The Heart of the West: 9/11, the Insider/Outsider Novel, and Worlding America

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List of Abbreviations

DPC = A Disorder Peculiar to the Country

ELC = Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close

FM = Falling Man

HB = Home Boy

OPL = Once in a Promised Land

RF = The Reluctant Fundamentalist

WWE = Windows on the World (English edition)

WWF = Windows on the World (French edition)

Introduction

i. The Argument

The cruelness and unexpectedness of the September 11, 2001 attacks shook the whole world. Having been caught live on tape, the event was a visual one, and so, people all over the globe made claims to the attacks and the ensuing trauma. Critics and scholars agreed that the tragedy could not be put into words and denied authors of fiction the ability of writing about it in any meaningful way. At the same time, American authors felt the pressure to write nothing less than the "great 9/11 novel" (L. Miller). Expectations and, consequently, the pressure particularly on American novelists were high. In 2005, Rachel Donadio claimed that up to that instant, no writer of fiction had "perfectly captured our historical moment." According to her, works published by the first wave of authors, that is to say authors who decided to make 9/11 the immediate subject of their novels shortly after the attacks, such as Don DeLillo, Jonathan Safran Foer and Jay McInerney, were not able to come to terms with the traumatic event adequately. Yet, Donadio acknowledges that the writing of fiction takes its time and that even masters in their field, such as Tolstoy, needed time to write meaningfully about actual historical events (in his case, the Napoleonic Wars).[1]

Although Donadio admits that art needs more time to respond to real-life events, she, like many other critics and scholars worldwide, apparently could not wait for "the" 9/11 novel to appear. The tragedy has given rise to important questions in regard to fiction and 9/11, two topics that seemed to be mutually exclusive to some. People voiced concerns about the ethic dimension of fictionalizing the attacks and as the corpus of novels grew, conflicting questions concerning the ethics and aesthetics of such an undertaking arose: What took so long? Has it really been long enough? Can fiction redress the wounds of that day? Are we ready to even try? Is it possible to write a novel about 9/11 that is

[1] "To date, no work of fiction has perfectly captured our historical moment the way certain novels captured the Gilded Age, or the Weimar Republic, or the cold war. Then again, it's still early. Nonfiction can keep up with the instant messenger culture; fiction takes its own sweet time. Even Tolstoy wrote "War and Peace" years after the Napoleonic Wars. Today, the most compelling creative energies seem directed at nonfiction. That is, until the next great novelist comes along to prove the naysayers wrong. Time, as Elizabeth Bishop once wrote, is nothing if not amenable" (Donadio).

actually *good*? Do we now experience the representation of crisis or rather a crisis of representation?

As after past great tragedies such as the Holocaust, the attacks of 9/11 once more made critics and readers alike wonder about the possible obsoleteness of art in general and the novel in particular. Many complained that it was much too soon to fictionalize the attacks when finally, in 2005, the first novels on the subject were published in the U.S. In contrast to the destitute silence following the Holocaust,[2] people reacted the opposite way after 9/11. After the trauma, language was "the first healer. Expression counter[ed] obsession. Telling the tale [was] the first step in getting on with life, integrating what happened into a meaningful narrative" (Versluys, *Blue* 13-14). Consequently, the attacks triggered an immediate wave of responses by professional writers but also by everyday people, who gave vent to their emotions through poetry at particular sites of memory, such as Ground Zero and St. Peter's Church, on websites,[3] and in (published) essays. Writers were encouraged to share their feelings and thoughts in collections such as *110 Stories: New York Writes After September 11* and *September 11, 2001: American Writers Respond.* These collections show how difficult it was even for professional writers to put their feelings and opinions into writing as Suheir Hammad's poem "first writing since" illustrates:

> there have been no words.
> i have not written one word.
> no poetry in the ashes south of canal street.
> no prose in the refrigerated trucks driving debris and dna.
> not one word. (Hammad 139)

Consequently, the attacks of September 11, 2001 became an incisive moment for writers, and they provoked a deep crisis, especially for authors of fiction. Jay McInerney, author of the novel *The Good Life* (2006), explains that

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[2] Dori Laub, himself a Holocaust survivor, argues that people react differently to catastrophes; while some feel the "imperative to tell" in order to recover, others feel "the impossibility of telling" ("Truth and Testimony" 62-63). They prefer to remain silent and to keep their trouble and agony to themselves. One possibility to tell, is to put one's experiences into a narrative through writing to translate the experience and finally work it through. "We are faced with versions of the event's meaning that continue and coexist, some driven by a wish to know, to bear witness, and some driven by an equally powerful need to not know, to deny and suppress the truth of witnessing" (Laub, "September 11, 2001" 211).

[3] e.g. www.voicesnet.org

> [m]ost novelists I know went through a period of intense self-examination and self-loathing after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. I certainly did. For a while the idea of 'invented characters' and alternate realities seemed trivial and frivolous and suddenly, horribly outdated. For a while. (McInerney, "Invention")

Although McInerney states that the attacks indeed marked a low point for authors, he already forebodes that the silence caused by 9/11 was not to be a permanent one.

British novelist Ian McEwan confessed that he found it exhausting to deal with fiction and fictional characters and that a turning point seemed to have been reached with the terrorist attacks. He felt he could not return to his daily routine as a writer and that it "'was the time to just go back to school, as it were, and start to learn'" (qtd. in Donadio). Martin Amis, too, admitted that his writing had been deeply affected by the attacks: "The so-called work in progress had been reduced, overnight, to a blue streak of pitiable babble. But then, too, a feeling of gangrenous futility had infected the whole corpus" (qtd. in Mishra, "Innocence"). Writing or not writing about the attacks seemed both impossible. Hence, one of the reasons for the relatively long silence of American novelists is that they had to overcome the shock accompanied by a writer's block.[4] Eventually, the idea of "reluctantly considering a change of occupation" was dismissed (Amis qtd. in Mishra, "Innocence"). Yet, instead of inventing "alternate realities" (McInerney, "Invention"), authors grounded their works in the actual reality of 9/11, telling about experiences and feelings that many Americans could relate to after the attacks.

Reviews were seldom in favor of these early fictional outpours. Werner Jung argues "that valid treatments have only been found with a historical phase shift - frequently one generation later" (Jung 167, translation mine). He doubts that the traditional printed media such as books are even capable of grasping the dimension of this outstanding event. Weeks argues that it is indeed too soon to expect something great from novelists since the attacks are still too close to the

[4] Jay McInerney admits: "I abandoned the novel I was working on and didn't even think about writing fiction for the next six months. In fact, I was so traumatised and my attention span was shot to such an extent that for months I was incapable of reading a novel, or anything much longer than a standard article in the New York Times, even though I was fortunate enough not to have lost any close friends in the attack" ("Invention").

present age. Like Jung, he states that it will take time for worthy works about the attacks to be published and that there is no need to rush.[5] Jonathan Safran Foer replies to the critique of the usefulness of timely fictional response to the attacks by asking a counter question:

> Why isn't everybody writing about it? .... Why is it that people would ask, 'Do you think it's right for novelists to be writing about Sept. 11? Do you think it's too soon?' Nobody would ask, 'Do you think it's too soon for journalists to cover it? Or do they have the right to cover it?' I think people are really afraid of art. But that's not a reason not to push on. (qtd. in Memmott)

Foer also points out the dilemma of fiction, which cannot keep up with actuality and has been excelled by non-fiction (for example by (auto-) biographies of survivors) and, of course, especially the news broadcast which made 9/11 a live event. However, after 9/11, the novel was far from dead. Novels "provide a context for what seems to be without context. They contain what seems to be uncontainable and reconfigure the symbolic networks that the terrorist attacks destroyed" (Versluys, *Blue* 13-4). Consequently, as Versluys states, novelists become "the chroniclers of their time" (*Blue* 183). In fact, fiction most often outlasts non-fiction which has a very short expiration date. Only time will tell if today's writers have produced any timeless work of art in 9/11 fiction yet.

As an iconic event of global consequence, September 11 is responded to not only by American writers. It was European authors who first jumped in at the deep end and dared to imagine the attacks or write critically about their impact. In the U.S., it took five years for the first serious fiction about the attacks on the Twin Towers to appear (*ELC*). Especially French writers did not take much time to thematize the attacks in their fiction. And so, several fictional responses to 9/11, such as Frédéric Beigbeder's *Windows on the World*, Luc Lang's *Onze Septembre Mon Amour*, and Didier Goupil's *Le Jour de Mon Retour sur Terre*, were published as early as 2003. *Windows on the World* was translated into English in 2005 because of its commercial success in France,

[5] Weeks maintains: "Personally, I would start worrying about American authors' supposed failure to treat 9/11 in a memorable fashion if 50 years from now, we reviewers were still futzing with the issue. Over in England, Pat Barker managed to write one of the finest World War I novels, *The Ghost Road* - in 1995. No one complained: 'What kept you?'"

however, to little literary acclaim, at least in the United States.[6] It seems that after these impulsive initial reactions to the attacks, the French interest in the tragedy ceased. The later conflicts and dissonances in regard to U.S. foreign affairs (the war on terror) have also ended the French interest in America's post-9/11 condition and, thus, the corpus of French 9/11 novels is limited.[7]

A number of British authors also dealt with the catastrophe via fiction, such as Martin Amis and Ian McEwan, whose novel *Saturday* (2005) is praised as one of the few 'good' novels treating 9/11 because it does not deal with the attacks themselves but with their aftermath and international repercussions, making it a post-9/11 novel.[8] Donadio (once more) proclaims the death of the novel and maintains that "it's safe to say no novels have yet engaged with the post-Sept. 11 era in any meaningful way." Yet, she also admits that McEwan's novel poses "[a] possible exception" (Donadio). Although she states that the novel "demonstrates a fine-tuned awareness of the range of human responses to terrorism and violence," like Mishra, Gray, and Rothberg, she criticizes the novel's shortsightedness in regard to today's geopolitical reality and, hence, "the backdrop of the geopolitical situation remains just that, a backdrop" (Donadio). The presumed failure of yet another novelist in the eyes of reviewers and scholars shows the complexity of the event and its fictionalization.

American novelists took more time to find the words to write about this first great tragedy of the new millennium and the first ever attack on the American mainland. The primary wave of American novels explicitly dealing with the attacks, especially with the destruction of the Twin Towers, was written from 2005-2007 and will be called "the first wave" herein after. The corpus includes novels such as Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005), Jay McInerney's *The Good Life* (2006), Ken Kalfus' *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* (2006), and Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007). All of

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[6] In France, the novel debuted at No. 2 of the French bestseller lists. It got awarded the French "Prix Interallié" and the "Independent Prize for Foreign Fiction" in Great Britain. The American reactions to the novel were divided: Stephen Metcalf finds the novel "strangely moving." Customer reviews on www.amazon.com show that not all Americans are of this opinion: "The people directly affected by 9/11 deserve much better than this. Instead of a tribute to these individuals, this book desecrates their memories" ("Dog Lover").

[7] The French corpus of novels that thematize 9/11 comprises only few novels such as *Allah Superstar* (Y.B., 2003); *La Dernière Nuit d'un Damné* (Slimane Benaissa, 2003), and *Artefact* (Maurice Dantec, 2007).

[8] Kakutani "Hero"

these books deal with the reactions to and consequences of the attacks for families in New York City and focus on disrupted families and the need and effort of the individuals to grow together again. The novels center on the effects of 9/11 on individuals; in most cases, the trauma triggers a need to change, even to reinvent oneself, in order to become a morally better person. The sobering effect does not last, and the characters return to being their old egoistic selves. One exception to the rule is Arab-American novelist Aram Schefrin's fictional autobiography *Marwan - The Autobiography of a 9/11 Terrorist* which he had finished in 2003 but was not able to publish until 2009. Far from the prejudiced and clichéd depictions of novels such as John Updike's *Terrorist* (2006), Schefrin retraces the development of Marwan, a fictionalized 9/11 terrorist, and he describes his protagonist as a human being tormented by doubts.[9]

Since 2007, novelists from South Asia and also Saudi Arabia have taken charge of the task of writing about the attacks, too. They now seem to write back once more to the 9/11 master narrative imposed by Western authors. Novelists such as Arunabha Sengupta (*Big Apple Two Bites*), Saher Alam (*The Groom to Have Been*), Laila Halaby (*Once in a Promised Land*), Nafisa Haji (*The Writing on My Forehead*), H.M. Naqvi (*Home Boy*), and Mohsin Hamid (*The Reluctant Fundamentalist*) have taken up the attacks in their fiction. However, instead of focusing on the trauma suffered by individual citizens of New York as done in Western fiction, the novels try to show a larger picture, writing about the insider-outsiders' experience in the U.S. after 9/11. The term insider-outsider will be applied to describe the status of the protagonists: while having, in their eyes, assimilated to the American lifestyle fairly well, thus seeing themselves as part of the American community, these people of Middle-Eastern/South Asian descent are considered "aliens" by predominantly white U.S.-Americans especially after 9/11. The protagonists are awakened to this fact through the behavior of their fellow citizens. While Westerners divided people into the dichotomous "us" and "them" rather naturally after 9/11, seeing a potential threat to the nation's security in ethnically marked immigrants in general and Muslims in particular, for "them" the situation presents itself more complicated, as Mohsin Hamid's comment in an interview reveals: "For one thing, part of me

[9] As the examination of this novel would go beyond the scope of this study (cf. II [The Texts]), it will not be discussed in the following.

identifies with ‘they’ and part with ‘us’ (Hamid, “Why”). These insider-outsiders, too, count themselves as at least hyphenated Americans, embracing the new country and its culture. After the attacks, they are singled out as the enemy and have to deal with the fact that their new home country now turns against them. As a consequence, the love story between immigrant and “the land of the free” ends abruptly.

In his monograph *Out of the Blue*, Versluys counteracts his own attempts to dissolve dichotomies. Versluys names the novelists Martin Amis and John Updike as authors who “attempt to triangulate the situation, to find a way to avoid a stark binary split or dichotomy between one side that is totally right and the other side that is totally wrong” (*Blue* 155). However, both novelists resort to very stereotyped clichés in their depiction of terrorists and contrast them to good, Judeo-Christian Westerners. Versluys himself steps into the trap: “For radical Islamists, the West consists of infidel dogs. Against such unilateral rejection of communality there is no defense, except (armed) self-defense” (Versluys, *Blue* 155). The attempts by Western authors to give the Other a voice fail spectacularly. Mishra unveils the weaknesses of many Western 9/11 novels, arguing that

> most of the literary fiction that self-consciously addresses 9/11 still seems underpinned by outdated assumptions of national isolation and self-sufficiency …. Composed within the narcissistic heart of the west, most 9/11 fictions seem unable to acknowledge political and ideological belief as a social and emotional reality in the world. (Mishra, “Innocence”)

Hence, the “reconsiderations” (“Ruins”), which DeLillo announced after the attacks, seem not to have taken place yet and writers either concentrate on the fate of WASPy protagonists living in Downtown Manhattan or fall back into familiar patterns by fuelling stereotyped clichés, ridiculing and thereby truly re-Othering non-Western culture and religion.[10]

[10] In “Last Days,” Amis reverts to stereotyped notions of Islam, at the same time ridiculing the protagonist and his religion by claiming that the Koran has been misinterpreted by many believers: “Ah, yes, the virgins: six dozen of them - half a gross. He had read in a news magazine that 'virgins', in the holy book, was a mistranslation from the Aramaic. It should be ‘raisins’. He idly wondered whether the quibble might have something to do with ‘sultana’, which meant (a) a small seedless raisin, and (b) the wife or a concubine of a sultan. Abdul-Aziz, Marwan, Ziad, and the others: they would not be best pleased, on their arrival in the Garden, to find a little red packet of Sun-Maid Sultanas” (72).

The aim of this study is to set these different novelistic approaches into dialogue. Expanding on existing readings of the 9/11 novel, this study will argue that while scholars and critics expected and even demanded a radically different aesthetic to do justice to this watershed moment in history, quite the opposite happened in literature since novelists followed the trend of domestic realism, a tendency that was observable already prior to the terrorist attacks throughout the 1990s, combining it with postmodernist aesthetics. 9/11 was perceived by many critics as a social, political, cultural, or historical rupture. However, this did not find expression in the novel. If it is true, as Patrick O'Donnell has it, that "contemporary reality … is mediated through the language of fiction and the form of the novel" (x), then, instead of finding new ways to express the seemingly unnarratable, novelists, regardless of their nationality, found a way out of their dilemma by combining aesthetic features from different literary periods and uniting them in their postmodern works. Authors tried to overcome the crisis of representation and benefitted from the novel's flexibility. They affiliated this tragic moment in recent history with past tragedies by interweaving their works with realism, fabulism, and romance. One can argue that the 'hype' created around the 9/11 novel is exaggerated and that these fictions were born in a specific literary conjuncture, as discussed in Chapter One. The development of how the September 11 attacks are dealt with in fiction now shows that the "9/11 novel" is at best a short-lived phenomenon that consists of a limited corpus and has now been displaced by what is termed "post-9/11 novel" by scholars.[11] In this study, I will argue that far from treading new ground, all of the novels discussed embrace postmodernist aesthetics. 9/11 becomes the catalyst for the narrative either by putting the attacks at the beginning of the story and letting the story evolve from there, or by putting 9/11 in the middle of the narrative so that the reader can compare the "before" and "after" situation of the characters. I will look at the corpus of texts from both thematic and aesthetic angles and will thereby claim that the authors hark back to literary nostalgia and that the 9/11 novel does not generate a new genre. Thematic newness is combined with aesthetically familiar forms: the domestic theme translates into realism and the attacks' hyperreality is expressed by combining it with other elements such as

[11] Shivani "Death"

autofiction, magical realism, fragmentation, unreliable narrators, metafiction, or the inclusion of other genres.

ii. The Texts

The corpus of novels discussed in "The Heart of the West" consists of well-known works such as Frédéric Beigbeder's *Windows on the World* (2003/2005), Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005), Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007), and Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), but also novels that have not found their way into critical discourses on novelistic realizations of 9/11 such as Ken Kalfus' *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* (2006) and Husain M. Naqvi's *Home Boy* (2009). In Chapter One, I will discuss criticism published about the so-called 9/11 novel and define this term. Also, I will introduce the term 'insider/outsider novel' to designate the novels examined in this study, thereby setting these texts off against the ambiguous term '9/11 novel'. The criticism published about the fictional realizations of 9/11 until now leads me to ask the following questions concerning relevant thematic and aesthetic aspects: What is the 9/11 novel? Do the novels' themes influence the novels' aesthetics or vice versa? Do American/Western novelists try to contribute to a process of normalization in respect to 9/11? Is this something that, by spelling out their critique of the West, South Asian authors do 'better'? Do they, in contrast to Western novelists, have the right to claim that 9/11 indeed 'changed everything' for them?

Chapter Two offers paired readings of DeLillo's novel *Falling Man* and Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close.* This chapter discusses the variety of themes addressed in the two novels that were accused of apoliticism and lengthy depictions of American exceptionalism and trauma. Since particularly the aspect of trauma in these two novels has been thoroughly analyzed in works by Rickli, Versluys, or Greenberg, I will not discuss these issues in detail but focus on different aspects that have gone mostly unnoticed so far. The chapter title "The Turn Inward, or the Exceptionalism of Suffering in DeLillo and Foer's Novels" indicates that the domestic realm is of great importance in both these novels. Although Keith, the protagonist of *Falling Man*, claims that "all life had become public," the novel itself speaks a different language. What Tore Rye Andersen calls the "intimate turn" is not a new phenomenon in literature; it

"gradually surfaced in the 90's. In the absence of intrusive world-historical crises in that decade, American writers increasingly turned toward the things that were close at hand, to family and individuals as opposed to society; to local matters at the expense of global matters. So 9/11 didn't create this specific literary tendency" (Andersen 13-4). I will assert that the novelists' return to the domestic - and thus a 'literary nostalgia' - is not a trend that started with 9/11 novels, but was observable prior to the attacks. Especially Foer steps out of the ordinary in regard to the novel's aesthetics and, while these works did not mark the beginning of a new era as far as aesthetics are concerned, the novelists use literary postmodernism's full potential. Keith Neudecker, the protagonist of DeLillo's *Falling Man,* narrowly survives the attacks because he was late for work and was not in his office, but only on the 44th floor of the South Tower from where he was able to flee shortly before the collapse. Immediately after his escape from the inferno, he finds himself walking not towards his own apartment in the vicinity of the towers but returning to his wife and son's apartment. The novel then deals with how 9/11 triggers Keith's wish to reshape his identity, of making the best out of life for himself and for the family, "ready to sink into [his] little li[fe]" (*FM* 75). *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* has the most complex plot of the novels discussed in this study because it is a novel whose main theme is not exclusively 9/11, but the effects of loss and traumatic events on people and on relationships in general. It shows how preceding traumas, in this case the bombings of Dresden during WWII, that were pushed away surface again in the event of a new traumatic experience. Both, Oskar, the nine-year old protagonist, and his grandfather wish to return to a time when everything was still good.

In Chapter Three, I will analyze major thematic and aesthetic issues of Kalfus' *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* and argue that this novel demystifies 9/11 by comparing it to a nasty divorce. Unlike his two writer colleagues, Kalfus does not shy away from giving a sarcastic comment on American exceptionalism and political decisions. In *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country*, Joyce and Marshall Harriman are in the middle of a divorce when the attacks happen. The novelist plays with his audience: setting off in a realistic tone, Marshall and Joyce's reactions to the attacks drift off into magic realism, counteracting the trend of literary nostalgia. Unlike the reaction of the rest of America, as

demonstrated by their families and co-workers, Joyce and Marshall are pleased by the events since they hope that the attacks will solve all of their legal problems: Joyce is scheduled for flight 93 to California. Marshall is supposed to be at his workplace inside the towers during the attacks. However, Joyce's trip is cancelled and Marshall's flirtation with his children's teacher Miss Naomi makes him come late for work, and he is thus spared. Consequently, their personal war goes on, paralleled by the invasion of Iraq that is broadcast live on TV. In this novel, too, for a very short while, both protagonists realize that life is too short to waste it by engaging in petty fights with their soon-to-be ex-spouses. However, they fall back into their behavioral patterns.

The three novels, although about the same event, have three different approaches to the topic. Besides describing the repercussions of 9/11 for the family, DeLillo's novel deals with what happened inside the towers, trying to reiterate the attacks through the eyes of a survivor (Florence). This is striking because he attempts to put himself in the shoes of the people inside the towers. Although Keith tries to work through his trauma, in the end, he fails. The novel does not allow for catharsis and ends on a dark note. Kalfus' *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* follows a different aim. The catastrophe only becomes one for both of the protagonists when they learn that their partner has not died. The two are so self-absorbed and preoccupied with their divorce that they do not notice the tragedy going on around them. They have their own war to wage, their own terror to face: "I can't talk. Osama's [Marshall] holed up in Tora Bora …. By the time this divorce was finalized, she was going to think he was Hitler and Stalin too" (Kalfus 76). The book's ending is a utopian dream of Marshall's in which the US becomes what she has always wished to be and as what she sees herself already: the savior of all suppressed nations who is loved by all people - a vision that contrasts strongly with the Iraq-war reality and a parody of the happy endings that audiences expect from fiction.[12]

It is noticeable that the three novels are about self-centered, narcissistic and self-absorbed individuals who try to come to terms with their crisis and personal trauma. Even Oskar, the sensitive and witty protagonist of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, is incapable of empathy towards his mother or

[12] For insight into Iraq-war reality see Simone Schwaer's *Storyfying War* (2014) on war memoirs.

grandmother, not acknowledging that they, too, have to come to terms with loss. The couples in *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* and *Falling Man* also do not talk about the attacks, even when they only have closely survived the tragedy because they are so absorbed with their lives. The family, which is ideally supposed to be a safe haven, is indeed dysfunctional and all members are left to fight for themselves. The restriction of themes, I assert, reflects the general atmosphere in the United States after 9/11. Oskar's flip book at the end of the novel and the ending of Kalfus' novel, too, symbolize the wish for a time when the U.S. was still an impregnable superpower. Rowe claims that the characters "are too conventionally American to address complex transnational questions posed by 9/11" (828).

However, in the following chapters I will show that, although a first reading of the novels may confirm Rowe's impression, especially *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* and *Falling Man* touch upon "transnational questions." Kalfus calls the reader's attention to the ever-present media that brought the war abroad into people's homes. TV keeps the couple and the reader up to date about world events and forces the couple to witness events that transcend the boundaries of their domestic war. Moreover, especially with the sarcastic ending, Kalfus voices harsh criticism of the U.S. government and its "Operation Enduring Freedom" that, in the novel, led to a democratic chain reaction. In DeLillo's novel, it is not the American characters, but two outsiders who comment on the complex questions of globalization, namely the (presumed) former German terrorist Martin Ridnour and the 9/11 terrorist Hammad. Although all three novelists choose to write about domestic relationships in post-9/11 America, this theme translates into different aesthetic approaches.

Frédéric Beigbeder's novel, which is discussed in Chapter Four, occupies a special position because it is one of very few novels that try to tell what happened inside the World Trade Center, narrating the attacks from the perspective of the doomed victims. The countdown towards catastrophe is alternately narrated by the two main characters, a French author named 'Beigbeder' and Carthew Yorston, an American real estate broker from Texas who wants to eat breakfast at "Windows on the World" with his two sons. Surprisingly and disconcertingly, the French author claims the tragedy for himself, arguing that his strong connection to the USA made the watching of the

endless repetitions of the crumbling towers a traumatic experience, which he attempts to work through by writing a novel. Over the course of the novel, 'Beigbeder' often brings the French-American relationship into play. To him, this was one of the reasons for writing the book: France and America have a long common history and are also linked politically and linguistically. He is sick of French anti-Americanism and wants to provoke some empathy in the French people through his novel; he wants to make his people understand the horrors that the American people had to go through. The novel can thus be read as cultural text that mirrors American post-9/11 reality. The novel has the important competence to mediate and prefers dialogue over hegemonic and biased narratives (cf. Däwes, "Obliging" 85). Aesthetically, Beigbeder's novel, too, is grounded in postmodern aesthetics: the mimetic effect that he tries to achieve through the chronology in the narration of events is destroyed by the clash of the reality of the attacks with the fictionality of his protagonists that Beigbeder terms "hyperreality." His use of autofiction by means of the character 'Beigbeder' renders the boundaries between reality and fiction even more blurry.

In contrast to these Western fictionalizations of 9/11 that deal with how white Westerners cope with the attacks and their aftermath, Hamid and Naqvi's novels narrate the events and their impact on the "Other." The two novels will be read as emigration novels: Originally lured by the benefits of globalization, which made wealth and well-being a seemingly reachable goal for those who are willing to work hard, regardless of their provenience, the self-proclaimed "Metrostanis" (*HB* 14) decide to flee the biased and even paranoiac atmosphere of their once Promised Land after the attacks. The growing hostility against "the brown man" (Attari) leads to the protagonists' disillusionment. The prominent theme of identity and disruption can be found in many novels by South Asian(-American), Indian(-American), or Arab-American novelists. All of the authors know what they are talking about when they write about self-perception on the one hand, and the way they are perceived in the United States after the attacks on the other. Similar to their protagonists, Hamid and Naqvi find it difficult to settle for one single definition of their identity.[13] The protagonists, while having, in their eyes, assimilated to the American lifestyle fairly well and seeing

[13] "For one thing, part of me identifies with 'they' and part with 'us'" (Hamid, "Why Do They Hate Us?").

themselves as part of the American community, are all lumped together as potential threats to the national security, regardless of their upbringing or denomination, by predominantly white U.S.-Americans in the days after the attacks. They are singled out as the enemy and have to deal with the fact that their new home country turns against them.[14]

Although heralded as 'truly' transnational, a close reading of Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and Naqvi's *Home Boy* in Chapters Five and Six will bring out that the novels indeed purport a strongly national agenda, establishing their own "us vs. them" and seeing the tragedy of 9/11 as posing an additional problem in their quest for identity. I will illustrate that, as the distinction between good Americans and evil Other is revoked by the novels themselves, dichotomies between worthy transnational literature by insider-outsiders and bad national (American) literature cannot be established easily. Especially the non-Western novelists manage to write about America's centripetal power which attracts people from all over the globe, and whose movement from the presumed "periphery" to the "core" is facilitated by globalization, thereby pointing out "literature's potential engagement with questions of difference, otherness, and strangeness" (Rothberg, "Failure"). While literature, and especially the novel, may not have the power to solve political or social problems or cure the trauma caused by 9/11, it has the potential to appeal to people and to offer the audience different perspectives on the same event, thereby allowing for an astute transnational examination of the attacks.

The Reluctant Fundamentalist traces the success story of Changez, a young Pakistani who, after graduating from Princeton, starts a promising career as a consultant with Underwood Samson in New York City. His pride about making it in the American meritocracy soon yields to doubts about his role in

[14] American citizens asked themselves "Why do they hate us?," trying to find reasons for the incredible cruelty and hatred towards the American people. Then President George W. Bush provided an answer immediately: "They hate our freedoms - our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other" (Bush, "Address"). This answer, although simplistic, helped persuade a whole nation to wage war on a country that, according to latest cognitions, had nothing to do with the attacks [Iraq]. If we look at the attacks from a more global perspective, it is plain to see that the reasons for the terrorists' hatred were grounded much deeper: "[T]he collision between the paradise of domestic security and the hell of global insecurity had happened long before it horrifyingly manifested itself on 9/11. The cold war and then economic globalization had knitted the world closer together. Yet the western vision of endless well-being had proved a deception for billions of people living outside the west" (Mishra, "Innocence").

the capitalist system whose negative sides he sees especially when he travels home to Pakistan. The attacks of 9/11 galvanize him when he finds himself "remarkably pleased" about the events (*RF* 72). Not ready to give up his individual self and despite racial profiling he grows a beard, thus fulfilling his peers' and co-citizens expectations of what the evil Other looks like. The novel thematizes the side effects of globalization, which, to Changez, can be equaled to Americanization. In contrast to the American novels, whose protagonists see the attacks as a weakening of their country and its people, Changez realizes that in the post-9/11 era, the U.S. is the up and coming empire that, similar to Underwood Samson, rates countries and has great impact on other countries' fate and future.

In the novel *Home Boy*, the perspective of H.M. Naqvi's protagonists shows certain parallels to Hamid's Changez. Chuck and his two friends A.C. and Jimbo are all of Pakistani descent. Chuck is an expatriate who successfully works as an analyst for a bank. His friend A.C. is a Ph.D. student with a green card while Jimbo, a native of New Jersey, works as a DJ. All three are true New York City "Metrostanis" who embrace their hybrid heritage (*HB* 14). However, for them, too, 9/11 changes everything. The step from being celebrated exotic Metrostanis to being suspected terrorists from "Bumfuckistan" (*HB* 135) is very small in a city that has changed from a multicultural salad bowl to a city of suspicious patriots. Even "Little Pakistan" is emptied after the attacks because the inhabitants are afraid of encroachments. Eventually, all three friends are arrested and charged for terrorist activities. The three realize that indeed "[i]n a changed America, … anything could happen" (*HB* 142). Like in *Once in a Promises Land*, the two novels show that the different cultural and political heritage makes it the more difficult to adapt to the new, American environment, especially when growing national(istic) feelings on both sides come in the way. For all the protagonists, 9/11 becomes a catalyst which makes them want to flee the hostile environment and go back to their community/home country.

While "The Heart of the West" will look at identity issues and problems encountered by these insider-outsiders, special attention will be given to how the United States are depicted and perceived by people torn between two worlds, yet solidly united with most Americans in the opinion that the attacks were a terrible tragedy. The novels illustrate that the "Other," although coming from a different

culture, is not so different after all. They, too, deplore the attacks and adding to their grief is the fear of retaliatory measures both in regard to their diaspora in the U.S. and to their families back home.

iii. The Method

By ways of "cultural literary studies" this study aims at analyzing how 9/11 has influenced the production of the novel and in how far literature registers/mirrors the post-9/11 era in aesthetic terms. For my analysis, I will allow for a very narrow frame: of the novels that deal with 9/11 published by now, I will only discuss those constituting what I call the "first wave," i.e. novels in which the whole narrative centers around the attacks on the Twin Towers and the consequences thereof. [15] In his essay "9/11 as a European Event," Kristiaan Versluys points out that there is a "new-found unity" between Europe and the USA after September 11, owing to the "shared trauma" which is "a condition shared by all *advanced* nations" (Versluys, "European" 75, my emphasis). America's role as Europe's ally and liberator (especially in the twentieth century) is what explains the solidarity with the United States, and Europeans responded to the attacks, similar to most Americans, with shock, grief, and solidarity.[16] Falling back on the most clichéd ideas of the East, Versluys claims that these regions of the world indeed constitute a periphery not only economically but also empathetically and are thus excluded from sharing the tragedy. However, by the time the essay was published (2007), Versluys had known that through the U.S.' War on Terror, South Asia had gotten its share of the tragedy.

