters the body, it appears "weaponized." The effect of this mediatic traumatization is the peculiar emphasis on the materiality of the body, that I relate above to the loss of the representational ability and the disappearance of the political. Through this process—as a reaction to the traumatic image—Lianne's pervasive sense of disembodiment, that marks the moment of her involuntary and reflexive aggression in line with the policies of the state, is constituted.

In *Falling Man*, the state is ubiquitously present through its visual technologies. The terrorists, who "encounter face to face," define themselves against the mediatic state: "The state has fiber optics but power is helpless against us. The more power, the more helpless. We encounter through eyes, through word and look" (81). To the technological power of the state, the body is opposed in its immediate, traumatic materiality. While the terrorists confront the state in a totally destructive violent act, Lianne seeks to assert her autonomy through a process of self-transformation. Here, the aesthetic experience plays a crucial role.⁵⁷ At one point in the novel, during the long process of working through her trauma, Lianne watches the guerrilla street performance of David Janiak, the man who falls from high places in public view, simulating the free fall of the "falling men" of 9/11. Janiak's performances are "not designed to be recorded by a photographer" (220), thus demanding an immediacy of reception. This is how Lianne describes her experience of the performance:

57 While looking at Martin's collection of old passport photos, Lianne thinks: "Maybe what she saw was *human ordeal set against the rigor of the state*. She saw people fleeing, there to here, with darkest hardship pressing the edges of the frame. Thumbprints, emblems with tilted crosses, man with handlebar mustache, girl in braids. She thought she was probably inventing a context. She didn't know anything about people in the photographs. She only knew the photographs. This is where she found innocence and vulnerability, in the nature of old passports, in the deep texture of the past itself, people on long journeys, people now dead. Such beauty in faded lives, she thought, in images, words, languages, signatures, stamped advisories" (142, my emphasis). This scene supports the view that for the novel's protagonists aesthetic practice provides a ground for personal recovery.

"There were no photographs of that fall. She was the photograph, the photosensitive surface. The nameless body coming down, this was hers to record and absorb" (223). Since visual technologies are in *Falling Man* the apparatus of state control, such aesthetic situation represents a moment of counter-hegemonic practice. Here, Lianne takes on the role of the camera, thus asserting her autonomy from the state. The novel suggests that by reenacting the traumatic scene, Janiak's performance, defined in opposition to the traumatizing media image, offers an opportunity for a cathartic working through. However, Janiak's art is completely in line with the logic of terrorism as analyzed by Michaels: the spectator is offered the pure body, without any words of explanation. This desire for immediacy is what connects Janiak's controversial acts with the violence of the terrorists—both are tactics against what the novel constructs as the repressive surveillance technologies of the state. This similarity is emphasized by the fact that Janiak's final performance was supposed to be suicidal (223). However, it is crucial that Janiak's and Lianne's effort is directed at remembering: while he provides the horrifying reminder, she wants to remember his "nameless body."⁵⁸ This "nameless body" will acquire a history after Lianne reads about Janiak's death in the newspapers and that way makes another step towards overcoming her trauma.

Earlier on I referred to Dominick LaCapra's contention that acting out can be a first step in the process of working through, whereas the second step requires "socially engaged memory-work" that would create "critical distance [...] resumption of social life, ethical responsibility, and renewal" (1991: 713). This notion helps cast light on the social work of DeLillo's 9/11 novel. While focusing on the traumatic elements of the experience of

58 Janiak's absolute focus on the material presence of the body and his rejection of language is emphasized in his refusal to comment on his art: "He had no comments to make to the media on any subject" (222). Also, during a structured improvisation in an acting class, he "assaulted another actor, seemingly trying to rip the man's tongue out of his mouth" (223).

September 11, *Falling Man* creates a tentative narrative around the paralyzing absence implied in the sight of the falling man. In that, the novel refuses to reduce the trauma either to the questions of personal interest or political option, focusing instead on the complex social processes on which both traumatization and post-traumatic recovery are contingent.

DeLillo initially denied the possibility of writing a 9/11 novel. In the *Chicago Sun-Times* interview DeLillo stated: "This is such a rich culture in so many ways that I don't think I need the terrifying excitation of these acts of terror," adding, "I don't know how much we should trust fiction that is written in direct response to an event. That's direct and immediate, as opposed to writing generated by the writer's unconscious" (Barron). But *Falling Man* was not, strictly speaking, a "direct response" to the event. As I suggest above in a footnote, it was a response to a photograph of a 9/11 survivor. DeLillo explains:

Originally, I didn't ever want to write a novel about 9/11. I had an idea for a different book, which I had been working on for half a year, when suddenly a picture surfaced in my mind: a man, walking through the streets of Manhattan after the attack, shrouded in clouds of dust and ash. Later I found out that this photo actually exists, but at the time I didn't know that yet. The picture was simply there in my head. (Amend & Diez)

Of course, except the photograph that provided a factual match to DeLillo's personal vision, *Falling Man* is also indebted to the traumatic photographs of the WTC jumpers, images that were quickly removed from public view and that caused heated public debates. Like Lianne, DeLillo is dramatically affected by the media image that comes to significantly inform his writing. Appropriately then, *Falling Man* closes with an act of seeing, although not quite with an image. Unlike Foer, DeLillo does not reproduce the infamous falling man photograph, but

opts for the verbalization of the visual. In the context of my analysis of the novel, in which visual technology figures as a persistent mark of an oppressive state, this move gains in relevance. Coming out of the burning WTC building, Keith "saw a shirt come down out of the sky. He walked and saw it fall, arms waving like nothing in this life" (246). The general ambiguous tone of the novel suggests that its final sentence might be read as a euphemism for a falling body, or it could indeed be just a shirt falling from the towers. But what the final image makes evident is DeLillo's constant confrontation of the traumatic with the aesthetic, which in the novel figures as the only viable ground for post-traumatic recovery. The novel can thus be seen as continuing where the terroristic aesthetic practice of David Janiak stopped. DeLillo's writing in *Falling Man* bears the mark of a radical dissociation between the materiality of social life (the novel's numerous "bodies") and any attempt to organize it through a communal discursive practice: what I referred to as "the political" disappears equally from the global and intimate-national sphere. Instead of the political as a socially productive discourse, there remains only the bare power of the state exercised on individual bodies.

If, following the cue from Walter Benn Michaels, in the "post-historical" United States the political disappears through a substitution of representation ("grief") for the traumatic thing itself ("moan"), then *Falling Man* simultaneously stages the fear of such disappearance (as evidenced in the character of Lianne) and dramatizes its occurrence in the face of trauma (as I argue above in my discussion of various processes of depoliticization in the novel). However, at the end of the novel (that constantly circles around the possibility of such depoliticizing reductions) an inversion occurs: the thing (the falling body) disappears into its representation (a white shirt). Ultimately, in *Falling Man* the trauma is literally absorbed by a narrative that would make it possible both to resist its paralyzing power and

meaningfully remember the event.

I mention above, in passing, how in *Falling Man* the event of 9/11 also entails a loss of memory and a disappearance of history from the site of trauma. Together with the depoliticization through traumatization discussed in this chapter, this evacuation of historical discourse can be seen as significantly informing the modalities of mourning represented and enacted in some of the 9/11 fictions. In the next chapter, I focus on a novel whose place in this study can be considered problematic. Nevertheless, if situated in the context of the post-9/11 culture of mourning, Thomas Pynchon's novel can be read as providing an alternative, historically informed contribution to the issues of remembering and loss that define the 9/11 archive.

Good Mourning, America: Genealogies of Loss in *Against the Day*

"We may find that the ruin of the towers is implicit in other things," wrote DeLillo in his 2001 essay: "The new Palm Pilot at a fingertip's reach, the stretch limousine parked outside the hotel, the midtown skyscraper under construction, carrying the name of a major investment bank—all haunted in a way by what has happened, less assured in their authority, in the prerogatives they offer." Here, DeLillo registers the destabilizing or ungrounding power of the traumatic event, but also reveals its continuing, spectral presence "in other things" and other occurrences. In DeLillo's ethically disposed discourse such an event marks a shift in the position of the traumatized subject: the view of the world is now haunted by the past, and yesterday's certainties are regarded with a renewed sense of ambivalence. In my reading of the 9/11 archive, that records the "new" existential uncertainty brought about by the shattering event of the terrorist attacks, I relied on Dominick LaCapra's notion of traumatic historical events as potentially questioning, as opposed to unequivocally grounding identity, as well as on Judith Butler's radical demand for an ethical recognition of others' vulnerability in the face of one's own trauma: "Could the experience of a dislocation of First World safety not condition the insight into the radically inequitable ways that corporeal vulnerability is distributed globally?" (Butler 30). Such suggestions are ostensibly scandalous: they propose that the traumatized subjects look beyond the immediacy of their experience and engage in a dialogue with the histories of others, as well as other histories of their own. The emblems of a globalized modernity that DeLillo itemizes—its technologies of communication, mobility, and finance—are "now" seen as being part of the event that, for a

moment, shook that modernity's foundations. Consequently, as DeLillo's own, as well as other texts analyzed here evidence, the apocalyptic episode was variously inscribed in narratives of the nation, globalization, capitalism, and imperialism, both as a moment of change and a symptom of continuity. Understood, radically and scandalously, as an opportunity for ethical and historical insight—for an account of all that has been lost—9/11 can be regarded as illuminating both the genealogies of contemporary hegemony and the parallel histories of occlusion; as intensifying the historical coupling of US corporate and political power, exposing the affinities between globalization, imperialism and terrorism, as well as signaling the rise of the national security state evidenced in the post-9/11 government policies curtailing civil and human rights. It is this expansion and complication of historical perspective latent in the traumatic event of 9/11 that provides the starting point for my reading of Thomas Pynchon's 2006 novel *Against the Day*. Apart from focusing on the politics of the novel's expansive historical perspective, I would like to approach it as yet another narrative of loss within the 9/11 archive.

While the 9/11 novels generally focus on the psychology of individual experience (trauma, family, domesticity etc.), in *Against the Day*—if we agree to include it in the 9/11 archive—Pynchon weaves an intricate narrative web that offers a (fictional) panoramic view of a historical moment. Although partly relying on the genre of family drama, the sheer vastness of the novel's scope turns it into a representation of the hegemonic structures of economy, technology, power, and affect. Such an expansive focus is also what allows us to see *Against the Day* as a text that transposes the topicalities of the post-9/11 "now" onto its relevant pasts. As usual in Pynchon's big novels, there are multiple story-lines in *Against the Day*. I will mainly focus on two, while also referring to other, peripheral but significant episodes and motives that populate the one thousand eighty five pages of the book. The novel

opens with the Chums of Chance, a group of adventurer balloonists, visiting the White City of the 1893 World Colombian Exhibition in Chicago. The Chums, whom we encounter on various points of their travels around the globe, are apparently responsible to an "Upper Hierarchy" or, sometimes, the "Chums Headquarters," titles which ultimately lead to the "American government" (795). The Chums sections are reminiscent of nineteenth-century adventure novels, a fact that is emphasized by the narrator's constant mention of various books about their fantastic travels. Thus, the Chums inhabit a liminal region between the novel's reality and world of fiction, and are also able to travel between the Earth and the Counter-Earth, or the "other Earth" (1021). Counter-Earth is only one example of the novel's constant production of other worlds that offer realities alternative to the globally consolidating system of industrial capitalism. The other important story-line follows the lives of the Traverses, a family of Colorado miners whose patriarch, Webb, participated in the labor struggles of the late nineteenth-century Midwest that Pynchon accurately documents and rather unambiguously refers to as "class war." The other side in the conflict is represented by Scarsdale Vibe, the head of the Vibe Corporation, one of the "plutocrats" and "owners" that the likes of Webb wage their war against. Webb Traverse is also known as the Kieselguhr Kid, the mythic anarchist bomber, which is why he is killed by Vibe's mercenaries. Through the novel we follow Webb's sons' attempts to cope with their loss and avenge their father, and see them get implicated in the workings of the Vibe corporation, participating in the Mexican revolution, international anarchist actions, imperialist schemings of the British and the Russian empires, as well as in more and less epochal events in Europe and Central Asia just before and during World War I. Various turn-of-the-century anarchist groups are *Against the Day's* embodiment of Pynchon's usual investment in counterhegemonic "underground communities and resistance formations," such as the WASTE system in *The Crying of Lot 49*,

the 24fps in *Vineland* or the Counterforce in *Gravity's Rainbow* (cf. Thomas 111).⁵⁹

Although not "about" 9/11, I argue that the novel can be productively read in the context of the historical moment inaugurated by the event: *Against the Day* does not treat the September 11 terrorist attacks and their aftermath, but it does in different ways allude to them. The topic of terrorism seems to be the most obvious connection, but there are others too. For example, the novel's description of the destruction of "the great city brought to sorrow and ruin" (Pynchon 2006: 148) brings to mind images of New York City on and immediately post-9/11 (149-155 pp.).⁶⁰ Also, the cover of the Penguin paperback edition features a painting by the Italian futurist Tullio Crali, called "Nose-diving on the City" (1939). The painting gives us a view from the cockpit of an aircraft diving towards a skyscraper cityscape not unlike that of lower Manhattan. Moreover, the dust jacket blurb, purportedly by the author, summarizes the plot like this:

With a worldwide disaster looming just a few years ahead, it is a time of unrestrained corporate greed, false religiosity, moronic fecklessness, and evil intent in high places [...] *No reference to the present day is intended or should be inferred.* [...] If it is not the world, it is what the world might be with a minor adjustment or two.⁶¹ (my emphasis)

If we take these clues seriously, the novel can be understood as mapping some central issues of the post-9/11 US contemporaneity onto another historical period: terrorism, capitalist globalization, the coupling of private (corporate) interest and state power, quelling of political dissent at home, mourning and loss—all these are crucial themes of *Against the Day*.