Michael Rothberg acknowledges that the tragedy of September 11 is "a global event" that requires literature "to move beyond [the] near-sightedness"

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[15] In order to narrow down the number of novels, I chose the following parameters for the books discussed in the dissertation. The list of books that qualify are more numerous than the ones selected who will serve as examples. The novels discussed here had to be available in English either in the original, or, as is the case with Beigbeder, in translation. Moreover, the texts had to actually thematize the attacks immediately and not only deal with the tragedy allegorically. This is already hinted at by paratextual indicators such as the books' front covers that evoke the tragedy. Frequently, the covers feature pictures of blue skies, airplanes, the New York Skyline, or exotic-looking people.

[16] *Le Monde*: "Dans ce moment tragique où les mots paraissent si pauvres pour dire le choc que l'on ressent, la première chose qui vient à l'esprit est celle-ci: nous sommes tous Américains! Nous sommes tous New-Yorkais …. Comment ne pas se sentir en effet, comme dans les moments les plus graves de notre histoire, profondément solidaires de ce peuple et de ce pays, les Etats-Unis, dont nous sommes si proches et à qui nous devons la liberté, et donc notre solidarité" (Colombani).

that is demonstrated with Versluys' choice of novels for his monograph (Rothberg, "Seeing Terror" 140-41). Rothberg finds these "multiple tongues" particularly in literature from outside the West. Authors such as Saher Alam, Nafisa Haji, Laila Halaby, Mohsin Hamid, H.M. Naqvi, and Arunabha Sengupta indeed contribute greatly to the thematic enhancement of the 9/11 novel by moving away from the "cult of individual experience in American writing" (Rahv qtd. in Mishra, "Innocence") to a viewpoint that shows how "globalisation and immigration now plunge identities shaped in the west into a fundamental instability" (Mishra, "Innocence"). The novels' protagonists are what I call insider-outsiders, that is people who are first or second generation immigrants to the U.S. from South Asia/the Middle East. The novelists appropriate a traditionally Western medium and break out of the narrow thematic frame by setting main emphasis on topics such as identity, race, hybridity, globalization, and transnationalism. Instead of only zooming in on the life of individuals, the novels look at the larger effects of the attacks, presented by the example of their insider-outsider protagonists. They portray an American people infected by the Cold War rhetoric of their political leaders, seeing a potential terrorist in every person not compliant to the image of a "regular," i.e. Judeo-Christian, white American, leaving the ethnically and culturally Other the choice to be either "For or Against Us." As the novels will show, more often than not, the choice is made for the protagonists as they are stigmatized as potential threats to the nation's security.

The novelists try to fill the gap left by Western authors and portray the Other as the victim of an irrational fear stirred up by the government. The novels also want to establish a counternarrative, holding up a mirror to its Anglophone/Western audience. However, besides all the contrasts that one can find in literature written by authors who are informed by their different national/cultural/religious backgrounds, the novels also share some common ground, a fact which I will elaborate on in the following chapters. The experiences of these protagonists with hybrid origins translate into novels with hybrid topics and aesthetics: Not ready to settle for one particular focus, Naqvi, Hamid, and Halaby cross generic boundaries just like they and their protagonists cross national boundaries. Fusing their native language and traditional forms of narration, for example oriental fairy tales with monologic narration and

intertextuality, these novels become commentaries on the time in which they were written.

In the critical discourse of 9/11 presented in Chapter One, opinions reach from that presented by Donadio, arguing for the obsolescence of fiction, to claims about the essentiality of fiction for treating the tragedy of 9/11. Besides the topic of 'us vs. them' and the attempted dissolution of binaries, a recurring theme in secondary literature about 9/11 in fictional writing is the question whether or not the attacks marked a caesura either on a thematic (political, cultural, social, historical) or aesthetic level. Most scholars expect nothing less than "The Great 9/11 Novel,"[17] which is supposed to - thematically and aesthetically - render the spirit of the age in a lifelike manner. However, their conclusions rather abate all hopes, particularly when it comes to the aesthetic side of the texts. The novelists take a retrograde step by using trusted forms to deal with the attacks: While some of the novelists retreat to the realm of domestic fiction, thereby giving way to a literary nostalgia, others give their novel exotic apparel, drawing, for example, on the tradition of Oriental tales. What all novelists have in common, however, is that humbled by the tragedy, all stick to the historical "model," giving the reader points of reference from real post-9/11life. The novelists effortlessly combine these forms with postmodern elements, such as metatextuality and other formal features. Even irony, whose death was heralded in the aftermath of the attacks, finds its way back into fiction for example in the works of Beigbeder and Kalfus. Concluding, we can say that the initial reactions to 9/11 cannot be seen as a benchmark for literature of the new millennium but the limited number of 9/11 books hints at the fact that these works emerged in a certain conjuncture that is now waning. Since the novels are strongly connected to literary realism, too, they 'mirror' reality much more than one would expect from contemporary fiction. Although they do not constitute a new genre, the novels seem to occupy an exceptional position in the corpus of contemporary fiction.

[17] Interestingly, while many critics and reviewers call for "the Great 9/11 novel," none of them gives a definition of this term. Junod, however, has elected Colum McCann's *Let the Great World Spin* as the first great 9/11 novel because it is not: it is a "pre-9/11 novel" which, Junod nebulously asserts, delivers that "[w]e are all dancing on the wire of history, and even on solid ground we breathe the thinnest of air" (Junod).

iv. The Novel

Mikhail Bakhtin wrote that "the novel is the sole genre that continues to develop, that is as yet uncompleted. The forces that define it as a genre are at work before our very eyes" (3). In the Introduction to *The Cambridge History of the American Novel*, Benjamin Reiss states that even Bakhtin would have been amazed at the, at times, significant changes that the novel underwent since 1982, "eroding our baseline sense of the novel as 'a narrative work of verbal fiction between two covers'" (959). The novel, as a very flexible genre, is able to accommodate a wide array of themes and to serve various different functions. This is also the case when it comes to the representation and fictionalization of 9/11. The attacks did not only leave a Ground Zero in New York City, they also proved to be a Ground Zero for fiction, for which the attacks created a grave crisis. Critics such as Rachel Donadio and V.S. Naipaul proclaimed the death of the novel (again) after 9/11 by arguing that it simply cannot keep up with other literary media when it comes to the processing of historical events. A second party finds fault with the novel's aesthetics and the novelists' retreat into realism instead of creating something new after this incisive moment in history.

The long novelistic quiet in the U.S. after 9/11 attested not only to the writers' own insecurity and trauma, but publishers also "were taking a break" from publishing fiction (Shivani). 9/11 surely was a far-reaching event that left its traces. The attacks seemed unreal, or, as Baudrillard has it, "hyperreal." On this day, reality overtook fiction so that now "we are living [in] a world that has an even lower level of reality than the unreal world" (Murakami). Writers after 9/11 have a hard time writing about this event that seems so unreal and yet familiar. In metadiscursive passages of *Windows on the World,* Frédéric Beigbeder muses, like his American colleagues, about the role of fiction after 9/11:

> Writing this hyperrealist novel is made more difficult by reality itself. Since September 11, 2001, reality has not only outstripped fiction, it's destroying it. It's impossible to write about the subject, and yet impossible to write about anything else. Nothing else touches us. (Beigbeder, *WWE* 8)

How did fiction deal with this surreal event? Haruki Murakami is convinced that the beginning of the new millennium and 9/11 are a crucial incision that will

provoke a change in the novel's aesthetics: "The moment our minds crossed the threshold of the new century, we also crossed the threshold of reality once and for all. We had no choice but to make the crossing, finally, and, as we do so, our stories are being forced to change their structures" (Murakami). Although he is certainly right when claiming that the novel's structure did change, attaching such a movement with a particular day (in history) proves problematic. In hindsight, we can see that the changes were not as dramatic and drastic as expected. Moreover, literary reactions take their time, and 'good' fiction about a particular topic is frequently only produced with timely delay.

Even though Gray acknowledges "that our moment combines novelty and continuity," he "stresses the need for what Bakhtin would call a 'radical reaccentuation' of given forms: 'some kind of alteration of imaginative structures is required to register the contemporary crisis'" (qtd. in Rothberg, "Failure"). Novelists were under pressure because in the course of its evolution, the novel always had to reinvent itself. While some see this as exactly the problem of the genre and proclaim its doom, Bakhtin sees the advantage of the novel in its flexibility, its ability to adapt to various situations and that it is not bound by rigid aesthetics. Although the death of the novel was heralded practically from the moment the genre was born,[18] the genre has survived. Today, "a book of fiction is published in the United States every hour, on average" (Cassuto 1), which makes clear that the novel's popularity is far from over.

> For Bakhtin, the novel's generic distinctiveness lies exactly in its generic promiscuity, its ability to fashion itself out of and in relation to extra-literary discourses such as letters, newspaper articles, historical documents, autobiographies, religious confessions, as well as other artistic discourses …. In this discursive hybridity lies the novel's authentic social realism. (Hale 449-50)

[18] "The novel has been dead for nearly as long as it has been alive. Its very name reveals part of the problem it faces: the genre's practitioners have felt throughout its history the pressures of newness …. Novelty, however, while one of the genre's primary attractions, makes its downfall inevitable" (Fitzpatrick).

This "generic promiscuity" is an advantage that the novel has over other genres. In what follows, I will look at if and how the "radical reaccentuations" that Bakhtin demanded have taken place with 9/11 novels.

> In those years after 9/11, everyone felt their task was to somehow make sense of this, dramatise it or deal with it. And it subsequently became an assault on the idea of the novel; that the novel somehow had to respond to 9/11, whereas I'm not sure quite what Moby Dick had to respond to. In other words, it was as though it was the novel's job to do what the newspapers were failing to do. When I was growing up, no one told me what the novel was for, so I sort of resented that idea. (Athitakis)

Marc Athitakis ignores the fact that besides the ideal of creating "art for art's sake," the novel has always served not only to entertain but to instruct the audience (e.g. the didactic novel, *littérature engagée* etc.). After 9/11, the task of the novel was to respond to the tragedy in "a structured stylistic system that expresses the differentiated socio-ideological position of the author amid the heteroglossia of his epoch" (Hale 509). Moreover, the novel contributes to the "larger cultural process of representing and interpreting the events of September 11, 2001" and to voice "critiques of and challenges to political discourses that seek to simplify or fix the meaning of 9/11" (Sheehan-Miles 3). Established structures help the novelists to write about the attacks at a very early stage; therefore, they use patterns not only of the novel but also borrow from, for example, the romance or of oriental tale-telling in regard to plot structure. The credo after the attacks was to rely on familiar structures in order to grasp the unimaginable at all. Although they are postmodern in their form, the writers of the first wave of American 9/11 novels "felt the need to reconceptualize their mimetic principles and to return to a form of literature 'grounded in reality'" (Hornung, "Terrorist Violence" 172), thereby stressing the novel's flexibility.

Moreover, novels are testimony for the writer's attempt to work through his/her and the nation's trauma. In the first wave of American 9/11 novels, the novelist is "acting here as both victim and witness" and the novel becomes more than mere text: it becomes "both symptom and diagnosis" (Gray, "Crisis" 130). This quote by Gray makes clear the singularity of this literature: unlike after the Holocaust, when the literary world was practically silenced, 9/11 triggered a totally different response and leaves us with a corpus of singular books that are

mirrors of their time and, consequently, work as cultural fingerprints. The novels render counternarratives to the primal terror. In contrast to non-fiction, the novel makes possible a realistic depiction and at the same time offers enough distance because of its fictional quality. The novel allows for empathy and creates a memory of the victims and of those who survived. The attacks and their aftermath had an impact on the author that mirrors strongly in their writing. Beigbeder makes this even more obvious by creating a fictional alter-ego of himself that muses on the painful experience of writing about the attacks. "The writer of fiction is set free from the bonds of tradition and the bonds of empiricism as well. His eye is not on the external world but on the audience, which he hopes to delight or instruct, giving it either what it wants or what he thinks it needs" (Kellogg/Phelan/Scholes 14). Following Kellogg, Phelan, and Scholes' idea, I will demonstrate that the novelists indeed pursue the goal of translating their way of looking at the attacks and their immediate aftermath to their audience. Hence, there is an interaction/nexus between the paratextual level and the novels per se, and we can see that the agenda that the writer pursues is very visible in her text.[19] Laila Halaby says in an interview:

> I have always believed that if other people could see my world, could see a Palestinian, Arab, or Muslim family/person/story, from the inside, then they couldn't have such ridiculous and negative stereotypes. I think over the years I have really come to appreciate the role of artists more, the role that translation plays in art. I don't have an agenda as a writer, but I do believe that it is my responsibility to offer an honest and challenging story. *Once in a Promised Land* is my offering. (Halaby, "About")

Novelists from outside the West have appropriated the novel as their medium and English as their language, causing an increasing "Tandoori-Chickenisation" because they influence the genre in innovative ways both in regard to its aesthetics[20] and themes that are addressed and so counter "McLiterature" (Mishra, "World"). Consequently, novelists "from the post-Anglo-American

[19] "Far from following a single literary mode or genre, novelists from the post-Anglo-American world employ a kitchen-sink pragmatism, assimilating Greene just as readily as Genet, Naipaul as well as Rushdie. Occasionally, the form of the novel itself - as in the monologue of Mohsin Hamid's The Reluctant Fundamentalist, which paradoxically depends on the unspoken and the unsayable for its effect - enacts a rejection of the old bourgeois novel with its social certainties and fixed existential identities" (Mishra, "Novel").

world" (Mishra, "Novel") process the attacks in different ways by ignoring national conventions. The novel, traditionally a Western genre, is used and adapted to the writer's needs. Mohsin Hamid's novel, for example, consists of a dramatic monologue in which the silence of the American is essential and upends the traditional imbalance between center and periphery, and Laila Halaby affiliates her novel with the tales of *1001 Nights,* constantly mingling the very real post-9/11 experience of Salwa and Jassim with the fantastic.

So, has the "radical reaccentuation of given forms" that Rothberg demanded taken place? Although we cannot speak of a radical change, I will work out in close readings of the texts that changes and variations can be detected in all of the novels discussed in this study. Concerning its function, the novel, I argue, has turned from an art form into a psychological and social tool. In regard to aesthetics, it is indeed the novels by Hamid, Naqvi, or Halaby that offer a reaccentuation. With hindsight, we can see that the novel's aesthetics do not mirror the instantaneity of the attacks themselves but that it ties in with trends existing before 9/11. The lesson we learn is that despite the fact that events may be experienced as watershed moments in history, the novel's aesthetic does not reflect this and changes come gradually instead of radically. As more and more writers from outside America write in English, this will also influence not only the already vast thematic array but also aesthetic developments.

The author is a crucial parameter in the creation and reception of the novels discussed. The paratext, for example interviews with the respective authors, makes clear that while their novels may not be autobiographical in the narrow sense, they still reflect real-life experiences. It is a fact that after the attacks many racially-marked people were singled out for interrogation and also arrested for no good reasons. The novelists interweave their fiction with these facts: Naqvi, for example, does not only tell us the story of the illegal arrest of the three Pakistani friends, but supports his narrative with facts such as the arrestment of Ansar Mahmood.[21] We thus realize the growing shift from Western master narratives into a "post-Anglo-American" era in which novelists look at

[21] The case of Ansar Mahmood: The permanent American resident asked passers-by to take a picture of him in front of the Hudson River. The photo's background consisted of a water treatment plant and consequently, Mahmood was arrested. Although the FBI could not prove that Mahmood was involved in any terrorist activities, he was held at a prison in Batavia; two years later, he was deported (cf. Shapiro).

the luminal (Mishra, “Novel”). In contrast to Foer and DeLillo’s protagonists, who, at best, wander around the Big Apple, Naqvi and Hamid’s central characters are not fixed to one particular location but migrate between different countries and cultures. This study seeks to participate in this movement and looks at 9/11 not only from the perspective of the insider, but turns the tables to give a voice to those who have been silenced for so long and who now demand to be heard.

I. The Critical Discourse of 9/11

In *The Culture of Commemoration*, David Simpson highlights some of the problems and difficulties in the novelistic approaches to 9/11.[22] The question of how to come to terms with the "Other" seems dominant in many discourses about 9/11 and the novel. As we will see in a critical survey of the status of current research, even if scholars try to evade national discourses, the "us vs. them" dichotomy seems inevitable. This study will be the attempt at opening up this still restricted and restrictive field of texts to novels and novelists from outside the West. In my analysis, I neither want to enforce an adamant "us vs. them" dichotomy, nor am I postulating that "they are us," thereby homogenizing what cannot be homogenized in terms of ethnic differences. Instead, I will take into account the fact that the novels discussed here are produced and evolve in different conjunctures and, hence, base their thematic focus on different literary as well as national aspects. This is also what makes the 9/11 opus so special because the novels are based on the authors' experiences of 9/11. The topics reach from the traumatic impact of the attacks on a white New York family to the experience of racism of a Pakistani immigrant. As the body of literature dealing with 9/11 and its fictionalizations is growing, I do not aim at cross-referencing all works, but only those relevant for this study.

A decade after the event, we can draw on a rather extensive body of novels about 9/11. The prevailing method used by scholars is to look at particular novels and the way in which they deal with the attacks thematically. Most often, widely read novels are juxtaposed and compared to each other (e.g. Foer and Beigbeder) or are clustered according to (territorial/ideological) commonalities. Sometimes, the novels (American and European) are grouped together under the aspect of trauma and are analyzed in regard to their function in the working through of trauma after the attacks. Many scholars and critics had great expectations about the aesthetic realization of the incisive event and most of them have been disappointed since they find that the novelists draw on familiar

[22] Simpson states: "To counter the model of 'them *and* us' with one that claims that 'they *are* us' is not good enough: neither absolute binary distinctions nor essentialist identifications describe carefully enough the situation in which we are living. What we have instead are various kinds of boundary troubles that cannot be generalized into philosophical absolutes of any kind but that reveal, on close inspection of the empirical kind, that some work is to be done in understanding the different and critical imbalances of power that govern all postulates specifying identity and difference" (Simpson, *Commemoration* 10).

structures such as the romance genre and the domestic/social novel. However, few scholars question the term "9/11-novel," not attempting to establish defining parameters, but merely checking whether these fictions fit into a spatial (USA), thematic (9/11), and temporal (post-9/11) frame.

In what follows, I will give an extensive and critical overview over current literary criticism on 9/11, focusing both on critical works that deal with the impact on literature, but also discussing books that look at the political and cultural impact of 9/11. I will assess many of the works, in particular monographs, elaborating on how they support my research but also highlighting their shortcomings. This chapter will also uncover falsely predicted trends and expectations about post-9/11 fiction in general and the novel in particular.

Georg Stein and Volker Windfuhr's *Ein Tag im September* (2002) looks at the attacks from a historical and political perspective and sees 9/11 as the most important date in recent history:

> However, the international community has not realized that a new chapter of history has begun with the attacks: the world irrevocably seems to glide into an era of the 'after,' into a completely new period. (Butros-Ghali 11, translation mine)

Butros-Ghali goes on to claim that the post-9/11 era is the era of "new global disorder" (Butros-Ghali, 12, translation mine). The question is: Does this manifest itself in the literature written after 9/11? Although the novels describe 9/11 as a crucial event, their use of other, historical tragedies in order to understand/grasp the catastrophe speaks a different language and takes away America's 'tragic' claim and weighs the attacks committed by al Qaida against American crimes against humanity.

In an essay titled "Novel Spaces and Taking Place(s) in the Wake of September 11." (2004), Alex Houen vents his anger and disappointment about novelists' lack of aesthetic originality. In Houen's opinion, the novel needs to produce "alternative worlds" (424):

> Post September 11, do we not need to invest in forms of fictive utopia as a way of responding to, and resisting, postmodernism's terrifying circuitry? The problem is that the current valency of novelistic utopia, along with the autonomy of literary space generally, is precisely what Jameson and others have put into question. (Houen 423)

Looking at the corpus of 9/11 literature, trends are clearly distinguishable by now. Especially the first wave of novels thematizing 9/11 does exactly the contrary of what Houen demands: it mirrors society and is more of a return to social or domestic realism than the creation of either a utopia or dystopia. Thus, although Houen's claims may be fulfilled by non-9/11 literature, his demands remain wishful thinking when it comes to novels dealing with the attacks: "I would argue that we now need further explorations of the novel as an 'outer space' of possibility in order to offer resistance to what Derrida identifies in the current 'impressionism' of terror as being characteristic of contemporary mass-media culture more generally" (Houen 429). While the second wave of novels, frequently termed "post-9/11 novels," comprising works such as Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland* (2009) or Ian McEwan's *Saturday* (2005), leaves this impressionism behind, it is an essential characteristic of the 9/11novel, which takes stock and describes post-9/11 lives closely.

With "The End of Innocence," Pankaj Mishra wrote an inspiring essay in 2007 in which he analyzes whether or not novelists have succeeded in catching "the new world order." Besides discussing some of the 'classics' in 9/11 literature, he also deals with the hybrid author's perspective on the topic. In his critical essay, he looks at the impact of the terrorist attacks on Asia, in particular on India and Pakistan, and draws the readers' attention to the fact that attacks did not come out of the blue: "[T]he collision between the paradise of domestic security and the hell of global insecurity had happened long before it horrifyingly manifested itself on 9/11." Mishra encourages both authors and audience to look beyond and accuses them of political short-sightedness that is reflected in the question "Why Do They Hate Us?" He notes that especially American novels up to that date did not manage to capture the new world order. In his opinion, the best novels about 9/11 are those that are not about the attacks, and so he commends Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* as a book that manages to bridge the divide and cross the border between East and West by connecting the situation at home in India and in America and thus acknowledging that the world has grown closer together. Mishra is perhaps right because it is indeed the novels written by multicultural authors that take the global aspects into account. However, at the time when the essay was written, many of the books discussed here were only shortly published and were not considered by Mishra. Contrary

to what Mishra states, there are indeed novels that deal with 9/11 more directly and still manage to keep in view the global aspect of culture, politics, economy, and history.

The idea of an incisive impact of the attacks on literature is an ever-recurring theme in the critical discourse about 9/11 and is also thematized in a special issue of *Amerikastudien/American Studies* (2007). In "Flying Planes Can Be Dangerous," Alfred Hornung notes that we now deal with a different kind of postmodern aesthetic and states that literature and especially fiction has undergone changes. Yet, unlike many scholars, Hornung does not see these changes as the beginning of a new era, but as the authors' postmodern adaptation to the conditions of the historical event.[23] I will argue that a resort to literary nostalgia can be observed in novels after 9/11. As I will show in the following section, instead of simply borrowing from writers from past eras, the novelists adapt this aesthetics to fit their needs.

In "On Contested Ground (Zero)," Birgit Däwes ascribes a mnemonic function to 9/11 literature: "What is needed at the multilayered space of Ground Zero … is therefore a memorial that … eventually 'provides a place to grieve for and speak to the dead, yet which does not allow for a smoothing-over of the search for meaning, or attempt to bring closure to an event that should not and cannot have closure" ("Contested" 520). For Däwes, Foer's novel meets the requirements because he creates "a new type of the 9/11 novel," thereby establishing that there is an 'old type' of 9/11 novels ("Contested" 522). Since Foer's was one of the first 9/11 novels to be published, it is difficult to see which novels could stand for this old type. Däwes does not establish defining parameters for the 9/11 novel in the first place. Besides arguing for the commemorative function that these novels certainly have, Däwes also discusses the transnational scope of these 9/11 fictions. However, by analyzing Western authors only, her aim of highlighting the transnationality of fiction about 9/11 falls short.

[23] "The flying planes of 9-11 and their destructive trajectories, the ensuing collapse of buildings and the desperate leap of human bodies to their deaths were signs in the air of a different kind from postmodern fiction. With the collapse of the buildings and the real deaths of people, postmodern assumptions and cherished ideas also collapsed and were grounded. A rethinking of our positions and a restoration of our reality concepts are urgently needed …. Literature, and I would like to add criticism and politics, need to be 'grounded in reality,' as Don DeLillo has it" (Hornung, "Planes" 402).

The edited volume *Nine Eleven: Ästhetische Verarbeitungen des 11. September 2001* (Irsigler/Jürgensen 2008) analyzes the aesthetic realizations of the attacks in film, literature, and drama. The overarching aim of the book is to look at whether or not 9/11 marked an aesthetic caesura that reflects the unanimous opinion that "nothing will be like it was before." As per Däwes ("Obliging"), both trends (innovation and retrograde step) can be traced in 9/11 literature:

> (1) mimesis, (2) omission or implication, (3) appropriation, (4) symbolic instrumentalization and, eventually, (5) experimental alienation - especially by attempting to develop a kind of novel whose layout is new, multimedial, radically pluralistic and self-reflexive. (Däwes, "The Obliging" 73, translation mine)

According to Däwes, this last group of novels does not only deal with the attacks thematically but also attempts to deal with the crisis of representation following the attacks. However, it is not made clear, how these works attempt to do this. Again, she uses the term "9/11 novel" without clearly defining the parameters, leaving open many questions: Does this concern the novels that she writes about only or all novels fitting her categories? Is there any temporal/spatial distinction? Which novels fall into this category? And is it not true, if one follows Hornung, that the recourse to known aesthetics highlights that authors did not essentially try to radicalize or pluralize the genre of the novel and create a particular 9/11 genre.

Like many other monographs and essay collections, *Literature after 9/11* by Keniston and Follansbee (2008) deals with the cultural impact of 9/11, only considering Western literary productions dealing with the attacks.[24] Since this collection appeared shortly after the attacks, the individual authors did not have the opportunity to consider many of the novels included in this study. At this very early stage, and even now, it remains difficult to define a particular 9/11 aesthetic. However, it is problematic that, for want of alternatives, the authors use the term "9/11 novel" unreflectively.

[24] According to the editors, their book "examine[s] the ways [in which] literature has participated in the larger cultural process of representing and interpreting the events of September 11, 2001, while also revealing the difficulties of doing so when cataclysmic events are still so recent" (Keniston/Follansbee, "Introduction" 2).

Keniston and Follansbee attempt to "define a new body of literature - literature after 9/11 - that reveals the instability of 9/11 as an event and the ways that literature contests 9/11's co-option for narrowly political ends." According to the authors, "the history of literary representations of 9/11 can be characterized by the *transition* from narratives of rupture to narratives of continuity" (Follansbee/Keniston 3). The authors of the collection argue that from seeing 9/11 as a unique event that causes a cultural caesura, we have to proceed to incorporating 9/11 into the long list of tragedies in the course of history (cf. Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*) and hence not overrate the impact of the event on literature. In this regard, I agree with the authors since the 9/11 novels published so far reveal that the authors follow trends that were present already before the attacks (e.g. domestic realism) and which still prevail today (e.g. Jeffrey Eugenides' *The Marriage Plot* [2011]).

The title of Keniston and Follansbee's book is misleading since it promises an expansive overview over the texts published so far. Yet, like many others, the essayists focus on Western/American publications.

> The history of literature written about and after 9/11 can also be seen, at least in part, as a sequence of genres …. It took several years longer for novels and full-length memoirs to appear. Early works often attempted to directly capture and convey the events of 9/11 and emotional responses to the events; as time has passed, the approach to the attacks has become more nuanced. 9/11 has come to seem less what these works are about than an event to which they refer, one element among many. (Keniston/Follansbee 3)

This development can be clearly traced if we look at the 9/11 novels published so far. While Beigbeder writes about the perspective of a victim inside one of the towers and DeLillo at least lets one of the survivors retell the traumatic experience of escaping out of the burning tower, Kalfus, Hamid, and others move even further away from the initial attacks, focusing on the global consequences of 9/11.[25]

[25] We can already catch a glimpse of what will come next: Novels such as *Netherland* mark the transition from the 9/11 novel to the post-9/11 era, which focuses on different themes.

The authors of the third part of the collection are concerned with the aesthetic effects of 9/11 on literature. In "Seeing Terror, Feeling Art," Michel Rothberg argues that

> [m]ore than five years after the attacks of September 11, 2001, it is not yet clear what 'literature after 9/11' will be. The question whether September 11 represents a cultural rupture remains open. Indeed, there is much continuity to be found. While post-9/11 literary works replay many familiar themes and techniques of post-World War II American literature, numerous pre-9/11 works foreshadow contemporary concerns, sometimes in quite uncanny ways [e.g. DeLillo's *Mao II*]. (Rothberg, "Seeing" 123)

Going along with my own arguments, Rothberg also sees the idea that 9/11 presented a kind of drastic moment for cultural productions critically, and the novels that I will discuss will prove the "continuity" mentioned by Rothberg. Rothberg also criticizes the periodization of literature and sees no point in taking particular dates as the presumed starting point of something different since the transition from one (literary) era into the next is fluent and is often only recognized in hindsight. The "pre-9/11 discussion offers important insights into our world and suggests that we need to be careful about how we periodize the 'before' and the 'after'" (Rothberg, "Seeing" 123). Rothberg also emphasizes the role of the aesthetic: "[T]he aesthetic constitutes a bridging realm that connects subjective experience to larger collectivities" (Rothberg, "Seeing" 124). Thus, despite the diminished importance of fiction in the twenty-first century, "literature has provided one of the most effective sites for reflection on the meanings of American life after 9/11" (Rothberg, "Seeing" 124).

Although Rothberg's essay was written very early after the attacks and only includes few novels as a basis for his thesis, it is astonishing that he did resist the general enthusiasm for radical changes and warns against inflated expectations. To strengthen his point, Rothberg bases his arguments on a book that was written prior to the attacks (Don DeLillo's *Mao II*) in order to demonstrate the workings of 9/11 aesthetics. He proves his arguments by drawing on very different genres such as the novel, poetry, and essays. However, to support his argument that literature is "bridging the public and the private, the *local and the global*," it would make it necessary to include texts written outside

the U.S., such as Beigbeder's *Windows on the World*, which was already available at that time (Rothberg, "Seeing" 124, emphasis mine).

Rothberg also notes that besides aesthetic retakes, discussions on terrorism existed prior to the 9/11 attacks and that this discourse still influences how we understand terrorism today (cf. Rothberg, "Seeing" 131). Rothberg is certainly right in claiming that terrorism has been thematized in fiction (and uncannily precisely, too) before. However, what is different in novels after 9/11 is that now novelists attempt to put themselves in the place of Muslim terrorists (in contrast to politically motivated terrorism committed from 'within' as is the case, for example, in *Libra* [1988]). Moreover, the kind of terrorism performed by al Qaeda, i.e. an organization that is stateless and acts on a global scale, is a first in the history of the U.S. Since 9/11 can be considered a global event, it is important to look at the corpus of novels not only from a national perspective as novels from, for example South Asia, give us different insight into how the writer not only "must occupy the space of danger and meet terrorism on its own terrain" (Rothberg, "Seeing" 128), but also how novels that are timely remote look at the global impact and consequences of 9/11. 9/11 becomes a mere backdrop and the narrative moves away from 'narratives of horror' (cf. Lorenz) and into the dynamics of globalization.

The novels that represent the first wave of American/European responses do exactly not transcend but rather retreat into the private sphere, concentrating on the trauma caused by the attacks, thereby contradicting Rothberg who claims that "[l]iterature and art can become sites for exploring the intersections between the public and the private and for understanding the feelings that terrorism draws on and produces" ("Seeing" 131). If we talk about the possibilities or the significance of literature after 9/11, we do have to consider works written from different perspectives than that of the victimized family. At the end of his essay, Rothberg emphasizes once more that "[i]n its preconditions, in its mass media unfolding, and in its deadly repercussions, September 11 was a global event [which] demands literature that takes risks, speaks in multiple tongues, and dares to move beyond near-sightedness" ("Seeing" 140-41). Rothberg is not the only scholar to demand radical changes and innovations after the attacks. However, as I will show in this study, the first wave of 9/11 novels belies expectations and relies on tried aesthetics and themes.

In “Telling it like it isn’t,” David Simpson writes about the difficulty of representing the “truth.” Going against the grain, Simpson is a proponent of the novel, and he argues that “[n]ow, more than ever, one might say, is the time for taking time, the time of the novel” (“Telling” 213). He goes on discussing some of the most well-known books, such as *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, in which Foer “makes his protagonist raise exactly this question about why we are at once bidden to know and forbidden to know what happened, why we are being constrained to know only what is deemed - by someone - appropriate” (“Telling” 214). He muses about what the novelist is to do with 9/11 and how the event should be thematized. For him, one way of doing so is to “represent the material details of dismembering bodies and minds” in order to evoke empathy, but it remains unresolved whether people actually take an interest at all or react that way (Simpson, “Telling” 215). Like Rothberg, Simpson is rather cautious about heralding the beginning of a new literary era after 9/11: “It is much too early to suggest that the contemporary novel is going in some clearly visible directions rather than others” (Simpson, “Telling” 215). In regard to genre designation, Simpson introduces the term “post-9/11 novel,” which, according to him, is “a genre destined to flourish under that name” (“Telling” 216). Yet, Simpson only defines this genre according to its temporality since in his opinion it is too early to tell about the thematic and aesthetic development of the post-9/11 novel. Even if this means that there is something new in the making, Simpson holds that

> [t]he two novels [*Terrorist* and *The Emperor’s Children*] share a common intuition – that nothing has changed, that life goes on, and that life is not very interesting or satisfying. In this they show themselves suspicious of the rhetoric of 9/11 as a world-changing event and not at all confident that the lives of these fictional Americans have been transformed by the tragedy or even by the spectacle. (Simpson, “Telling” 216)

The American novels of the first wave that I will discuss indeed mark 9/11 as an incisive and traumatic moment for the affected families, but the event is interchangeable as DeLillo and Foer’s novels show. Both link the attack to other earlier and more personal tragedies. Hence, it is the trauma and not 9/11 as a political event that is thematized. However, some novelists, such as Kalfus and Hamid, make clear that 9/11 has far-reaching and long-lasting consequences outside the boundaries of the United States down to the present day.

The collection of essays *Amerikanisches Erzählen nach 2000* (2008) looks at the American novel after 2000, making the turn of the millennium an incisive date and expecting that the novel has experienced permanent changes. The book aspires to analyze the innovations that have taken place during that time span. Only two essays focus on 9/11 and the novel. The attacks are used as a zero point from which the contributors to the volume delve into the various narrative variations that emerged after the attacks. One of the major problems is that none of the essays attempts a definition of the 9/11 novel, although many authors indeed acknowledge the relevant number of novels written about the attacks. Other trends discussed here are post-humanism, the resurrection of the historical novel, or sonic fiction.

In the above-mentioned collection, Domsch sees September 11 as a trigger moment that compels literature to break new ground. Like many other critics, Domsch places great expectations on literature. He maintains that

> September 11, 2001 is an impressive symbol for a sea change, … but as a symbol it points to a context which is greater than itself, and which has already started earlier. (Domsch 10, translation mine)

Domsch remarks that indeed many creative and thematic currents observable in 9/11 fiction were not the result of the attacks themselves but have been present before that date. Moreover, we can see that novelists have dealt with terrorism and globalization in fiction long before the event (*Mao II*, *Cosmopolis*, etc.) so that the attacks themselves do not seem to have any concrete effects on literary productions in the long run. However, more than a decade later, it is still hard to predict the directions that literature, and in our context, the novel, will take. “The more interesting among these texts that want to tread new narrative paths after 2000 do neither uncritically adjust the postmodern play, nor do they go back behind this development as if it had never taken place” (Domsch 13, translation mine). In Domsch’s opinion, the return to realism does not signify literary nostalgia but that this realism is reflexive and always refers to fictional quality of the narrative. Hence, this self-reflexive realism may foreshadow a new aesthetic which is also influenced by the way that 9/11 is narrated.

Mary Ann Snyder-Körber ("Ground Zero/s des amerikanischen Erzählens") is one of the few scholars to deal with questions of aesthetics. She not only notices that there is a return to well-known forms but sees that, although the patterns may be familiar, they get a new meaning in 9/11 fiction. Snyder-Körber talks about the role that the novel plays in a post-9/11 world that has nothing to do with the working-through of trauma, a function ascribed to the 9/11 novel all too readily. She proclaims the resurrection of the "*social novel*" (Snyder-Körber 41): "realistic in its manner, panoramic in regard to contents, and educative in its purpose" (Snyder-Körber 41). Snyder-Körber argues that this movement has not been triggered by 9/11 but was preexistent. Yet, she acknowledges that the form gets new attention and also becomes important in regard to cultural significance (cf. Snyder-Körber 41). In the case of 9/11 novels, the historical context is taken off in order to present America in "a sentimental light" (Snyder-Körber 41, translation mine).

In the same anthology, Christina Rickli writes in "Wegweiser aus dem Trauma?":

> Even if the novels serve less to come to terms with collective trauma, their strength lies in the portraying of individual traumas …. Therefore the 9/11 novels have got the potential to serve as guideposts in regard to personal grieving, thereby showing an outset to coming to terms with 9/11 traumas. (Rickli "Wegweiser" 143, translation mine).

On the basis of her selective corpus, she attempts to set up a typology for the 9/11 novel. However, she reads the texts exclusively as guideposts leading to a working-through of the trauma, thereby neglecting the many other issues addressed in these novels.

In *9/11 als kulturelle Zäsur* (2009), an essay collection resulting from a symposium in 2008, scholars argue for the groundbreaking cultural changes that 9/11 caused. The editors assert that the collection's aim is to analyze how September 11, 2001 may have caused a caesura, which factors makes this rupture observable, and how significant this caesura is within the western intellectual world. The particular newness of the attacks consists of the fact that they were executed by a stateless group that could not easily be identified. In contrast to the many crimes that have been committed by First World countries (Hiroshima,

Dresden, Iraq, etc.) in recent history, it was a minority group that has attacked the last true Superpower. Moreover, the crime was broadcast globally and witnessed by people all over the world. It has left the world in disbelief on account of the impact. According to Poppe, the global circulation of the images of the collapsing towers and the lasting confrontation with the event via the media helped to shape the collective perception of the event and made clear that the attacks would have far-reaching consequences (cf. Poppe 9). The essays in this collection look at the attacks' impact on art forms such as films/documentaries, photography, and, especially, literature/fiction and the contributors to the volume ascribe a new role to fiction in particular: cultural memory, mirror, healer, political and cultural instruction of the reader. These expectations are foredoomed to fail. According to Poppe, the silence of American artists after 9/11 was striking; moreover, American artists often chose, in contrast to, for example, Beigbeder and others, a more allegorical approach to the topic. Poppe thus concludes that in order to be able to deal with 9/11, distance is vital, be it spatial or, created through allegory, temporal.

One of the major issues with the essay collection is that it only takes Western perspectives into account, discussing Western cultural productions, thereby foreshadowing the trend of the inevitable friend/foe-binary established after the attacks. Furthermore, since it was published shortly after the attacks, it can only look at the immediate effects and dominant discourses which were predominantly located in the realm of trauma studies. Two essays pay particular attention to the fictional realizations of the attacks.

Christina Rickli's essay "Trauer- oder Traumageschichten" analyzes in how far fiction reflects the ensuing trauma and the presumed cultural rupture. She categorizes novels written after the attacks into four different thematic categories: The first group of novels was published soon after the attacks and "refuses to deal with the September 11 attacks in a direct way" as in Bret Easton Ellis' *Lunar Park* (2005) (Rickli 107, translation mine). In the second group, 9/11 appears as a "distortive narrative element," for example in Reynolds Price's *The Good Priest's Son* (2006) (Rickli 109, translation mine). The third group of novels consists of works in which the narrative is ancillary to the attacks; the protagonist is typically under-age, a trick that allows to elude the political context. The fourth group of authors creates "Proto-New-Yorker[s]" as main

characters rather than highlighting the fate of individual characters (Rickli 114). I believe that the sub-categorization of the 9/11 novel does not contribute to a theorization of said fiction but aims at clustering works that are difficult to categorize in categories that are very broad in order to accommodate as many of the books as possible. Moreover, Rickli's last category is superfluous and can be grouped together with the one before since in both the novels immediately deal with the attacks and their effects if not on individuals, as in Foer, then on families. Rickli explains that, five years after the attacks, the idea of the collective trauma is not the prevailing topic anymore, especially when the political reality of retaliatory measures against Pakistan and Iraq set in and the nation gradually lost its (trauma-related) unity and consent over the invasion of Iraq.

In "Risse in der Mimesis," the French scholar Véronique Porra reveals the ruptures in the mimetic structure of the novel post-9/11 and asks how we deal with an event that seems surreal. In *Windows on the World*, Beigbeder coins the term "hyperreality" for this phenomenon: 9/11 becomes a sort of déjà-vu because the narrator is under the impression that he has experienced the attacks already prior to September 11 in films such as *Independence Day* (1996). In the French novel, 9/11 becomes a disruptive element, a rupture especially with mimesis and traditional narrative styles. Porra analyzes the novel from the perspective of a French literary scholar, pointing out the extravagances of the texts and the breaches with French literary traditions. Reading the text as an American studies scholar, however, I see Beigbeder's novel, in particular, as embedded in a strongly postmodernist literary tradition. Moreover, through the use of autofiction but also through the minute rendering of the victim's fight for survival, the novel regains much of its mimetic momentum.

One of the most widely read critical works from Europe about 9/11 comes from Kristiaan Versluys. *Out of the Blue - September 11 and the Novel* (2009) follows his article "9/11 as a European Event" (2007). Like the article, the monograph focuses on Western novels only. Thus, the "9/11 novel," "9/11 fiction," or "9/11 narratives," as he terms this literary phenomenon interchangeably, consist of a very narrow body of novels exclusively written by Western authors. Versluys himself admits in the book that an analysis of novels written by authors from other parts of the world is still a desideratum. Moreover,

Versluys discusses the four most widely read novels about 9/11 merely descriptively, clustering common themes, yet failing to draw conclusions from his observations. The monograph lacks overview and method. In the introduction, Versluys misses to discuss the phenomenon of the "9/11 novel" and takes this expression for granted. Instead, he focuses on the discursive responses in general, reaching from poetry, to movies, to "firsthand account[s]" like telephone messages from within the towers (Versluys, *Blue* 5). The novel, in his opinion, becomes curative for the traumatized individual. Versluys realizes that "[i]n a time of globalized witnessing and shared vicarious experience, an event like 9/11 is a rupture for everybody. As a consequence, there is a globalized need to comprehend, to explain, and to restore" (*Blue* 4). However, the author does not elaborate on the effects of this presumed rupture on literature and also neglects to include this "everybody" into his discussion.

Versluys categorizes the novels written so far into four categories and only few of them are of literary merit to him and "succeed in engaging the full range of the imagination, beyond patriotic clichés and beyond the pabulum of the talking heads[.] They affirm the humanity of the befuddled individual groping for an explanation" and are thus "able to substantiate a true 'poethic turn': that is to say, their poetics is a form of ethics" (Versluys, *Blue* 13). Despite his mention of the poetics of what he calls "9/11 novel," he does not elaborate on what these particular "poethics" look like. Instead, Versluys limits the effects of the novels to the counteraction of "the impact of trauma," not seeing the great potential that the 9/11 novel offers (*Blue* 13).

In three chapters, Versluys discusses novels written by American authors Don DeLillo, Art Spiegelman, and Jonathan Safran Foer. Chapter four discusses Frédéric Beigbeder's *Windows on the World*, in Versluys' opinion "an outsider's point of view" (*Blue* 15). The title of the fifth chapter, "September 11 and the Other," suggests that Versluys at last takes notice of novels coming from outside the transatlantic West. Yet, far from "triangulating" the discourse, as is Versluys' professed goal, the title of the chapter tells the reader already that a center-periphery dichotomy is established all over again. Moreover, as the reader proceeds in reading the chapter, she notices that the title is misleading. "The Other" is not allowed to speak for itself; instead, Versluys analyzes novels written by Western novelists from the perspective of a (9/11) terrorist. In

Versluys' opinion, Updike's novel *Terrorist* deserves citation because "it seeks fully to illuminate the viewpoint of the Other" and tries to avoid dichotomization (*Blue* 16). This attempt, however, fails since Updike, like Amis and others, makes use of his Western knowledge about the "ultimate Other," using stereotypes and prejudices, thus walking right back into the trap of Orientalism itself (Versluys, *Blue* 17). At long last, Versluys goes even so far as to say that the novel's influence is so strong that it may serve a peacemaking function: "[N]ovelists employ an ethics that gainsays binary thinking and that, in potential, proffers a way out of the deadly spiral of violence and counterviolence that the planes, coming out of the blue, initiated" (*Blue* 17). Although I would agree that the authors follow a particular agenda with their works, claiming that they offer a way to escape "the spiral of violence" seems over the top. Although the novel certainly can act as a vehicle for cultural translations and give its audience an understanding of the dynamics surrounding the September 11 attacks, it probably does not have the power to effect real change.

In the "Epilogue," Versluys writes about the fact that 9/11, in contrast to, for example, the Holocaust, has not silenced people but triggered an immense outpour of literature of any kind. Although he terms the attacks a "world historical event" (Versluys, *Blue* 183), he narrows it down to a transatlantic Western tragedy by neglecting how the rest of the world reacted to the attacks. He observes that "the focus is shifting away from the perpetrator-victim dichotomy, which the trauma paradigm implies, to a triangulation of the discourse in which the *confrontation* with the Other is the central concern" (Versluys, *Blue* 183, emphasis mine). Instead of only confronting the Other, scholars should include the point of view of this Other in order to realize that there is no clear demarcation line but serious "boundary troubles" that scholars will eventually have to take into account (Simpson, *Commemoration* 10). In my opinion, both Updike and Amis' works do not fulfill Versluys' aspirations. In contrast to these novels, the works of Mohsin Hamid, Laila Halaby, and H.M. Naqvi offer a different perspective on 9/11. The authors, of either Arabian or South Asian heritage, do not write from the perspective of terrorists but as insider-outsiders; their novels offer insight into the world of the feared "Other" and how they have to confront America and its changed post-9/11 reality, thus allowing for a possible triangulation of the 9/11 discourse.

Cara Cilano, editor of *From Solidarity to Schisms* (2009), looks at fictitious realizations of 9/11 from outside the U.S. She asks: "How have the events of that September day, as well as their aftermath, affected cultural practice?" (Cilano, "Introduction" 15). The book analyzes the attacks from a transnational perspective, a perspective that goes beyond and moves away from the United States. The collection of essays includes works from Canada, Australia, Great Britain, France, Israel, Pakistan, Iran, and Germany. Cilano's introduction announces that the essays will "investigate both political and cultural constructions of home, thus gesturing toward what it would mean to become unhomed" (17). Particularly the South Asian texts analyzed in this study also very strongly emphasize the idea of home and how it is deconstructed in the wake of 9/11.

As the trauma slowly is worked through, interest in literature/fiction from outside the West's barricaded boundaries grows, and Anglophone novels written for a western audience by hybrid authors are pouring into the literary market and experience growing popularity. The essays collected in the volume undertake "examinations of fictive and filmic representations of 9/11 itself as well as of a post-9/11 world from non-U.S. perspectives. The novels and films discussed … span continents, time zones, and historical periods" (Cilano, "Introduction" 15-6). Questions central to the book are: How has September 11 and its aftermath influenced cultural practices? How do these practices offer space for critique of political decisions? Cilano sees the utopian potential of 9/11: "In order to perceive this potential … we must expand outward beyond the borders of the U.S." (17). According to her, this movement beyond the U.S.

> traces how different peoples and cultures may represent and understand their post-9/11 worlds in non-US centered ways, thereby pointing toward possible reconfigurations of what this event means and how it may alter relations between groups and nations. (Cilano, "Introduction" 17)

Cilano's scope, then, is rather political, and it is telling that many of the texts discussed in the collection indeed focus on western narratives again despite her claim for a transnational perspective. For Cilano, 9/11 becomes an "aterritorial signifier" ("Introduction" 17). It is certainly true that 9/11 is more than a national tragedy; many novels still hint at an American exceptionalism of suffering that

can be extended at most to encompass the transatlantic West. Similarly to what this study attempts to do, Cilano's collection of essays investigates how "9/11-centered discourses define 'home' and speculates over what is at stake in being uncomfortable in one's home" (Cilano, "Introduction" 17). The discomfort does not only affect Americans who come to realize that the U.S. is not as impenetrable as they believed it to be, but culturally hybrid residents also suddenly feel uncomfortable there. Although the main characters of Hamid and Naqvi move back and forth between different locations, the reading of South Asian novels in my study shows that territory still plays an important role since it is directly connected to ideas of home in a post-9/11 world. Their home environment, be it in Pakistan, as is the case with Changez, or in Mini Auntie's apartment in New York, as in Chuck's case, makes the contrast between the corporate feeling at home and the harsh post-9/11 reality in the U.S. become apparent. The novels become stories of disillusionment and emigration.

In "Uses and Abuses in Post-9/11 Fiction and Contemporary Culture," Ulrike Tancke writes about Halaby's *Promised Land*. Tancke argues that the novel starts from 9/11 but then "let[s] it fade into the background and draw[s] our attention to something else: the uncontrollability of human actions and the human psyche, the random eruption of violence in everyday lives, and the destructive nature of coincidence" (79-80). She focuses on the traumatic experiences of the protagonists that are not necessarily connected to the September 11 attacks since "the traumatizing potential of violence and guilt inherent in human relationships [is] impossible to measure and predict" ("Trauma" 85). She looks at the traumatic effects "of lost origins and severed connections to their [the protagonists'] home" (Tancke, "Trauma" 82), problems that the protagonists have to struggle with already before 9/11. Unhappy in their marriage and disillusioned by the Land of Opportunities, the protagonists' hybridity is at the core of their trauma. Yet, as the long prologue of the hard-cover edition of *Once in a Promised Land* shows, the protagonists' identity issues are amplified by racial targeting and paranoia after the attacks. However, in the context of Halaby's novel, the term 'trauma' is possibly exaggerated. 'Trauma' is overused, and it remains questionable whether the events that Jassim and Salwa go through deserve this predicate, especially when they are juxtaposed to the loss of thousands of lives in the attacks of September 11.

"Daring to Imagine" by Carolyn Durham discusses Beigbeder's controversial novel *Windows on the World* and Slimane Benaissa's *La Dernière Nuit d'un Damné* (2003). She states that "[i]n order to speak what is considered unspeakable, both Beigbeder and Benaissa logically seek to create a new language and an original form in which to express themselves" (Durham 168). In her opinion, Beigbeder "appropriate[s] America's national tragedy to his own literary ends" (Durham 172). Durham sees Beigbeder's novel as fulfilling Mishra and Rahv's claim for "global aesthetics" (also because he quotes Lennon's *Imagine*) (172). Yet, the fact that reviews by American readers were not benevolent shows that the novel's tone and Beigbeder's appropriation of the American tragedy are irritating to an American readership. While the novel earned a Prix Interallié in France and won a Foreign Fiction award in Great Britain, the novel's success in the U.S. lags far behind that of Foer or DeLillo. Durham, ignoring these facts, resorts to indistinctive common places as the following: "In a global universe, mutual understanding will no longer be based on an original common language but rather on international multilingualism and multicultural literacy" (Durham 175). One point that Durham leaves out completely is Beigbeder's frequent allusions to the Holocaust, but also his references to Hiroshima. Durham claims that "[b]oth novels thus successfully avoid appropriating the tragedy of 9/11, as so many critics, readers, and reviewers fear that fiction will do" (181). Although she states the contrary only a few pages earlier, one can rather claim that especially Beigbeder suffers from what one can call 'trauma envy'[26] and then appropriates the novel as his personal cure for his alleged trauma.

Silvia Schultermandl's "Perspectival Adjustments" is about the iconicity of the attacks, which made them particularly incisive: "Several 9/11 novels set in the US … depict the attacks on the Twin Towers in New York City as a turning point in American history, one that entirely alters the protagonists' lives …. What unites all of these literary responses [including Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*] to 9/11 is their emphasis on the iconic meaning that

[26] In the aftermath of the attacks, Beigbeder, who has not experienced loss of any kind in the attacks, willingly puts himself in a - to him - similar situation to experience at least a small proportion of the suffering of the actual victims. He is apparently jealous of the victims' trauma und tries to evoke a similar atmosphere in order to better be able to put himself in the shoes of those he wants to write about.

the attack … has" (Schultermandl 185). This observation is not true for Hamid. His identity may be intensified by 9/11, but he suffers from an identity crisis right from the beginning and experiences his awakening in the Philippines and Chile. While 9/11 may be an iconic event for American authors, it serves as the backdrop for transnational novelists whose emphasis lies on different themes such as portraying post-9/11 America, the identity and its construction of the presumed Other, and the global political repercussions of the attacks. These observations are confirmed in Cilano's essay "Manipulative Fictions," in which she compares Hamid's novel to *In the Name of God*, a movie by Shoaib Mansoor (2007): "[R]ecent Pakistani fictions … take up Spivack's contention, as it were, and use the epistemological breach of 9/11 or construct an ethical moment, a repositioning in which the primary other of the US's 'war on terror,' the Muslim male, becomes a self" (Cilano, "Manipulative" 203).

The essay collection *American Multiculturalism after 9/11* (Rubin/Verheul 2009) analyzes different Western ideas of multiculturalism against the backdrop of the attacks in September 2001. The book's three different sections discuss theories of multiculturalism in the context of globalization, cultural texts such as photographs, films, memorials, poetry, and American 9/11 novels, and the "transatlantic dialogue" (16) between the USA and Europe respectively. The essays highlight the importance of the cultural facet to multiculturalism that has often been overlooked in favor of political aspects.

Amal Talaat Abdelrazek's *Contemporary Arab American Women Writers* (2008) looks at questions of identity before and after 9/11 in novels from four different Arab-American writers through the lens of gender studies and post-colonial theory. However, she misses out on the fact that the identity of Arab-Americans or the Other in general does not only depend on their self-perception but on how they are perceived and constructed by the society in which they choose to live (in this case, North America).

The collection of essays *Trauma's Continuum: September 11th Reconsidered* (Gross/Snyder-Körber, 2010) focuses, as the title indicates, on the traumatic effects of 9/11 and discusses Anglo-American fiction in this context. "Contributions share the premise that while traumatic events are disruptive, trauma itself has a critical and literary tradition." The collection "seeks to explore how [9/11] … is embedded in particular discursive frameworks that make it

meaningful" (Gross/Snyder-Körber 370). In her essay, "'Close Neighbors to the Unimaginable,'" Birgit Däwes is interested "in the different ways in which writers differentiate and undermine the dichotomy between Self and Other" ("Close" 502). She argues that

> contemporary literature has assigned itself the task of imagining the Other as simultaneously outside and within - not merely to contribute to the 'counter-narratives' that DeLillo has called for ("Ruins" 34) - but to disclose the underlying ideological paradigms and anxieties in the post-9/11 cultural landscape. (Däwes, "Close" 502)

While Däwes' statement may be true for some texts, she makes it seem all-inclusive and makes "imagining the Other" the task of all literature. However, we have to consider that only a fraction of all fiction published deals with the attacks of September 11, 2001. Moreover, using the term "Other" has overtones of alterity and hence gives her venture a negative twist. However, she is right when she observes that the Other is indeed outside and within, and the novels of, for example. Halaby and Naqvi show that this does not have to have negative effects. The hybrid Other, or the insider-outsider, here is not depicted as the enemy, but the authors contribute to the counternarration that is needed to oppose the image of the Other constructed by the 9/11 terrorists and Al Qaida. Däwes, furthermore, proposes that "these literary texts [e.g. by Amis] not only emphasize the importance of literature for the cultural memory of 9/11; they also subvert conventional projections of villainy, thus contributing to a reconfiguration of both the literary history of evil and of the larger cultural imaginary of 'terrorism'" ("Close" 502). Although one may agree that these texts contribute to the cultural memorialization of 9/11, one cannot support Däwes' argument about the "reconfiguration of evil … and terrorism." As shown above, these texts are highly artificial and construct a non-authentic terrorist identity, in many cases written by western authors, and thus also tap into existing perceptions of evil/terrorism. All novels are also written from a strictly national(ist) perspective despite the author's aspirations to slip into the role of the Other.

By now, there are some more successful attempts at dissolving our gridlocked horror visions; writing from their hybrid perspective, authors such as

Laila Halaby or H.M. Naqvi are more detached from the American/European nationalist discourse. The most convincing and perhaps least stereotyped novel written from the point of view of a terrorist was written by Aram Schefrin, an Arab-American writer, who refrains from stereotyping and vilifying the protagonist of *Marwan - A 9/11 Terrorist*, but simply tries to retrace the steps of Marwan that led him to eventually fly a plane into the World Trade Center. Däwes, moreover, expounds that "[t]hese moments of empathy - however entangled and grotesquely decorated - climax at the end …. In sharing the perpetrator's perception of death, Amis's tale does more than merely present readers with a detestable Other to be pitied or scorned" ("Close" 505). The author certainly tries to overcome his prejudices about these mass murderers and tries to create strong characters. In contrast to Däwes, who believes that the picture rendered of the terrorist evokes empathy, Updike's depiction of the protagonist is rather to be seen as connected to the tradition of Orientalism,[27] creating "identikit terrorists" that are ridiculed (Mishra, "Innocence").[28] Däwes argues that these novelists "provide the fictional re-enactments *necessary* for cultural catharsis and healing, and negotiat[e] the contact zones of individual and collective identity" ("Close" 495, emphasis mine). So does the nation need to ridicule the other to achieve closure? What becomes clear is that critics like Däwes or Versluys overestimate the power of fiction. The overwhelming increase in the demand for non-fiction shows that the interest in fiction is on the low, especially when about September 11.[29] Although I, too, believe that the novel fulfills various roles in the dealings with 9/11, we must not overestimate its cultural or even social influence.

While the novelists try hard to explain terrorism, their attempts fail because we as westerners simply cannot explain it. Even Däwes has to admit that far from breaking down dichotomies, "*Terrorist* is, in the end, a text that fuels

[27] This becomes particularly clear when we look at Amis' other publications around the topic, such as "9/11 and the Cult of Death," or "The Age of Horrorism (part one)."

[28] Mishra maintains: "Their novelist-host has to overcome much fear and revulsion in order to take seriously murderous passions aimed at his own society. Sympathy often breaks down, and hasty research reduces individuals as well as movements to stereotypical motivations. … Assembled from jihad-mongering journalism and propaganda videos and websites, their identikit terrorists make Conrad's witheringly evoked revolutionaries in The Secret Agent and Under Western Eyes look multidimensional" (Mishra, "Innocence").

[29] "Americans have turned away from fiction and toward nonfiction to understand the world" (Freeman).

dichotomies of cultural difference and thus confirms stereotypical notions of the Other" ("Close" 508). The novels reveal that prejudices and distrust are still strong and the fear of an unknown enemy outside and within is still present. The novels of insider-outsiders in contrast show that immigrants did not have an easy time after the attacks. They, too, became the victims of the terrorists who condemned people of a certain faith or color of skin to being regarded as the evil Other.

In *9/11 and the Literature of Terror* (2011), Martin Randall discusses 9/11's impact on literature. Like innumerable other studies of this phenomenon, Randall only deals with western representations of the attacks in fiction and chimes in with many scholars by talking about the disruptive effect of the attacks. It is only in the conclusion that he mentions one novel that seemingly cannot be ignored: Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Instead of the term '9/11 novel,' the author settles for the broader expression 'Literature of Terror,' but also uses the term '9/11 novel' without further explanation (Randall 3).[30] The main thesis of the monograph seems very weak and, ten years after the attacks, rather obvious, too: "It is the central thesis of this study that the images of 9/11 did not 'obliterate' language with its stunning visual symbolism but the terrorist attacks do pose significant and hugely complex challenges for writers of fiction" (Randall 18). Randall discusses early reactions to the attacks such as DeLillo's "Ruins," McEwan's "Beyond Belief," and the anthology *110 Stories* edited by Ulrich Baer. He comes to the conclusion that DeLillo's essay is characterized by nationalistic discourse. Randall later also analyzes DeLillo's *Falling Man* and argues that the novel still has the nationalistic undertone of the essay, although in a more subtle manner. While other scholars see difficulties in dealing with the attacks in postmodern fiction, Randall sticks to the idea of a profound rupture caused by 9/11 and states that

> [t]here is a growing sense that the traditional realist novel struggles to accommodate the profound 'rupture' of 9/11. Furthermore, … there is a developing suggestion that fictional realism might not be the most efficacious or suitable genre and

[30] "Although Saturday cannot be strictly thought of as a '9/11 novel' in the same way that, say, Beigbeder's Windows on the World is, it does reflect back upon the vents and, crucially, allegorises the post-9/11 world" (Randall 21).

> that more hybrid forms … are better suited to represent the attacks. (Randall 63)

Although Randall is right in observing that literary realism may be insufficient to represent the attacks, he misses that fictional realism, too, represents a hybrid form. As Chapter Two of this study will show, even DeLillo and Foer's works are already hybrid forms that use realism, but only to combine it with other forms (for example the epistolary novel). Although the so-called 'Great American 9/11-novel' may not have been written yet, according to scholars, the novelists, at this very early stage, do their best to overcome the crisis of representation.

In a later chapter, Randall looks at Beigbeder's *Windows on the World,* which he seems to see as one of the "hybrid forms" he claims are necessary to accommodate the attacks fictionally: "*Windows on the World* provides its own meta-commentary, exposing its fictionality whilst also straining for verisimilitude" (Randall 69). If Randall acknowledges that there are hybrid forms out there, it is surprising that he does not include novels from outside the West into the corpus of novels. In the conclusion, Randall discusses Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist.* Although he notes that the novel consists of a monologue, as with the other novels, Randall misses to comment on the aesthetics of the novels he analyzes. He refers to Mishra's essay and suggests a reworking. Rather than American writing being parochial and uninterested in the politics of the rest of the globe, one might claim that 9/11 has signaled, in fact, another kind of 'retreat' "to discourses of commemoration and remembrance" (Randall 135). Although novels indeed contribute to the commemoration of 9/11, Randall seems to use this as an excuse for the - in his opinion - lack of originality. He misses that, far from centering exclusively on the domestic realm, even DeLillo already addresses issues that preoccupy the United States politically and culturally prior to 9/11.

In 2011, Birgit Däwes published her monograph *Ground Zero Fiction* (2011). Her aim is to investigate "a textual corpus which is simultaneously coherent and heterogeneous" and to offer a "systematic analysis of the 9/11 novel as a literary subgenre" (Däwes, *Ground Zero* 6). In search of definitions for the overused term "9/11 novel," few readers will notice that the term is frequently used without further elaboration by scholars and critics alike. In her monograph Birgit Däwes attempts to define the novels as follows:

> For the purpose of this study, I will use three major, story-oriented criteria that qualify a novel for inclusion in the category of what I call ground zero fiction: (1) the (spatial and/or temporal) setting, (2) the thematic and/or symbolic relevance of the terrorist attacks – whether they are implicitly or explicitly represented – for the plot, and (3) the characters' involvement with and/or perception of the novel. (Däwes, *Ground* 81).

As a consequence, she offers a wide reading of over 170 novels that qualify as 9/11-novels. Däwes, like Versluys or Shivani, attempts to classify the novels thematically, but her definition's flexibility poses various problems and leads me to a puzzling question: Is it really necessary to classify these novels in order to come up with a concise definition? While Däwes' book explicitly deals with 9/11 novels, she also discusses what she calls "9/12" novels, which makes the presumed overview even more confusing. Moreover, she includes works that can be read as allegories of 9/11 but do not explicitly deal with the topic. What one takes away from reading her study is that it is indeed difficult to delineate a demarcation line for this phenomenon. Reading into many of the novels mentioned by Däwes - the 'classics' such as DeLillo's *Falling Man*, Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, or Frédéric Beigbeder's *Windows on the World* - but also neglected works by authors from the U.S., France, India, and South Asia,[31] this study instead holds that the thematic focus on the novels is strongly connected to each author's personal 9/11 experience.