59 This brief plot synopsis is very far from doing justice to the novel's temporal and spatial span. A useful aid in that respect is the *Against the Day* section of the *Pynchon Wiki*, a project that provides valuable points for orientation to a critical reader of the novel (cf. Ware et al.).

60 All subsequent references are to the same edition.

61 Tim Ware points to the differences between the description of the book that appeared on Amazon.com just before it was published and the one on the book jacket. The italicized sentence appeared only in the online description.

Moreover, such trans-historical mapping—an important concept in *Against the Day* about which I will say more below—is not random, but points to historical patterns tied up, *Against the Day* suggests, with the existing economic and political relations, in the context of which the 9/11 event and its fallout need to be located.

One of the novel's central motives, that of doubling, can be related to this historiographic-metafictional procedure of mutually mapping times and spaces.⁶² This motive appears in numerous variants. One of these is "Iceland spar," a crystal that refracts light so as to double the image seen through it: "[t]he doubling of Creation, each image clear and believable" (133). In the novel, Iceland spar is the resource for the construction of various technologies, from military (the "Q-weapon," 906, and the "light-weapon," 953), to entertainment ones (the proto-films of Rideout and Roswell, 1038). The crystal, however, does not split in two and multiply only vision, but also people (570-1) and whole cities (387). This doubling can result in the appearance of "lateral worlds" (518) and "alternate Histories" (682), which often intersect with the here and now of the novel, offering to some of the protagonists excursions into alternative realities and insights into future and past events. Bilocation, a related motive, is the ability of some characters to occupy two places at the same time, or, in other words, to deal with time and space in ways radically dissimilar from the ones allowed by physical laws. This motive of duality and bending of space and time is fundamental to the utopian vision of the novel, and can easily be seen as referring to Pynchon's own project of imagining a radically different world. As one of the novel's numerous anarchists puts it:

This is our age of exploration [...] into that unmapped country waiting beyond the

⁶² Here I am referring to Linda Hutcheon's concept of "historiographic metafiction." For Hutcheon, "[t]he intertextual parody of historiographic metafiction [...] offers a *sense of the presence of the past*, but a past that can be known only from its texts, its traces—be they literary or historical" (1988: 125, my emphasis). While Pynchon's work can generally be described in Hutcheon's terms, these are not quite sufficient to account for his novels' politics. The sense of the presence of the past, however, is a crucial aspect of Pynchon's work that I deal with below.

frontiers and seas of time. We make our journeys out there in the low light of the future, and return to the bourgeois day and its mass delusion of safety, to report on what we've seen. What are any of these 'utopian dreams' of ours but defective forms of time-travel? (942)

However, as I will argue below, *Against the Day* does not merely dwell on its own narrative mechanisms by promoting a textual politics of imagination (although it definitely does that); it historicizes such politics by simultaneously celebrating and mourning the losses of the American, and, to a certain extent, international anti-capitalist tradition.

The motive of doubling can be understood as a sign of encouragement for the reader to add the present day and time to Pynchon's spatio-temporal mix. I see the connections between the novel's present and our own as being of a dual nature: on the one hand, they are topical, with Pynchon offering us a historically informed discussion of matters urgent to the post-9/11 US; on the other, the novel constitutes a historico-philosophical model alternative to the hegemonic narrative of global progress of an exceptional nation that has provided the context for the understanding of 9/11, thus suggesting that the ostensibly new and urgent phenomena of the present day can actually be seen as re-emergent symptoms of longer historical processes. As I argued earlier, 9/11 was assimilated into the exceptionalist narrative of America's progress through "homogenous" historical time as another (tragic and traumatic) test on the path towards national fulfillment, now on a global scale. In an important way, in *Against the Day* Pynchon attempts to reintroduce an apocalyptic vision in a post-apocalyptic world-view based on the notion of the "end of history." As I will try to show, this model is inextricably linked to visions of alternative politics that *Against the Day* both mourns, reconstructs and imagines.⁶³ In what follows, I would like to address *Against the*

⁶³ This allusive-allegorical procedure of spatio-temporal mapping seems to be typical of Pynchon's historical novels. Andrew Gordon thus claims that "*Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), ostensibly about World War II, was written during the Vietnam War and indirectly reflects that topsy-turvy time" (168). Samuel Thomas suggests

Day's topical connection to the present first, and then extend the discussion by proposing a reading of the novel's politicized vision of history.

Against the Day encompasses the period of time from the 1893 World Colombian Exhibition in Chicago to the years after World War I. This period has been seen as formative for US globalist or imperialist tendencies in the twentieth century. Neil Smith thus posits three moments of "U.S. global ambition:" 1898, 1945, and the period following September 11, 2001 (cf. 2004: xiii). "The first truly global (as opposed to international) assertion of US power," Smith writes, "came in the years following 1898 and leading up to World War II" (2005: 27). In this context, Smith sees the post-9/11 war in Iraq as a continuation of the US imperialist project that began with the McKinley presidency roughly a century earlier. (I argued earlier that the same genealogy of US imperialism is active in Spiegelman's 9/11 book.) *Against the Day* registers these early symptoms of US "global ambition" particularly through the Chums of Chance's explorations of Inner Asia, and the Vormance expedition's—tragic, it turns out—search for Iceland spar. Thus, *Against the Day* is also about "mapping" in a very literal way: through the novel's geographers, cartographers and adventurers Pynchon registers the expansion of imperial powers (US, Britain, Russia) in other parts of the world, with scientific exploration going hand in hand with corporate enterprise.

Here, I would like to offer a slight digression: the Vormance expedition episode seems to clearly allude to 9/11 and thus calls for inclusion in this section. However, I see the novel's less direct, but more historically informed connections to the post-9/11 "now" as being more relevant than the segments that straightforwardly evoke 9/11—but, without these, the relational historical model at work in *Against the Day* would be impossible to observe in

the same when stating that "the thinly veiled attack on Richard Nixon in the final 'Counterforce' section of [*Gravity's Rainbow*] means that it can clearly enrich any debate about the sixties and the seventies" (161). Similarly, I argue that *Against the Day* participates in the debates about the post-9/11 historical moment.

the first place. While the motives of the participants in the Vormance expedition to Iceland vary, ranging from scientific to commercial ones, the overall goal is to obtain the novel's prime material resource, Iceland spar. In terms of relevance, Iceland spar could be said to correspond to the place oil occupies in our world. Dr Vormance's speech on "The Nature of Expeditions" captures the larger repercussions of the enterprise:

we crossed solid land and deep seas, and colonized what we found. [...] Now we have taken the first few wingbeats of what will allow us to begin colonizing the Sky. Somewhere in it, God dwells in His Heavenly City. How far into that unmapped wilderness shall we journey before we find Him? [...] Will we leave settlements in the Sky, along our invasion routes, or will we choose to be wanderers, striking camp each morning, content with nothing short of Zion? And what of colonizing additional dimensions beyond the third? Colonize Time. Why not? (131)

The passage reads like a parodic rendering of the capitalist entrepreneurial spirit, with obvious references to the European colonization of America. At the same time, capitalism's tendency of unlimited expansion is pushed to the extreme through the notion of colonizing time (although this notion is seriously explored in the novel). The Expedition eventually finds an ominous "Figure" buried in ice and decides to bring it home to the US, despite signs of warning from the areas' natives. The Figure brings massive and never fully explained destruction to a place simply referred to as "the great city" (148) and "metropolis" (153). Since some of the witnesses of destruction end up in "the upstate security of Matteawan," (145) an actual asylum at Fishkill in upstate New York, it seems rather plausible to assume that the city in question is New York.⁶⁴ That this episode can be read as an oblique reference to the implications of US imperialist actions for a destructive, 9/11-like event at home, is

⁶⁴ I owe this reference to Ware's Pynchon Wiki.

suggested by several revealing passages. For example, the fact that the "day of unconditional wrath" does not "purify" the city which continues to be dominated by "greed, real-estate speculating local politics" (153), can be read as an allusion to the post-9/11 debates about the reconstruction of the Ground Zero site, that were shaped by the conflict between the interests of real-estate investors and the demands of memorialization. Moreover, "on each anniversary of that awful event, spanning the sky over the harbor, would appear a night panorama—not quite a commemorative reenactment—more an abstract array of moving multicolored lights against a blue, somehow maritime, darkness, into which the viewer might read what he chose" (154). To read this passage without thinking about the towers of light that illuminated the New York sky on the first several 9/11 anniversaries seems impossible. If this is indeed so, an allegorical reading of the episode would imply that Pynchon sees the September 11 attacks both as an incommensurable tragedy and as being inextricably linked to essentially exploitative US actions abroad. In this context, the Vormance expedition episode is an allegory of the destructive consequences of the unchecked expansion of capitalist enterprise, and can be read as pointing to the perilous domestic effects of US global imperialist presence. However, although encompassing a wide variety of geographic localities, *Against the Day* is in an important sense a novel about the US, the newly consolidating nation and the genealogies of its present. At the same time, and I will turn to this issue later, the novel's vision is directed towards a "supranational idea" (1083).

The opening of the novel takes place during the Chicago World Exhibition, an event which in the classical study of "the incorporation of America" Alan Trachtenberg takes as the moment that symbolically marked the end of one era and the beginning of another. For him, the White City embodied the consolidation of the nation and its capitalist elite, but also ushered the United States into the era of incorporated economic and political power. Pynchon

references many of the revolutionary events of the period treated by Trachtenberg, such as the building of railroads, which in *Against the Day* mark the global advance of capitalism in its new, corporate form. This advance is for Pynchon embedded in a historical narrative of progress that conceals the concurrent catastrophic consequences for those on whose labor industrial capitalist development was based. The novel ironically comments on the emerging organizational form of the corporation and its newly achieved legal status by way of the theory of evolution:

Evolution. Ape evolves to man, well, what's the next step—human to what? Some *compound organism*, the American Corporation, for instance, in which even the Supreme Court has recognized legal personhood⁶⁵—a new living species, one that can out-perform most anything an individual can do by himself, no matter how smart or powerful he is. (147-48)

Apart from evidencing Pynchon's clear anti-capitalist stance, the passage is a critical take on the coupling of capitalism and evolution through a vision of linear history (another subject of *Against the Day* to which I will turn shortly). The incorporation and consolidation of America—for Pynchon a far from natural, evolutionary development—was achieved at the cost of persistent social divisions and political repressions. Trachtenberg thus notes the technological wonders spectacularly put on display in Chicago that year, but also insists on what was excluded and hidden (209): the American Blacks, who were excluded from all stages of the exhibition's organization (220), women, who were included only in the roles complying with the patriarchal social model (221), and Native Americans, exhibited as "primitives" and "savages" (220). A special place in Trachtenberg's study is dedicated to the fate of organized labor. Parallel with the rise of corporate power, Trachtenberg notes the tumultuous events that

⁶⁵ Pynchon is here referring to the 1886 Supreme Court case *Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad Company*. Based on this decision the US law now recognizes corporations as persons.

accompanied it: the strike at Pullman, Illinois, the labor organizing of the American Railway Union, and other significant, and for the most part tragic episodes in US labor history.

Through the lives of the Traverse family, *Against the Day* registers precisely the losses of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century US labor movements. One of these episodes includes a fictionalized depiction of the miners' tent colony just before the historical Ludlow Massacre (1007-17 pp.). As in virtually all other anti-labor actions of the period, here too the Pinkerton detectives played an important role, serving as a private army that often worked with the National Guard in violent suppressions of strikes. The joint effort of a private agency hired by the owners of mines and railroads, and the repressive apparatus of the state, evidences the fusion of corporation and government, a development implied in Trachtenberg's concept of "incorporation." The remarks of the labor historian Harold Aurand on a quite typical contemporary event, the trial of the Molly Maguires, are illustrative in this respect. After their workers' strike was brutally crushed by the Pinkerton detectives in 1877, the heads of this Irish immigrants' labor organization were sentenced to death. Aurand called the trial one of the most astounding surrenders of sovereignty in American history. A private corporation initiated the investigation through a private detective agency; a private police force arrested the offenders; the coal company attorneys prosecuted them. The state provided only the courtroom and the hangman.