The title of Däwes' book suggests that the monograph deals with novels that focus on the attacks on the Twin Towers only. According to her, 9/11 novels are novels in which

> the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington provide the entire or a part of the setting, they feature more or less prominently as a historical context … or they have a decisive function for the development of the plot, the characters, or the novel's symbolism. (Däwes, *Ground* 6)

If the "9/11-novel" can be set in different cities and deal with the attacks in general, why then put Ground Zero in the title? Such references restrict the

[31] For example Ken Kalfus' *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country*, Didier Goupil's *Le Jour de mon Retour sur Terre*, Luc Lang's *Onze Septembre mon Amour*, Arunabha Sengupta's *Big Apple Two Bites*, or Nafia Haji's *The Writing on My Forehead*.

novels' setting or theme to the attacks in New York. Moreover, her definition of the term "9/11 novel" stays unconvincing and hazy. One gets the impression that every book that vaguely alludes to the falling towers can be considered a 9/11 novel. But what do we do with novels that seemingly do not deal with the attacks but can be read as allegories of 9/11? If everything can be a 9/11 novel, then it will be difficult to set up a genre theory with the parameters outlined in Däwes' book.[32]

Richard Gray's *After the Fall: American Literature Since 9/11* (2011) follows his 2009 article "Open Doors, Close Minds," in which he diagnoses the American novel after the 9/11 attacks. The book focuses exclusively on American literature, and the author looks at recent developments in this field since that date. The "9/11 novel" is only one of many research areas, even though it plays a major part. The title suggests that 9/11 indeed represents some kind of caesura, which is not specified in the text (cultural? political? social?). In the earlier essay "Open Doors, Closed Minds" (2009), Gray argues for a more transnational orientation of the American novel since it withdrew into nationalistic discourses after the attacks and created an exceptionalism of suffering. Gray criticizes American authors heavily for this thematic short-sightedness/narrow-mindedness. In this new monograph, however, Gray imposes national boundaries on his research. Interestingly enough, he includes the Anglo-Pakistani author Mohsin Hamid into his corpus of texts, thus making him an American author.

Gray specifies the problems that novelists faced after the attacks: "If there was one thing that writers agreed about in response to 9/11, it was the failure of language; the terrorist attacks made the tools of their trade seem

[32] In the chapter titled "Diagnostic Approaches" Däwes approves of the idea that the attacks were not as ground-breaking as expected: "[D]iagnostic approaches most openly dismantle this myth [of a historical caesura] and demonstrate that many conditions have remained the same" (Däwes, *Ground Zero* 236-7). 9/11 is neither the beginning nor the end of history and novelists mirror this in their fiction by setting the events into a historical context. Drawing on a by now considerable corpus of novels, the authors' harking back not only to history but to proven aesthetics cannot be denied. Looking at the novels' multiple thematic orientations, I find it difficult to assign novels to a certain thematic category. Considering the corpus of diagnostic novels, one wonders why *Reluctant* does not qualify for this category since it, too, addresses global wrongdoings and thus "widens the map of victims and atrocities" (Däwes, *Ground Zero* 239). The novels are thematically and aesthetically diverse that it is almost impossible to group them into larger categories that inevitably lead to simplifications or overgeneralizations. Although Däwes' monograph gives an extensive overview over the corpus, this extensity comes into the way of a theorization of the 9/11 novel.

absurd" (Gray, *Fall* 1). Thinking of Adorno's famous claim, we realize that 9/11 is not the first event that made writers rethink their role and that of literature. What makes the attacks of September 11, 2001 so iconic is the fact that they were addressed at the U.S., that it was the first ever attack on American mainland, and that such iconic buildings representing America's economic power were attacked and destroyed, equaling a declaration of war. The picture of the collapsing towers has become an allegory for an America brought to her knees (cf. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*) by a small group of stateless fanatics. Terrorism has left its mark on the new millennium and has triggered a war on terror. The U.S. and her novelists, who, until then, had to look at Europe to find tragedy (WWI and II), were now also vulnerable since the terrorists "struck at the heart of the nation" (Gray, *Fall* 4). Since this is a first in American history, her novelists, I argue, needed time to grasp the events. And again, they borrow: in order to write about the attacks, they make use of approved literary devices such as tales, romance, realism, postmodernism.

The first wave of American novels about 9/11 is described by Gray as a "desperate retreat into the old sureties …. [T]hey embrace it [the familiar] - and, in doing so, dissolve public crisis in the comforts of the personal" (16-7). One may add that while these novels deal immediately with the attacks and set the story in the realm of the familiar and familial, a second wave of novels has a more allegorical approach to the topic. This second wave can be compared to what Gray terms "post-9/11 novel" and Däwes names "9/12 novel," since it deals with the after-effects of the attacks more than it deals with the attacks and their traumatic impact. One of the major issues with Gray's monograph is that while he diagnoses the novel after 9/11, he does not attempt to define it or draw conclusions from his observations.

Gray criticizes novels such as *Falling Man, A Disorder Peculiar to the Country,* and *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* for pointing out the obvious and trying to "domesticate, to shepherd that sense of crisis into the realms of the familiar" (*Fall* 40). It is questionable that, if he finds American novels dealing with the attacks of low quality, he still chooses them over literature by what he terms the Other, a highly problematical term by which he evokes postcolonial notions of center and periphery even when he favors the Other over Western responses. Many American authors move away from the idea of individual

trauma while domesticity is a topic also taken up by non-American authors. However, if we take a moment and read the novels closely enough, they too, unfold strong national discourses and the presumably transnational quality that Gray praises is only a thin semantic layer contained in the novels.

In his opinion, one successful attempt of writing about 9/11 is Cormac McCarthy whose strategy in *The Road* (2006) is "not to domesticate but to defamiliarize" (Gray, *Fall* 40). However, he admits that McCarthy's novel, too, draws upon familiar patterns not on a thematic but an aesthetic level.[33] In chapter three, Gray discusses some examples of novels that

> get it tight, as I see it, thanks to a strategy of convergence, rooted in the conviction that the hybrid is the only space in which the location of cultures and the bearing witness to trauma can really occur …. [T]hey respond to the heterogeneous character of the United States, as well as its necessary positioning in a transnational context, by what I would call deterritorializing America. (Gray, *Fall* 17)

What does Gray mean by that? According to the *Oxford Dictionary*, "deterritorialization" signifies "the severance of social, political, or cultural practices from their native places and populations." Gray's claim to a deterritorialization of America is a match for an appeal for American imperialism. Why would such a deterritorialization be necessary and how would literature benefit from it? Especially after the attacks, America did not allow for a deterritorialization by other nations and fortified its boundaries against the intrusion of outsiders, a fact that mirrors in the novels of Halaby and Hamid. These novels emphasize the fact that culture and place are even more strongly connected than before the attacks, even in New York City. The global influence of America, as pointed out in the novels by Hamid and his peers, is undeniable and is mirrored in the novels that, particularly in the case of Naqvi, have been strongly influenced by an American aesthetic. Still, the authors achieve to position America in a "transnational context" by pointing out the aftereffects of American culture and politics on people outside and inside the U.S. Although

[33] "Formally what is at work here, after all, is the Romantic belief in deferral, … the Symbolist commitment to what Mallarme called 'that part of speech which is not spoken,' … and the Modernist conviction that the use of what Frank Kermode called 'the Image as radiant truth' might lead to the creation 'out of a number of words' of 'a single new word which is total in itself and foreign to language' (2, 43)" (Gray, *Fall* 48).

Hamid, of course, thematizes September 11, 2001, he is at the same time reterritorializing the attacks because he approaches them from his own national and, at times, nationalistic point of view.[34] Gray honors Hamid's book as one of the few successful attempts at fictionalizing 9/11. This novel moves away from a narrowly local look at 9/11 and globalizes the events by observing them through the eyes of a Pakistani who gradually falls out of love with America. Another novel Gray mentions in this context is Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland* (2008). Here, the term "deterritorialized" that Gray introduces is confusing. Although the novel includes different nationalities, it is written from the perspective of a white Dutch male who sees New York City and the post-9/11 era through his, admittedly non-American, but still very own national lens. He, unlike many Americans, seeks the company of a dubious, dark-skinned character named Chuck, who comes from Trinidad and worships Cricket, a sport that, in his opinion, is not a game introduced by immigrants but a truly American activity. Although he cannot find any really engaging novel about the attacks that is groundbreakingly different from other fictions and he wishes that the events of September 11 will eventually bring forth a different literature, the attacks still mark a caesura for Gray that

> offers to American writers … the chance, maybe even the obligation, to insert themselves in the space between conflicting interests and practices and then dramatize the contradictions that conflict engenders. Through their work, by means of mixture of voices, a free play of languages and even genres, they can represent the reality of their culture as multiple, complex and internally antagonistic. They can achieve a realization of both synchrony and diachrony: a demonstration of both structural continuities between past and present and the processes by which those continuities are challenged, dissolved and reconstituted. (Gray, *Fall* 19)

This and countless other quotes show that the event is seen as a guidebook for the future of American literature.[35] In my opinion, we cannot extrapolate from 9/11 novels to the state of literature in a decade or more. Although the events

[34] Although Changez is a "lover of America," (*RF* 1), he heavily criticizes the US and their isolationism.

[35] Gray even predicts: "The degree to which writers do meet the challenge, of allowing their work to be a site of struggle between cultures – and a free play of idioms and genres – will surely help to determine where American writing is twenty, thirty or more years from now, long after the fall" (Gray, *Fall* 19).

were incisive, it seems as if literature returns "back to normal" now, looking forward, both thematically and aesthetically, into the post-9/11 era.[36] Gray tries to highlight the fact that the tendency goes towards a global, less national(istic) perspective of events. Whether or not this can be applied to other fictions remains questionable. In my opinion, Gray expects too much; to him, 9/11 has the power to trigger a literary movement, from the first nationalistic attempts to the more global/transnational dealings with the event. Yet, we have to consider that transnational novels have been written by authors such as John Dos Passos already prior to the "Fall." Also, the idea of deterritorialization of literature is not new (cf. Paul Giles). However, although there is a centripetal attraction towards the U.S., her centrifugal movement remains strong and is even intensified as American culture is transported into the world.

According to Gray, novels by hybrid authors "interrogate the assumptions on which the either/or discourse dealing with 9/11 and the war on terror is based. Such novels do so by mapping a territory between cultures, responding to intercultural exchange in terms that are themselves genuinely intercultural, that hybridize" (*Fall* 114). What Gray does not see, however, is that 9/11 is seldom the trigger for the crisis in these "hybrid novels" (except for *Home Boy*). Hamid, Haji, and Halaby's protagonists are all torn between two cultures and have doubts about their life in the U.S. Moreover, as I will point out in the respective chapters, presumably hybrid authors are not beyond essentialism. In the chapter "Imagining the Transnational," Gray delineates the developments of post-9/11 literature by looking at novels by South-East Asian authors who, to him, serve as examples for a deterritorialized approach.[37]

In the essay "Prolonged Suspension: Don DeLillo, Ian McEwan, and the Literary Imagination after 9/11," Clemens Spahr maintains that *Falling Man* and *Saturday* do more than merely address the traumatic event. Spahr labels the two novels as "post-9/11 novels" (235) because of the topics they address. Both books touch on various (political) topics but stay, like many other 9/11 novels, noncommittal. According to Spahr, the novels' non-binding nature "stand[s] for

[36] Novels such as Jeffrey Eugenides' *The Marriage Plot* indicate that the trend to a return to traditional poetics is unabated and make it hard to believe that we have entered the post-postmodern era.

[37] For my dissertation, these works are not relevant since they do not actually thematize the attacks of September 11 but show a development in American literature which is, however, not new (cf. Gloria Anzaldúa) but repeating itself with different nationalities.

an ongoing revaluation of the powers and the limits of the literary imagination" (235). Hence, this lack of commitment highlights the novelist's and the novel's limits, and it is a typical sign of the crisis of representation experienced after the attacks.

In "'Terminal Crisis?' From the Worlding of American Literature to World-System Literature" (2011), Leerom Medovoi introduces the term "world-system literature:"

> [t]he rubric of 'world-system literature' offered in this essay's title means to advance the idea that, while the rubrics of transnationalism or imperialism can be usefully brought to bear on literature, the ultimate horizon of understanding for both analytics would be the world-system, of which transnational relations and imperial power are but partial expressions. (652)

Medovoi's terminology seems valid since he bypasses the narrow frame set by the term '9/11 novel.' With the help of his umbrella term, laborious categorization and classification of novels about 9/11 can be avoided.

As the above discussion of criticism shows, scholars have different concepts in mind when applying the term "9/11 novel." Versluys and other scholars believe this term to be self-explanatory and do not define them in their works and use it interchangeably with other terms. Other critics and scholars, for example Spahr and Shivani, cluster together novels under thematic, spatial, or temporal aspects, employing the term "post-9/11 novel." To classify fiction as 9/11 novels due to its themes seems sensible but proves equally difficult if, as Däwes monograph *Ground Zero Fiction* shows, we set no limit to the novels that can be included. As Snyder-Körber and others have observed, the tendency of a literary nostalgia that is noticeable in novels about 9/11 was already present in works published prior to the attacks and does not constitute something groundbreakingly new that is not distinctive of the 9/11 novel.

The novels analyzed in this study fit specific narrow thematic, local, and temporal parameters, center on the time around the September 11 attacks, and deal explicitly with the (psychological, economic, social, and political) effects of 9/11 on the protagonists. Moreover, except for *Extremely Loud and*

Incredibly Close,[38] the novels' paratext unfailingly discloses the novels' thematic focus: the front covers feature blue skies, airplanes, the Manhattan skyline, or Middle-Eastern looking people (cf. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* or *Once in a Promised Land*). As will be shown in the chapters below, some of the texts discussed in this study settle for the 9/11 attacks and the individual's struggle of coming to terms with the traumatic event. Yet, novels such as *Home Boy* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, but also *Falling Man*, use the attacks as a springboard to discuss political issues. These issues are considered from the Western viewpoint of what I term insiders, but also from that of (insider/)outsiders from South Asia, who experience the attacks from the opposite perspective. Consequently, the term 'insider/outsider novel' embraces the different perspectives presented in the books and does justice to the wide range of topics thematized in the five novels.

If we look at the novels about 9/11 published so far, it becomes apparent that only few novelists (such as Foer) made use of their imagination and most endeavored to stick to the historical "source material," thus negating Erica Wagner, who predicted that "such epoch-making events have traditionally proven to be great canvasses for the imagination" (qtd. in Kohari). The authors resort to conventional aesthetics (such as the social novel, the domestic novel, the epistolary novel, oriental tales, romance, tragedy, postmodernism, realism), which highlights that they do not want to revolutionize the genre or create a 'subgenre' of the novel but that they find that these devices are suitable to overcome the silence and the impending crisis of representation. Apparently, authors did not find it sufficient to stick to the restrictive parameters of one particular genre but found it more suitable to cross genre boundaries and combine different genres, the insecurity in their representation of the attacks reflecting post-9/11 reality, which creates the novel's very own cross-generic quality. The multitude of genres is also reflected by the multitude of themes addressed by the various authors. It seems that critics, if they talk of a radical rupture, expected not only changes, but challenged authors to create a completely new genre to fit the catastrophe's enormity.

[38] In Foer's case, the novel's layout is presumably different due to marketing reasons since the cover resembles the distinctive design of Foer's debut novel *Everything Is Illuminated*.

Except for Däwes' monograph, none of the books critically discusses the whole array of novels. Instead, the novels are mostly loosely clustered according to authors' nationalities, thereby mirroring social realities that still advocate racial, ethnic, or xenophobic dichotomies. Arguing that the aesthetics of novels about 9/11 broadly correspond on an international level, I do not see any necessity to separate the "West" from the "Rest." Consequently, this study is going to set novels from different parts of the world into dialogue. I will settle on what Richard Gray has termed "threshold situations," a term with the help of which I want to look at where different literatures intersect and analyze such zones of confluence by critically discussing an inclusive field of global text production. This study aims at proving that it is not necessary to establish a novelistic subgenre of the novel since all attempts at defining this presumed genre only consider thematic aspects; although general observations about the aesthetic realizations of 9/11 in the novel have been made, no monograph goes into details and looks at the impact of these aesthetics and their interaction with the themes addressed.

II. The Turn Inward, or the Exceptionalism of Suffering in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close and Falling Man*

The first novelists to react to the attacks followed the trend toward domesticity. They set their plot in the heart of a family, focusing on the trauma suffered by the members after 9/11 and how the characters then dealt with this situation. Although the two novels also address past tragedies or connect the attacks to earlier political events, this is always done in connection to 9/11 and creates the impression of an exceptionalism of suffering in which only the American people/American individuals are affected by the crisis. And so, Andersen asserts, "[i]n an increasingly globalized world, the American novel has turned inwards and become less global than ever" (Andersen 13-14). However, in contrast to Hamid and Naqvi (see below in Chapters Five and Six) who hammer home their message, both novelists attempt to show that the attacks did have a global impact and that a less essentialist stance is advisable in order to recognize these global workings. In a close reading, I will reveal the numerous interrelated themes hidden in both texts, and I will also highlight the aesthetic potential of the novels under discussion.

Keith Neudecker, a lawyer and passionate poker player, manages to escape from the World Trade Center, and, instead of going to his apartment, he returns to his separated wife Lianne and their son Justin. Suffering of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), he cannot talk about what happened to his wife. Although his inability to be a good husband (he cheats on his wife) and father led him and his wife to separate, after the attacks, he tries his best to become a better person and returns home for good. However, his reinvention as a family man fails. He has his share of "terror sex" when he begins an affair with a fellow survivor to whom he feels attracted because of the shared experience. He can only talk to her about the horrors he had to witness while he escaped the tower, and thus she helps him to work through his trauma. Soon, Keith abandons his new life again and becomes a semi-professional poker player because he appreciates the anonymity of poker tournaments. He only occasionally returns to see his family. The novel is multiperspectival, and, besides highlighting the struggle of the disrupted and estranged couple, *Falling Man* also shows how not only the attacks but especially the ensuing media coverage has a disquieting

effect on the couple's son who, after 9/11, is on the lookout for a terrorist named "Bill Lawton" (DeLillo, *FM* 74).

In *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, on the other hand, Foer takes a more positive view of the future: although the family is made dysfunctional by the attacks since the father, the pivotal member, dies, in the end, the family members are able to interact with each other and achieve catharsis. We first encounter the novel's protagonists, Oskar Schell, his mother, and his grandmother, while they are on their way to the funeral of Thomas Schell Jr., who was killed during the attacks on the Twin Towers in September 2001. Oskar, Thomas Schell's son, is a nine-year-old, who is, amongst other things, an "inventor, jewelry designer, … Francophile, vegan, origamist, pacifist, … [and] collector of various things" (*ELC* 99). Especially Oskar shows signs of posttraumatic stress disorder after the attacks because he was not able to pick up the phone to talk to his father, who then left five messages on the family's answering machine before he died in the restaurant Windows on the World. Oskar is extremely affected by the loss of his father to whom he was enormously attached. During a sleepless night after the funeral, he discovers an envelope containing a key in his father's closet. The only clue Oskar gets is the word "Black" written on the envelope in red pen. Oskar starts his quest for the lock that fits the key, believing it is part of a last riddle that his father left for him to solve. The mystery of his father's death drives Oskar to imagine the attacks and to invent his father's death over and over again, adding new, gruesome details every time.

However, Oskar is not the only person suffering. His grandparents, Thomas and Grandmother Schell, have to confront a double trauma: the loss of their only son and the bombing of Dresden in 1945, which caused the death of their loved ones. Both tell their story through letters to their son and to Oskar. After her husband's return after the attacks, their relationship remains reserved. Oskar's grandmother does not allow her husband to see Oskar and to reveal his true identity to him. To Oskar, he has to remain "the renter" who shares a flat with his grandmother (*ELC* 69). One day when his grandmother is not home, Oskar tells the renter the whole truth about the phone calls. When Oskar eventually finds the owner of the lock, he is disappointed because the key was only there by accident. Then however, Oskar digs out his father's empty coffin

with the help of the "renter." Thomas Schell Sr. puts in all the letters that he had written to his son and that he had never dared to send to him. Now that the coffin bears a meaning for Oskar, he manages to get over his father's death and grows closer to his mother again.

In *Falling Man*, far from forming a harmonious unity, the family is dysfunctional already prior to the attacks. After a short phase during which the protagonists try to live up to the image of the perfect, loving family that stands together in a moment of crisis, the family is disrupted again. Like many of the other novels discussed here, DeLillo's book can give an answer to the much-posed question "Why do they hate us?" Although one might expect a critical involvement particularly on the part of non-western authors, many early Western novels indeed also try to look at the situation critically: Instead of putting the blame on some unknown "Other," especially DeLillo and Kalfus are interested in the dynamics of the attacks, trying to analyze how it could come to this extreme reaction against America and what it stands for. I will discuss how the novelists establish or reinforce national boundaries through their texts, retreating into a nationalistic discourse but I will also go into detail concerning the two authors' attempts at deconstructing boundaries with regard to both content and aesthetics and show how they mediate between different cultures, if not worlds.

Duvall and Marzec claim that "[f]rom the Mishra-Gray-Rothberg perspective, there's little to choose between Jay McInerney's *The Good Life* and DeLillo's *Falling Man*. Both are merely symptoms of an American literature that has retreated from politics into domesticity" (384). This chapter strongly opposes this statement because particularly *Falling Man* is far from being apolitical. Shortly after 9/11, DeLillo claimed that "[i]t is only through the pursuit of counternarrative that we can wrestle the narrative back from the terrorist" ("Ruins"). DeLillo's essay was his personal declaration of war against terror, and his novel *Falling Man* seems to be the essay's sequel: the plot centers on Keith and Lianne Neudecker and their family, their relational issues taking center stage. Yet, a good portion of the book is dedicated to the fictional 9/11 terrorist Hammad and Martin Ridnour, an activist and alleged terrorist in Germany and Italy, thus counterweighing a biased narrative.

Through the novel, we can see a development in DeLillo's perception of the attacks. The following analysis will question readings by critics like

Morley who see the novel as a new attempt at putting the West at the center while pushing the terrorist to the periphery. Although Foer's novel seems painstakingly apolitical at first glance,[39] the author connects the American Ground Zero to other incisive world historical events, offering a counterhegemonic narrative opposing the perception of an exceptionalism of suffering after the attacks. Foer's novel concentrates on the protagonists' recovery from various traumatic occurrences. He draws parallels between Oskar's suffering and that of his grandparents in Dresden during WWII but also that of a survivor of the bomb in Hiroshima.[40] Although Simpson is certainly right by pointing out the impossibility of comparing 9/11 to the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, the mentioning of these historical Ground Zeros plays an important role in the novel. Foer attempts to relativize the suffering and thus take away the exceptionalism surrounding the event.

DeLillo's work, in contrast, has been shaped by terrorism. His essay "Ruins" marks a very patriotic stance in setting up us vs. them binaries[41] and "DeLillo also establishes certain ideological discourses that, ten years later, reveal how the 9/11 representation has developed" (Randall 27). The development of the discourse can already be perceived in *Falling Man*, DeLillo's contribution to the growing number of so-called 9/11 novels. From a radical point of view in "Ruins," DeLillo offers us a more nuanced view in the novel, a fact that mirrors the general development in 9/11 discourses now, eleven years after the attacks. Although the author has been criticized for the ideology presented in his works, and while much of the book focuses on the traumatic impact of September 11 on the survivor and his family, this thesis shows that in *Falling Man* the boundaries between good and evil are troubled by a terrorist defying his more than human wish to be a seemingly "normal" German arts

[39] An examination of the Other does not take place: Oskar only once imagines a showdown with a terrorist who is about to fly into the Empire State Building on whose platform Oskar stands: "I imagined the last second, when I would see the pilot's face, who would be a terrorist. I imagined us looking each other in the eyes when the nose of the plane was one millimeter from the building. I hate you, my eyes would tell him. I hate you, his eyes would tell me" (*ELC* 244).

[40] Especially Simpson strongly opposes the comparison of 9/11 to nuclear catastrophes: "[T]hese have so far all been caused by nation-states and many caused by 'us' and people on 'our' side. One can see the connection of the 2001 event with the dropping of the bomb: there, too, in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, hardly any bodies or body parts remained …. There too no one had a clue what was coming out of a clear summer sky …. [T]he most urgent point to be made is that it is *not* Hiroshima, not *our* Hiroshima, not our price of full admission into the community of global suffering" (Simpson, *Commmemoration* 43-44).

[41] "our tradition of free expression" vs. "'their' culture is suffused with 'hatred'" (Randall 27).

dealer, who turns out to be a former member/supporter of the Baader-Meinhof group in Germany. At the end of the novel, DeLillo brings together two characters that have more in common than one might think: the victim Keith and the perpetrator Hammad: "Hammad turns his back on the promise or possibility of real human contact in favor of an abstract, but passionately felt, idea in a similar way to Keith, who renounces his former life and retreats to the mathematics, statistics and routine of poker …. Hammad and Keith thus share a devotion to self-discipline, or more accurately the two men share a desire to escape the self" (Randall 122-3). At the moment when Hammad enters Keith's life, the narrative passes from the dying terrorist to that of the survivor, and the reader realizes that the two men were not worlds apart. DeLillo here attempts to bridge the divide between perpetrator and victim, the emotional inability of the one (Hammad) causing/amplifying that of the other (Keith).

It may seem surprising that one of the first American novels about 9/11 published refrains from establishing clear-cut boundaries between 'good' and 'evil,' although "[i]n both the essay and *Falling Man*, DeLillo contrasts al Qaeda with America: medieval vengeance with advanced technology; a brotherhood of martyrs with global markets" (Kauffmann 356). "But," Kauffman goes on, "he deconstructs the very dichotomies others reinforce" (356). DeLillo is well-known for analyzing terrorist violence in all shapes like in his novels *Mao II* (1991) and *Cosmopolis* (2003). While, for example, Hamid's reluctant fundamentalist, Changez, narrates the story of his awakening chronologically and monologically, in *Falling Man*, the different points of view are assigned to different characters who debate about the attacks dialectically. Hence, besides looking at how a new national(istic) and xenophobic identity is formed in literature after the attacks in America, I will look at how DeLillo attempts to counter these forces, not by supporting the terrorists' cause, but by attempting, like Hamid, to mediate, and by attempting to comment on the events from different perspectives.

As the following quote from an Indian review shows, the Western attempts at fictionalizing the attacks find little enthusiasm outside the West because

> most novels have only scratched the surface of phenomena that remain, finally, *beyond the comprehension of the classes to which these writers, and many of their readers, belong*. The otherness of the religious fundamentalist, let alone the terrorist, remains incapable of narration, except as absolute evil, medieval stupidity or juvenile error. (Khair, emphasis mine).

Despite the fact that *Falling Man* is written by a Westerner and for a Western audience, it is one of the few examples for novels that attempt to realize that 9/11 is not a question of "good vs. evil" but a border situation. Although some parallels can be found between DeLillo's work and the texts of Updike and Amis, when it comes to the (prejudiced and clichéd) depiction of Hammad, the 9/11 terrorist, DeLillo at least attempts to understand the "otherness," highlighting that the equation "Other = terrorist" does not hold. DeLillo draws historical connections by relating the 19 9/11 terrorists to the 19 terrorists of the Baader-Meinhof Group, a far-left militant group responsible for numerous bombings and assassinations, inter alia the assassination of the then president of the German Employer Association, Hanns Martin Schleyer, in 1977. DeLillo tries to point out that terrorism is not restricted to the Other and lets Martin Ridnour, a white Westerner and former terrorist, outline the workings of terrorism and delineate the reasons that led to the attacks on September 11, 2001.

Novelist Benjamin Kunkel believes that "maybe the novelist should not aid the terrorist's bid for significance" by dealing with them (Kunkel). Although DeLillo elaborates on terrorists' motivations in general, one can hardly say that he thereby gives the terrorists significance. DeLillo's texts aim to "describe the disconnect between America's self-image and its image in the eyes of the world" (Kauffman 353). The novelist attempts to look across (national, social, cultural) borders, to break up our patterns of thinking, and to analyze threshold situations where, as Hamid's novel also points out, good and evil are not easily distinguishable.

> It is as if the rage, fear and contempt that have overwhelmed many people in the non-Western world have also overwhelmed some of the brightest people in the West, distorting their vision to the point where some extraordinary crude fantasies - insulting Islam into a reformation, boosting the American Empire, bombing entire societies into democracy – appear to them as practical solutions to the problem of living in an overcrowded world with people who are not and, do not wish to be like them. (Mishra, "Paranoia")

What Mishra describes here fits the sentiments of Lianne, who almost lost her (estranged) husband in the attacks. Lianne stands for many people after the attacks who, as proof for their group mind set, display a growing hostility and nationalist feeling and who are also to be found in the novels by Hamid, Naqvi, and Halaby. *Falling Man* triggers two different but complementary reactions: on the one hand, individuals develop a group mentality and show solidarity with the victims and survivors, which frequently manifests itself in the display of American flags that are also a display of power; on the other hand, the protagonists of the novels show how, besides identifying with the large group of fellow Americans, they also identify with the values of the traditional family, secluding themselves from the outside world.

Although Lianne is happy that the attacks have brought her and her husband back together, they cannot overcome the silence caused by the fact that they did not share the traumatic experience. While she only witnessed the tragedy on TV, Keith fought his way out of the tower. Lianne seems unable to cope with the fact that Keith had to go through this alone. Overnight, Lianne changes from a rational New York business woman to an anxious, prejudiced family woman, and 9/11 offers her a "rhetorical trope that could legitimize [her] views" (Salaita). When her neighbor Elena starts listening to oriental music, Lianne loses it:

> This is retaliation in itself. Ask her why she's playing this particular music at this highly sensitive time …. They're the ones who think alike, eat the same food at the same time. She knew this wasn't true. Say the same prayers, word for word, in the same prayer stance, day and night, following the arc of the sun and the moon. (*FM* 68)

Eventually, she starts a quarrel with Elena and even hits her in the face. Lianne's reaction to her neighbor mirrors the general atmosphere of hostility but also insecurity after the attacks. Even Lianne, an educated and successful woman, is infected by the virus called paranoia. Later in the story, her rant about the terrorists shows that the views spread by the media have struck a chord with many people and although Martin tries to reason with her, her prejudices and fears are not easily overcome. Her change in attitude is also signaled by her wish to leave New York; by giving up the multiculturalism of the city, she

acknowledges her fear. Lianne's biased reaction and attitude echo that of DeLillo in "Ruins" but also of many people around the globe after the attacks, especially of survivors or relatives.

The character of Martin Ridnour, then, mirrors DeLillo's changed perception of things with timely distance from the tragedy. He tries to bring Lianne and her mother Nina back to their normal selves by advising them not to take the attacks personal but to see them as what they are: a political act.