(Churchill 15)

Pynchon's return to events of this kind in *Against the Day* both marks the persistence of a historical pattern and registers the originary moment of its emergence. Indeed, in a recent retrospective look at his work, Trachtenberg repeats the familiar view of globalization as expansion of US corporate power when noting that "[w]e've arrived today at a new stage of incorporation, a point at which America, Inc., is about to rename itself Globe, Inc. In many

ways it seems a colorized rerun" (2008: 762). The post-9/11 war in Iraq, that many critics place in the context of a century-long US imperialist advance, indicated that a governmental mode in which sovereignty is shared among corporate and state actors continues to influence US politics significantly. At the same time, Pynchon's post-9/11 return to an earlier manifestation of the corporate/state nexus suggests that what is referred to as "capitalist imperialism" took root equally on domestic as on foreign soil. (This nexus, in its various historical manifestations, might be considered a general subject of Pynchon's writing.) The American twentieth century will be dominated precisely by the complex of economic and political power that, during the Gilded Age, redefined the meaning of "America." "Was not the successful businessman the very model of a 'healthy and independent' America?," asks Trachtenberg rhetorically (73). This consolidation of the ideal of "Americanness" in capitalist entrepreneurial terms takes place at the beginning of what Paul Giles called "nationalist phase" of American culture (cf. Giles 2007). Surely, this national(ist) consolidation was contentious, marked by violent exclusions based on class, race, gender and ethnicity. For Pynchon, who in *Against the Day* focuses on labor struggles, the emergence of the US nation in this period is comparable to nothing less than a state of war, making the Great War that ensued in 1914 for most of the novel's characters just an intensified and expanded version of ongoing violent systemic processes.

Scarsdale Vibe, the arch-capitalist and the incarnation of corporate greed in *Against the Day*, describes the historical moment by asking: "Should there be moral reservations, in a class war, about targeting one's enemies?" (332). He elaborates:

My civil war has yet to come. And here we are in it now, in the thick, no end in sight. The Invasion of Chicago, the battles of Homestead, the Coeur d'Alene, the San Juans. These communards speak a garble of foreign tongues, their armies are

the damnable labor syndicates, their artillery is dynamite, they assassinate our great men and bomb our cities, and their aim is to despoil us of our hard-won goods, to divide and sub-divide among their hordes our lands and our houses, to pull us down, our lives, all we love, until they become as demeaned and soiled as their own. [...] The future belongs to the Asiatic masses, the pan-Slavic brutes, even, God help us, the black seething spawn of Africa interminable. (333)

The figure that embodies Vibe's fear, as his listing of historical locations of class struggle makes evident, is one of a racialized worker-cum-terrorist. The image of the worker, according to Trachtenberg, became during the Gilded Age antithetical to the new hegemonic ideal of Americanness. Thus, the "ideological" violence of late nineteenth century that accompanied the incorporation of America was considered "by definition un-American" (Gage 102). This conflation of anti-capitalism and anti-Americanism was emphasized by the fact that a large part of the industrial workforce, and thus many labor organizers and anarchists, were of immigrant descent, as the closing lines of Vibe's speech remind us. In Trachtenberg's words, the worker at the time "appeared as foreign, alien, in need of Americanizing" (1992: 87). At the same time, "terrorism" became the word of choice for the description of anti-capitalist struggles. Jeffery Clymer has argued that "emergent means of narrating industrial capitalism and classed identity were deeply intertwined with the way modern terrorism was imagined as a form of violence in turn-of-the-century America" (5). Hence, "terrorism" emerged as a term through which the debates on industrial/corporate capitalism were refracted—that is, it became the focus for either a displacement or articulation of systemic contradictions (primarily issues of class and labor in a consolidating economy). One should keep in mind the historical fact of the incorporation of capitalist enterprise and an ideal of Americanness which contributed to the hegemonic notion of anti-

capitalist violence and anti-capitalism in general as being un- or anti-American (cf. Gage 102). In Pynchon's *Against the Day*, we witness an attempt to disentangle this ideological conflation—in which opposition to capitalism and immigrant descent are merged in the image of the anti-American "terrorist"—and resurrect the tradition of a national anti-capitalist struggle.

In the context of the post-9/11 US, Pynchon's exploration of these early applications of "terrorism" to domestic resistances to capitalism obviously complicates the contemporary, often indiscriminate usage of the term. To quote Clymer once again, "[i]f during the last decade the imagined figure of the terrorist in America was always, correctly or incorrectly, a religious zealot of Middle Eastern descent, in the 1880s the terrorist was, equally inevitably, identified as an anarchist from Germany, Russia or Bohemia" (11). *Against the Day* hence points to the involvement of the discourse on terrorism with the process of consolidation of class power, but, also—as the fusion of immigrant/foreigner and worker/terrorist suggests—its relation to the consolidation of a hegemonic idea of national identity. *Against the Day* thus provides a historical background for Leti Volpp's argument about the opposition between the citizen and the terrorist as backing the repressive actions of the US state after 9/11 (cf. Volpp): this does not seem to be a new, post-9/11 development, but a recurrent pattern in US history, now re-emerging in a different form, reactivated to cover a different set of vulnerable bodies and social problems. That way, Pynchon's post-9/11 novel works against the dominant discourse on the September 11 terrorist attacks, that posits terrorist violence as a completely (and traumatically) new and unprecedented occurrence that ushers the United States into a new era. As Clymer notes, the scale and impact of the attacks certainly were unprecedented, but the historical fact of political violence was not (cf. Clymer 10). Similarly, *Against the Day* presents an argument in favor of the view that the aftermath

of the event, marked by conflicts abroad and an exclusive homogenization at home, was far from an exceptional episode in national history. Pynchon's shift of focus onto a different historical manifestation of terrorism—a flexible and polyvalent term in US public discourse—points to the fact that the term participated in the hegemonic consolidation of capitalist/corporate and nationalist/globalist power both prior and post-9/11.

As the turn-of-the-twentieth-century political violence of *Against the Day* represented a symptom of growing economic and social tensions, the contemporary one can hardly be understood without the context of a globalized capitalist economy that continues to produce social inequalities on an even larger scale. *Against the Day* registers the co-emergence of an increasingly globalizing capitalist system and the resistances that accompanied it. The novel's characters obsessively discuss issues of violent political struggle and the matter of their victims' innocence. Webb Traverse, meditating on the proper target for his next dynamite blast, reasons as follows:

Lord knew that owners and mine managers deserved to be blown up, except that they had learned to keep extra protection around them—not that going after their property, like factories and mines, was that much better of an idea, for, given the nature of corporate greed, those places would usually be working in shifts, with the folks most likely to end up dying being miners, including children working as nippers and swampers—the same folks who die when the army comes charging in. Not that any owner ever cared rat shit about the lives of workers, of course, except to define them as Innocent Victims in whose name uniformed goons could then go out and hunt down the Monsters That Did the Deed. (84-5)

As much as it resonates with the post-9/11 discussions about the US innocence in face of the attacks, the passage cannot be simply applied to them either. This indicates the extent to

which *Against the Day* is written "against" that iconic day: Pynchon radically shifts the grounds for the contemporary understanding of terrorism and draws the distinctions about "us" and "them" along very different lines. Read in this context, *Against the Day's* insistence on the co-emergence of industrial capitalism and "terrorism" points to the fact that, both in the age of the Red Scares and now, "terrorism" functioned as an often too simple ideological cover for contentious processes within existing power relations. Moreover, by turning to the anti-capitalist workers' struggles of the turn of the twentieth century American anarchists, Pynchon complicates the easy application of the term whose scope was, after 9/11, dangerously expanded. I commented earlier on how, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the international anti-capitalist movement (or the "anti-globalization" movement) started appearing as anti-American Islamic terrorism's double (cf. chapters on DeLillo, especially "The Market Moves Us in Mysterious Ways"). Naomi Klein's *Shock Doctrine*, a book that can be read as an extended elaboration of David Harvey's argument about "accumulation by dispossession," provides another telling example. Klein focuses on the planning and implementation of neoliberal economic policies during the 2003 US occupation of Iraq. She quotes Paul Bremer, the head of the Coalition Provisional Authority, who soon after the 9/11 attacks started a counter-terrorism consulting company. In a paper about "New Risks in International Business," Bremer notes the existence of resistances to neoliberal policies, and directly links the implementation of free market economy to the rise of terrorism. As Klein explains quoting Bremer,

Free trade, [Bremer] wrote, has led to "the creation of unprecedented wealth," but it has "immediate consequences for many." It "requires laying off workers. And opening markets to foreign trade puts enormous pressure on traditional retailers and trade monopolies." All these changes lead to "growing income gaps

and social tensions," which in turn can lead to a range of attacks on U.S. firms, including terrorist attacks. (Klein 360-61)

What Klein does not mention is that Bremer sees the threat of reactive terrorist actions primarily as originating in the anti-globalization movement:

Today there are clear signs that anti-globalization forces are retargeting actions from multilateral financial institutions toward multinational companies.

Moreover, there are indications that [...] the anti-globalization movement is spawning terrorist groups at its margins. Because globalization is associated most closely with America, U.S. multinationals are particularly vulnerable to the risks it poses. (Bremer)

Thus, Bremer's article suggests, new forms of "terrorism" are brought to life by the process of "economic modernization." This example points to a recurrent co-emergence analogous to the one depicted in *Against the Day*: the violent implementation of an economic model is coeval with often violent resistances, of which many are dubbed "terrorist."⁶⁶ While Pynchon refrains from tracing direct analogies, others have suggested that a lineage of anti-capitalist struggle from the nineteenth century anarchists to modern-day anti-globalists could be drawn.

Trachtenberg, for one, likens nineteenth century labor struggles to the turn of the twenty first century anti-globalization movement when stating that a "[r]evival of the great labor movements of the Gilded Age and the 1890s doesn't yet seem imminent though the antiglobalization demonstrations in Seattle and elsewhere may signal what's coming" (762).

These contemporary developments give support to Clymer's claim that "the idea of terrorism is an important hegemonic prop in the maintenance of America's capitalist order" (13).

I find it important to insist on these historical parallels because they are

⁶⁶ The current global crisis provides an unfortunate reminder of the inadequacy of prognostic assumptions that imagine an anti-capitalist and anti-American "terrorist" as *the* threat to the global economic system.

significant points in what I consider to be Pynchon's genealogical project. Namely, I see *Against the Day* as a sort of culmination or intensification of counter-hegemonic genealogies present in Pynchon's earlier novels. In *Against the Day*, Pynchon writes the cracks, digressions, and suppressions in the history of the incorporated and consolidated US nation-state. As elsewhere in his work, here the "dissident but divided voices" (Trachtenberg 1992: 231) of suppressed, alternative histories are dialogically united. *Against the Day*, perhaps more than any other Pynchon's novel except *Vineland*, enacts a kind of return to the historical roots not only of the present-day capitalist system, but of the oppositional tradition in which Pynchon inscribes himself. If trauma effects a revisiting of the presumed foundations of identity, and, often, their reconsolidation, in *Against the Day* we find Pynchon revisiting what, in the near-total absence of any biographic material, we might regard as the historical antecedents to his own literary politics. As Bernard Duyfhuizen has noted, links between *Against the Day* and Pynchon's previous novels are numerous, with the most obvious one being "the major plot line in the saga of the Traverse family and their response to Webb Traverse's murder." Duyfhuizen continues:

At the end of *Vineland*, Webb's grandson (Reef's son) Jesse is the patriarch of the Traverse-Becker family that gathers for its annual reunion, thus making him the father of Sasha, grandfather of Frenesi, and great-grandfather of Prairie. The genealogical connections track not only family DNA, but the transformation of Webb's anarchistic spirit through generations of decline to Frenesi's role as a government snitch. In the larger story of America that Pynchon's oeuvre presents, *Against the Day* redirects our attention to *Vineland* and to the commentary each Pynchon novel makes about the forks in the road America did not take and to our collective complicity in those decisions.

Through these genealogies, Pynchon weaves intricate historical patterns that connect memories of loss to the present-day US: from the labor struggles in late-nineteenth century Colorado, to the 1930s and 1940s union activism in Hollywood, the New Left of the 1960s, and the beginning of the neoliberal era during the Reagan presidency. By drawing on these histories, Pynchon situates his writing in the tradition of American radicalism. As with the political ideas of late nineteenth and early twentieth century anarchists, socialists and labor organizers, this internationalist tradition is in the United States reduced to barely visible margins.

It is interesting to note in this context how Pynchon's work has been systematically depoliticized by critics, with the critiques of his leftist "nostalgia" culminating in unfavorable reviews of *Vineland*, a novel that is similar to *Against the Day* in that it also draws on historical forms of US counter-hegemonic practice. Samuel Thomas summarizes the dominant tendencies in Pynchon criticism: "Pynchon's writing has been held aloft as an exemplary form of postmodern fiction. [...] It is typically characterized (and highly praised) as a series of complex, self-reflexive language games. [...] If there is a consensus to be had about Pynchon then this is it: all hail the high priest of uncertainty" (10). Michael Bérubé talks about the critical depoliticization of *Gravity's Rainbow* that "made it an exercise in narrative technique." This, according to him, represents a "kind of displacement of Pynchon's politics onto the politics of literary form" (267). Thomas concludes his overview of Pynchon criticism with a similar thought: Pynchon's "innovative and unsettling discussions of freedom, war, labor, poverty, community, democracy, totalitarianism and so on are often passed over in favor of constrictive scientific metaphors and theoretical play" (11). In opposition to this critical tendency, Thomas views Pynchon's writing as representing "a radical overhaul of the relationship between aesthetics, epistemology and political praxis"

(12), and is concerned with its "radical political dimension" (13). In this, Thomas relies on the fewer more political readings of Pynchon's work that provide a much needed counterweight to the criticism that constructs his opus as exclusively postmodernist and metatextual. With such a change of focus, an "empathy" can be detected in Pynchon's work, a sense of solidarity with victims of various forms of oppression, even a "curious moralism" (Thomas 12).

While these thoughts lead in a direction beyond the scope of this study, and provoke questions about the relationship between such critical depoliticizations and repoliticizations and the mainstream American politics' general containment of its radical offshoots, my intention is merely to stress the following: the radical genealogy, that is variously reconstructed throughout Pynchon's work, is not merely familial (as with the Traverses) or biographical (since it signals Pynchon's own intellectual and political formation), but represents an attempt at historical resuscitation, in that it points to, and—to the extent literary practice allows for—counters the near-disappearance of a national political tradition. In other words, in *Against the Day* we are offered an originary tale of loss of political alternatives in the US. Clearly, Pynchon sees their emergence and loss as taking place simultaneously: as socialist, anarchist, and labor organizations gain momentum, they are virtually eliminated by the emerging corporate-political power. In this sense, since the novel's historical perspective is guided by an obsessive reconstruction of what has been lost—people, places, and politics—this novel can be considered to represent an act of mourning. I see this mourning process enacted in *Against the Day*, ambivalently directed towards the present and the past, as another way in which the novel participates in the 9/11 archive.

Read in the context of the aftermath of 9/11, problems posed by *Against the Day* touch on the domestic political present and speak most pointedly to the consequences of the

event as felt over the anti-systemic political spectrum. Most critics have noted that US government's responses to 9/11 lead to a national homogenization that came at a cost: the playing up of nationalist sentiments, the building of an often racialized image of the good citizens, their increased surveillance as well as some conspicuously un-democratic legal practices.⁶⁷ At the same time, the hegemonic inscriptions of and reactions to 9/11 worked against a broadly defined "left" opposition to the dominant US political culture. Writing in the 2002 issue of the *South Atlantic Quarterly* dedicated to the September 11 terrorist attacks, Fredric Jameson remarked:

The opponents of an antiglobalization politics will certainly be quick to identify bin Laden's politics with the antiglobalization movement generally and to posit "terrorism" as the horrible outcome of that misguided antagonism to the logic of late capitalism and its world market. In this sense, bin Laden's most substantial political achievement has been to cripple a nascent left opposition in the West. (303)

The subsequent turn of events proved that the observation was fairly accurate. In an article about the impact of the event on the new social movements, Andrew Ross argued that reactions to the September 11, 2001 attacks harmed the emerging anti-globalization movement in two ways. On the one hand, the post-9/11 anti-Americanism caused by the unilateral "pre-emptive" strike on Iraq shifted the public's attention "from the coalescing plutocracy that benefits from the World Trade Organization (WTO) to the feuding aristocracy that prevails over the UN" (293). On the other, the movement for globalization from below suffered when the Bush administration's response to September 11 reformatted the geopolitical map, substituting an old cartography of friendly and unfriendly states for the network of trade flows that makes up the geography of

⁶⁷ I provide more details on these developments in earlier chapters.

neoliberalism. The alternative globalization movement was nearly erased from U.S. public consciousness [...]. (293)

The aftermath of 9/11 thus corrected the focus of the alternative globalization movements, clearly showing how, "[n]eoliberal institutions appear to bypass nation-states, but they actually rely on states' monopoly of violence to guarantee the most favorable investment terms for clients" (Ross 294). However, Ross views the post-9/11 moment as an opportunity for renewing the progressive "homegrown protest" through "international linkage." He traces the historical roots of this demand in the internationalist tradition of the US left:

While the U.S. left has often reflected the nation's strong leaning toward isolationism, exceptionalism, and protectionism, it has also seen admirable service on the frontline of internationalism: the Anti-Imperialist League of the 1890s (which boasted a membership of half a million), the Popular Front of the 1930s, the civil rights, women's, and gay liberation movements, and the antiwar mobilization of the 1960s. (296-97)

In other words, apart from the tragic loss of lives on the day of the attacks, the aftermath of the event also marked a moment of loss for counter-hegemonic political options—and, as Ross' article suggests, a possible opportunity for their reconsolidation.

These remarks are meant to both further situate Pynchon's *Against the Day* in the context of the post-9/11 United States and emphasize the sense of urgency underlying the novel's genealogical project. By turning to the events of a century ago, Pynchon reconstructs a historical moment that, the novel suggests, had an ethico-political potential similar to the one opened up, and lost, with the traumatic advent of 9/11. In Pynchon's terms then, the post-9/11 policies point to another missed opportunity for "America," similar to the one described by Butler in the introduction to this chapter. Read along with other 9/11 fictions,

Against the Day is a novel about historical loss and, as suggested above, represents a form of mourning. But while it can be read against the traumatic day of 9/11, the novel is oriented towards other, related losses that accumulated and were intensified in the event. To formulate the novel's politics in this way is to describe it in Benjaminian terms: indeed, Pynchon's post-9/11 novel resuscitates the memory of precisely the "messianic moments" in history, those that hold a revolutionary potential for a different future. With this, I conclude my discussion of the topical connections between *Against the Day* and 9/11, and move on to the problem of the novel's historiographic method.

By returning to the turn of the twentieth century in *Against the Day*, Pynchon draws an arc from the end of the American cycle of accumulation to its beginning, in Arrighi's terms. The mapping that I see at work in *Against the Day* thus connects the emergence and rise of the twentieth-century hegemon with the period which witnessed the first considerable signs of its decline. With its distinct focus on the fate of labor, Pynchon's novel connects the accumulation of corporate capital at the end of the nineteenth century with its high, financialized phase, and thus delineates the process of "accumulation by dispossession" (cf. Harvey 2005), that US economic growth and global hegemony depended on, as a constant in the capitalist world system. In other words, in a financialized historical moment, where "money breeds money," *Against the Day* asserts that money is ultimately bred from the material forces of human labor. Moreover, this reading emphasizes Pynchon's interest in moments of crisis. Thomas observed that Pynchon's opus focuses on "specific moments of crisis and transformation in Western linear history," representing "a roll call of our finest and unfinest hours" (15). These include the Enlightenment (in *Mason & Dixon*), World War I and II (in *V* and *Gravity's Rainbow*), the 1960s (in *The Crying of Lot 49* and

Vineland), the neoliberal and neoconservative 1980s (in *Vineland*), and, in *Against the Day*, the period of incorporation of America (cf. Thomas 16). However, in *Against the Day* another aspect of this procedure gains in prominence: the novel does not simply trace a development, it unearths genealogical connections between present and past events, thus resisting the notion of history's linearity and progress itself.

According to Ian Baucom, the historical consciousness at work in *Mason & Dixon* operates in a similar fashion. Relying on Arrighi's cyclic history of the capitalist world system, Baucom writes about Pynchon's previous novel as marking the "eternal recurrence" (2001: 160) of the high moment of finance capital by drawing a parallel between the Dutch chartered companies of the late eighteenth with the US-based transnational corporations of the late twentieth century: "*Mason and Dixon* is [...] less a progressive than an eschatological narrative, [...] in this text the chartered company is not only the form of the global but the form of the end of history" (2001: 159). Baucom's "eschatological moment" corresponds to Arrighi's "moment of finance capital," which marks the "transitional moments when a dominant space of flow shifts from one scene to another," from Amsterdam to London to New York (2001: 160). Baucom argues that there are epistemological correlatives to these transitional moments—what he calls "the thinking of the global in the moment of finance capital" (2001: 160)—that are characterized by a (neo-)Romanticist

turn [...] to the redemptive possibilities of local knowledges and the locale; anecdotalism; speaking-with-the-dead historicism; the transcendent particular; politics of melancholy remembrance; romanticization of the displaced, the wandering, and the diasporized; and [...] the discovery of territories of temporal difference that have escaped the synchronization the global clock—the defense, in a word, of the noncontemporaneity of the contemporaneous. (161)

Although these lines serve as an introduction to Baucom's discussion of "global literary studies," they can accurately describe the interests pervading the opus of the author whose words—"We are the doings of global trade in miniature"—provide the epigraph for Baucom's article. The idea that it is possible to distinguish among kinds of writing that would correspond to different phases in the history of the capitalist world system is an intriguing one, but my interest at the moment lies elsewhere: namely, in Pynchon's own philosophy of history as evidenced in *Against the Day*, that the above passage from Baucom succinctly summarizes.

As I tried to show in my readings of DeLillo, the progressive historical vision of the "end of history" thesis and the accompanying idea of a global and final victory of capitalism and liberal democracy defined the US response to the 9/11 attacks to a significant extent. Thus, a specific understanding of history was implicated in the interpretation of the event, setting certain limits for its cultural inscriptions and the (related) possibilities of political alternatives to the hegemonic responses. *Against the Day*, with its shamanist and anarchist theories of time, vanishing utopian communities and lateral worlds, intervenes in this end-of-history constellation in order to resuscitate the asynchronic and noncontemporaneous interstices of the apparently smooth global present that was interrupted by the trauma of 9/11. Pynchon's novel can be seen as disrupting the dominant historical discourse, on the one hand, by shattering any notion of history's linearity and progress, and on the other, by reverting to repressed histories of anti-capitalist movements. The disastrous and monstrous, the exceptional and world-unmaking, are in *Against the Day* embedded in the narrative of the "now" not as epochal turning points or stages in linear progression, but as events in the Benjaminian sense, moments of possibility and opportunity.

Although *Against the Day*, as other Pynchon's novels, does not lack carnivalesque

scenes, surreal occurrences and obscure scientific theories, it also offers unusually unambiguous formulations of its themes. The ending of the novel's depiction of the Ludlow Massacre is a case in point:

Shots kept ripping across the perilous night. Sometimes they connected, and strikers, and children and their mothers, and even troopers and camp guards, took bullets or fought flames, and fell in battle. But it happened, each casualty, one by one, in light that history would be blind to. The only account would be the militia's. (1016)

Contrary to the expectations readers might entertain based on the views prevailing in the body of Pynchon criticism, the passage is quite explicit, and it captures the general tendency of the novel to celebrate and memorialize the repressed histories of the defeated. Behind Pynchon's historical transposition—what I referred to as "mapping"—there is a particular historical vision, one that can be productively related to Walter Benjamin's cyclic-eschatological philosophy of history. As his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, and the fragments of the *Arcades Project* indicate, Benjamin writes against historicist and reformist notions of linearity and progress, insisting on the revolutionary potentiality of every historical "now." For Benjamin, as for Pynchon, writing history means recovering the tradition of the struggle of and for "the oppressed:"

The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the "state of emergency" in which we live is not the exception but the rule. We must attain to a conception of history that is in keeping with this insight. [...] The current amazement that the things we are experiencing are "still" possible in the twentieth century is *not* philosophical. This amazement is not the beginning of knowledge—unless it is the knowledge that the view of history which gives rise to it is untenable. (Benjamin 1988: 257)

Thus, the "amazement" about atrocities being "still" possible is founded on what Benjamin sees as an essentially flawed notion of history as progress. The shock and the trauma of 9/11, in its collective, national form, was contingent on a view of a teleological capitalist history that found its realization in the "post-historical" US. The idea of a radically new event that creates a veritable state of emergency is countered by Pynchon's critical permutation of the post-9/11 "now" into another traumatic historical moment.