> Stand apart and think about the elements,' he [Martin] said. 'Coldly, clearly if you're able to. Do not let it tear you down. See it, measure it …. There's the event, there's the individual. Measure it. Let it teach you something. See it. Make yourself equal to it.' (*FM* 42)

Lianne's point of view contrasts strongly with that of Martin. As a German, and thus as an outsider, he sees America's weak points and criticizes the country heavily. Allowing for Martin Ridnour, a Westerner, to voice this critique, makes the boundaries between good Westerners and bad Other questionable: "Maybe he [Martin] was a terrorist but he was one of ours, she [Lianne] thought, and the thought chilled her, shamed her – one of ours, which meant godless, Western, white" (*FM* 195). Realizing that Martin may well have been a terrorist, Lianne is made aware that not everything is as black and white as she sees it immediately after the attacks. For Martin, the personal has nothing to do with the political, and so for him, the attacks were not aimed against individual people but against an ideology. Of course, being the wife of a survivor and seeing how Keith struggles to be master of his life again, Lianne takes the terrorist attacks personal. Martin serves as a mediator who draws the attention of his American friends and of the audience to the fact that globalization also signifies striking imbalances. Martin, aka Ernst Hechinger, a former member of Kommune 1 in Germany, has a dubious past, and the novel does not reveal whether he himself has killed people for the group's cause.[42] However, it is made clear that he strongly sympathized with the cause of the Baader-Meinhof group, committed to left-wing radicalism, and from this terrorist perspective, he can also understand the 9/11 terrorists' motivations and brings in a historical perspective of radical

[42] A "Wanted" poster in Ridnour's apartment shows "'[n]ineteen names and faces'" of German terrorists (*FM* 147). This scenario evokes the 9/11 terrorists, also nineteen members of a terrorist group.

terrorism. "'He [Martin] thinks … these jihadists, … they have something in common with the radicals of the sixties and seventies …. They have their visions of world brotherhood'" (*FM* 147). Sick of American narcissism, Martin reacts violently. He predicts that America's global influence will become less and less over time, thus also predicting the doom of globalization.

> 'We're all sick of America and Americans. The subject nauseates us …. For all the careless power in this country, let me say this, for all the danger it makes in the world, America is going to become irrelevant …. Soon the day is coming when nobody has to think about America except for the danger it brings …. It becomes the center of its own shit'. (*FM* 191)

Martin's interlocutor, a library director, advances a totally contrary view, emphasizing America's global influence and power and stating that it was pushed into its role especially by Europe that is strongly influenced and surrounded by American (pop)culture.

> 'If we occupy this center, it's because you put us there. This is your true dilemma,' he said. 'Despite everything, we're still America and you are still Europe. You go to our movies, listen to our music, speak our language. How can you stop thinking about us? You see us and you hear us all the time. Ask yourself. What comes after America?' (*FM* 192-3)[43]

The library director's point of view can be read as a confirmation of Henry Luce's idea of the "American Century", which he propagated in 1941. However, he does not think that this era has ended yet, extending it to the 21st century. The director's idea(l)s cater to feelings of nationalism and exceptionalism in which many Americans believe and of which they are proud. The debate on nationalism and the terrorists' cause culminates in a dispute between Nina and Martin, which mirrors the American mindset. Like George W. Bush, Lianne explains the attacks emotionally, as an act of envy and lack of humanity. Martin tries to counter her arguments with rationality by bringing in political elements and by pointing to America's role in the attacks. In this dialogue, both characters make

[43] During a commemoration of the victims of the September 11 attacks at Ground Zero on September 11, 2011, one of the speakers pointed out that now, ten years after the attacks, the date that is etched into many people's minds is 2016, the year when "the age of America ends" (Gardner). The tragedy of the attacks and the lessons that America should have learned from them are now slowly fading and make space for new anxieties.

points that are similar to the ones brought forth by Changez and his American interlocutor in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, which makes clear DeLillo's intention to distance himself from a one-sided narration.

> 'It's sheer panic. They attack out of panic.' 'This much yes, it may be true. Because they think the world is a disease. This world, this society, ours. A disease that's spreading …. There are no goals they can hope to achieve. They are not liberating a people or casting out a dictator. Kill the innocent, only that.' 'They strike a blow to this country's dominance. They achieve this, to show how a great power can be vulnerable. A power that interferes, occupies …. One side has the capital, the labor, the technology, the armies, the agencies, the cities, the laws, the police and the prisons. The other side has a few men willing to die.' 'God is great,' she said. 'Forget God. These are matters of history. This is politics and economics. All the things that shape lives, millions of people, their lives, their consciousness.' 'It's not the history of Western interference that pulls down these societies. It's their own history, their mentality. They live in a closed world, of choice, of necessity. They haven't advanced because they haven't wanted to or tried to.' (*FM* 46-47)

Despite DeLillo's attempt at explaining the dynamics that led to 9/11, in *Falling Man*'s last chapter, it is once more made clear that he does by no means make a plea for the terrorists' cause. The chapter titled "In the Hudson Corridor" (237) narrates the last minutes inside the hijacked plane from Hammad's perspective, which then blends into that of Keith experiencing the crash of the plane into the tower. Keith tries to save the severely injured Rumsey, who dies in his arms. He sees people jumping out of windows while he walks down the stairs and out of the World Trade Center: "Then he saw a shirt come down out of the sky, he walked and saw it fall, arms waving like nothing in this life" (246). While Lianne only saw a performance of the Falling Man and felt traumatized by this, DeLillo metonymically tells us that Keith sees actual people jumping to their death.[44] DeLillo commemorates the many victims and the horror that made the events traumatizing and shocking. Unlike Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, *Falling Man* offers no catharsis. While Lianne and Justin try to adjust to the new

[44] In DeLillo's novel, the iconic term '9/11' is never mentioned. Although Florence takes us back to that fateful day and also Keith tells the reader about the death of Rumsey, the attacks somehow seem removed and the novel rather focuses, like all other novels - except for Beigbeder's - on the aftermath. Bin Laden is referred to as "Bill Lawton" and the title's falling man is only a performance artist, not the man from Drew's photograph.

situation with Keith on the road, Keith's life becomes a permanent attempt to escape himself and he creates his own *huis clos* by retreating to the anonymity and artificiality of casinos.

Besides thematizing the omnipresence of trauma, which is a recurring theme in Western novels centering on the attacks of September 11, 2001, DeLillo aims at questioning the West's ready-made and short-sighted view by addressing pressing issues of global scope. In contrast to Foer, DeLillo is not afraid to discuss the political tensions of that time. At the end of the novel, he writes about the protests against the war in Iraq. Lianne, although she goes to the demonstration, still is not her old self, but governed by "rage and foreboding" (*FM* 182). She is not "[c]ut free from nights that sprawl through endless waking chains of self-hell," and the "crowd did not return to her a sense of belonging" (*FM* 182). Whereas the anti-war demonstration shows that many Americans try to move on, her rage about what the attacks did to her country and, more importantly, to her family, prevents closure. Lianne's reaction shows that "the gap between the individual and the collective" is not closed but that individual suffering still lasts and must not be forgotten (Däwes, *Ground* 280). As I have argued before, the novel shows the progress in DeLillo's thinking since 9/11 and his essay "Ruins." The final scene's reticence contrasts strongly with the outspoken ending of Kalfus' novel. Although DeLillo does not go as far as Kalfus in criticizing the government's politics and strikes a reconciliatory tone in the end, the novel attempts a paradigm shift.[45]

The novel as a genre offers authors many opportunities not only to use it as a means to entertain the audience. As Amy Kaplan argues, people react differently to traumatic situations; trauma can manifest itself through insomnia, anxiety, panic attacks, nightmares and the like, depending on the person's "psychic history" (Introduction 1). All these reactions to traumatic situations are summarized under the term post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Although psychoanalysts try to find ways by which victims of trauma can find relief and achieve closure, trauma can seldom be cured. To overcome PTSD, the victims

[45] DeLillo is well aware of the global role of the US and offers the reader some comments on the violent course of action in the War on Terror: "All he had learned was that Keith had once owned a pit bull. This, at least, seemed to mean something, a dog that was all skull and jaws, an American breed, developed originally to fight and kill" (*FM* 44).

have to find a way to work through and confront their trauma. However, many prefer to suppress the traumatic experience instead of facing it. To many victims, the experience was too horrible, and they refuse or do not have the strength to face it again. Yet, mostly, victims of trauma are not successful in repressing the event permanently. Cathy Caruth calls this the "historical power of trauma" (Introduction 8). She argues that "the experience is repeated after its forgetting … and through its forgetting … it is first experienced at all" (Caruth, Introduction 8). Consequently, if people refuse to face the experience, the event will haunt them in recurring flashbacks and nightmares (cf. Erikson 184). Thus, psychoanalysts argue that a traumatic event has to be worked through to achieve closure and to step out of this vicious circle. It is interesting to see that the novels focus on individual people and their desperate search for a way out of their mental imprisonment. Through their characters, the novelists point out that the fight against PTSD is a lonely one and everybody is absorbed with their own problems.

Although very restricted and restrictive in terms of plot and character development, the novels are "more memorable and psychologically acute than most of the journalism generated by September 11" (McInerney, "Invention"). 9/11 signifies the loss of loved ones and most people are indifferent or unaware of the U.S.' retaliatory measures which cause death and fear in other regions of the world. Grief and memory are appropriated by America, thereby creating an exceptionalism of suffering: "The deaths of 9/11 thus occurred within a culture of commemoration that was already primed to resort to sanctification and personalization in the cause of upholding the image of flourishing civil society and a providential national destiny, and one that inadvertently signals … that it is doing exactly that" (Simpson, *Commemoration* 31). The presumed unrepresentability of the attacks led to a crisis of representation and the first attempts are characterized by their heavy focus on the traumatic impact of 9/11 on a collective but especially on the private level. Lucy Bond "contend[s] that this crisis of representation has arisen, at least in part, from the ubiquity of traumatic narratives, which have been transferred across discursive realms, disguising crucial authorial and critical differences, and seeming to validate the perspective of the state by testifying to an apparent unity of interpretation and response" (Bond 733). This becomes particularly clear with novels such as

Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, which focuses very much on trauma and its effects on a family. But Foer does not limit the trauma to the 9/11 attacks; he evokes earlier tragedies such as the bombing of Dresden or the dropping of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima - thereby signalizing to the reader that the September 11 attacks are only the latest event in a long row of tragedies, which, over time, have been worked through. By doing so, the plot is reduced to a trauma narrative and does not leave much space for other topics, such as the U.S,' retaliatory measures and the attacks' global repercussions. However, we can argue that while Foer wrote the book, the atmosphere in the U.S. was indeed marked by anxiety and trauma and the majority of people did not (yet) think about the global effects.

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close focuses on those who struggle to overcome their grief for the personal loss they experienced due to 9/11 and the guilt of surviving. The novel paints a heart-rending portrait of a young boy who tries to work through his PTSD with the help of a quest for a key he found in his father's closet. His quest becomes an allegory for the people who try to make sense of the attacks: loss and pain surround us, be they caused by a historical tragedy or otherwise, and we have to learn to deal with grief and loss, no matter what. The book ends on a hopeful note and serves a cathartic purpose for both the author and the reader. The novel is circular, ending where it began, namely at the grave of the father. The (empty) coffin that gave occasion to immense grief becomes the solution in the end. Foer points to the fact that grief and mourning are inseparable from our lives and do not only affect us after 9/11.[46]

Both, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and *Falling Man*, are very local novels that focus on the impact of the attacks in New York City. Similar to Foer's portrayal of mourning New Yorkers, DeLillo's *Falling Man* paints a psychological portray of New York after the attacks, and the characters present us with the many ways in which the trauma of 9/11 was dealt with. Although the American people grew extremely solidary after the attacks, the novel points out that the protagonists' battle to go back to a normal self is fought individually. Keith, a survivor, cannot talk about the attacks to his family. While Oskar's actions are informed by survivor's guilt, Keith is strongly affected by his near-

[46] For example, Thomas Schell loses his fiancé and unborn child during the bombings of Dresden.

death experience and the death of his friends. 9/11 is omnipresent: first of all, he is reminded of it by his injured hand; the fact that he repeats his exercises compulsively long after his injured hand has healed shows that while the exterior wounds have healed, the scars left on Keith's soul do not disappear as easily. Ugo Panzani argues that Keith unconsciously tries to overcome his trauma when he accidently takes a fellow survivor's, which becomes a "historical 'vector'" (Panzani 87) that connects "histories and people" (Panzani 87).

For this fellow survivor, Florence, Keith becomes her rescuer, not from the crumbling towers but from post-9/11 life:

> I can't explain it but no, you saved my life. After what happened, so many gone, friends gone, people I worked with, I was nearly gone, nearly dead, in another way. I couldn't see people, talk to people, go from here to there without forcing myself up off the chair …. Then you walked in the door. You ask yourself why you took the briefcase out of the building. That's why. So you could bring it here. So we could get to know each other. That's why you took it and that's why you brought it here, to keep me alive.
> He didn't believe this but he believed her. She felt it and meant it. 'You ask yourself what the story is that goes with the briefcase. I'm the story,' she said." (*FM* 137-138)

Their shared experience helps Florence to work through her trauma. Time and again she goes over her escape from the tower in minute detail. Unable to talk about the attacks himself, Keith hopes that through her, he can find a way to work through the trauma and return to being his old self. After some time, however, he realizes that there is no easy way out of his crisis.

For the couple in *Falling Man* family kinship becomes something the two are under the impression they have to perform pressured by the attacks. While in *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* the estranged couple soon gives up its attempts at reconciliation, Keith and Lianne decide: "'We're ready to sink into our little lives'" (*FM* 75). The attacks seem to trigger a group mindset with the family as its core and mainstream America as its extension. Yet, this reinvention as a member of a mourning nation mostly fails and a return to individuality soon sets in again. Despite their attempt at becoming an intact family again, the basis, communication, is missing and the family soon falls apart. Justin does not talk to his parents about the ominous Bill Lawton. Lianne is unable to talk about her fear of having inherited the Alzheimer's-gene and

about the trauma caused by the death of her father who shot himself because of his illness. Finally, Keith cannot talk about what happened to him on that fateful September morning.

The novel's title hints at the fact that reinvention fails: besides the literally falling victims and the performance of the Falling Man, Keith's fall is psychological. His transformation is particularly striking. The end of the disruption of the family is simultaneously the beginning of the disruption of his self. Keith tries to be the way he was before the attacks, only better: he returns to his family and even finds a new job. Yet, something is missing, and soon after his return home, he has an affair with a fellow survivor, Florence. Over time, the traumatic experience of surviving the attacks weighs too heavy on Keith's shoulders: "Nothing seemed familiar, being here, in a family again, and he felt strange to himself, or always had, but it was different now because he was watching" (*FM* 65). He realizes that he has never fit in the role as a family man, but, now, he feels he does not belong to the family but is only a spectator, an outsider who does not play a role for the family's life, which hints at the fact that his attempts at pretending to be 'normal' will fail.

Before the attacks, Keith was part of a group of poker players who met regularly; after the attacks, he seems to give up poker playing since two of the members are dead. Yet, after some time, family life crowds Keith in, and he distances himself gradually. At the end, he finds himself in the limbo land of Las Vegas poker tournaments, feeling as if he were caught in a nightmare from which he does not know how to escape, enduring the sensation of helplessness and numbness. He "is the falling man who has lost his moorings" (Kauffman 369).[47] It becomes clear that Keith has escaped only physically; there can be no catharsis for him.[48]

The protagonists experience 9/11 as a kind of caesura and want to make the tragedy mean something for them personally by attempting to reshape their lives for the better.[49] Like the protagonists of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, Lianne believes in the family; she is the counterweight to Keith's egotism

[47] (cf. *FM* 202).

[48] (cf. *FM* 214).

[49] "They called it terror sex. Everyone needed something new, some release or payback or just acknowledgement that their lives had changed" (22–23)" (Gray, "Crisis" 130-1).

and stands for American values: "'Times like these, the family is necessary …. This is how we live through things that scare us half to death'" (*FM* 214). For most, however, the shock wears off all too quickly and reality catches up with them: In *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country*, Joyce and Marshall's private war is paralleled by the war in Iraq, something that relativizes the American tragedy and the protagonists decide to give up their masquerade and return to being their old, selfish selves.

Of course, this is a tendency that cannot be transferred to all novels about 9/11: as Spiegelman's *In the Shadow of No Towers* (2004) shows, although people attempt to return to how things were before the attacks, something has changed nevertheless. This is also the case in McInerney's *The Good Life*. Here, the protagonists undergo a different kind of change: the protagonists Luke and Corrine use 9/11 as an occasion to change their lives; in an attempt at escaping their role as father and mother, husband and wife, the two have an affair. In the end, however, they realize, during a staging of *The Nutcracker* with their respective families, a tradition that both families have followed for many years, that somehow things have quieted down and a certain routine has returned for themselves and the New Yorkers around them.[50] In the end, both give up their new identity as adulterers since their relationship only worked under the special circumstances after the attacks. In contrast to the above performances of identity, these two protagonists do not have to pretend: their feelings were authentic and after the end of their love affair, they do not return to the performance of family father/mother and wife/husband like Keith attempted in *Falling Man*; both realize that something has to change and decide to leave their spouses nevertheless. "The Good Life may be the most provocative novel yet about September 11, precisely because it dares to suggest that most of us weren't changed at all" (Strong). People's relationships, like the towers themselves, "end[] in the rubble" (DeLillo, "Ruins").

Less distinct than in *Falling Man*, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, too, causes a change in mindset in one of the protagonists. After the death

[50] "It seemed to him both hopeful that he could once again imagine the city as a backdrop to the dramas of daily life and sad that the satori flash of acute wakefulness and connectedness that had followed the initial confrontation with mortality in September was already fading behind them" (McInerney, *The Good Life* 353).

of his son, Thomas Schell, Sr. returns to his wife and moves in with her. However, their relationship is burdened by both their common memory of Dresden and by the death of their son. Thomas Schell Sr. makes a step back into society by communicating with Oskar and by helping him overcome his father's death. The two dig up Thomas Schell, Jr.'s coffin and fill it with the unsent letters. The meeting of Oskar and the shared experience of digging up the coffin leads to catharsis. The grandfather is relieved that his letters have reached their addressee and that he has finally told his story to somebody. Thomas Schell's attempt at reshaping himself as a better man, a better husband, ends after this cathartic experience and he decides to leave his wife again. However, this time, she proposes to accompany him and to live at the airport. It can be argued that he does so to escape from reality. To him, the airport is a "nothing place," a neutral place where people meet and people have to separate. Like Keith Neudecker's limbo land of professional poker, the airport is the place Thomas Schell, Sr. goes to when he wants to feel nothing. The airport is defined ex-negativo: "Not coming or going. Not something or nothing. Not yes or no" (*ELC* 312).

Just as things seemed to return back to 'normal' soon after the attacks in real life, the artificial cult of domesticity soon loses its spell on the protagonists who sink back into individualism. Even during the short time span of reshaping, the protagonists cannot wholly let go of their old habits: the 'renter' still does not talk, and Keith and Lianne are too absorbed with reviving their marriage to really take care of their son so that he creates his very own truth about Bin Laden and the fall of the towers. The authors' thematization of the new cult of domesticity after the attacks serves as a comment on real-life. Like in the novels, the epoch-making character of the tragedy has frequently led people to take stock of their lives and has revived gender-stereotypes: "In the aftermath of the attacks, the cultural troika of media, entertainment, and advertising declared the post-9/11 age an era of neofifties nuclear family 'togetherness', redomesticated femininity, and reconstituted Cold Warrior manhood" (Faludi 4). And thus, the career-driven mothers of Justin and Oskar find themselves in the role of the consoling mom. On the other hand, as the male is either dead or too self-absorbed, the women display rather a post-WWII "We can do it" mentality, and both Lianne and Oskar's mother are ready to take their

lives in their own hands without men: "[S]he [Lianne] was ready to be alone, in reliable calm, she and the kid, the way they were before the planes appeared that day, silver crossing blue" (*FM* 236). Although there is no closure for Keith, Lianne eventually finds a way to cope with the events of the fateful morning in September. She has accepted that she cannot change history and also that she cannot change her husband.

As I have shown above, while the September 11 attacks may seem to have changed everything, the protagonists of *Falling Man* try to resume their pre-9/11 lives and try to recreate domestic togetherness. Although Justin's parents have tried to keep the details of the attacks from their son to spare him the trauma, Justin's sciolism makes him invent the things he did not gather from the media or his parents' discussions. Creating his own normality, he and his friends are on the lookout of Bill Lawton, the Americanized version of Bin Laden's name. Although Justin has pieced together what has happened on September 11, 2001, he refuses to acknowledge the destruction of the Twin Towers, fashioning the illusion of a fairy tale-like happy ending, an illusion that he himself destroys again: "'We know they're [the planes] coming because he says they are …. He says this time the towers will fall …. This time coming, he says, they'll really come down" (*FM* 102). Lianne is utterly shocked by her son's fantasies: "His repositioning of events frightened her in an unaccountable way. He was making something better than it really was, the towers still standing, but the time reversal, the darkness of the final thrust, how better becomes worse, these were the elements of a failed fairy tale, eerie enough but without coherence" (*FM* 102). Justin's reversal of the chronology of events reminds us of Oskar's flip book that also portrays an alternative reality. However, while Oskar's flip book undoes the tragedy, Justin's happy ending is only temporal and his announcement sounds threatening despite the fact that the towers are already gone. DeLillo points to the fact that the harsh post-9/11 reality cannot be escaped and replaced by alternative endings but that the tragedy has to be worked through in order to achieve closure. This can be observed with the two protagonists: Lianne, angry at first, eventually manages to cope with the tragedy. With Keith gone, she attempts to return to a normal life.

Keith, too, attempts to restore a certain level of normality again by going back to his wife and by pretending that nothing has happened, suppressing

his trauma. Predictably, his attempt fails. Keith creates an alternative reality by becoming a semi-professional poker player and by leaving his family behind once more. Keith's inner monologue shows that no catharsis is possible for him and thus, also no possibility to return to his old life from which he had already tried to escape pre-9/11 by moving out of their apartment.

> There were no days or times except for the tournament schedule. He wasn't making enough money to justify this life on a practical basis. But there was no such need. There should have been but wasn't and that was the point. The point was one of invalidation. Nothing else pertained. Only this had binding force. He folded six more hands, then went all-in. Make them bleed. Make them spill their precious losers' blood. These were the days after and now the years, a thousand heaving dreams, the trapped man, the fixed limbs, the dream of paralysis, the gasping man, the dream of asphyxiation, the dream of helplessness. A fresh deck rose to the tabletop. (*FM* 293-294)

In contrast to Keith and his family who have to fight to find a way back to normality after the attacks, Hammad, the terrorist, has different issues: in DeLillo's portrayal of the 9/11 terrorist, Hammad exhibits a human touch. After having been recruited by Al Qaida for the deathly mission on September 11, 2001, Hammad now has to fight against his wish to be normal, and he finds himself missing his normal life in Germany and missing his girlfriend. Being a human and not a killing machine, he has doubts about his mission and questions that the killing of innocents is necessary for their cause. DeLillo's "alternative reading of terror allows us to examine its occurrence in the reciprocally violent historical contexts of colonialism and global neocolonialism rather than of the ahistorical 'war on terror' in which terror is viewed simply as savage and irrational, an irruption of the primitive" (Boehmer 147). By blurring the boundaries between good and bad, DeLillo also draws the reader's attention to the fact that Islam is not a religion that is confined to the countries of the East but that has long found its way into our western world. Consequently, the perception of many Westerners of Muslims as fanatic Arab sons of the desert has to be rethought dramatically when DeLillo describes Hammad as a human being who does not wish to die but wants to have a future.

Oskar, whose world has been shattered by men like Hammad, finds back to some normality through his quest for the key: because he believes that

the search is a last riddle left for him to solve by his father, Oskar can feel close to his dad again. The illusion of normality is shattered when he finds out that the quest was pointless, and he suffers a major setback. When he learns that his mother has offered him the quest as a possibility to distract himself, he feels offended at first, but when he thinks his quest over again, he feels grateful. The protagonists' inner turmoil, emotional numbness, and the conflict between normality and tragedy reflect the crisis of representation following the attacks. Despite the fact that people retreated to the domestic realm after 9/11, the media coverage made all life public. However, while David Janiak caused medial uproar with his performances, his death is only mentioned in a small article in the newspapers, which hints at the fact that the 9/11 hysteria/hype/sensationalism is over and a return to normal life begins. This is also mirrored by the fact that both Oskar and Lianne are at peace again and resume their normal lives.

As can be seen in *Falling Man*, the attacks were an event that was primarily experienced visually and is thus mostly remembered as a visual event. The pictures of the falling towers have burned themselves into the minds of the watchers and are by now firmly located in the collective memory. The omnipresence of the attacks on screen is also thematized by the novelists; most of their protagonists experience 9/11 through the news broadcast. The fact that the attacks were caught on tape and can be repeatedly watched makes it difficult for the protagonists to move on:

> Every time she saw a videotape of the planes she moved a finger toward the power button on the remote. Then she kept on watching. The second plane coming out of that ice blue sky, this was the footage that entered the body, that seemed to run beneath her skin, the fleeting sprint that carried lives and histories, theirs and hers, everyone's, into some other distance, out beyond the towers. (*FM* 169)

The replaying of the collapsing towers on TV contributed strongly to the iconicity of the Twin Towers and Ground Zero, and the memory of the victims made way for the iconic memory of the collapsing towers. Hence, because it is charged with symbolism, it is New York, and not a field in Pennsylvania, that comes to mind when we remember 9/11. The writing of novels is another attempt at commemorating the attacks. In this context, Erll talks of a "cadre médial" (140): "In analogy to Maurice Halbwachs's *cadres sociaux*, these 'frames' draw

boundaries that determine what kind of memory is possible and/or socially permissible" (Siegel). Through their different narrative strategies, the novelists have contributed to a larger perception of the attacks and, more importantly, of the individual victims thereof. In *Windows on the World*, Beigbeder criticizes the medial self-censorship that made the images of people falling to their deaths vanish from the news almost instantly since they caused a public uproar. Foer's use of photographs at the end of the novel, but also DeLillo's performance artist, named the Falling Man, were heavily criticized and deemed unethical for the same reason. The novels of Beigbeder, Foer, and DeLillo attempt to bring back, with the help of painful metaphors and actual images, the individual suffering and death. The novels thus actively partake in the shaping of 9/11 memory and highlight how 9/11 has shaped the collective memory as a predominantly visual and national event.

Writing does not only offer a way to work through the traumatic experience but is also a general way of remembering the attacks, not only for the Alzheimer's patients writing down their life stories in *Falling Man*. Lianne, a freelance editor, reads manically every manuscript dealing with the attacks that she can lay hand on. The pictures etched in her brain by their multiple reruns do not make sense to her. Although they contribute to her commemoration of 9/11 as an iconic event, she is not able to believe her eyes but still compulsively watches the pictures on TV. Lianne is unable to connect these pictures to her private life that was so much affected by the collapse of the towers. She cannot acknowledge that the attacks are real and that her husband almost died.

Memory and loss are two vital components in the meaning making process after the attacks. Kauffman states that "DeLillo confronts the repression of memory and the memory of repression, using his considerable craft to give memory and tenderness to all our howling grief about what is past, and to come" (Kauffman 372). Through reading about the dynamics of 9/11 and by discussing the attacks with her group of patients during the Alzheimer's patients' story line sessions that she mentors, Lianne attempts to make sense of the pictures. The sessions show yet another possibility to come to terms with trauma by means of a writing cure. The

> ‘story line sessions’ in East Harlem with a group of Alzheimer’s sufferers [are] an apt metaphor of amnesia produced by trauma - and of the process of recovering meaning retrospectively through narrative, of making sense of the grief the terrorist attacks leave in their wake, and assessing what remains in the lives of those whose world has been forever altered. (Wilcox 42)

Soon after their sessions on the attacks, the group starts to dwindle and more and more of the people she mentored fall prey to forgetting. Alzheimer’s disease becomes a strong metaphor, foreshadowing the vanishing of the memory of 9/11 from people’s minds. Although the manuscripts remain and the written word contributes to the commemoration, the manuscripts, just like the 9/11 novel, only reach a narrow target audience.

David Janiak, the title’s falling man, has found another way to deal with the attacks. Like Beigbeder, who evokes the horror of people falling from the towers, Janiak keeps the memory of the victims, whose pictures vanished from the screens in an act of medial self-censorship, alive. Moreover, his performance also points out the importance of art of every kind for the commemoration and for the process of working through the attacks.

> The true choice apropos of historical traumas is not the one between remembering or forgetting them: traumas we are not ready or able to remember haunt us all the more forcefully. We should therefore accept the paradox that, in order really to forget an event, we must first summon up the strength to remember it properly. In order to account for this paradox, we should bear in mind that the opposite of existence is not nonexistence, but insistence[.] (Žižek 22)

Janiak’s performance is horrifying, tasteless and cathartic at the same time because it forces people to confront their trauma and cope with the terrible images. His performance counters the helplessness of those (e.g. Lianne) who had to watch the towers come down “by reenacting the traumatic scene[.] Janiak’s performance, defined in opposition to the traumatizing media image, offers an opportunity for a cathartic working through” (Cvek 347). Yet, his reenactment of the “Falling Man” does not have a cathartic effect on Janiak, who eventually kills himself during his performance. Also, in contrast to Oskar’s “insistence” demonstrated by his quest in the five boroughs, Keith sinks into

"nonexistence," experiencing a sensation of asphyxiation and numbness and not being able to become his former self again.

In Foer's novel, Oskar struggles to find out how exactly his father died. He encounters a wall of (medial) silence in his research about the fate of the victims and has to go to foreign websites to gather information about the circumstances under which the people died. This points to the fact that the media and the restriction of information available shape the memory: because he lacks information and cannot recreate the memory of his father's death, Oskar compulsively invents ever new versions of his father's dying. By connecting the protagonists' 9/11 experiences with memories of previous tragedies, the memory of 9/11 is set into the larger frame of history and Oskar's individual suffering is connected to that of the collective.

In what follows, the chapter will show that the representation of the attacks happens in a postmodern framework in which the authors cross (sub-)generic, stylistic, aesthetic boundaries in order to represent the tragedy. The novels also cross temporal boundaries since the characters' experiences in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* are interlaced with history and the epistolary episodes prevent a chronology of events. Moving across space as well, Foer blends the actuality of New York with the historicity of Dresden and Hiroshima. Moreover, both *Falling Man* and *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* are circular: Foer's novel begins and ends with the father's (first empty, then letter-filled) coffin. In *Falling Man*, everything begins and ends with Keith escaping the tower, thereby defying chronology. This circularity hints at the dilemma of representing the crisis in literature. As the novels return to the beginning, authors do so, too, by combining tried aesthetic means. The narrative comes full circle and so do the novels' aesthetics. In *Falling Man*, the chapters purport clear boundaries but the characters interact and cross chapter boundaries, and, as the example of Keith and Hammad shows, even melt into each other.

The authors combine many different styles, making it difficult to settle on a particular generic attribution. The novels are domestic as well as social. Oskar's story can be read as a coming of age story. Since the novels are "both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages," they can be read as historiographic metafiction (Hutcheon 5). Although both authors are keen on realistic representations, especially Foer toys

with magical realism. Like Beigbeder, Foer exhausts the novel's possibilities by interweaving autobiographical elements with the fictional world of his protagonists and, consequently, stretches the boundary between fiction and non-fiction.[51]

In a review of Foer's novel, Michael Faber writes: "It promises to take you to Ground Zero, but helplessly detours towards the Land of Oz, spending most of its time journeying through the Neverlands in between" (Faber). Foer endeavors to stick to realist principles most of the time and emphasizes this through his protagonist Oskar, who believes in science and writes letters to Stephen Hawking. After his world is shaken by the death of his father, Oskar, unable to gather hard 'scientific' facts about his father's death, turns to his fantasy and imagines his death instead. Like his very real encounters with people sharing the last name "Black," his inventing is another way of coming to terms with his beloved father's death. Like DeLillo's Justin, who creates his own eerie 9/11 fairytale, Oskar escapes into fantasy when he cannot find or bear the truth. The ending, too, is of magical quality since it is improbable that grandfather and Oskar dig up a coffin. Through the use of magic realism, Foer leaves his readers with a positive feeling. Oskar's withdrawal into a fantastical world can be transferred to the audience. They allow us to escape reality or to create a new one. Magic realism here is strongly connected to the psychology of the characters, and it helps Oskar to work through his trauma. Through the use of magical realism, Foer also comments on memory and reality[52] and on the function of the novel: it offers an alternative to reality, but is also an important factor for working through the trauma caused by the attacks.