In a Benjaminian vision of history, the relation between the "now" and the past it inherits and intensifies is "the dialectical form by which the later moment finds its conditions of possibility in the earlier moment even as the earlier moment finds itself 'awakened' by the later [...]" (Baucom 2005: 30). Pynchon's historical transposition of the twentieth century's end to its beginning thus rests on an understanding of the post-9/11 "now" as precisely such an "uncanny moment." As Baucom explains, the financialized moment we inhabit

is a moment of repetition, a moment in which the past returns to the present in expanded form, a moment in which present time finds stored and accumulated within itself a nonsynchronous array of past times. Our present moment is, thus, more than structurally like the antecedent high finance moments whose value forms and capital logics it recuperates. [...] Our time [...] is a present time which [...] inherits its nonimmediate past by intensifying it, by 'perfecting' its capital protocols, 'practicalizing' its epistemology, realizing its phenomenology as the cultural logic 'of the entire social-material world.' (2005: 29)

Following this line of thought, *Against the Day's* topics—the robber barons, the unchecked rise of corporate power it traces, the military conflicts for natural resources in "Inner Asia," and the repression of domestic political dissent—can all be viewed as more than allusions to the post-9/11 moment: they are early episodes in the long histories that converged in the 9/11

event and were intensified in its aftermath. The novel both operates with a non-linear notion of history, evidenced in numerous instances of time-space bending, and theorizes it, with mathematical explanations of time-travel echoing shamanistic conceptualizations of time. After receiving a cryptic prophecy from one of the novel's shamans, the members of the Vormance Expedition conclude:

For us [prophecy is a] simple ability to see into the future, based on our linear way of regarding time, a simple straight line from the past, through present, into the future. Christian time, as you might say. But shamans see it differently. Their notion of time is spread out not in a single dimension but over many, which all exist in a single, timeless instant. (143)

In *Against the Day*, the "local knowledges," such as shamanism, provide a pattern for the novel's historiographic protocol, but also provide an alternative to the epistemological models concurrent with the processes of capitalist incorporation and globalization. The modes of production are thus in *Against the Day* inextricably linked to the production of knowledge. When Lew Basnight, a corporate detective trying to infiltrate the labor unions, muses on the nature of class struggle, he realizes that it is "civil war again, with the difference now being the railroads, which ran over all the old boundaries, redefining the nation into exactly the shape and size of the rail network, wherever it might run to" (177). The expansion of railroads, the main target of anarchist attacks in *Against the Day*, signify the global advance both of an economic system and hegemonic forms of knowledge and power. As Lew later learns from one of the novel's scientists (Renfrew), "history emerges from geography," but the primary geography of the planet is the rails, obeying their own necessity, interconnections, places chosen and bypassed, centers and radiations therefrom, grades possible and impossible ... capital made material—and flows of power as

well, expressed, for example, in massive troop movements, now and in the futurity. (242)

Trachtenberg showed how the expansion of the railroad system had an enormous impact on the notions of time and space, fostering the transition from a chaotic multiplicity of local times to standardized time zones, thus, in another sense, incorporating the peoples spread over the North American continent into a nation (cf. 59-60). In *Against the Day*, this process of incorporation is extended to encompass the planet, with places such as the mythical Shambhala and knowledges such as the shamanist ones offering fleeting possibilities of evasion. Whereas the debates about time and space can in *Against the Day* be quite arcane, the passages such as the one just quoted suggest that the novel posits a mutually constitutive relation between the ways, for example, history is thought, and the routes along which power is distributed in the world system (here, by way of railroad). As the anarchists of *Against the Day* dynamite the railway tracks, so the novel disrupts the temporality these brought to life. In this, apart from telling the stories of opposition to incorporation, *Against the Day* resists a specific notion of history and time; a hegemonic one, as I argue above, employed in the linear and teleological narratives in which the trauma of 9/11 was incorporated. In adhering to such historical model, and the marginal historical forms of politics, Pynchon writes against both the notion of the end of history and the implied idea of loss of alternative political options.

There is, however, a potential problem with such a double reading focus: if *Against the Day* is obliquely referring to the post-9/11 US, it is at the same time accurately depicting social conditions at the turn of the twentieth century. Thus, the reading of the novel requires an activity similar to the effect of the Iceland spar; or, it requires its readers' "bilocation," the ability to read two historical references at the same time. But *Against the Day* is not a neat allegory of the present-day US; there is no symmetry in its correspondences

to our historical moment. Rather, as I tried to show, through its metafictional historiographic method constructed at the intersection of allegory and allusion, *Against the Day* draws an expansive historical map that provides significant genealogies to the post-9/11 US present. Through its method of historical "bilocation," *Against the Day* constantly wavers between the original experience of history—the historical moment the novel references—and that which it haunts and which it is haunted by—the other histories that significantly resonate with it, but that are nevertheless irreducible to it. There is, I think, an ethical aspect to this method: by establishing parallels between different historical experiences, it encourages and requires a sympathetic reading of otherness, or an expansion of what Judith Butler called "the norms of recognition."

In that sense, the trans-historical mapping of *Against the Day* has to be related to the novel's idea of solidarity. Apart from recovering a national tradition of anti-capitalism, *Against the Day* connects it to other similar struggles across the contemporary world. Such "mapping," both among past and present and among various coeval histories of *Against the Day*, is a textual form of trans-historical and trans-national solidarity. That is, Pynchon's trans-historical and—to use the novel's conceptual apparatus—"bi-locational" mapping intervenes in the existing "norms of recognition" by establishing ties between distant and unfamiliar experiences and by discerning affinities among disparate histories.

The description of workers from the Balkans who participate in Colorado labor struggles provides a useful example (there are many others). The strikers in Trinidad, Colorado (where the victims of the historical Ludlow Massacre were buried) are "Greeks and Bulgarians, Serbs and Croats, Montenegrins and Italians." As Ewball Oust explains, "[o]ver in Europe [they are] all busy killin each other over some snarled-up politics way beyond any easy understanding. But the minute they get over here [...] they just drop all those ancient

hatreds, drop 'em flat, and become brothers-in-arms [...]" (1002). This, Ewball claims, has to do with the fact of their common exploitation by the mine-owners, that creates a class consciousness overreaching ethnic and petty political strife. Ewball's reliance on the formulaic cultural stereotype about "ancient hatreds" as the source of an ahistorical and infinite Balkan-style violence clearly indicates the limits of such trans-historical mapping project. His speculation about why anyone would come slave in the Colorado mines leads him to the conclusion that these workers might actually be "already dead, casualties of the fighting in the Balkans." This complicates things further:

For the unquiet dead, see, geography ain't the point, it's all unfinished business, it's wherever there's accounts to be balanced, 'cause the whole history of those Balkans peoples is revenge [...] and it never ends, so you have this population of Balkan ghosts, shot dead, [...] got no idea where they are, [...] all they feel is *that unbalance*—that something's wrong and needs to be made right again. And if distance means nothing, then they surface wherever there's a fight with the same shape to it, same history of back-and-forth killing, and it might be someplace in China we never get to hear about, and again it might be right here a city block away, right down in the depths of the U.S.A. (1003)

Although the caricatural tone of Oust's account of solidarity is soon checked by Frank Traverse's comment that "that is some bughouse talk," (1003) the passage does summarize the general idea that I see as operating in Pynchon's historico-political model. Although the (global) scope of this mapping necessitates certain reductions in the presentation of the more peripheral episodes, the fact that this reductive tendency is, as above, foregrounded, suggests it is to be regarded as a tactical concession. But, to be fair, the Balkans are in *Against the Day* much more than a site of eternal ethnic violence, and the novel's characters' adventures in the

region are backed by extended and historically informed discussions of its concrete problems. Setting aside the question of a balanced view, the issue remains whether the singularity of experience (or of the historical event) is lost in such trans-historical and trans-experiential mappings. I propose to treat this problem as follows: Although admittedly abstract and undertheorized in *Against the Day*, the phenomenon of "bilocation" and the corresponding historical mapping performed by the novel insist on an equivalence between different planes of reality. Understood as a figurative blueprint for an ethico-political strategy of solidarity, this constellation then has to be read in terms proposed by the novel. In that context, the assumption is not that there is no uniqueness to historical experience, but that the history in question cannot be reduced to a narrative delineating a nation or, in more general terms—and with some reservation—supporting an identity. The mapping, the bilocation and the solidarity are overdetermined by the hegemonic historical force that moves the novel's characters to action and shapes their affective attachments: the history framing Pynchon's mappings in *Against the Day* is in the first place the history of the capitalist world system. It is within its cycles, patterns and and ir/regularities that the novel's historical transpositions and solidarities are operating.

Other passages on loss and the dead, which abound in *Against the Day*, give support to this view. In one of these, the anarchist-painter Hunter Penhallow (the witness to the destruction of the city) comments on the fate of Clive Crouchmas, a spy working for several sides in the pre-World War I European conflicts:

Someone is clearly fascinated [...] with Crouchmas's simultaneous attachments to England and Germany. As if just having discovered a level of 'reality' at which nations, like money in the bank, are merged and indistinguishable—the obvious example here being the immense population of the dead, military and civilian,

due to the Great War everyone expects imminently to sweep over us. One hears mathematicians of both countries speak of 'changes of sign' when wishing to distinguish England from Germany—but in the realm of pain and destruction, what can polarity matter? (903)

The dead here provide a template for imagining a community whose "simultaneous attachments" supersede national boundaries and that is, as with the Balkan-American miners above, based on a common suffering. As Penhallow's approximation indicates, this form of affective attachment is intrinsically related to the operations of the supranational financial system. Thus, this community's "polarity" (its differential marker) is based on a recognition of common destinies within a system that, in *Against the Day*, serves as the lowest common denominator for a vast variety of losses and deaths. It is along lines drawn by capitalist dispossession, after all, that the novel's basic distinction between "us" and "them" is constituted. The capitalist world system appears as the ultimate horizon that sets the limits to mourning, affect and community in *Against the Day*. (I offer similar suggestions in my readings of Spiegelman's 9/11 book and DeLillo's "In the Ruins" essay.)

Pynchon's allegiances in these matters, as the above discussion makes clear, are quite straightforward. Read in the context of the historical moment in which it appeared and the traumatic event to which it alludes, the novel can be seen as constructing the image of its present's significant past. There is a certain nostalgic aspect to *Against the Day*, that registers the losses in the political tradition the novel thematizes. Still, unlike in his previous novels, in *Against the Day* Pynchon's resistance formations are firmly grounded in historical labor and anarchist movements. This fact should be taken into account when reading the numerous invocations of the possibility of a utopian future that culminate in the suggestive vision that concludes the book. Critics have noted that *Against the Day* is characterized, "unlike

Pynchon's previous novels, [by] a more complete sense of an ending" (Duyfhuizen). As Bernard Duyfhuizen put it, "We know that the 1920s, when *Against the Day* ends, was only a prosperous calm before the storm of The Depression and of World War II, but for the characters we have come to care for in this text, the skies have cleared and the wind has freshened." This is especially true of the Chums of Chance, whom we initially meet as yet another in the series of Pynchon's fictional government agencies—"draped with patriotic bunting," (3) with President McKinley as their ship's figurehead (109)—only to find them transformed at the end into an anarchist dream come true, and embodiment of the "supranational idea" (1083). The closing paragraph describes the Chums' ship, *Inconvenience*, in utopian terms:

Never sleeping, clamorous, as a nonstop feast day, *Inconvenience*, once a vehicle of sky pilgrimage, has transformed into its own destination, where any wish that can be made is at least addressed, if not always granted. For every wish to come true would mean that in the known Creation, good unsought and uncompensated would have evolved somehow, to become at least more accessible to us. No one aboard *Inconvenience* has yet observed any sign of this. They know [...] it is there, like an approaching rainstorm, but invisible. Soon they will see the pressure-gauge begin to fall. They will feel the turn in the wind. They will put on smoked goggles for the glory of what is coming to part the sky. They fly toward grace. (1085)

Although the imagined alternatives to the existing political and economic systems that pervade Pynchon's fictions find one of their historically most concrete realizations in *Against the Day*, the novel ends on a different note, offering its readers a vision of community that is as idealized as it is surreal. The general utopian tone and ending of the novel can be linked to

the fact that these historical alternatives' suppression was simultaneous with their emergence and that, as argued earlier, their present-day incarnations only suffered further losses. The simultaneity of nostalgia and utopia has to be read against this reality. While both nostalgia and utopia in *Against the Day* are then symptoms of specific historical losses and failures, the novel's simultaneous orientation towards a lost, but present past (its nostalgia) and an imagined future (its utopia) registers not only a sense of loss, but also a renunciation of a paralyzing post-traumatic melancholia. Read within the 9/11 archive, *Against the Day* represents a refusal to approach the event in hegemonic terms established through the archive's hegemonic discourses. The opposition evidenced in the novel's title can be extended to encompass this refusal. Like other 9/11 fictions, Pynchon's oppositional discourse deals with historical loss, but the topicalities and the historical vision it offers attempt to look beyond the events that triggered the process of mourning.