The harsh reality and Oskar's magical world clash painfully at the end of the novel when Oskar invents a whole new narrative to the pictures of the Falling Man, in whom he sees his father. The truth evoked by photographs is thus only a construct: Oskar, by reversing the order of the photographs, creates a new reality in which the man jumps back into the tower and "would have been

[51] In an interview Foer states: "All writing ... is autobiographical. 'Has to be. There is nowhere for it to come from but from the author. Every character, every event ... is autobiographical.' And though you don't write to learn about yourself, 'that is what happens. When you read something you have written, you have to confront some of the lies you have been telling yourself.' So writing becomes an experiment, a kind of laboratory in which you discover your own identity" (qtd. in Mackenzie).

[52] "Indeed, magical realism refuses to verify a fixed, singular or homogeneous version of any event or reality" (Langdon).

safe" (*ELC* 326). Foer counters hegemonic intentions by showing how easily truth can be manipulated and even remade. Just like reality was suspended in a post-9/11 world, Foer, too, makes us wonder what is 'real.' By making the realistic clash with the magical or fantastical, Foer mirrors the hyperreal quality of the attacks. However, magic realism does not destroy the historic dimension since New York's "historical and ontological reality" is a referent for Foer's extension of reality ("Magic Realism"). The author hints at possible occurrences of magical realism very early on: the German spelling of Oskar's name is reminiscent of Günter Grass's Oskar Matzerath, the protagonist of *The Tin Drum* (1959). And just like Grass's Oskar, who has an adult's capacity of thought since birth, the reader of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* is under the impression that Oskar Schell may well be an adult mind in a child's body. This premature intelligence and Oskar's constant need to invent alternative realities counter the realistic impressions the author endeavors to create through the photographs or historic correctness. Oskar becomes an unreliable narrator, which makes the reader aware of the fact that this is not only the story of a young boy trying to overcome his 9/11 trauma; Oskar's story then becomes universal and shows that people of all races and ages have to deal with and come to terms with blows of fate.

Although a very visual event, the many novels published since the attacks show that language has not been made obsolete by 9/11. In *Falling Man*, the images of the attacks are evoked powerfully through language. The novel's title lets the famous picture taken by Richard Drew arise before our mind's eye, and the recurring performances of the Falling Man David Janiak prevent that the reader forgets the gruesome images: "by giving us a fictional performance artist … who bases his act on an image of a real victim, DeLillo deliberately confronts the issues facing the writer who attempts to aestheticize mass trauma" (Morley 305-306). By constantly evoking the fall of the victims, DeLillo, like Beigbeder, consciously keeps alive the responsibility that is essential to remembering, bringing back to people's minds the suffering of individuals instead of catering to the idea of 9/11 as an iconic event.

> The raw event was one thing, the coverage another. The event dominated the medium. It was bright and totalising and some of us said it was unreal. When we say a thing is unreal, we mean it

> is too real, a phenomenon so unaccountable and yet so bound to the power of objective fact that we can't tilt it to the slant of our perceptions …. 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[.] (DeLillo, "Ruins")

Moreover, the novel constantly alludes to the visual arts. Martin Ridnour is an arts dealer, and the reader is introduced to various artworks that get new meanings in the wake of 9/11: The 'Wanted' poster of 19 terrorists hanging in Martin's apartment connects the terrorism of the Baader-Meinhof group to that of the 19 men responsible for the tragedy on September 11, 2001. The *natura morta* painting by Morandi hanging in Nina's apartment suddenly is connected to the attacks because Lianne and Martin "keep seeing the towers in this still life" (*FM* 49). This emphasizes once more that 9/11 and hence death ("morta") is omnipresent so that even a painting from the last century gets a new meaning and a connection to 9/11. The image of the burning towers has become an iconic still life and has burned itself into people's minds.

While in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* Oskar is the attentive observer who documents his life by taking pictures of all kinds of people and things, in *Falling Man*, Lianne herself becomes "the photograph, the photosensitive surface. The nameless body coming down, this was hers to record and absorb" (*FM* 284). As Sven Cvek argues, "[s]ince visual technologies are in Falling Man the apparatus of state control, such aesthetic situation represents a moment of counter-hegemonic practice." While the audience tends to contrast the novel and reality, in the novel itself, this double vision continues, and reality and an artificial version thereof collide most of the times: "In the movie version, someone would be in the building, an emotionally damaged woman or a homeless old man, and there would be dialogue and close-ups" (*FM* 27).[53] Just as the pre-9/11 reality collides with the tragedy of 9/11, people have to manage to come to terms with the terrible attacks, and, at the same time, they have to manage to regain control and find a way back to an everyday routine. "Falling Man a sort of 'double vision', allowing the reader to experience on the one hand

[53] Lianne's disbelief is often illustrated by her comparing the attacks and her life to a movie production: "The moment seemed false to her, a scene in a movie when a character tries to understand what is going on in her life by looking in the mirror" (*FM* 47). Keith, too, believes the situation to be surreal at times: "in cartoon format, a total fool, hurrying into Justin's room, hair flying, and dragging him out of bed" (*FM* 211).

how the characters 'focus on the immediate concerns of every day' and, on the other, how the fall of the Twin Towers changed every moment of the quotidian (Brauner 2008/2009: 74)" (Panzani 86). This is mirrored by the novel's aesthetics: while the quotidian is grounded in realism, the attacks themselves suspend said reality when the worlds of victim and perpetrator collide.

Besides harking back to the visuality of the attacks, the art referred to in the novel (the paintings but also the Alzheimer's patients' creative memoirs) deals with the role of the artist and his creativity, reflecting DeLillo and his novel's role after the attacks. Similar to Beigbeder, who conveys the dilemma of writing about the attacks metanarratively, DeLillo's book deals with art and the dilemma of representing the attacks through artworks. "And in the end, the eponymous Falling Man, David Janiak, dies without having fulfilled his ultimate creative ambition. In this regard, DeLillo not only uses the recent past of 2001 but engages in a wider cultural dialogue about the role of art and the ethics of the use of history" (Morley 722).

> I … think using images makes sense for this particular book … because September 11 was the most visually documented event in human history. When we think of those events, we remember certain images - planes going into the buildings, people falling, the towers collapsing. That's how we experience it; that's how we remember it. And I want to be true to that experience. (Foer qtd. in Mudge)

Unlike DeLillo, who evokes pictures through language and reference to the arts, Foer refers to the visual character of the attacks more explicitly. Besides Oskar's childlike and imaginative inventions that inevitably evoke pictures before the mind's eye,[54] Foer supports his narrative with the help of photographs. These pictures serve to make things more real, more authentic for the reader and are a means to support the narrative. The many pictures let the reader see the world through the eyes of the protagonists: the doorknob photographed by Thomas Schell, Sr. or the back of the head of Mrs. Black photographed by Oskar. Since the novel centers on the trauma inflicted by the attacks, the pictures and other "gimmicks" mirror the speechlessness and unnarratability of the events and go where narrative fails and the author has no words.

[54] Oskar's insomnia also drives him to invent things that would keep the people he loves and cares about safe from harm, like a birdseed shirt, for example, with which people could fly to safety.

At the end of the novel, the reader is confronted with the Falling Man brought to mind by DeLillo: Oskar has made a flip-book in which the reader sees a man who is falling up and back into the towers instead of jumping into certain death. These pictures were cause for scandal in the U.S. because they seemed inappropriate and people argued that it was too soon to publish them. People were shocked and wished that the tragedy could be undone so that thousands of people could be saved from a terrible death. Moreover, the survivors felt guilty for being alive. Through these pictures, the tragedy is undone, the man is safe. Moreover, the anonymous man is given an identity, at least in Oskar's eyes. For him, the man falling back up into the building represents his father who then "would have been safe" (*ELC* 326). Besides symbolizing Oskar's wish to get back his father, the reversal of the order of the pictures can also be interpreted on a larger scale: They can be read as a symbol for America's wish to return to a pre-9/11 era where America seemed invincible and was on the zenith of its power. On an aesthetic level, the rearrangement of the photographs and the fact that they have been modified for the novel[55] also show that the visual representation, although realistic, does not necessarily mean that it is real, leading back to Baudrillard's idea of hyperrealism.

The flip book is part of Oskar's scrap-book "*Stuff that Happened to Me*" (*ELC* 325). In it, Oskar collects all sorts of terrible stories and pictures that he finds in newspapers or on the internet. Like his encounter with the many "Blacks," "*Stuff that Happened to Me*" is a symbol for the many terrible incidences that people have to suffer from every day. Yet, the reversal of the pictures of the falling man in the scrap-book makes it less terrible and less scary. The idea that the man is safe is a happy one that shows the change in Oskar's mood from depressed to hopeful. Oskar's recovery is a symbol for the fact that people have to deal with whatever difficulties come their way and that it is possible to go on living, even after a terrible blow of fate. "Just as the TV images of 9/11 convinced a global audience that what they were watching really

[55] "Although Foer does not use Drew's photograph, the copyright page explains that the falling figure is a 'photo illustration based on a photograph by Lyle Owerko.' Owerko was made famous by supplying the controversial cover image for the September 14, 2001, special issue of Time that caught the moment the south tower was struck by United Airlines flight 175. In Foer's novel, the image on page 205 and the final fifteen pages is a modified version of Owerko's photograph from pages 34 and 35 of his collection And No Birds Sang. The original image is in color and the falling figure is much smaller, but it is clear that the person is falling feet first with arms outstretched" (Mauro 596).

happened, the photographs in Oskar's narrative seem to be evidence that what happens in the novel really took place" (Siegel). While some critics see Foer's usage of pictures etc. as an attempt to strain after effect, this study maintains that the inclusion of other art forms emphasizes the flexibility of the novel genre and also makes the novel into an art form of itself. The pictures underline the characters' world view and make the clash of their presumed reality with the magical realism we are presented with even stronger. The reader is torn between believing in Oskar's reality and challenging it, making the book, as I have argued before, more than a trauma novel.

Foer also makes use of visual writing by inserting photographs and letters into the novel.[56] Foer operates with visual elements where words fail him in order to be able to narrate the unnarratable, such as the death of the people jumping from the towers. Moreover, he inserts parts of grandfather Schell's day book with the help of which he communicates with the world. In a stream of consciousness-like manner, the grandfather writes letters to his son into this book, too. Within these letters, the reader can find questions that have nothing to do with the rest of the text. In one of the letters, the "proposal" of his wife is included. In another letter, Thomas asks for the price for a ticket to Dresden. At first, this seems irritating, but it helps to make clear that Thomas Schell Sr. wrote this particular letter at the airport on the day he left his wife for the first time.

One can argue that by using the used sheets of his day book to write the letters to his son, the father allows his son to take part in his everyday life although they do not see each other. This shows that although Thomas Schell, Sr. is, for one exception, not capable of facing his son or even sending him the letters, he is not indifferent towards him and suffers from pangs of conscience. One letter has shown particular importance, namely the last letter that Thomas Schell writes to his son on September 11, 2003. In this letter, he describes his first encounter with Oskar, and how he heard his son's calls on the answering machine. Mr. Schell runs out of pages, and he starts to write narrower and narrower, and he overwrites what he has already written, and then, finally, the

[56] Many readers and critics were irritated by this. However, Foer defends himself, wanting people to accept that paintings etc. are text, too: "Why don't novels have all these things? Why is literature less accepting of the full spectrum of the arts than, say, painting or music? … Why is it so strange to see painting within writing?" (qtd. in Mudge).

pages are black from the many things that Thomas Schell Sr. wants to tell his son. He seems to want to shake off the past, and the flow of words gushes on the sheets and becomes a black whole; everything becomes blurred, like his life. In contrast to the grandfather, who scribbles down on everything that one can imagine, including walls and his own arms, Oskar's grandmother seems to take her time while she is writing. In her letters to Oskar, she oftentimes leaves double spaces in between the words and the sentences. She seems to pause and to think things over, to go back in time. One can also argue that the blanks on the sheets equal the emptiness inside her (*ELC* 75-85). These elements in the letters underline the grandparents' state of mind. With the help of the skillfully arranged letters, the mood in which the letters were written opens up to the reader. Foer was both praised and criticized for his innovative approach.

As the above section has shown, far from being sheer gimmickry, visual elements play an important role in the first fictionalizations of 9/11. Besides taking over important functions, such as constituting the visual memory of 9/11, the pictures go where the narrative fails and the writer finds no other means. They are thus reflecting the state of the novel after the attacks: the struggle to narrate the unnarratable has found its way into the representation of 9/11 through visual elements (pictures, but also metaphor). The use of pictures/visual language marks the solution to the problem of representation but also constitutes the problem: the absence of language corresponds to the howling void left by the absence of the Twin Towers.

The "reliance on old techniques" that Cilano terms "literary nostalgia,"[57] was the bone of contention for critics and scholars alike. How could famous and innovative authors such as DeLillo not find a different access to the tragedy and instead debauch in nostalgic aesthetics?[58] The combination and return to tried elements reflects the crisis of representation. At the same time, these authors do not follow the nostalgic turn mindlessly. Instead, they combine different styles as a first step to come to terms with the event. However, as

[57] Cilano defines the term "literary nostalgia" as a "reliance on older literary techniques and texts that seeks to trace the continuity of Western history and culture straight through 9/11" (Cilano 20-21).

[58] Reviewer Cheryl Miller notes that *FM* does not deviate from DeLillo's usual style of writing: "DeLillo is a novelist of global alienation, whose works over 30 years have chronicled the inability of individuals around the world to escape the crushing burden of American mass media and American imperialism. His latest novel - from its alienated and uncommunicative anti-hero to its elliptical, mannered dialogue - is no departure either in substance or in style."

Snyder-Körber and others have rightly observed, a return to the domestic realm is not a phenomenon of 9/11 literature only. Already before the turn of the century, critics observed this trend. Yet, Morley claims that we now have to deal with a different kind of realism: "the September 11 terrorist attacks engendered a new form of narrative realism, a form of realism born of a frustration with the limits of language as an affective and representative tool." She argues that "[t]his new realism, analysed here … merges the written and the visual in order to realise the new realities of post-9/11 socio-political and personal landscapes of trauma, grief and loss" (Morley 295). Consequently, this chapter has shown, the visual elements are particularly important for this kind of realism.

Going along with Gray, Derosa argues that especially DeLillo failed to clearly mark the difference between pre- and post-9/11 America by assimilating the attacks into familiar structures:

> Such approaches add 'next to nothing to our understanding of trauma at the heart of the action' ([Gray] 28). They fail to show an 'enactment of difference' between a pre- and post-9/11 world and instead 'simply assimilate the unfamiliar into familiar structures. The crisis is, in every sense of the word, domesticated' (30). (DeRosa 612)

Although the crisis is contemplated mostly on the domestic level and Gray thus believes for it to be domesticated, these fictions address major issues on the level of the family, which can easily be transferred to the level of society in general. In *Falling Man* and *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country*, for example, it is not 9/11 that triggers a crisis in the family. On the contrary: the families are disrupted and dysfunctional before the tragedy and the family's members attempt change after the attacks.

The focus on the domestic realm can also be seen as an attempt to return to a normal state of things. In this context, Kempner sees "literary nostalgia …. as a way of counteracting the idea of 9/11 as a permanent rupture in Western history and culture" (53). As the protagonists go on living their lives, the reader, too, comes to realize that the attacks are not the epoch-making event as which they were sold, especially by the media. Although the attacks have, of course, left their marks on a cultural (e.g. visual writing and photographs in novels) and historical (Invasion of Iraq etc.) level, the protagonists Oskar, Keith, Lianne,

Joyce, and Marshall show that they did not disrupt people's routines for long. Both DeLillo and Foer, but also the other authors discussed here pay much attention to their novels' *vraisemblance* and to historical details in order to create the illusion that the story told could indeed have happened this way. Naqvi inserts snippets from news reports and speeches; Kalfus refers to the tense post-9/11 situation with the anthrax scare and the stock market crash. The novels' realism is achieved by the use of heteroreferences, such as the circumstances at the time (for example the primaries in NYC), the mild weather. Real-life occurrences (besides the attacks) are included, and the protagonists make mention of real-life people (President Bush, Mayor Giuliani, Ansar Mahmood, Stephen Hawking). A credible integration of the event into the plot takes place according to the established master narrative.

III. 9/11 and the Social Satire: *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country*

Ken Kalfus' novel *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* is one of the lesser known novels in the corpus of 9/11 novels. This may have to do with the fact that the novel appeared later than those by Foer and DeLillo - novels that, if we look at the debates of 9/11 in fiction, are by far the most well-known and investigated. Joyce and Marshall Harriman, the protagonists, are in the middle of a particularly nasty divorce, fighting a court battle over their Brooklyn Heights apartment, money, and custody. When the Twin Towers crash, instead of realizing what damage blind hatred can do, both are relieved because they believe their partner to be dead (Marshall works in an office in the South Tower and Joyce was scheduled for Flight 93). The domestic war is overshadowed by the little and large political wars fought after the attacks (the anthrax scare, the war in Afghanistan, and the invasion of Iraq), which are broadcast live on TV and remind both protagonists of their own situation. While the invasion of Iraq reaches its peak, Marshall thinks of more and more ways to provoke and torture his soon-to-be ex-wife. Besides attempting a suicide attack in their own home (which fails), he tries to ruin not only Joyce, but her whole family by trying to sabotage the wedding of Joyce's WASPy sister Flora to Neil, a Jew. Marshall's plan almost succeeds since the cultural divide between bride and bridegroom suddenly seems insurmountable. Against all odds, the couple eventually gets married against the family's wishes. The happy ending at the wedding is followed by and contrasted to the happy ending of the novel as such: after a long and tedious period of time, Joyce and Marshall are happily divorced. With the end of their domestic war comes the end of the war in Iraq: "the Velvet Occupation" (*DPC* 230) only caused few casualties and the democratic wave spills over into other Muslim countries such as Syria. Miraculously, Weapons of Mass Destruction are found and Saddam Hussein is executed in Iraq. Moreover, the U.S.'s public enemy number one, Osama Bin Laden, is caught and America rejoices in a utopian orgy at Ground Zero, regardless of faith, ethnicity, gender, and race:

> Air horns tooted while American anthems were sung by men and women who had come to New York from every country of the world. Marshall sang too, 'God Bless America' and 'O Beautiful

> for Spacious Skies' and 'My Country 'Tis of Thee,' squeezed between a young sari-wrapped woman and a tall man in dreads …. They sang and so did these suited businessmen and this gaggle of big-haired young women in heels and an old guy in a bomber jacket and another guy and another guy and an elderly woman who had come with a walker. (*DPC* 235-6)

The protagonists' return to Ground Zero at the end of the novel reminds the reader of the circularity of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* or *Falling Man.*

Unlike Foer and DeLillo, who, as Gray and Rothberg criticize, domesticate the crisis, Kalfus can only be accused of this if the novel is read superficially. Although it is about the disruption of a family that ends with divorce, the ruptured relationship and domestic war is only used as a metaphor for much larger issues, that is to say American exceptionalism and the global repercussions and a real war triggered by the attacks on September 11, 2001. In this respect the novel resembles Hamid's work rather than that of American novelists since there are many different layers to be found and criticism of the U.S. is rather overt, especially at the novel's ending. Moreover, unlike for example Foer and DeLillo, Kalfus does not concentrate on the trauma caused by the attacks despite the fact that his two protagonists have only closely escaped death. Instead of being an occasion for grieving, 9/11 for them is associated with a feeling of joy and relief. Their day is only ruined after they learn that their soon-to-be-ex-spouse has survived the attacks.

The chapters are dedicated to the different protagonists. In "May," Viola has one chapter to herself, and the events are narrated from her perspective. However, even the children do not appear in a favorable light in the novel, and the reader is left with dislike for all characters. Breaking with the traditional pattern of pro- and antagonist, the reader is left at a loss. Unlike Foer's Oskar, who is a role model, the characters' villainy and the focus on their marital war makes clear that even after 9/11, not everything changed. Consequently, the novel's focus lies on a different aspect of the attacks and highlights American egocentrism and exceptionalism, even in the face of tragedy: the protagonists are depicted as narcissists; all the characters are concerned about is themselves, and they are ignorant of the global impact of American foreign politics also before the attacks. The title indicates that this narcissism is, just like Mishra claims, a disorder that is peculiar to the U.S. It seems that to them only with the intrusion

of evil fanatics has America entered the ring of world history and, apparently, Americans do not realize that the answer to the frequently asked question "Why do they hate us?" lies in the historical context.

The novel satirizes American reactions to the attacks and stresses the geopolitical impact of 9/11 and the War on Terror through Joyce and Marshall's domestic war. In contrast to Hamid, Kalfus does not resort to nationalistic discourses thereby rather attempting to deconstruct the Us vs. Them divide. After having built a bomb according to instructions on the internet, Marshall, a.k.a. "Osama" (*DPC* 76), attempts a suicide attack at home, which eventually fails because the instructions were in Arabic. The ending of the novel is a satirical parody of reality, and the novel can be considered as a link between Beigbeder, DeLillo and Foer's novels and the novels by Hamid, Naqvi, and Halaby. As Carla Spivack argues, works such as Schulman's *A Day at the Beach* (2007), Messud's *The Emperor's Children* (2006), McEwan's *Saturday*, and Kalfus' *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* "to one degree or another satirize American society's response to the attacks, skewering its narcissism, its oblivion to world history, the reassurance of happy endings and its need for the myth of the perfect community" (869). Spivack's observations make clear that *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* differs significantly from novels such as *Falling Man* and *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, which, although they, too, criticize the U.S. and point to the flaws that Spivack mentions above, do by no means satirize the attacks. Kalfus' novel signals that irony and sarcasm have found their way back into the language of the novel, almost completely replacing the language of trauma. In what follows, I will point out and discuss the major thematic aspects of the novel before going into the aesthetical aspects related to them. I will show how, although having the novel set in New York and dealing with the attacks of September 11, the novel's use of metaphor allows for a different, much more interesting and deeper reading of the text.

Instead of emphasizing the traumatic impact and elude political reality, Kalfus' novel presents a heavy critique of egomaniac America. Marco Roth states that in *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* the protagonists "begin to act as though they are history in a microcosm" and so "[t]he resemblance between this situation and standoffs in certain hot sandy countries is acute" (L. Miller). Roth's observation confirms my argument that the emotional domestic terrorism

in the Brooklyn Heights apartment mirrors world events and political terrorism. No mention is made of the 9/11 terrorists in the book; terrorism and world history are exemplified through Marshall and Joyce. Nostalgia, be it in regard to history or personal matters, unlike in all other novels discussed here, does not play an important role in the narrative. Kalfus concentrates on the present and realistically notes the flaws of America and its people. The absence of nostalgia is striking. The attacks of September 11 were often compared to past tragedies, especially Pearl Harbor. Mirroring real-life expectations after the attacks, the general impression of people was that the attacks indeed marked a 'Ground Zero,' a somber zero hour from where history, and, apparently, economy, started anew. However, unlike the economical disaster caused and the anxieties and traumata evoked by 9/11 in the protagonists' friends and co-workers, when the towers collapse, 9/11 seems to mark the beginning of a new, joyful era for Joyce and Marshall: post 9/11 means post-relationship for the protagonists; the death of the partner signifies the escape from the painful divorce:

> In his struggle with Joyce, even when defending his most fundamental interests, he had doubted that what he was doing was either right or good – it had only been necessary. Now … in these moments of peril, decision, and action, … something was being revealed. He could discern hope. He could, at this instant, glimpse a vision of the man he could yet be. (*DPC* 15)

Although the couple sometimes looks back at their common past longingly, there is no room for nostalgia since, apparently, negative memories prevail.

As is the case in the other novels discussed in this study, 9/11 seems to remind the protagonists of universal core values and makes the otherwise so distinct/autonomous individual become part of a collectivity of 9/11 witnesses. However, this reinvention as a family man/woman fails sooner or later, and the protagonists return to being their own, selfish, egocentric selves. Marshall, too, almost immediately realizes that the circumstances do not allow him to be his new self: "The sentiment that had embraced him in the plaza and which had promised him so much now vanished, leaving him with not-unfamiliar despair" (*DPC* 18). Unlike DeLillo and Foer's works, which are more gloomy and sad, Kalfus has desanctified and demystified the attacks by writing not another trauma novel but a social satire which becomes more and more caustic by the

end of the book. Kalfus asserts claims that his novel, too, mirrors reality and that beside feelings of grief and trauma, many of the victims surely were in unhappy relationships and, hence, the story of Joyce and Marshall is simply another facet of post-9/11 reality. Already the novel's first few pages leave no doubt that the author will not linger over domestic nostalgia in his work: "Joyce and Marshall discovered that they hated each other" (*DPC* 4). And even worse, not only is the relationship of the couple disrupted; other relationships in the novel go to pieces as well, and even the couple's daughter, Viola, devises an intrigue against her brother Victor: "The only solution - and this, she thought, must be the subject of her parents' secrets, their frustrations, and their bad moods - was to remove Victor from the household. He would have to be adopted" (*DPC* 135). All relationships are deteriorating, and Joyce observes: "Every human relationship was a conspiracy" (*DPC* 89). All of these statements put the idea of family and relationships on a level with warfare and wars that are fought all over the globe.

After having escaped the battlefield of World Trade Center Plaza, when Marshall hears that more planes have been kidnapped, he inquires: "'Tell me something: the Newark plane, where was it flying to? Do they have the flight number?' … 'Ninety-three,' the young man announced. 'They say it was United, to San Francisco'" (*DPC* 19-20). Marshall's reaction to the fact that his wife's plane has crashed is not the way the reader would expect it to be. To make this even more obvious, Marshall's elatedness after having escaped and learning about his wife's presumed death marks a very strong contrast to the emotions of fellow New Yorkers and fellow survivors: "Women *limped* in bare feet. A few people supported each other. Many of them wept, but most of their faces had gone as blank as the indifferent sky. Marshall went among them and headed for the bridge, *nearly skipping*'" (*DPC* 19-20, emphasis mine). While the reader may have felt sympathy with this survivor of the attacks, who even tried to save another person, the reader cannot help but be disgusted with Marshall's insensitivity and selfishness.

Joyce's feelings are very similar to those of her husband when she sees the two towers collapse:

> Joyce felt something erupt inside her, something warm, very much like, yes it was, a pang of pleasure, so intense it was nearly like the appeasement of hunger. It was a giddiness, an elation ….

> The building turned into a rising mushroom-shaped column of smoke, dust, and perished life, and she felt a great gladness …. His [Marshall's] office was on the eighty-sixth floor of the south tower, which had just been removed from the face of the earth. She covered the lower part of her face to hide the fierce, protracted struggle against the emergence of a smile." (*DPC* 3)

Just like Hamid's Changez, Joyce cannot help but smile despite the tragedy eloping in front of her eyes. Instead of thinking about the thousands of lives lost, she can only think about what the crumbling of the towers signifies for her personally: the escape from an unhappy marriage and the escape from a painful divorce and her husband and his lawyer's vulgarities. The domestic fight is brisked up after 9/11; inspired by the attacks, the fight becomes a veritable war when they both find out that their hopes of a new life are shattered:

> She hadn't even tried to call him last month when there was a distinct possibility that a 600,000-ton building had fallen on top of him. He had arrived home that afternoon with stitches in his scalp and his suit shredded, and she had said, 'So you made it out?' He had looked away, into the air, and replied, 'So you weren't on the plane?' He added, his voice leaden, 'We're such fortunate people.' (*DPC* 25)

In the domestic war, the sanctified idea of the valued traditional family, which has regained popularity and is among the most important values in a post-9/11 America, is exposed as an illusion and thus nullified, and so is the experience of (collective) trauma. As in many other passages, the reader is in doubt about whether or not Kalfus attempted to write a realistic novel at all. Yet, the author himself argues that the novel indeed mirrors reality since unhappy marriages and divorces are common and the reaction of Joyce and Marshall surely have real-life foils. Besides acknowledging that all that glitters is not gold in post-9/11 relationships, the growing hostilities also portray humankind's character in general. If the spouses can hate each other so thoroughly, the idea that terrorists kill thousands of people in suicide attacks suddenly does not seem so implausible anymore. Kalfus seems to want to tell us that evil is part of human nature.

Besides mirroring reality, the domestic war more importantly serves to explain the global repercussions of 9/11, and so *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* is streaked with vocabulary of war. The personal war is paralleled by the global wars screened every day: "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*" (*DPC* 7). Their children, the twins Viola and Victor, become the "civilian casualties" of this fight (*DPC* 7). The parent's violent outbreaks and (un-)social intercourse also strongly affect their children. Viola plots against her brother and is extremely satisfied when her mother hits Victor. The parents' war is continued in the four-year old's microcosm:

> Her [Joyce's] hand sprang from her side and struck Victor hard on the upper part of his arm. He fell right to the floor and into the trash.
> This was good for Viola, good beyond words. She desperately wished that her mother would do it again, immediately …. Now that it had been established how easy it was for Victor to be hit, Viola watched him more closely. From once being no more than an annoyance, his misbehavior had grown in ambition until it was a danger to them all. But she knew she couldn't simply report each mischief: her parents would stop listening she had to be patient. (*DPC* 134)

The only 'character' who appears to be deserving of sympathy is Snuffles, the uncared for dog, who is caught between the lines of fire. Making the animal, which depends on their care, suffer is another proof for the characters' selfishness.

The couple's warfare is dirty and is conducted on a psychological as well as an economic level. Marshall at times can be seen as performing the part of the American soldier, a true marshal, who tries to exert pressure on his enemy - Joyce. He also makes use of technological instruments such as a listening device, eavesdropping on Joyce's telephone calls in order to sabotage her better. This is a clear parallel to the American government's reaction to the attacks, to the Homeland Security Act from 2002, which constituted an infringement on the individual's rights for the sake of supposedly increased national security. However, although Marshall himself would stoop to anything to get his way in his private war against marital terrorism, he opposes the act when it comes to an infringement of his own privacy. When he goes to RadioShack to buy equipment to build a suicide bomb, he is sensitive to the enquiries of the clerk, just like a real terrorist who does not want to be identified: "Aren't there enough assaults

on our privacy as it is? Does every last piece of data about us have to go into your computer? It's bad enough the government is doing it" (*DPC* 187). It seems that because he has a bad conscience because of what he is about to do (build a suicide bomb), Marshall gets very defensive. Like a real terrorist, Marshall does not want to be sleuthed. Joyce, in contrast to her husband's initially well-conceived and rational scheme, takes to guerilla tactics, hitting on an FBI agent and seducing Marshall's friend Roger, teaming up with the friend of her enemy: "In Afghanistan sex wasn't 'fun' or an expression of 'love'; it was a weapon" (*DPC* 62-63). In an ultimate act of betrayal, Joyce has sex with Roger in Marshall and her conjugal bed, another "chaotic interplay of individuals" (*DPC* 47). Yet, she has to realize that she has been instrumentalized and that "[e]very human relationship was a conspiracy" (*DPC* 89).

In *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country*, Kalfus departs from the immediacy of the attacks and attempts a first critique of the U.S.' post-9/11 reaction. The domestic realm is used exemplarily to expose larger problems. Paralleling Bush's discourse of war against terror, to Joyce, Marshall becomes "Osama" who is holed up in their common bedroom, which is now "Tora Bora," a place to which Joyce has no access anymore; it has literally become Marshall's hideout (*DPC* 76). Their fight over every bit of property becomes unnerving, and Marshall is so pleased about doing psychological damage to Joyce that he is convinced that "[b]y the time this divorced was finalized, she was going to think that he was Hitler and Stalin too" (*DPC* 76). Through their psychological warfare that causes emotional damage not only to themselves but also to their children, Kalfus shows spiritual abyss not only of the couple but of humanity as a whole. If persons who once loved each other can torture their former spouse, hope for universal peace proves to be utopian. With his book, Kalfus points out how fragile and difficult relationships are, be it on the level of the family or that of nations. The novel's ending, oozing with sarcasm, hints at the fact that the future does not bode well if we do not replace egoism with altruism.