Concluding Remarks

As suggested at the beginning of this study, my aim was neither to provide an answer to the question "what happened" on September 11, 2001, nor to say everything about 9/11 and its cultural archive. Many issues were here left out or touched upon only marginally. These are treated in other, specialized studies to which I try to direct the reader in the footnotes and the bibliography. Rather, the ambition of this study was to delineate certain social processes within a culture and their relation to a historical event, by offering a critical reading of the 9/11 archive's (primarily) literary segment. These processes—that both followed 9/11 and set the conditions for its understanding—prove to be impossible to untangle from an event commonly understood as a moment of rupture. This entanglement bespeaks of the problem of the event's shifting limits, as well as of a need for a dynamic methodological framework in attempts at its critical analysis. In the Introduction I briefly discuss the theoretical model constructed here in order to account for the complexity of the study's subject. The preceding chapters indicate, for better or worse, how productive this model might be.

The initial idea for this project was quite simple: to see how the September 11 terrorist attacks were registered in some recent works of US fiction. In the process of reading, however, the 9/11 archive proved to open numerous related questions: about the possible narrative, generic and conceptual modes of the event's inscription, about the discursive limits regulating the response to the traumatic impact of 9/11, about the structures of affect and forms of sociality implicated in these responses, about the event's place in history, and about various histories and social forces that the different inscriptions of the event elucidate or

occlude. Here, I tried to approach some 9/11 literary texts precisely as local sites of inscription of the event, as connecting points that can help shed light on the complex relations between the historical event, the affective structures supporting its transformative effects on a national community, and the systemic contexts relevant for its emergence.

Starting with that assumption, I offered an interpretation of Foer's 9/11 family drama as a narrative adjacent to the hegemonic models of national post-traumatic recovery after 9/11. In my reading of Art Spiegelman's book, I focused on the way *In the Shadow of No Towers* critiques and counters the dehistoricizing work of the media in the face of national trauma, as well as historicizes the post-9/11 "now." Issues raised by Spiegelman, in turn, lead to a consideration of more expansive, transnational contexts for the inscription of 9/11. It is these contexts that become central in DeLillo's essayistic and novelistic explorations of the transforming position of the United States in the process of neoliberal globalization (in *Cosmopolis*) and the possibilities of a transitional national recovery (in *Falling Man*). In a somewhat experimental, allegorical reading, I tried to approach Pynchon's *Against the Day* as an attempt both to move beyond the event of 9/11 and assert its influence on the US "now" by drawing on the genealogies relevant for what the novel proposes is a not quite "new" age.

Viewed as local sites of inscription of a world event, these texts provide a fragmented picture of a historical moment strewn with contradictions. The basic one, reflected in the fact that that the event of 9/11 (ambivalently) grounded national community, only so as to allow it to reclaim a right to global presence, I proposed as being fundamental to the 9/11 archive. But this proposition does not imply that the "national" and the "global" are somehow fixed and clearly distinct spheres. As I have argued here, this dual aspect of the traumatic event and the ambiguity of its inscriptions should be related to the social processes contingent on the general historical transition the United States is undergoing at the moment.

In other words, while the national/global binary defines the main modalities of the event's inscriptions in the 9/11 archive, the terms of the distinction between the "national" and "global" are simultaneously being reformed under the pressure of the event's impact. An understanding of this moment of transition, that both engenders the possibility for the occurrence of the trauma of 9/11 and of which the event can be considered symptomatic, thus becomes indispensable for the understanding of 9/11. Hence, the texts analyzed here turn out to be not only about 9/11, but also about the changing position of the United States within the history of the world system. "Transition," clearly, means something else than simple "change:" it implies a longer duration, a transformation over time—if we think of the event as a rupture, then transition is an event extended. The event of 9/11, with all its political consequences, social effects and possible future implications, I tried to view as a movement inside this period of transition. This historical moment brings with it a complex cultural landscape of, in Raymond Williams' terms, residual, dominant and emergent elements (cf. 121-127). These combine in the 9/11 archive which, starting from the event, registers the impact of the governing forces of transition on the US national imaginary.

This study takes as its subject the US nation-state, but also the world-historical situation in which the US experienced the event as a national trauma. The context in which nation-states exist has certainly changed since the times of Renan's and Anderson's important theorizations. While the process of globalization has entailed a gradual but steady transformation of national sovereignty and the emergence of a supra- or trans-national economic and, to a significantly lesser degree, political system, this process is far from being definite. DeLillo's focus on the globalization processes as the significant context for his 9/11 writing, marks a shift from the predominant contextualizations of the event in national chronology. These, I argued, are usually supported by a specific narrative about the US

position in a globalized world that formed the backdrop for the hegemonic US representations and responses to the event. This narrative involves a particular view of history that combines the tradition of American exceptionalism with the end of history thesis according to which, prior to 9/11, the United States inhabited history's end as an embodiment of the post-historical and post-political ideal defined by the assumed victory of liberal democracy coupled with a neoliberal version of global capitalism. That is the general context for DeLillo's 9/11 fictions. As I suggested, the historical event of 9/11 interrupted DeLillo's work on the allegorical account of the extended moment of American transformation in *Cosmopolis*. However, the traumatic moment of rupture was subsequently incorporated in the narrative of transition that it apparently disturbed, as the "In the Ruins" essay illustrates. This peculiar temporal bend in DeLillo's writing thus suggest that, although the form the catastrophic event took was unimaginable before it happened, a catastrophe was, in one sense, expected, and the grounds for its reception already in preparation. While in the more nationally focused and restorative 9/11 fictions the history that the United States enters is one of self-realization and fulfillment (a continuation of the teleological narrative of the nation's historical progress), in DeLillo the American "entry into history" represents a failed (in *Cosmopolis*) or unfinished (in *Falling Man*) process of dubious self-realization: it is actually an entry into a chaotic global regime defined by an economy that might be nationally based, but is ultimately out of US control. DeLillo's 9/11 writing is thus especially interesting since it most pointedly marks the moment of transition within which 9/11 occurs. Also, DeLillo's texts reveal what I claim is the fundamental dynamic within the 9/11 archive; between the deterritorializing effects of global capitalism that are countered by the reterritorializing power of the traumatic event in its hegemonic cultural inscription. In the first part of this study I tried to analyze the conditions for this reterritorialization, with a special emphasis on the

modalities of mourning and their mediation as pertaining to the process of communal homogenization post-9/11. This process, for which my discussion provides only the basic coordinates, proved to be contingent on the same post-traumatic metanarratives that supported the changes in US foreign and domestic policies after the September 11 attacks. These testified not to the disappearance, but the universalization or (further) globalization of one nation's ideological and material presence. After 9/11, as Neil Smith put it, "[US] national exceptionalism is reinventing itself as the elixir of a putatively postnational globalism" (2004: xiii).

In the context of such a reformation of the national globalist imaginary—which, it is important to remember, is certainly not an invention of the post-9/11 moment—Butler's theorization of mourning and affect as foundations for social solidarity gains in relevance. As I tried to emphasize throughout this study, the focus on the discursive regulation of affect, and the related consolidation of societal ties, is a distinctively political problem in the post-9/11 US. Although inseparable from the trauma of 9/11, this flow of affect in its communal forms cannot be simply reduced to issues of ostensibly reflexive responses to personal and historical loss. I do not provide here a systematic treatment of the trauma of the attacks' survivors, or the mourning of the victim's families, or even of all the ways in which the event was memorialized in US culture. Instead, in the light of the many changes brought about by the September 11 attacks, I take on the issue of the event's ethico-political potential, and the ways in which this potential was realized in the event's aftermath. That is where the questions of communal consolidation become inseparable from the problems of the political forms this consolidation takes. The social processes tied in with this affective-political nexus are by no means described in full here, nor are they given a definite theoretical elaboration. By trying to articulate the relations between the traumatic, the affective, and the political, I intended to

point to their irresolvable involvement within the 9/11 archive (an involvement that perhaps calls for more extensive work on these relations in other historical contexts). Amy Kaplan's 2003 Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, itself considerably marked by the domestic transformations in the United States after 9/11 and the war in Iraq, suggests something similar. In that talk, Kaplan frames her anti-imperialist agenda in terms that clearly situate it in the context of the post-9/11 US culture of mourning:

We've learned from movements around the world that mourning and remembering the dead can be a form of militant protest. A global politics of anti-imperialism must also call on grief and mourning for the uncounted dead and the unrepresented suffering at the hands of the American Empire. (2004: 16)

Here, Kaplan draws on a line of argument similar to that of Butler, about the power of mourning to affectively ground politics: the call for a "global politics of anti-imperialism" is here based on the recognition of the anonymous violence perpetrated by the "American Empire." However, as I argued earlier on, the practice of grounding of politics on violent acts and events, or on bodies in pain, is not without its problems. Indeed, there are suggestions, to which I point in my reading of DeLillo's *Falling Man*, that such a practice can effect an evacuation of politics, or, at least, its radical transformation. The issue of locating a basis for the forms collective political action might take, how this basis should be articulated, and perhaps even whether it need exist, is then bound to remain inconclusive.

Although in the cited address Kaplan seems to appeal to a form of trans-national solidarity, she also warns about the complication of any easy notions of disappearance of the nation-state or an uncritical celebration of transnationalism in the face of the 9/11 event and its aftermath. In that context, the difficult question becomes, "how both to decenter the United States and analyze its centralized imperial power" (Kaplan 2004: 12). In my

discussion, I tried to situate one possible answer to this question in the context of capitalist globalization and the ambivalent position the United States takes in the process. I found DeLillo's writing on 9/11 to be especially illuminating in this respect. Capitalist globalization and the violence it involves is also the context for various catastrophes in Pynchon's *Against the Day*. Because of its dubious status within the 9/11 archive, and because it is a post-9/11 novel that most extensively elaborates on the connections between the affective, the political and the economic, I feel this text deserves a couple of more concluding comments.

Read in the context of the 9/11 archive, Pynchon's displacement of the contemporary anti-American terrorism to its turn of the twentieth century anti-capitalist counterpart represents an implicit critique of mediatic terrorist spectacle that took place on 9/11. As I tried to show, the event itself, the media-induced "percepticide" that followed (cf. Taylor 244), as well as the government policies post-9/11 worked to overshadow systemic contradictions and power relations implicated in "anti-American" terrorism (Spiegelman's 9/11 also book focuses on this issue). In some ways similar to Spiegelman's work, that delineates a genealogy of US corporate imperialism from the Spanish-American War to Iraq, Pynchon's interest lies in a historically informed narrative. But unlike Spiegelman, who traces the genealogy of the US empire as the important context for the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Pynchon focuses on the roots of domestic, American anti-capitalist "terrorism." By working through allegory and allusion, and simultaneously uncovering and reimagining the historical co-emergence of corporate power and suppression of organized labor struggles, Pynchon's *Against the Day* turns the readers' gaze from the blinding power of the violence of 9/11 towards events and problems that are either forgotten or marginalized in the national debates about the post-9/11 moment. As a novel about loss then, *Against the Day* can be seen as yet another modality of mourning. As such, it also points to alternative grounds for consolidation

of societal ties in the face of historical loss. For Pynchon—or, rather, for his novel in which this becomes most obvious—this consolidation also entails the resuscitation of specific (lost) forms of politics. Thus, similar to Kaplan's demand, Pynchon posits common suffering as the grounds for trans-national solidarities, but also, by insisting on the problems of labor, points to the horizon against which these are consolidated—that of a global political economy. That way, the novel weaves together the issues of traumatic loss, affect and community, and politics; issues, as I suggest above, that are central to the 9/11 archive. But, apart from simultaneously mourning the loss of politics and grounding it in historical forms of anti-capitalist practice, the novel does not offer easy resolutions. The fact that Pynchon sets the utopian, redemptive moment of his political allegory of loss on a hyper-fictionalized level—it is crucial that the Chums' adventures are, we are constantly reminded, the subject of many dime novels—suggests that the utopian, future orientation of the novel might offer little more than another form of mourning. In the context of the 9/11 archive, however, and its obsessive reworkings of the past traumatic experience, this utopian trace could be seen as a step beyond the paralyzing post-9/11 traumatic loop.

Finally, let me comment briefly on some questions raised in the discussions in previous chapters. Apart from, or along with, the issues mentioned above, the 9/11 archive opens other challenging topics to future research. In light of the strong state interventions in the domestic political space post-9/11 it would undoubtedly be interesting to look into the forms the presence of the state takes in recent US cultural production. Normally seen as a restrictive force opposing the putative freedom of the market, the state is nevertheless the key social mechanism of liberalism (cf. Wallerstein 1991). This contradictory status of the state in US culture, exacerbated especially by the apparent contradictions in neoliberal economic theory and practice, could likely become a contentious discursive site of considerable

significance, especially in the context of the current state interventions in the national economy. (I only hint at this development in the first chapter of this study.)

Another topic that surfaced as relevant in the course of my research is the problem of representation of economic relations in the analyzed corpus. As my discussions of Spiegelman, DeLillo and Pynchon suggest, the capitalist political economy often represents a kind of discursive limit in these texts. The role of the economic sphere in the emergence and management of the 9/11 trauma is only hinted at in Spiegelman's comic. In DeLillo, it is both overwhelmingly present and represented in ambiguous and abstract terms, with a peculiar stress on temporality. Pynchon's novel in that sense represents an exception of sorts, even within the author's own corpus, since it unequivocally builds its political and historical vision against the losses and systemic traumatizations engendered by the capitalist economy. In the corpus under discussion then, the economic relations become more apparent in a moment of crisis (and are, in some of these texts, shown to aggravate that crisis). A research based on a broader corpus could elucidate the question of whether or not the issues of economy and capital are marginalized in those works of contemporary US fiction that do not focus on moments of crisis. The 9/11 archive suggests that these can emerge, although in opaque form, with traumatic historical events, in moments brought about both by natural and man-made disasters. My discussion of DeLillo's fictions of globalization points to the possibility of such a reading. There, I suggest that the local disastrous event—such as Bhopal or 9/11—can expose the traumatic foundations of the power structure supporting its emergence. In this sense, a national catastrophe will also betray the US position within the globalization processes, as will the suffering of various laboring others point to the system's grounding in a perpetual accumulation by dispossession.

These final remarks reintroduce the affective component in the discussion of

contemporary social realities. These, in turn, lead to the study of culture as the significant site where discursively informed structures of affect and sociality interlock with political and economic practices. In the various inscriptions of the event of 9/11, whose influence is still palpable in the world and that, in that sense, has not yet ended, these issues are both violently condensed and re-set in intensified motion, emphasizing once again the dynamic aspects of the transitional moment the event marked for the United States and the world.

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Abstract

This study analyzes the representations of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States in contemporary American literary and cultural production, focusing in particular on the work of Jonathan Safran Foer, Art Spiegelman, Don DeLillo and Thomas Pynchon. While the central part of the corpus consists of selected literary texts, on its margins it also includes media images, films and works of visual artists. This cultural work, that with various degree of explicitness refers to the 9/11 attacks, the study locates within a larger "9/11 archive" that also encompasses the cultural representations of a post-9/11 America and its debates about the "global war on terror." The 9/11 archive does not offer a coherent or definite picture of the event. Marked by mourning and loss, it can best be understood as a process of the event's in-culturation, i.e. as encompassing a variety of discourses through which the traumatic event becomes part of US culture. What can be observed in the archive are two structuring forces that emerge as fundamental. On the one hand, the 9/11 event was defined by the centripetal force of US nationalism. The reconstitution of national homogeneity after 9/11 was supported by interpretations of the event that relied on the logic of what LaCapra calls "the myth of founding trauma," that, tied up with the social practices of mourning, bound national community together and worked to set it off from non-national/terrorist/immigrant others. On the other hand, the various processes of economic globalization exploded the limits of the presumably national event and connected it to a multitude of sub- and trans-national histories. The study argues that, by centering on non-national contexts for 9/11, it is possible to approach it as a symptom of the globalization processes that destabilize the limits of the national community and necessitate its reconstitution in the global context. Since globalization is a process in which the US

nation-state plays a crucial role, it is also intertwined with a specific US national imaginary. The construction of this conflicted imaginary is what can also be detected in post-9/11 US fiction. In other words, two tendencies can be observed in the 9/11 archive, both implicated with a specific adjustment of American national imaginary to the changing global position of the United States (which includes a declining US hegemony): on the one hand, the archive speaks of a post-traumatic reconstruction of an imagined national wholeness; on the other, many 9/11 fictions also work to reconstitute US nationness inside a planetary context.

The 9/11 archive is then underwritten by the dynamic between the deterritorializing effects of global capitalism and the reterritorializing power of the traumatic event in its hegemonic cultural inscription. The first part of the study focuses on the conditions for this reterritorialization, with a special emphasis on the modalities of mourning and their mediation as pertaining to the process of communal homogenization post-9/11. This process is contingent on the same post-traumatic metanarratives that supported the changes in US foreign and domestic policies after the September 11 attacks. These testified not to the disappearance, but the universalization or (further) globalization of one nation's ideological and material presence. The move from national to global, implicit in many 9/11 fictions, is explored in the second part of the study. It is important to note that, while the national/global binary defines the main modalities of the event's inscriptions in the 9/11 archive, the terms of the distinction between the "national" and "global" are simultaneously being reformed under the pressure of the event's impact. An understanding of this moment of transition, that both engenders the possibility for the occurrence of the trauma of 9/11 and of which the event can be considered symptomatic, thus becomes indispensable for the understanding of 9/11. Hence, the texts analyzed here turn out to be not only about 9/11, but also about the changing position of the United States within the history of the world system.

This study proceeds by way of a series of thematic leaps, in order to unearth the active entanglement of the event with systems of meaning and power that create the conditions for its understanding. I highlight four of these in the title: event, trauma, nation, and globalization. These are laid out to form a composite screen for my reconstruction of the complex social reality that came to be remembered primarily through a simple iconic-numeric form. The general trajectory of my analysis follows the basic division sketched above. Although both the centripetal and centrifugal force operate simultaneously in all the texts under scrutiny, I try to focus first on the imploding, homogenizing symptoms of 9/11—its hegemonic inscriptions as national trauma—and then move onto a reading of works that situate the event in supranational contexts. The study thus moves from an analysis of the ways in which the event was symbolically encoded within the sphere of a traumatized collectivity to readings of texts that approach 9/11 as an opportunity to speak of its other relevant histories.

In the process of reading, the 9/11 archive proved to open numerous related questions: about the possible narrative, generic and conceptual modes of the event's inscription, about the discursive limits regulating the response to the traumatic impact of 9/11, about the structures of affect and forms of sociality implicated in these responses, about the event's place in history, and about various histories and social forces that the different inscriptions of the event elucidate or occlude. The issues of traumatic loss, affect and community, and politics emerge as central to the 9/11 archive. The main methodological problem of the study consisted in articulating the relations between the historical event, literary (and other) texts, and the wider social system. Recognizing that there is no easy or direct way to analyze the relationship between the forming and formative cultural processes and the questions of community and political economy, the study approaches some 9/11

literary texts as local sites of inscription of the event, as connecting points that can shed light on the complex relations between the historical event, the affective structures supporting its transformative effects on a national community, and the systemic contexts relevant for its emergence. In order to account for the complexity of its subject matter, the study proposed the 9/11 archive be approached by way of a layered analytical perspective, that could both set a heuristic framework for the unavoidable sense of expansion of the event and account for its concentric and palimpsestic contexts. Thus, a number of theoretical practices is critically engaged here, from psychoanalysis and nationalism studies to philosophy of history, world-system theory, and the heterogeneous critical practices of American Studies, in a situationist response to the methodological challenge posed by the 9/11 archive.

Sažetak

U ovom se radu analiziraju predstavljanja terorističkih napada od 11. rujna 2001. u suvremenoj američkoj književnoj i kulturnoj produkciji. Najveći dio korpusa obuhvaća književne tekstove, uz povremene osvрте na medijske prikaze, film i radove nekih vizualnih umjetnika. Rad smješta ovu kulturnu produkciju u širi "arhiv 11. rujna", koji osim tekstova koji se izravno bave napadima uključuje i djela koja tematiziraju promjene u SAD-u nakon 11. rujna kao i "globalni rat protiv terorizma". Arhiv 11. rujna ne nudi skladnu sliku događaja oko kojega je formiran. Ovaj arhiv, bitno obilježen gubitkom i žalovanjem, bolje je razumijeti kao proces "inkulturacije" događaja, tj. kao skup diskurza kroz koje je traumatični događaj postao dio američke kulture i povijesti. Rad upućuje na dvije strukturne silnice u arhivu 11. rujna. S jedne strane, američko razumijevanje događaja određeno je centripetalnom silom američkoga nacionalizma. Nova nacionalna homogenizacija koja je nastupila poslije 11. rujna oslanjala se na interpretacije događaja obilježene logikom "mita o utemeljujućoj traumi" (LaCapra). Usko povezane s društvenim praksama komemoracije i žalovanja, ova su hegemonijska diskurzivna uobličjenja povijesnoga događaja potakla konsolidiranje zajednice kroz opreku prema drugima, bili oni ne-državljeni, imigranti ili teroristi. S druge strane, procesi ekonomske globalizacije narušavaju sliku događaja smještenog tek u okvir nacionalne pripovijesti, te upućuju na njegovu povezanost s drugim povijestima koje zadiru u tijelo monolitno zamišljene nacije, otvarajući je pritom prema oblicima društvenosti koji su i lokalniji i globalniji od nacionalne države. Stoga analiza 11. rujna u njegovim ne-nacionalnim kontekstima, odnosno njegovo shvaćanje i kao simptoma globalizacijskih procesa, može pružiti uvid u suvremeni položaj SAD-a kao nacije i države u globalnom kontekstu. Budući

da je globalizacija proces u kojem SAD igraju važnu ulogu, ona neminovno utječe na formiranje specifičnog američkog nacionalnog imaginarija. Upravo se konstituiranje tog imaginarija može iščitati iz arhiva 11. rujna. Drugim riječima, arhiv bitno obilježuju dvije tendencije povezane s prilagodbama nacionalne zajednice promjenama u globalnom položaju SAD-a (koje uključuju i urušavanje američke hegemonije): s jedne strane, mnogi književni tekstovi nakon 11. rujna prikazuju post-traumatsko obnavljanje zamišljene nacionalne jedinstvenosti—i u smislu "jedne" i "jedinstvene" nacije—dok se s druge strane 11. rujna predstavlja kao trenutak u kojem se SAD postavljaju u planetarni kontekst. Za arhiv 11. rujna je tako presudna dinamika koja proizlazi iz interakcije, s jedne strane, deteritorijalizirajućih učinaka kretanja globalnog kapitala i, s druge, reteritorijalizirajuće moći traumatičnog događaja u njegovim hegemonijskim prikazima. Prvi dio ovoga rada bavi se reteritorijalizacijom američkoga nacionalnog imaginarija poslije 11. rujna, s posebnim naglaskom na modalitetima žalovanja i ulozi medija u procesu post-traumatske obnove društvene zajednice. Ovaj je proces bio poduprt istim metanaracijama koje su pratile promjene u vanjskoj i unutarnjoj politici u SAD-u nakon napada. Ujedno, ove su dominantne pripovijesti o događaju svjedočile da sama forma nacionalne države ne nestaje u kontekstu globalizacije, već da se ideološka i materijalna prisutnost SAD-a univerzalizira i globalizira. Pomak od nacionalnog ka globalnom, koji obilježava mnoge književne tekstove o 11. rujna, u središtu je drugoga dijela rada. Ovdje je važno napomenuti da analitička podjela na "nacionalnu" i "globalnu" sferu ne podrazumijeva i njihovu strogu odjeljivost i monolitnost. Dok binarizam nacionalnog i globalnog bitno određuje glavne načine ispisivanja događaja u arhivu 11. rujna, temelji na kojima je izgrađena podjela na "nacionalno" i "globalno" mijenjaju se pod pritiskom tog istog događaja. Stoga je razumijevanje perioda tranzicije američkoga društva, koja ujedno stvara uvjete za traumu od 11. rujna i koje je događaj

simptom, neophodno za razumijevanje fenomena 11. rujna. Tekstovi analizirani u ovom radu nisu dakle samo o 11. rujna, već i o dinamičnoj poziciji SAD-a u suvremenoj povijesti svjetskoga sistema.

Ovaj rad nudi nekoliko uporišta koja omogućuju da se promotri isprepletenost povijesnoga događaja sa sustavima značenja i moći koji stvaraju uvjete za njegovo razumijevanje. Ta su tematska ili konceptualna uporišta naznačena u naslovu: događaj, trauma, nacija, globalizacija. Ovaj niz sačinjava slojevit pozadinu za rekonstrukciju društvene pojave upamćene u jednostavnom numeričkom i ikoničkom obliku. Struktura rada uglavnom prati goreopisanu dvojni podjelu. Iako su i centripetalni i centrifugalni aspekti događaja prisutni u svim tekstovima arhiva 11. rujna, prvi dio rada bavi se pretežito homogenizirajućim simptomima događaja—hegemonijskim prikazima nacionalne traume—dok se drugi sastoji od čitanja tekstova koji događaj smještaju u nad- ili trans-nacionalne kontekste. Ova podjela pokušava reproducirati pomak od načina na koje je događaj simbolički upisan u povijest traumatizirane zajednice ka tekstovima u kojima je 11. rujna prilika da se progovori o drugim značajnim povijestima upletenima u događaj. U trima kraćim poglavljima izložen je teorijski model u okviru kojega je analiziran arhiv 11. rujna—o povijesnom događaju i naciji, o traumi i o globalizaciji—dok se veći dio, odnosno duža poglavlja sastoje od tradicionalno osmišljenih pomnih čitanja nekolicine romana o 11. rujna. Stroga podjela između "teorijskih" poglavlja i njihove "praktične" primjene međutim ne stoji. Poglavlja posvećena pojedinim književnim tekstovima treba shvatiti kao proširene i fokusiranije rasprave o problemima naznačenim u tri kraća okvirna dijela.