Joyce thinks of the impact of a suicide bomb when she rides the subway: "Joyce was riveted by the thought of a suicide bomb's spectacular effect here: the noise, the fire, the flying glass and shrapnel, the overcoming, roaring rush of water and estuary silt. The terrorists were on their way" (*DPC* 180). Ironically, not the terrorists but her husband will threaten her life; the boundary between

domestic terror and political terrorism is blurred conclusively when Marshall attempts his own suicide attack and thus switches position: from being an American soldier he becomes a suicide assassin. Inspired by a newscast on a suicide attack in Israel, Marshall builds a bomb and wants to blow up the family.[59] "'God is great,' he announced. He took a moment to inhale and brought the clips together" (*DPC* 188). However, the bomb does not work and Marshall's trappings and his weird behavior catch Joyce's attention. What follows is a grotesque scene, which at the same time evokes sympathy, pity and antipathy for this disrupted and broken family. The bomb temporarily reunites the family:

> 'What are you doing? What is that?' 'A suicide bomb.' …. She raised an eyebrow. 'Really?' … The children had risen from their places by the television and had silently filed into the hallway next to the kitchen. Viola's expression was thoughtful as she assessed the situation. Victor probably had no memory of ever seeing his parents like this, nearly touching …. The four were in a tight space at the entrance to the kitchen, virtually huddled there …. The kids crowded around their parents. Victor was resting against his father with one of his tiny hands on a dynamite cap. This was how the family once looked to the outside world, how it had once been: a compact unit, loving and intimate. (*DPC* 189-91)

Ironically, instead of scaring the other family members, making them flee the apartment, the bomb and its repairing draw the family closer together and they all stand together as a family in an embrace. The scene is both comical and macabre. Marshall's immoral behavior discomforts and shocks the reader; at the same time, his amateurish approach is comical and his failure causes a certain Schadenfreude on the part of the reader. Kalfus prefers to use black humor and social satire instead of overt censure. However, his critique is only thinly veiled and he uses every opportunity to ridicule the protagonists, thereby holding a mirror up to the American people and their government.

Marshall feels exhausted and cannot find the strength for a second attempt after Joyce has fixed the bomb. Soon, the magic is lost, and Joyce returns

[59] "[T]he pictures had been all over the news last night and this morning …. Yesterday, seven time zones ahead, a Palestinian youth dressed as an orthodox Jew had rushed past a guard into a Tel Aviv corner pizzeria, cried out in Arabic, 'God is great!' and blown himself up along with nearly everyone inside …. The New York television news replayed the scenes of devastation every half hour, as often as the traffic reports" (*DPC* 177-8).

to their routine and starts criticizing Marshall: "'You don't follow through with anything. That's what's wrong with you.' … He tore away, leaving her on her knees" (*DPC* 191). With Marshall's suicide attack, the couple's fight has turned into a jihad, and Marshall transcends the boundary between victim and terrorist. Consequently, he contributes to the blurring of the 'Us vs. them' divide, confusing the reader about who the actual victims are. However, Marshall strongly opposes any inclination towards the Other:

> "'I'm not Saddam Hussein,' Marshall declared. 'If that's what you think …. That's what you think!' he cried. 'You think it's symbolic, don't you? 'Another evil person removed!' Am I right? … *I* gave up more of my basic human rights than you did. I was the one who was oppressed. To compare me with Saddam is totally unjust'" (*DPC* 225).

Marshall feels as a victim whose basic human rights have been infringed upon by the enemy other. The news again only serves as a metaphor for the couple's personal problems; they are ignorant of the suffering going on around them. 9/11 has frequently been perceived as a (cultural, historical, economical) Zero Hour: "At his firm 9/11 was the alpha point from which history moved forward, the Big Bang, Genesis I:I" (*DPC* 154). However, to the couple the attacks of September 11, 2001 prove to be a disappointment. Contradicting the general opinion, September 11, 2001, to them, is basically a day like any other: "The Day that Changed Nothing." As horrible as it may sound, for Joyce and Marshall, the events would have made a difference and the many deaths would have made sense if their spouse had died along with the many other victims.

When Marshall needs to see his doctor because of a rash, a reaction to his contact with the rubble of the collapsing towers, Marshall's story of survival encourages the doctor to give his patient brief insight into his family's own suffering. Like Oskar in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, Marshall has to acknowledge that tragedy also exists outside his secluded world. The doctor, whose name Marshall cannot pronounce, proves to be from Afghanistan, and he talks about their escape from the Soviet invasion: "While they sipped [tea], the doctor described his family's terrifying yearlong passage to America, through Iran and Pakistan. The girl had been hurt by a landmine" (*DPC* 60). Marshall starts to see his doctor in a new light, for the first time appreciating him as an

individual who has a history of his own. Their shared experience of suffering makes them allies against Joyce, whom the doctor finds "high-strung" (*DPC* 59).

The doctor also comments on the terrorist attacks and notes that after 9/11, U.S. Americans, too, "know what it's like to live in history" (*DPC* 58). This statement suggests that until 9/11 the U.S. have perceived themselves as existing outside world history until they were attacked on their own soil, catering to American exceptionalism.[60] This notion of exceptionalism ignores the fact that America has been very much involved in history, in particular in shaping the history of other countries (e.g. in Dresden and Hiroshima, as Foer points out).[61] Especially the Afghan doctor should know of this by his own experience: Afghanistan paid a high prize for its liberation from the Soviet Union that was supported by America and its allies since it helped put into power the Taliban after American interest in the country had ceased.

The newscast on the War on Terror makes the couple aware of the fact that the U.S. very much affect the lives of others, but they only see these world events as symbolic for their relationship, not the other way around: "'If you isolate each of our betrayals and self-indulgences,' Marshall tells his lawyer, 'the mean things we've said to each other, the errors in judgment - on their own, they're quite heinous. Yet neither of us did anything to the other that wasn't in the context of something else'" (*DPC* 150). The media coverage of the war in Afghanistan triggers a fascination for this country, particularly its culture and food, in Joyce. Although the Afghan restaurant she visits is very much grounded in American post-9/11 reality, Joyce cherishes the illusion that the restaurant is her kind of exotic refuge: "A large American flag hung above the entrance to the kitchen and red, white, and blue car-dealer pennants garlanded the front door, but she felt continents away, and also exotic and gritty-real" (*DPC* 62). By adorning a "Middle eastern bracelet" (*DPC* 62), she further aligns herself with the Afghan other. However, Joyce remains unaffected by the suffering that fellow Americans cause in this far away, exotic part of the world. Her ignorance

[60] Joyce resents "her former belief that their lives in America had been secure. Someone had lied to them as shamelessly as a spouse. All over the planet people wanted to kill Americans" (*DPC* 33).

[61] Joyce finds that "[i]n a single lightning flash the unconnected parts of the world had been brought together and made into sense. No, *sense* was not made. This was a world of heedless materialism, impiety, baseness, and divorce. Sense was not made, this was jihad: the unconnected parts of the world had been brought together and made *just*" (*DPC* 179).

and the lack of empathy toward the suffering people in Afghanistan mark her as a prototypical American character.

The fact that she is the one threatened by an anthrax letter and her befriending of an FBI agent strengthen this impression. "[I]n the wake of 9/11, commemoration has been hijacked by revenge, there has been a visibly commodified national mourning, the image of death has been taken over by the image of falling towers, and those who are still dying accrue no images" (Simpson, *Commemoration* 170). The pictures of the war in Afghanistan create the impression of a clean technologized war in which the actual victims, which are more often than not civilian casualties and not terrorists, go unseen: "When the war finally did begin, with a surprise air strike at a bunker … and then the shocking, awesome air raid on Baghdad, broadcast live, Marshall and Joyce were visited with relief" (*DPC* 224). Just as after the attacks, the pictures of victims are censored, leaving people with an abstract idea of war. Kalfus attempts to galvanize the audience and make them more attentive in regard to world history.

The omnipresent media set a realistic frame for the plot and mirror the general atmosphere in New York and America. "Marshall had just passed a newsstand whose papers screamed their grief and rage" (*DPC* 178). Yet, the soldiers' valor and the suffering of the people in Afghanistan and Iraq are only passively acknowledged. Although Žižek argued that 9/11 would pull the American people out of its lethargy,[62] the following quote proves that the attacks did not have any incisive meaning and did not change the protagonists' behavior. The victims of the war only serve as a mirror of the protagonists, who identify with the unfair treatment of the victims. At most, the newscast triggers vague interest in the exotic other; no empathy whatsoever is shown, only self-pity:

> You went through your daily life in a haze, knowing that fellow Americans were preparing to race across deserts and jump from planes and kill and die and elsewhere a man or woman just like you, with kids just like yours, were waiting for this violence to wreck the fabric of a life already as tenuous and complicated as

[62] Žižek states that "[w]e should therefore invert the standard reading according to which the WTC explosions were the intrusion of the Real which shattered our illusory sphere: quite the reverse - it was before the WTC collapse that we lived in our reality, perceiving Third World horrors as something which was not actually part of our social reality, as something which existed (for us) as a spectral apparition on the (TV) screen - and what happened on September 11 was that this fantasmatic screen apparition entered our reality. It is not that reality entered our image: the image entered and shattered our reality (i.e. the symbolic coordinates which determine what we experience as reality)" (16).

> yours …. Joyce and Marshall secretly and impatiently wished for the invasion of Iraq to begin …. To their television screens they whispered, *Let's get it over with*. (*DPC* 223)

Joyce, like Lianne in *Falling Man*, becomes a photosensitive surface. Standing allegorically for America, she takes everything in like a sponge, unable to make up her own mind thanks to the mediatized brainwash. Joyce "had never read political magazines, but now she found herself shopping for an opinion - Leon Wieseltier asked, 'How can any liberal, any individual who associates himself with the party of humanity, not count himself in the coalition of the willing?'" (*DPC* 202). These passages highlight the attempts to manipulate popular opinion and also highlight that everybody has gone back to business. War has been transferred to far-removed regions of the world, and with physical distance the emotional distance grows, too. The tragedy eloping in Afghanistan and Iraq is reported matter-of-factly, lacking the empathy displayed for the victims at home. Joyce observes that in contrast to the indifference to or enthusiasm for the war, many Europeans protested against the retaliatory measures that affected mostly innocent civilians: "[T]he Europeans demonstrated every weekend. Joyce watched on television as they surged through medieval landscapes that had suffered war and now knew the postnational, remunerative, touristic pleasures of peace" (*DPC* 219). Critiquing the weak protest against the war in the U.S., Kalfus makes Joyce mirror the prototypical reaction: instead of taking action herself, she is exposed to the constant stream of pictures on the news, where the pictures of the protesters are almost crowded out of the screen by the government's war against free opinion-making via the media. : "She remained home with the children, the three of them watching the news on TV, where the worldwide protesters were an image shrunk within the screen to make room for the 'War on Terror' logo, the Homeland Security Threat Bar, and the news crawl" (*DPC* 222).

The domestic war fought between the two spouses is paralleled in real-time by America's 'War against Terror' in Afghanistan and Iraq. By constantly interweaving the couple's reality with political reality, Kalfus stresses the importance and influence of the media, particularly of TV. Both Joyce and Marshall are influenced by the news that is broadcast: while Joyce feels

fascinated by Afghani culture, the violence on TV inspires Marshall's suicide attack and people's fears are fuelled by TV reports:

> He could be killed. His *children* --. Somebody was at work right now. Bacterial grains were being milled and coated with silicia to minimize their electrostatic properties. Pentaerythritol tetranitrate [one of the most powerful high explosives] was being molded into the bottoms of running shoes. Turbaned men were even now double-clicking obscure, awesome icons. (*DPC* 48)

Kalfus shows how the media tried to keep the American people on track and erase doubts about the wars raging abroad. By moving the war zone to a Third World country, Americans lose interest in the Other that only signifies danger while it infiltrates the U.S. The scare tactics of changing the levels of alert constantly remind people that terrorism still looms over their heads and that the evil other that has infiltrated the country could not be expelled. The consequences of this are highlighted in novels by, for example, Naqvi, Hamid, and Halaby. Kalfus himself does not address these issues but focuses on criticizing his own country. Moreover, the impact of the media on the couple's children is thematized; the adults do not consider that the attacks will leave an impression on the children at all. The unfiltered information that they gather from the news confuse them and since their parents are so absorbed by their own problems, the children try to come to terms with what they see by playing 9/11: "This was how it was now: too much happening too fast, and no-one would explain. Viola had to pay attention, but that wasn't enough. She had to make connections and draw interferences …. She didn't understand everything that the news said. No one did. The news leaked all over the World" (*DPCr* 132-3). Kalfus criticizes the media's representation of the attacks and their aftermath as a one-sided affair. While the war is abstract to most Americans, it is very real to other nations. The hype around 9/11 is artificial and fanned by the media.

Joyce's European friends and colleagues doubt the American people's common sense and are bedazzled by how well the government's propaganda machinery works and how fear is fanned. "Joyce received e-mail from her colleagues in Europe …. They asked, Has America gone crazy? Are you bewitched by propaganda? Do you believe, with 69 percent of your fellow citizens, that Saddam was involved in 9/11? Can't we stop this rush to war?"

(*DPC* 219). By declaring a constant state of alert, people are overly sensitive and doubt their own common sense: After all, the unimaginable has happened once; who says that it could not happen a second time? The title of the novel is taken from Oliver Goldsmith's essay written in 1760 and alludes to the state of spreading paranoia that the U.S. finds herself in after the attacks. The title of the novel makes clear that Kalfus mocks the post-9/11 paranoia and permanent alertness oscillating between 'orange alert' and 'red alert' and considers it a disorder, something abnormal. After 9/11, Joyce is suddenly aware that America lived in the utopian belief that it is impregnable: "She resented her former belief that their lives in America had been secure. Someone had lied to them as shamelessly as a spouse. All over the planet people wanted to kill Americans" (*DPC* 33). Now, in a post-9/11 world, people wait, as Spiegelman put it in *In the Shadow of No Towers*, "for the other shoe to drop" (Spiegelman 1): "The Department of Homeland Security had just raised the terrorism alert level to code Orange, gravely advising Americans to stock up on duct tape and plastic sheeting as a protection against a chemical or biological attack" (*DPC* 220).[63] This constant state of alert and biased media coverage fuel the fear of the 'Brown Man,' thematized especially in the novels written by non-Western authors; Changez, Salwa and Jassim, and Chuck, Jimbo, and AC describe how they fall prey to xenophobic attacks and how this paranoia spreads quickly to all domains of life, professional and private. Nevertheless, it only dawns on Americans slowly that 9/11 was not a first strike but a counterstrike, a revenge triggered by America's dealings around the globe.

Kalfus picks up on the actual anxiety and insecurity in America after the attacks not from the perspective of the Other, but of two normal people who live through the threats in the aftermath of 9/11 such as the anthrax scare, an actual, physical harm or the more abstract, but just as dreaded stock market crash. Yet, he also shows that hate and fear lie within all of humankind: When Joyce's enterprise is evacuated because of a (hoaxed) anthrax letter, she thinks not of the terrorists but of her husband as responsible for this. Although the letter

[63] There are many examples throughout the novel for this scaremongering: "Tom Ridge went on TV to say these were 'the most significant set of warnings since prior to September 11. The threat is real.' He repeated, 'The threat is real'" (*DPC* 220).
"The Department of Homeland Security, having *quietly dropped* its terrorist threat assessment to Yellow, returned it to Orange" (*DPC* 223, emphasis mine).

set to Joyce's enterprise is a hoax, the "attack" is broadcast on TV where the audience can see Joyce's co-worker who is evacuated from the scene in an ambulance. Joyce calls an FBI agent because she believes that Marshall is behind all of this: "If he was capable of sending baby powder to her office as a practical joke, … what could he do to her and their children right here in their apartment?" (*DPC* 36). The general anxiety is transferred to the level of the individual and is connected to Joyce's personal fears.

As will be shown in Chapter Five, Mohsin Hamid confronts his audience with their prejudices about the Other already through the title of his novel and deconstructs them. Kalfus, too, attempts to blur the Us and Them divide. Even before Marshall's attempt at killing his family in a suicide attack, Joyce frequently compares him to a Taliban, thus illustrating that the marriage and divorce to her are like fighting against an evil Other: "'He's [Marshall] is gone. He left the country. He joined the fucking Taliban,' she said" (*DPC* 66). As I have shown in Chapter Two, the binary opposition of 'Us' and 'Them' is prominent in most of the novels discussed in this study. While Beigbeder juxtaposes traumatized, victimized Westerners to an evil Other, Halaby, Hamid, and Naqvi bring face to face a victimized Other, who is misapprehended, and an American people who fell prey to a post-9/11 paranoia. Kalfus aims at a syncretism. The protagonists are victims and terrorists, casualties and belligerent perpetrators at the same time. The blurring of boundaries between good and evil can then be transferred to the level of nations: Marshall and Joyce come to realize that not all Afghanis are terrorists and that real, innocent people are the casualties of the war against terror, just like their children are the casualties in their marital war. Marshall not only attempts to kill his family in a suicide attack, his zeal in attempting to destroy Joyce and her family evokes the picture of a fanatic fundamentalist:

> Joyce knew that Marshall didn't even want custody, but the threat would be potent enough to persuade her eventually, wretchedly, tearfully, inevitably, to scale back or fully eliminate her mortgage demands …. She was being beaten and crushed, suffocated and abandoned. The force of Marshall's hatred was nearly self-validating: after all, how could a man believe with so much fervor and be wrong? (*DPC* 9)

However, Marshall is not satisfied with ruining the life of his wife; he aims at destroying her whole family. The wedding of Joyce's sister Flora proves to be the ideal opportunity to terrorize his wife and family. His main goal is to turn the two families against each other, and his best option is to play off the two (culturally, socially, and religiously opposed) camps against each other.

The families of both soon-to-be husband and wife are concerned about the interreligious/intercultural wedding since Flora and Joyce are textbook examples of WASPs and Neal comes from a (non-practicing) Jewish family.[64] Marshall's schemes play on these cultural and religious differences; by making anti-Semitic remarks at the bachelor party, he triggers a religious clash and fuels religious sentiments particularly in the groom's brother. Marshall's renderings are quite outspoken and anti-Semitic, voicing critique of the Jewish-American alliance that is pilloried by Muslim fundamentalists. This is particularly surprising since he almost got killed by Middle Eastern fanatics. Yet, it seems as if Marshall were playing devil's advocate, claiming that Arabs are not the only ones to blame but that America's link to Israel is dangerous for America. The geo-political issues that Marshall addresses are only used as stand-ins for his private feud, and thus the intrusion of Israel on Palestinian ground can be read as the couple's battle over their Brooklyn Height apartment where "[f]eelings between Joyce and Marshall acquired the intensity of something historic, tribal, and ethnic" (*DPC* 7). In reaction to Marshall's provocations, the groom insists that Jewish traditions are added to the wedding ceremony last minute, much to the displeasure of Flora's parents, whose reaction he interprets as anti-Jewish.

In contrast to the other novels, nationalism of any kind is avoided or ridiculed in *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country*. Since the novel thematically circles around war, discussing the U.S.' mission in Afghanistan and Iraq is inevitable. Kalfus introduces a drunk, bulky man as a supporter of the American cause in Iraq and as a proponent of nationalism.

> 'That's bullshit, the same old crap from the same old United Crap of America. If you say you support the troops, you have to support the mission. Otherwise it's an empty promise, an implication that their sacrifices mean nothing. Our troops serve our nation and we go to war as a nation .... It happens all the time. We give up our

[64] "He doesn't care about that [a rabbi being present]. It's been a year since he set foot in a synagogue. His parents don't care" (*DPC* 76).

> lives, limbs, and the best friends we'll ever have. When we come back you spit in our faces. … You're not a vet, are you?' (*DPC* 204)

After reading this passage, the reader may assume that the man is a traumatized (Vietnam ?) veteran who, disappointed by his nation, has given himself up to drinking. Kalfus plays with the reader's knowledge of history and with the clichéd ideas that we as readers may have about war veterans. Marshall, too, assumes that the man is a Vietnam veteran but almost loses his composure when he finds out that the man has participated in the invasion of Granada in 1983. The veteran swings at Marshall, who then falls from his stool because he jerks away. The scene is comical and a satirical comment on exaggerated nationalism.

A much more explicit comment on today's politics is offered when a Black boy is sexually harassed and abused by Victor and Viola's teacher, Miss Naomi, at a party with a bag over his head. The scene powerfully evokes the pictures of prisoners in Abu Ghraib prison who were tortured and humiliated by American soldiers. The fact that a regular woman who takes care of people's children during daytime can perform such a humiliating deed is reminiscent of the friendly-looking soldiers, who are supposed to bring peace, but instead pose for pictures standing on piled up, naked prisoners just as a big-game hunter posing with his prey.

> One of the other men produced a Bloomingdale's shopping bag and placed it over the youth's head. The boy's square, brown, alien mask provoked a few chuckles and, from the back of the room, a mock-rebel yell ....
> When she put her hand on the boy's penis the boy flinched and the Big Brown Bag made a brief rattling sound. This was met by general laughter, good, easygoing, unironic laughter, the kind of sweet laughter you might hear on a playground. The boy kept his fists clenched ....
> A flash camera flamed beside him [Marshall]. As the photographer watched the picture come up on the digital monitor, he held the apparatus several inches in front of his face, the camera's silvery curves as smooth and tactile as a sexual surface. (*DPC* 215-8)

Marshall only makes one lame attempt at ending the grotesque spectacle that arouses him sexually. Embarrassed and sobered, he leaves the party. This scene,

which stands for the greater crimes committed by U.S. soldiers abroad, again makes more than clear Kalfus' stance on the war on terror.

David Simpson points out the American rush to commemorate the attacks and explains that the attacks are appropriated as a strictly American tragedy and 9/11's aftermath and the repercussion the attacks had and still have on other countries are mostly ignored. American newspapers and TV news mostly dealt with the American perspective, presenting the bombings of cities as a victory for America and democracy. Only few actually dared to report about the victims, and only one newspaper title page is dedicated to the victims of the war, not the perpetrators. Pictures of the soldiers who were torturing their prisoners soon vanished from the news also due to America's embarrassment. Kalfus, however, does not try to gloss over these victims. Kalfus' novel is the first novel to attempt to describe the position of the other without writing from the Other's perspective. On the contrary, Marshall, an average American terrorizes his family and thus changes allegiance, becoming himself an, admittedly atypical, terrorist, both in regard to his looks and his motives.

Although not having been physically harmed in the attacks, Marshall's encounter with death has left him traumatized. Kalfus does not leave out the victims jumping from the tower, thematizing the falling people just like Foer, DeLillo, and Beigbeder: "Just as they were about to run, an object that was recognizably a woman in a navy business suit … thumped hard less than twenty feet away, and bounced and burst" (*DPC* 16). Forgetting his selfishness for once, Keith tries to save a panicking man and leads him out of the towers. Unfortunately, shortly before they reach safety, Lloyd is killed: "'We're almost there,' but he saw that Lloyd wasn't listening, that half his head - Marshall couldn't tell which half - had been ripped away" (*DPC* 17). Although he has experienced the attacks first-hand, Marshall never actually talks about what has happened to him - and Lloyd - because he fears that Joyce could use this trauma to her advantage: "He had lost friends and colleagues. But he had said nothing. It was. With all the strains of the divorce war, and he had simply lost his mind" (*DPC* 35-36). Kalfus dutifully mentions the attacks at the beginning of the novel, but does not spend much time on the event itself.[65] The attacks are a starting

[65] Marshall observes that "[t]here had been panic in the elevator lobbies, explosions, contradictory emergency announcements, pandemonium in the stairwell" (*DPC* 12).

point from which things evolve. Marshall's escape from the tower makes him appear human and pitiful, and his attempt to rescue Lloyd is heroic. However, Kalfus destroys this illusion only a few pages later and shows the readers a different facet of the post-9/11 man: portrayed as effeminate and weak in some novels, or masculine and heroic in others, here, Marshall is simply a human with all his flaws. He unites many different character traits, and he has a bright as well as a dark side to him. But one trait stands out prominently: while the tragedy may have prompted altruism that manifested itself in the rescue of Lloyd, this will remain his sole altruistic deed. The rest of the novel will show that soon enough, Marshall becomes the selfish person he was before the attacks, or even worse, which proves that for Marshall and Joyce the national tragedy does not weigh heavy compared to their private problems.

In *Falling Man,* Keith constantly reminds himself of his 9/11 trauma through the exercises he does, even after his hand is fully functional. Marshall, too, is physically marked: he gets a rash that may be due to the toxic substances that were released when the towers collapsed. Psychologically, it seems as if Marshall does not have the time to realize that he has escaped death closely. He is so absorbed in his domestic war that he does not have the time to be concerned about his experience, which is "bottled up within him" (*DPC* 36). Since life in the apartment is hell, Marshall pursues his daily routine after the attacks; although his office is gone, he returns to the towers every morning and goes home only in the evening. Again, in these unoccupied hours, he is predominantly absorbed with domestic problems: "He threw his hands up, stricken by bewilderment. This [the divorce] was even more painful to speak about than September 11" (*DPC* 59). One could argue in favor of Marshall and say that he cannot talk about his 9/11 experiences because he suffers from PTSD. Marshall's overall behavior, however, suggests that his private problems even outweigh what has happened to him at the World Trade Center.

Although his private problems dominate his thoughts, 9/11 always hovers at the back of his mind, and the questions he asks himself in regard to his failed marriage and his wife's hatred mirror the general incomprehension about the attacks.

> In some of these hours, on some of these days, he was so consumed by grief he could barely take another step forward. He would stand on a randomly selected street corner and think of Joyce and how thoroughly their lives had been ruined. What had he done to her? Why did he deserve this? Why did she hate him so? But these questions occupied only a few hours, hours in which the events of September 11 had vanished from human memory. (*DPC* 46)

Although emotionally affected by both his country's and his personal situation, Marshall somehow manages to become his old, egocentric self again. Seemingly unmoved by all the pictures showing the catastrophe and the victims of Ground Zero, Marshall only wonders why he is nowhere to be seen in all of the photographs. But his obsessive search of photos of himself also points to the fact that although he has experienced the tragedy firsthand, it seems so unreal that he needs to find black-and-white evidence. Feeling emotionally numbed by his divorce and the attacks, he looks for proof that he is still alive: "He found no documentary evidence that he had been at the World Trade Center that morning, nor evidence that he had survived" (*DPC* 37). He is under the impression that as long as he does not have any evidence of his presence at Ground Zero, the tragedy is not palpable, not real and neither is his existence. At the group counseling taking place at the office, he is accused of repressing his grief. After the attacks, the survivors at his work place have grown closer together, but Marshall, maybe indifferent to the idea of a business family because of his own familial problems, does not play according to social rules. The mixture of private problems and the fact that the attacks and his survival seem so unreal, also because he has no opportunity to talk about his experience, cause a detachment from the events of September 11, which becomes apparent when he is "the only one at the weekend retreat in the Berkshires to have brought his tennis racket" (*DPC* 76).

While Marshall's preoccupation with himself may be excusable after what he went through, Joyce's behavior seems heartless. Instead of worrying about her estranged husband, all she can think of is that he may have taken advantage of the situation and used his traumatic experience as an excuse for his deeds: "'He seems a bit disturbed since then. I thought he was disturbed before September 11 - what he's put me through - but now… September 11 may have sent him over the edge. He may have done this to get back at me somehow'"

(*DPC* 43). Even Joyce has to admit that her husband must have had a terrible experience and acknowledges that 9/11 has changed him. The fact that Marshall is out of control after 9/11 comes in handy since she does not have to blame herself for triggering his behavior but can use 9/11 as an explanation. Yet again, she sets her personal interest in the foreground, claiming that Marshall was at the World Trade Center and survived only to torture her; she seems incapable of empathy.

The children's trauma goes almost unnoticed in the novel. Although the parents quarrel over custody, nobody really seems to want the children or care for them in this highly tense situation. They mingle the two events in their portraits of the family in front of burning towers: "The drawings came into focus, the psychologist had asked the girl to draw pictures of her family. In each one she had placed her family near or round the burning World Trade Center …. In the last drawing the four of them had leaped from the towers and were falling hand in hand" (*DPC* 74). But their parents are so self-absorbed that they do not actually deal with this situation and help their children. Turned adrift by their parents, they find their own ways to deal with both the divorce and the September 11 attacks. One of the chapters is narrated by Viola and we get insight into the little girl's psyche and how she, too, becomes a terrorist, trying to catch her parents' attention:

> Suddenly Viola rushed to her mother, laughing … 'Poop!' She announced. It ran wet down her legs. The girl was already four; Joyce swore bitterly. Viola laughed at that too. … She was still pooping willfully. (*DPC* 8)

The news coverage about 9/11 has not gone unnoticed with the children, and so they play "9/11" in their grandmother's garden. Mimicking the endless repetitions of the two falling towers, the children jump from the front porch, holding hands, over and over again. The adults are oblivious to the children's eerie game and Joyce is relieved to have some time for herself.[66] The game gets out of control and the true nature of their "game" comes out when Viola breaks

[66] Realizing that something must have happened to her daughter, Joyce, for once, notices and regrets her self-centeredness: "Whatever deficiencies as a mother - her self-centeredness, her inattentiveness, her temper, her poor judgment, her foolish fantasies of total freedom, all of which had been reconfirmed in recent months - she knew at once that the shriek belonged to Viola" (*DPC* 112).

her forearm after one of their jumps: "'The World Trade Center was on fire and we had to jump off together. But he let go off my hand!'" (*DPC* 114). Oblivious to her child's obvious pain, the children's game evokes images of the war on terror, which still resonate with Joyce. Her daughter's cries remind her of "the children trapped in the world's wars" (*DPC* 113), unaware that her children have become the victims of a war, too.

9/11 and its aftermath are not far-removed from the protagonists' minds, although it becomes less aggrieving when it is not experienced in New York: "But the war proved to be considerably less interesting when read about in Connecticut, rather than in New York City, where the towers' absence was still palpable" (*DPC* 111). Despite the fact that the aftermath is accepted stoically, the American people takes possession of the attacks themselves as an exclusively American matter to whose trauma every American automatically gains access. Kalfus here addresses the U.S.' exceptionalism of suffering, through which America sees itself as the only victim. Roger, the couple's common friend, who was not personally affected by the attacks, suffers from trauma envy:

> Joyce realized he [Roger] considered himself a significant actor - a victim - in the September 11 tragedy. And didn't she think she was a victim too? After all, she had *seen* the buildings fall, with her own helplessly naked eyes. She was supposed to have been on one of the planes. But so what. *Every* American felt that he had been personally attacked by the terrorists, and that was the patriotic thing of course, but patriotic metaphors aside, wasn't the belief a bit delusional? There was a difference between being killed and not being killed. Was everyone walking around America thinking they had been intimately, self-importantly, involved in the destruction of the World Trade Center? (*DPC* 78)

It can be argued that he wants to justify his own improper behavior towards Joyce by claiming that he, too, has been traumatized by the attacks and has a right to act irrationally. Hans van den Broek, the protagonist of Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland* observes the same phenomenon and comes to the same conclusions as Joyce:

> I've heard it said that the indiscriminate nature of the attack transformed all of us on that island into victims of attempted murder, but I'm not at all sure that geographic proximity to the

> catastrophe confers this status on me or anybody else. (*Netherland* 240-41)

The quotes from the two novels underline the idea of an American exceptionalism on the one hand; on the other hand, many people diagnosed themselves with a trauma, thereby playing down what the real victims and survivors had to go through. The American people, it seems, did not see the attacks as a political act, but all felt as individual victims of the terrorists, thereby appropriating the event.

A Disorder Peculiar to the Country uses allegory to point out that what took place in September was not a clash of civilizations. The author also emphasizes that the boundary between good and evil is not easily defined. "Allegories are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things" (Benjamin). The ruins of Joyce and Marshall's relationship become an allegory for a shocked and unsettled American population. When a vase is destroyed by the children, the couple pauses for a moment and realizes that its fights are petty. Joyce and Marshall pick up the shards, a symbol for their marriage, together; this brief moment of solidarity corresponds to the brief moment of global solidarity after the attacks. The Harriman's private life parallels global actions and, just like in the novel, the brief moment of social cohesion is elusive and soon the daily routine sets in again.