U prvom poglavlju, "Ustrajan događaj: pripovijesti oko 11. rujna" ("Enduring Event: Telling Stories around September 11"), analiziraju se glavni načini kontekstualizacije događaja u američkim reakcijama na terorističke napade. Posebna pažnja posvećena je

povijesnim kontekstima aktiviranim u procesu zauzdavanja traumatskog učinka događaja. Iz dominantne, amerocentrične perspektive, 11. je rujna prekinuo navodno linearan tijek svjetske povijesti, te stvorio priliku za uvođenje općeg izvanrednog stanja. Ovom se gledištu u radu supostavlja drugo, koje počiva na pojmovima koje u okviru svoje cikličke i revolucionarne filozofije povijesti predlaže Walter Benjamin. U skladu s Benjaminovom vizijom povijesti, povijesni događaj možemo promatrati ne kao radikalni rez i početak novog, izvanrednog doba, kako su dominantne pripovijesti o 11. rujna nalagale, već kao trenutak u kojem postojeće povijesne tendencije jačaju i u kojem raznolikost izranjajućih prošlosti narušava prividnu homogenost "post-historijske" sadašnjosti. U skladu s ovom tezom, događaj uvijek valja motriti u odnosu na povijesne kontekste iz kojih ovaj crpi svoje značenje i one povijesti koje iz događaja proistječu. Poglavlja posvećena čitanjima pojedinih romana pokazuju da je ova analitička pozicija dijelom nadahnuta povijesno-političkim teorijskim modelom Iana Baucoma, koji u svojoj studiji *Sablasi Atlantika (Specters of the Atlantic)* sjedinjuje Benjaminovu mističko-materijalističku historiografsku poziciju i marksističku povijest svjetskoga sistema Giovannija Arrighija. Drugo poglavlje, "Ponovljena snimka: izgradnja zajednice na mjestu traume" ("Constant Replay: Community Building at the Site/Sight of Trauma"), bavi se međuovisnostima diskurza nacije, povijesne traume i društvene prakse žalovanja u kontekstu hegemonijskih prikaza 11. rujna. U poglavlju je posebno istaknuta uloga vizualnih medija u procesima nacionalne traumatizacije i post-traumatske konsolidacije. Vizualni aspekti događaja predmetom su iduća dva poglavlja. "Na zajedničkom tlu: melodrame 11. rujna" ("Common Ground: Melodramas of 9/11") najvećim se dijelom bavi romanom *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* Jonathana Safrana Foera, post-traumatskom obiteljskom dramom koja učinkovito bilježi glavne modalitete žalovanja i obnove zajednice nakon 11. rujna. Isto poglavlje problematizira prevladavajuće žanrovske

okvire, posebno melodramu, koji su odredili američke odgovore na terorističke napade. "Medijacija i eksproprijacija *U sjeni tornjeva kojih nema*" ("Shock & Own: Mediation and Expropriation *In the Shadow of No Towers*") čitanje je istoimenog stripa Arta Spiegelmana. Spiegelmanova knjiga nudi oštru kritiku uloge medija nakon 11. rujna te upućuje na nužnost širenja interpretacijskih okvira nasuprot dominantnim reakcijama. Također, djelo sugerira da su ahistorijski prikazi 11. rujna, kojima Spiegelman upućuje izazov tako što uglavljuje napade u povijest američkoga imperijalizma, prikrivaju utjecaj partikularnih političkih i ekonomskih interesa na svakodnevni život nacije.

Nastavljajući se na takav zahtjev za nadilaženjem nacionalne perspektive u pogledu na 11. rujna, poglavlja koja slijede smještaju događaj u kontekst globalizacijskih procesa, posebno naglašavajući ambivalentan utjecaj globalizacije na društvo SAD-a na prijelazu stoljeća. U poglavlju "Globalizacija nacije" ("Globalizing (the) nation") nudi se radna definicija pojma globalizacije te se raščlanjuje uloga SAD-a u tom složenom procesu. Budući da je pojam globalizacije tema koja premašuje okvire ovoga rada, poglavlje se posebno usredotočuje na naglašen temporalni aspekt američkog ispisivanja globalizacijskih procesa. Kao što analiza DeLillovih tekstova pokazuje, američko je poimanje napada od 11. rujna bilo u velikoj mjeri određeno diskurzom "kraja povijesti", koji je najutjecajnijiu formulaciju dobio u radovima Francisa Fukuyame i koji naturalizira globalnu nadmoć američkog ekonomskog i političkog modela. "Tajanstveni putevi tržišni: Don DeLillo o 11. rujna" ("The Market Moves Us in Mysterious Ways: Don DeLillo on 9/11") nudi daljnju raščlambu ovih problema kroz čitanje eseja "U ruševinama budućnosti" ("In the Ruins of the Future") Dona DeLilla. U ovom se poglavlju u raspravu uvodi još jedan scenarij bitan za arhiv 11. rujna: diskurz o islamskom fundamentalističkom terorizmu. DeLillo komplicira ovaj scenarij neprestano razlikujući i supostavljajući teroriste odgovorne za 11. rujna i

organizirani otpor globalnom kapitalizmu kroz anti-globalizacijski pokret. Ova dva društvena fenomena DeLillov tekst problemski postavlja kao jedine preostale enklave otpora kapitalističkoj globalizaciji. "*Cosmopolis: Meditacija o deteritorijalizaciji*" ("*Cosmopolis: A Meditation on Deterritorialization*") poglavlje je posvećeno DeLillovom prvom romanu objavljenom nakon 11. rujna. Iako se ovaj roman ne bavi terorističkim napadima, događaj je u njemu zabilježen na druge načine. Naime, 11. rujna je nakratko prekinuo DeLillovo pisanje ovoga romana, za koje vrijeme je DeLillo napisao "U ruševinama budućnosti". Taj esej i *Cosmopolis* stoga tvore svojevrsnu cjelinu, posebno zato što roman vrlo jasno postavlja konceptualne okvire za DeLillovo shvaćanje napada. Ovaj (podcijenjeni) DeLillov roman opisuje važan tranzicijski trenutak u povijesti SAD-a povezan s financijalizacijom globalne ekonomije. Poglavlje sagledava načine na koje *Cosmopolis* bilježi učinke povijesne tranzicije na američki nacionalni imaginarij. DeLillov roman o 11. rujna, *Falling Man*, predmetom je sljedećeg poglavlja, "Politika smrti: umijeće obnove *Čovjeka koji pada*" ("Killing Politics: The Art of Recovery in *Falling Man*"). Roman sažima mnoge važne teme arhiva 11. rujna, a u ovom poglavlju kritički je naglasak na procesima depolitizacije američke javne sfere nakon traumatičnog događaja 11. rujna. Ovaj roman tako, poput *Cosmopolisa*, bilježi marginalizirane ali značajne procese koji obilježavaju američko društvo u post-traumatskoj tranziciji. Posljednje poglavlje, "Američki žal: genealogije gubitaka u *Protiv dana*" ("Good Mourning, America: Genealogies of Loss in *Against the Day*") bavi se romanom čiji se status unutar arhiva 11. rujna može smatrati problematičnim. Zadnji roman Thomasa Pynchona tematizira borbe američkog radničkog pokreta s kraja devetnaestog i početka dvadesetog stoljeća, pa naizgled nema veze s događajima od 11. rujna 2001. Teza je poglavlja, međutim, da roman izmješta neka od gorućih pitanja američke suvremenosti u drugi, vezani povijesni period, kako bi komemorirao povijesne gubitke političkih opcija koje su dodatno oslabljene

nakon 11. rujna. Kao i DeLillo, Pynchon se okreće temi terorizma kako bi progovorio o (ne)mogućnosti protu-hegemonijske političke akcije u tobože post-historijskom i post-političkom svijetu. Budući da tematizira gubitak, Pynchonov roman, koji politizira praksu žalovanja, predstavlja još jedan, kritičan doprinos komemorativnoj kulturi koja je zavlдала društvenim pejzažem SAD-a nakon 11. rujna.

Kao što ovaj kratak pregled pokazuje, iščitavanje arhiva 11. rujna otvara brojna isprepletena pitanja: o mogućim pripovjednim, žanrovskim i konceptualnim modusima ispisivanja događaja, o diskurzivnim granicama reakcija na napade 11. rujna, o afektivnim strukturama i oblicima društvenosti izgrađenim oko traumatičnoga događaja, o mjestu događaja u povijesti, te o povijesnim i društvenim kretanjima koje različiti prikazi događaja mogu rasvijetliti ili prikriti. Pitanja traumatskog gubitka, afekta, zajednice i politike pomalaju se tako kao ključna za arhiv 11. rujna. Namjera je ovoga rada naznačiti određene društvene procese unutar američke kulture i njihov odnos prema povijesnom događaju od 11. rujna. Ti se procesi, koji su i slijedili događaj i uvjetovali njegovo razumijevanje, naposljetku ne mogu jednostavno razlučiti od događaja obično shvaćenog kao trenutak prijeloma. Ova isprepletenost ukazuje na problem pomičnosti granica povijesnoga događaja, ali i na potrebu za postavljanjem dinamičnog metodološkoga okvira u pokušaju da se događaju kritički pristupi.

Glavni se metodološki problem ovoga rada sastojao upravo u artikuliranju odnosa između povijesnoga događaja, književnih (i drugih) tekstova i šireg društvenog sistema. U svijetlu činjenice da su načini analize odnosa između kulturnih procesa i pitanja društvenosti i političke ekonomije otvoreni raspravi, ovaj rad prilazi književnim djelima iz arhiva 11. rujna kao lokalnim mjestima ispisivanja događaja, kao čvorišnim točkama koje mogu razjasniti odnose između povijesnoga događaja, afektivnih struktura koje podupiru njegove

transformativne učinke na nacionalnu zajednicu, i sistemskih konteksta bitnih za njegovo pojavljivanje. Da bi se naglasila i očuvala složenost teme, ovaj rad 11. rujnu prilazi iz slojevite analitičke perspektive kojoj je cilj postaviti heuristički okvir koji bi naznačio neizbježano širenje granica povijesnoga događaja, ali i omogućio sagledavanje njegovih koncentričnih i palimpsestnih konteksta. Stoga se metodologija ovoga rada, u svojevrsnom situacionističkom odgovoru na metodološki izazov arhiva 11. rujna, kritički oslanja na niz teorijskih praksi, od psihoanalize i post-kolonijalnih teorija nacionalizma, do filozofije povijesti, teorije svjetskoga sistema i raznolikih kritičkih praksi američkih studija.

Key words:

September 11, 9/11, United States, trauma, affect, nationalism, globalization, imperialism, terrorism, capitalism

Ključne riječi:

11. rujna, "9/11", Sjedinjene Države, trauma, afekt, nacionalizam, globalizacija, imperijalizam, terorizam, kapitalizam

Curriculum Vitae

Rođen sam u Puli 1975, gdje sam završio osnovnu školu i gimnaziju. 1999. godine diplomirao sam anglistiku i kroatistiku na Filozofskom fakultetu u Zagrebu. Na istom fakultetu od 2000. radim kao znanstveni novak i asistent i predajem uvodni književnoteorijski kolegij te književni seminar druge i treće godine. Školsku godinu 2003/04. proveo sam u Bergenu (Norveška) na stipendiji u okviru programa *A Foreign Language that Unites*. 2005. sam na matičnom fakultetu obranio magistarsku radnju pod naslovom *Image Inc: Popularna vizualnost i postmoderni američki roman*. Školsku godinu 2005/06. proveo sam u SAD-u (New York University) kao stipendist Fulbrightovog programa. Književne kritike, prijevode i članke objavljivao sam uglavnom u domaćim časopisima. Od 1998. do ranih 2000-tih bio sam jedan od urednika *Libre Libere*, časopisa za književnost u izdanju Autonomne tvornice kulture, te pokretač i sudionik nekoliko ranih književnih Internet-projekata. Područja mog profesionalnog interesa obuhvaćaju prvenstveno američku suvremenu književnost i kulturu, probleme globalizacije, vizualnosti te novih medija.

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