The novel's beginning already tells us that Joyce and Marshall are not a happy couple but that they are in the middle of a divorce. Like the couple, the country, too, is divided over the question of war, and the war on terror itself is dirty, tiresome, and seemingly endless. The novel uses the marriage and the ensuing divorce of Joyce and Marshall as an allegory for the global goings-on post-9/11 and discusses the repercussions of the attacks not for the family (their own 9/11 tragedies are narrated briefly and unceremoniously) but for the people of Afghanistan and Iraq. Although some critics have read the global events as a mirror for the couple's crisis, thus interpreting the book as yet another domestic 9/11 novel, it is rather apparent that, since "most of us know a lot more about divorce than we do about the Middle East" (L. Miller), the domestic reality is used to depict what is going on in the world outside the U.S. The novel highlights the fact that besides the initial reaction of focusing on individual shock and pain, there is a much broader frame to be considered. This black comedy encourages

its readers to look beyond the trauma. Like their country, the protagonists are at war and peace (= divorce) only comes when the country, too, has destroyed all evil and, on top of that, has become the savior of democracy in the world. The distribution of roles is not as distinct as in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, where the names are already clear markers of the character's role. The fact that a white Christian couple stands in for the Other in this novel problematizes the perception of good and evil even further. Kalfus thus "created a portrait of America as a place of such unrelenting ugliness as almost to justify the hijackers' point" (C. Miller).

While it first seems that Joyce is assigned the role of the evil Other because of her affinity for Afghan culture, she also figures as a victim of this presumed Other (Marshall) through the anthrax scare and later also Marshall's (failed) suicide attack. With Marshall, quite the opposite transformation takes place: a survivor and victim of the attacks at first, he soon switches to guerilla tactics in order to destroy his wife, and he sometimes wonders where all his hatred comes from. Because he makes Joyce's life hell, she compares him to Bin Laden, a comparison that pleases her husband: just like Bin Laden and his organization left America stricken and scarred, he, too, comes nearer to his goal to destroy his wife. And so "[i]n this astonishing black comedy, Ken Kalfus suggests how America's public calamities have encroached upon its most private illusions" (Blurb *DPC*). He is obsessed with destroying Joyce and her family, who become his America, and he pursues his goal with much zeal, neither thinking of the consequences for him nor others around him. He makes use of stereotypes and voices the most terrible anti-Semitic prejudices, which places him in the same category as Muslim fundamentalists and although his motivation is neither political nor religious, he is driven by pure passion and hatred, becoming a "crazy fucking divorcing superpower" (*DPC* 106). The fact that an American couple goes through the hell of a divorce not only serves to question the boundary between who is perceived as good and who as evil but the couple's egocentrism mirrors American exceptionalism and the perceived uniqueness of this first "attack on the home front" (Anker), and the deterioration of the couple's relationship can be read as an allegory of the waning power of America on a global scale.

It has been noted that many 9/11 novels make use of an allegory of falling. Unlike the victims of the attacks who literally fell out of the sky, in Joyce and Marshall's case, we can talk about the moral fall of man. The attacks, a moment of severe crisis for the country and its people, bring to light that not even their family, their children, are important enough to stop their war; all that is important is their personal benefit and the ultimate destruction of the other. Although the psychiatrist voices misgivings in regard to the children's psychological stability, their children's visits to the psychiatrist remain without consequences since the parents are absorbed in their own world.

Shivani states that

> [t]here is a sense in which the reader feels like a privileged observer of larger meanings that are just barely escaping the protagonists, a common response to some of the greater novels. One guesses this was all along Kalfus's mature intention, as he sought to reward the patient reader (the kind not willing to go along with imposing one or another genre or style on this very fluid narrative). (201-2)

The novel, despite its mostly realistic apparel, reveals several layers of interpretation to the reader. It evolves from the portrayal of a couple who struggles through a painful divorce[67] to a bitingly sarcastic comment on egocentrism. Though the reader may accept the protagonists' extravagant reactions to the attacks, the later developments in the couples' war against conjugal terrorism become more and more fabulous. By the end of the novel, Kalfus departs from realism in any shape or form: he paints a utopian picture of the world and satirizes America's success in democratizing the world, an act that also seems to bring peace to the finally divorced couple.

This interplay of different styles makes Kalfus' novel stand out from his predecessors' attempts to fictionalize the attacks since he is the first one to dare a satirized comment on seemingly typical American exceptionalism / egocentrism and neo-imperial aspirations, thus mercilessly revealing the weak spots of both America and its people. Kalfus at various times points out the fact

[67] Kalfus elaborates on this point in an interview. "Given what we know about the frequency of divorce and the extreme bitterness that often accompanies it, I supposed that if 3,000 people were killed in the towers that morning, then there must have been at least a few spouses relieved and gratified by the end of the day." ("Interview" by Salon Staff)

that people expected 9/11 to mark a watershed moment in history and 9/11 was to be a Great Awakening; Kalfus disappoints and destroys all of these hopes with his novel. The protagonists cannot change who they are and (almost) remain the same. The same can be said of the novel and both, the protagonists as well as the novel genre, emerge from the crisis slightly altered: the characters have looked into the abyss of their own villainy, and the crisis' end leaves them relieved. The novel itself also survived the crisis and brings about a mixture of postmodernism and domestic realism that allows for a way to represent the crisis at all. With this novel, Kalfus plays exactly with these expectations raised by critics, scholars, and the audience. Kalfus is the first author not to sanctify the attacks and instead gives us a satirical portrait of a couple and its 9/11 experience and re-introducing irony.[68]

In his diagnosis of the 9/11 novel, Pankaj Mishra criticizes the "dominant American mood of 9/11 commemoration," and maintains that "most of the literary fiction that self-consciously addresses 9/11 still seems underpinned by outdated assumptions of national isolation and self-sufficiency" ("Innocence"). In his opinion, this impedes the "sense of aesthetic possibility." However, Kalfus' novel explicitly addresses the points criticized by Mishra. Far from being another novel centering around domestic and national trauma, the novel illustrates that the couple has issues more pressing than to work through their 9/11 trauma. Especially Marshall's close survival evokes empathy, if not necessarily for a long time since his professed goal is to destroy his soon-to-be-ex-spouse emotionally and economically, heading out for a psychological warfare that will stretch over a time span of several years. The characters sometimes appear flat and sketchy, and the fact that nothing is told about their past prevents that they become alive. But this is not the most important function of these characters since they serve as allegories for the American post-9/11 crisis. However, Kalfus takes great pains at giving the narrative a realistic frame.

[68] In "The Age of Irony Comes to an End," Roger Rosenblatt proclaimed the end of irony with the September 11 attacks: "One good thing could come from this horror: it could spell the end of the age of irony. For some 30 years - roughly as long as the Twin Towers were upright - the good folks in charge of America's intellectual life have insisted that nothing was to be believed in or taken seriously. Nothing was real. With a giggle and a smirk, our chattering classes - our columnists and pop culture makers - declared that detachment and personal whimsy were the necessary tools for an oh-so-cool life. Who but a slobbering bumpkin would think, 'I feel your pain'? The ironists, seeing through everything, made it difficult for anyone to see anything. The consequence of thinking that nothing is real - apart from prancing around in an air of vain stupidity - is that one will not know the difference between a joke and a menace."

At the beginning of the novel it seems likely that it will be yet another attempt at working through the traumatic impact of the attacks by focusing on the importance of family ties. Yet, the fact that Kalfus chose an omniscient narrator and decided against narrating the events from a victim's point of view shows that this novel approaches the attacks differently, i.e. from a more distanced perspective than is the case in, for example, Foer or Hamid's novel. Instead of identifying with the narrator, Kalfus puts the distance of a third-person narrator between the audience and the characters. As the story moves on, it becomes clear why readers would want the distance: all of the protagonists are unsympathetic and have bad character traits and are thus strikingly different from, e.g. Oskar Schell or Carthew Yorston, who arouse our compassion. The impression of realism is disturbed by the fact that the characters do not have any depth to them and are mostly stock-characters, stand-ins for what we believe to be a WASP family from Connecticut, a bourgeois couple trying to belong to the New York tribe by clinging to their tiny Brooklyn Heights apartment, Neal's brother, the zealous Zionist, the other-worldly, exotic, Ethiopian waitress. The book becomes the first one "of the post-9/11 era to attempt and execute a new technique reconciling persons with impersonality" (Shivani 199). Although the novel stretches over a time span of three years, Kalfus does not deem it necessary to fill the characters with life, to give them a background story. The reader only knows tiny fragments of the couple's pre-9/11 and pre-divorce life, thus jeopardizing the reader's belief in a realistic story. Hence, although the novel's aesthetics do not have changed on a large scale, the novel adds new bits and pieces, contributing to the evolvement of the genre. On the other hand, the characters are rather atypical post-9/11 New Yorkers since the tragedy vanishes from their minds to give way to their private problems soon and they often surprise the audience by escaping the grip of conventions. Although the characters behavior is exaggerated and readers do not actually identify with them, their conduct serves as a warning to society because it gives an outlook on what the world would be like if we do not let go of a sense of exceptionalism.

In contrast to the other novels discussed in this study, *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* is the only one that stretches over an extensive time period, whereas most of the other novels are a snapshot of a relatively short time span (stretching from a few hours as in Beigbeder's *Windows on the World* to a

few months before/after the attacks as in *Falling Man*) and take stock of the situation immediately after the attacks. The narrative in *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* stretches from September 11, 2001 to June 2003,[69] when the couple finally gets their divorce and the war on terror is won simultaneously. The novel depicts the socio-political circumstances under which the protagonists live: the anthrax scare, the war in Afghanistan, the stock market crash, and the invasion of Iraq, the FBI's difficulties with catching Bin Laden, sometimes underlining the author's claim to realism by news casts on TV that parallel the couple's interactions.

Kalfus often exhibits the habit to paint the beginning of a scene in realistic colors, paying great attention to details throughout by minutely narrating the events: "He approached in slow, steady steps, his hands heavy with electrochemical potential. She had picked up a carrot and was peeling it over the sink" (*DPC* 188). The novelist then gradually augments the dose of magic; the minute description is continued when the scene slips into magic realism and the reader has to witness bewilderedly how Marshall and Joyce try to fix the suicide bomb. The grotesque scene is still depicted as a family idyll, the family huddling closer together. The children, unsuspecting of their father's cruel plan, take the opportunity to be close to both their parents, which brings back some kind of pre-divorce normality to them. Similar to Foer's Oskar and DeLillo's Justin, who invent alternative realities, Viola and Victor's self-deceit leads them to pretend that their parents' arguments never happened and that everything is back to normal. The family's daily routine is paralleled by the news that soon becomes part of this schedule. The news leaves the (adult) protagonists unmoved and only reminds them of their own dilemma. The news coverage gives the novel a realistic appeal and serves as a reference point to the reader so as to situate the family's history in the general historical context. Scholars and authors such as DeLillo, Beigbeder, Rushdie, and Žižek have written about the significance of reality after the attacks. Salman Rushdie explains that "we all crossed a frontier that day, an invisible boundary between the imaginable and the unimaginable, and it turned out to be the unimaginable that was real" (Rushdie 436-437). Kalfus also points out this phenomenon: "You had to make an effort to keep before you

[69] The chapter titles are "September," "October," "November," "December," "May," "July," "August," "February March April May June."

the thought that thousands of people were losing their lives at precisely this moment" (*DPC* 3). Although the two protagonists have experienced the attack on the World Trade Center 'live,' the dimension of the cruel act leads to the impression that reality has been overtaken by fiction. Later on, the fact that many people have found their deaths in the towers becomes even less relevant, and the tragedy steps into the background while the marital feud dominates the couple's lives.

Unlike, for example, Naqvi, who uses authentic news footage, Kalfus mocks the reader's ready belief in realism with his creation of an alternate reality:

> In a scene broadcast globally, Saddam pleaded for his life, falling to his knees. A scaffolding was constructed in the orchard, where hundreds of men, women, and children raucously sang patriotic, pre-Saddam songs and, at one point, 'The Star-Spangled Banner.' … The dictator was hung from the high branches of an Olive tree. The silhouetted image of the corpse, captured by an AP photographer as the sun went down, swiftly became iconic. Within a day it was screened onto millions of T-shirts that would be sold and distributed in every country of the world, in some of them by clandestine means. (*DPC* 230)

The ultimate proof that Kalfus has departed from reality follows only a few pages later: "And then, just as summer was about to begin, Osama bin Laden was found huddled on a filthy rug in a cave located in the lawless, mountainous tribal lands on the *Iraqi-Afghan* border" (*DPC* 234, emphasis mine). By rearranging the world geographically, he emphasizes the qualities of the novel: although it may make reference to real-life, it does not have to stick to reality and the author has the freedom to invent his own reality. Also, Kalfus makes the news reports seem realistic and unrealistic at the same time by juxtaposing "the flat, journalistic tone of the current affairs inserts (precisely as naïve receivers accept the established version) with the accomplished domestic realist novelist's seductive tone" (Shivani 201-2). This contributes to the novels particular character since it constantly plays with the audience's expectation, mingling tones and aesthetics.

Kalfus has been criticized in several reviews for 'ruining' his novel through his use of fabulism. Especially the novel's ending, a parody of neat modernist happy endings, is a utopian portrait of a world made better through the influence and help of the U.S. The novel ends by means of a deus ex machina

solution: all of America and the Middle East's troubles are resolved in no time, which also influences the people at home, who celebrate in harmony.

> Of course, there is one final trick, … without which the novel would have remained anchored in only the vaguely experimental. But the concluding few pages force a reinterpretation of all the preceding events, even as the reader is compelled to forgive Kalfus the sheer trickiness of his maneuver …. [H]e seems to say, I, the novelist, have shown you the kind of mirror (even if a twisting, distorting one) you had long forgotten was possible to show you. (Shivani 201-2)

The blatantly obvious critique of American exceptionalism and egocentrism cannot be found in the other 'Western' novels discussed in *The Heart of the West*. Moreover, the novel proves to be uncannily prophetic since Osama Bin Laden was indeed found and killed, but tellingly not by the Bush-administration. Moreover, the democratic developments in Syria and Iran foreshadow the Arab Spring in 2011, which, proves that the world evolves even without the U.S.' protective initiative.

IV. Autofiction and the Boundaries between Art and Life: Beigbeder's *Windows on the World*

Frédéric Beigbeder's novel consists of 119 chapters, each chapter ticking down a minute of the countdown towards catastrophe. It starts shortly before the impact of the first plane (8:30 am) and ends with the collapse of the North Tower at 10:28 am. The countdown is alternately narrated by the two main protagonists of the story, a French author named 'Beigbeder' and Carthew Yorston, an American real estate broker from Texas who wants to eat breakfast at "Windows on the World" with his two sons.[70] Like the author, the protagonist intends to write a novel about the attacks on September 11, 2001. 'Beigbeder' tries to make his novel more authentic by putting himself in a similar setting on the other side of the Atlantic. He goes to the Tour Montparnasse in Paris, which is like a miniature of the Twin Towers in New York and the highest building in Paris. It is without question that he will write the book because he does not see the point of writing about anything else. However, the dimensions of the catastrophe make it a difficult task for him.

The second protagonist, Carthew Yorston, narrates the story from within the North Tower. He comes to New York with his two sons, Jerry and David, to make up for all the time he is not with them because Carthew and his wife, Mary, are divorced. As a special treat, he takes them to the Twin Towers for breakfast. However, his plan backfires: he and his sons are trapped inside the restaurant "Windows on the World" for one and a half hours until the final collapse of the tower. Yorston tries to convince his children that the fire, the smoke, and the panicking people are all part of a game called "Tower Inferno"[71] to prevent David and Jerry from panicking (*WWE* 58). He desperately tries to find a way out of the restaurant that becomes hotter and smokier by the minute. After several fruitless attempts to find an intact stairwell and after having tried to escape to the roof, he and the children wait, together with employees and guests, for somebody to rescue them. Carthew has several flashbacks, thinking

[70] The narrator/protagonist 'Beigbeder' will be marked by inverted commas in order not to mix up the protagonist with the actual author Frédéric Beigbeder.

[71] Beigbeder here alludes to the 1974 movie *Towering Inferno* in which the highest skyscraper of the world which catches on fire. Many people die and the chief of the Fire Department warns that one day ten thousands of people will die if skyscrapers are not built more safely in the future.

about his attitude towards the traditional family and about his relationship and sex life with a model named Candace. He regrets having lived such an erratic life and that he did not spend enough time with his children.

Eventually, David dies in his father's arms. Minutes before the towers collapse, Carthew takes his son Jerry by the hand and they jump out of one of the windows, Carthew holding David in his arms. In the epilogue, Carthew speaks to the reader and the world from heaven, concluding that he and his sons died for nothing. 'Beigbeder' on the other hand, comes to the conclusion that life has to go on; dealing with the horror has helped him to overcome his shock. On his way back to France, a sort of content feeling settles in. His trip to New York City proves to have a cathartic effect on him.

Thematically, Beigbeder crosses a line that no other author has dared to cross. Piecing together hard facts gathered from media footage, telephone calls, and other materials, he, an outsider from Europe, imagines what we do not know from the perspective of those inside the towers. He does so from multiple perspectives: that of Carthew Yorston, but also that of his children David and Jerry, from a waitress, Jeffrey, a stockbroker, and two traders. Moreover, he writes about the attacks' effects for those who witnessed them on TV, including Carthew's ex-wife Mary, but also people from his publishing house and himself, arguing for a global traumatic effect of 9/11 and offering us, through the different characters, the different ways the attacks were perceived. To him, 9/11 is "the first great hyper-terrorist attack" (*WWE* 295) and marks a caesura to be equated with the end of the world, an apocalypse: "In a moment, they will all be horsemen of the Apocalypse, all united in the End of the World" (*WWE* 2). Ursula Henningfeld argues that while the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 marked the end of a communist Utopia, on September 11, the terrorists ended utopian capitalism. For 'Beigbeder' the attacks indeed mark a radical rupture not only in his life but on a global level and serve different functions.

Besides their large economic and political consequences, the attacks are a *memento mori* to 'Beigbeder' and lead him to the questionable conclusion: "Les catastrophes sont utiles: elles donnent envie de vivre" (*WWF* 227). This newly discovered *joie de vivre* is not limited to 'Beigbeder':

> Does pleasure replace fear? Fanatics are hitting the fan. Their terrorization has produced precisely the reverse of what they had hoped. Hedonism is at its peak. Babylon lives again! Women aren't veiling their faces: on the contrary, they're stripping at restaurants …. A new Jazz Age gets under way in an excess of debauchery while we bomb foreign countries …. Terrorism terrorizes no one: it shores up freedom. Sex dances with death. (*WWE* 185)

Consequently, the terrorists have missed their target and have even boosted licentiousness. Instead of making people retreat to their homes and making them reflect on why they have deserved this punishment, people defy terror with terror sex.

To Beigbeder/'Beigbeder,' the attacks are a motivation for the French to reach out to their American neighbors, although "[s]ince September 11, the wild times are in New York and the French come here to be insulted" (*WWE* 182). In order to avoid hostilities, he "put[s] on a Spanish accent .... Dazed New Yorkers mistake me for an ally" (*WWE* 182). Beigbeder here, of course, alludes to the lacking support of the French government for the invasion of Iraq. Yet, besides cultural changes such as a collective trauma, solidarity, and the self-indulgence that the attacks entailed, he observes a more alarming political change in the U.S.'s attitude towards the rest of the world: "September 11 has had two diametrically opposed consequences: kindness at home, cruelty abroad" (*WWE* 190). This cruelty refers to the invasion of Iraq and the war in Afghanistan where America displayed its power and superiority. This "cruelty abroad" is what the novels by Naqvi, Halaby, and especially Hamid thematize and criticize.

In his attempt to come to terms with the tragedy, Beigbeder combines thematic newness with postmodernist aesthetics, both from France and the U.S., and the aesthetics thus parallel the novel's thematic interweavement of a French author's 9/11 trauma and an American family's deadly 9/11 experience and can be read as a plea for border-crossing empathy. The author hopes to achieve this goal by declaring American culture superior to an obsolete French culture and inserts many examples of what he earnestly believes to be American cultural landmarks (McDonalds, lap dance, various American poets, bands, and novelists). Beigbeder's utopian outlook for the future is dampened by the novel's introductory paragraph but also leaves some hope for the future. Yet, the problem with this utopia is that it seems to be a strictly Western matter, the

(Judeo-Christian) West closing ranks (despite political and cultural differences) against the (Islamic) Rest.

In contrast to Joyce and Marshall Harriman in *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country*, the attacks of September 11 trigger an urge to change or reinvent the self in both narrators, 'Beigbeder' and Carthew Yorston, who regret their selfish lifestyle. While Yorston recalls the past and envisions how he would have lived his life if he had known that he would die this early, 'Beigbeder' sees the attacks as his chance to recreate a new and better version of himself. With Yorston, 'Beigbeder' created, in his eyes, a typically self-centered American character who, like many of his fellow Americans, is oblivious to the dynamics of global politics that have come to affect his own country all of a sudden (or so it seems). However, inside the tower, Yorston comes to realize that he is affected by these politics and that he will even become part of history: "[T]hese wars came to hurt me that morning; me not someone else; my children, not someone else's; these things I knew nothing about, these events so geographically remote suddenly became the most important things in my life" (*WWE* 108). In the monograph *The Terror Dream* (2007), Susan Faludi argues that after the attacks people tried to grasp the tragedy by comparing it to preceding catastrophes. After failed comparisons to Pearl Harbor, people started to collate 9/11 and the Cold War with astonishing cultural/social effects: "In the aftermath of the attacks, the cultural troika of media, entertainment, and advertising declared the post-9/11 age an era of neofifties nuclear family 'togetherness', redomesticated femininity, and reconstituted Cold Warrior manhood" (Faludi 4). It seems that through the attacks, the Victorian cult of domesticity, which encouraged traditional role allocations, experienced a revival that also mirrors in fiction. Men were becoming John Wayne-like protectors of their families instead of being effeminate dot-com-geeks, and women became Security Moms who stayed at home to take care of the house and the family instead of pursuing their own careers (Faludi 4-5). Faludi contests this twisted version of reality since

> [b]rokers, busboys, municipal workers, and military bureaucrats, not little girls, were the victims of the terrorist attacks. Why did we perceive an assault on the urban workplace as a threat to the domestic circle? Why were we willing ourselves back onto a

> frontier where pigtailed damsels clutched rag dolls and prayed for a male avenger to return them to the home? (Faludi 7)

Although the number of male casualties outgrew the number of female ones, the attacks became increasingly effeminate. The media gave their best to strengthen this new image and promote the traditional role allocation. For his son David, Yorston, too, is literally a superhero who will save them from the burning towers. However, the father of two has to grow into the role of fatherhood: "When I dived under the table, I wasn't thinking of anyone except little old me" (*WWE* 54). Like Roberto Benigni in the movie *Life is Beautiful* (1997), Carthew tries to convince his children that the attacks are only a game called "Tower Inferno" in order to keep them calm (*WWE* 58). However, shortly before their death David comes to realize that his father is not "Ultra Dude" (*WWE* 134) and, once more he is a disappointment to his children and has to let them down. Yet, in a last, heroic act, Yorston grabs his two children, one of whom has died in his arms, and jumps from one of the restaurant's windows. This is narrated through a stream of consciousness:

> C'mon, c'mon kids, let's get out of here, let's do what we should have done long ago, beat it, hit the road again, *adiós amigos*, *hasta la vista*, baby, the glass is broken, look through the Windows on the World, look, Jerry, freedom, no, Jerry, my little hero, don't look down, keep your blue eyes fixed on the horizon, … how could those murderers, c'mon darling, come on, my little lambs, Space Mountain will be like cat's piss compared to this, hold on tight to me, Jerry, I love you, come with Daddy, we're going home, we're taking your little brother home, come and surf the clouds of fire, you were my little angels and nothing will ever split us up again …. I can still hear Jerry laughing, holding tight to my hand and to his little brother's, plummeting through the heavens. Thank you for that last laugh, O Lord, thank you for Jerry's laugh. For a split second, I really believed we were flying. (*WWE* 290)

The quote from Beigbeder's novel seems to support Henningfeld's statement that: "The absolutization of individuality, freedom and independence at the expense of traditional values such as love, family and morality has become questionable with 9/11" ("Holocaust" 184, translation mine). However, most of the novels also illustrate that this trend did not last and so the protagonists soon

return to being their old, egocentric selves. Of all people, it is Beigbeder who promotes the idea of family values most strongly. Like in *Falling Man* and *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country*, the family is already ruptured before the attacks. Yet, like in these two other examples, the attacks trigger a need to reinvent oneself as a family person. Yorston is divorced and only sees his children intermittently. He is now torn between regretting his lack of family ambition and not having lived life to the fullest without a family to care for. When he was married he felt trapped and longed for liberty; he "had chosen pleasure over happiness" (*WWE* 270). Now, facing death, he realizes that striving for success did not lead him anywhere since his money cannot help him to get out of the towers. Yet, in chapter '9:23' he says that he does not believe in "middle class ideas of the perfect family" (*WWE* 167). Carthew Yorston's transformation from egomaniac to family man is gradual. The more life threatening the catastrophe becomes for him and especially for his children, the more he regrets his life style. It seems that in moments of crisis, we come to realize what is most important for us and as what kind of person we want to be remembered. Yorston recognizes that his two sons are his biggest achievement in life.

Still, physical attraction, sex and the hedonistic satisfaction of individual needs seem to play an essential role in his life. Yorston establishes his own Cartesian-like mantra: "*As long as I am a sex maniac, I am*. When I stop thinking about sex, I will cease to be" (*WWE* 180, emphasis mine). However, in the face of the greatest horror imaginable, he sees that this essentialized satisfaction of needs is obsolete, and he notes that "I wasn't happy when I was free" (*WWE* 277). In chapter '9:36,' even 'Beigbeder,' the narcissist and bon vivant, repents for his way of living; he makes a whole list of self-accusations: amongst other things, he repents for his narcissism and for having abandoned his child.[72] Just as Zola cleared Dreyfuss' name by writing the famous open letter "J'accuse" in 1898, through his self-accusations, 'Beigbeder' hopes to redeem himself. He says that if he survives the attacks, he will immediately marry Candace and take more care of his children. At the same time, in the French version, Beigbeder turns the story of the two traders, which is drastically

[72] Beigbeder is of the opinion that "[a]s the rich man's Zola, it's time for me to write: 'Je m'accuse'" (*WWE* 204).

shortened and moderated in the American edition, into pornography, synchronizing their growing lust with the increasing pain caused by the smoke and the fire: "'Death is better than Viagra,' says the guy in Kenneth Cole. 'You were my reason for living; you're my reason for dying" (*WWE* 281).[73] In a benevolent interpretation of this scene one could say that for the couple, too, death makes them realize what is important to them: life and love. They try to defy their painful death with sex.

While Yorston does an about-face when he is trapped inside the restaurant, sitting in the *Ciel de Paris* has direct impact on the life of its author 'Beigbeder.' Like his protagonist, he wants to marry his girlfriend as soon as he returns home from his trip to New York. For 'Beigbeder' happiness and love and not public conventions such as marriage become terrorism's counternarratives which are the key to a feeling of comfort and satisfaction. After the cathartic trip to New York 'Beigbeder' concludes: "I've got peace deep in my soul. I've got love making me whole" (*WWE* 302). Reflecting the direct aftermath of the attacks and free of sarcasm, Beigbeder's message is that family and love are indeed the core values. Yet, the novel ends with this assertion, and we do not know whether 'Beigbeder' has followed this plan through. In real life, Beigbeder married his girlfriend Amélie Labrande in 2003, whom he thanks for becoming Amélie Beigbeder in the Acknowledgements (*WWE* 305). However, in reality we frequently do not get the happy ending that we get in novels: the marriage did not last and the couple got divorced in 2006.

In his attempt to reconcile France and America, 'Beigbeder' acknowledges that America is superior to France - an assertion that his French audience will not like to hear. Moreover, 'Beigbeder's' view of the U.S. is full of clichés and based on what he as an outsider perceives to be typically American, for example McDonald's. He appears very overconscientious in his attempts to prove his firm knowledge of America and lists the names of American artists and their works indiscriminately. He does not tire to emphasize that America and France are connected inseparably and establishes many

[73] Like Updike and Amis, Beigbeder also picks up on the novelists' seemingly favorite stereotype: "In heaven, there were no virgins, but there were once two. It's not only in hell that passions blaze" (*WWE* 281). In the American edition, the very explicit sex scene is drastically shortened. In the French edition, the chapter is 3 pages long; in the Anglophone edition, it is only half a page.

connections between godmother and godchild.[74] The author claims to be a connoisseur of America and her culture, and he is never tired to give us examples of his favorite American artists to underline this fact. He is the incarnation of this connection since his American grandmother, Grace Carthew Yorstoun, married Charles Beigbeder and moved to France.

Yet, as the North American reviews prove,[75] many Americans do not recognize themselves in Beigbeder's protagonists since he did not manage to shape credible, authentic characters but rather used clichéd stock-characters:

> My childhood takes place in a verdant paradise of a fashionable suburb of Austin, Texas .... My parents try their best to live like a Technicolor movie: they hold cocktail parties at which mothers compare notes on interior decoration .... There are a couple of executions every week in my state. (*WWE* 44-45)

With his novel, Beigbeder wants to counter French/European anti-American sentiments because he is one of the few to be "sick of bigoted anti-Americanism" (*WWE* 16). This is emphasized through 'Beigbeder's' mention of Jean Baudrillard's *The Spirit of Terrorism* (2001). However, Véronique Porra argues that his pro-American stance and his dealings with French anti-Americanism upset his mimetic principles (174). Although 'Beigbeder' frequently plays with irony, he is serious about reuniting the two nations because he himself is a product of a bi-national relationship. However, in the face of geo-political realities, his attempts seem futile and also unnecessary: America followed through with its war on terrorism, ignoring protests from France and Germany. This shows that America does not need Europe for its political decisions, and it surely does not need Beigbeder to write a novel about 9/11, attempting, through fiction, to overcome anti-American sentiments. Moreover, he subordinates the home country of great philosophers, writers, and painters to the "MacDo" culture of the United States. It remains dubitable if he has achieved his goal since his

[74] "The history between France and America is long dormant. Perhaps it's time to wake it up. France can still help. …. France is not America's mother - That's England - but it could claim to be America's godmother. You know, the crusty old aunt with the facial hair problem you see only on big family occasions … but who reminds you of her existence from time to time with a beautiful gift" (Beigbeder, *WWE* 189).

[75] Canadian Catherine MacLennan says that Beigbeder goes over the top with his pro-American enthusiasm that makes his novel "less captivating, especially to English speaking audiences" (MacLennan).

book was heavily criticized in the U.S. and met with ressentiments against an 'outsider.' Besides attempting to cross cultural and political barriers, Beigbeder also crosses many aesthetic boundaries in his book in order to narrate the presumably unnarratable events of September 11.

Porra observes that

> Consequently, the result is a rupture with traditional narratives, which is additionally intensified by the introduction of various interfering elements. With Beigbeder, this shows up with the recourse to other codes. The insertion of pictures, the pagination of the chapters with the time of day, the chronology of the events, or through the graphic composition of his text at the end. (176, translation mine)

Although the "interfering elements" Porra refers to may be uncommon for the French novel, as we can see in Foer and also DeLillo, they are an appropriate tool to fill the narrative void left by the attacks. These elements are not included to disturb but to underline the aspirations at a realist presentation of events of the author: he underlines this by aesthetic devices such as the chronological countdown towards death and the pictures that embed the narrative into a historical temporal and spatial frame. The constant change of styles and registers present in the text is, on the one hand, attributable to postmodernism; on the other hand, the inconsistencies are written evidence for the problems writers faced after the attacks. 'Beigbeder's' metafictional comments about the ethics of writing this novel about 9/11, of course, underline this. In this respect Beigbeder's novel constitutes an exception in the corpus of novels analyzed here. While Foer admits that his work is informed by autobiographical elements, Beigbeder goes a step further, and makes use of what is known as autofiction. Besides blurring genre boundaries Beigbeder also crosses other boundaries, e.g. between high art and pop art, and between comedy and tragedy.

In an interview Beigbeder says that "[t]he novel is a very accommodating genre - you can do anything with it - so I mixed elements of the newspaper article, the pamphlet, the novel, and the essay" (Géniès). By blending different genres but also styles in his novel, Beigbeder shows that, although he aims at a realistic representation, domestic realism is just not enough to grasp the attacks' vastness. Moreover, being France's literary *enfant terrible*,

Beigbeder dares to go where many other authors do not dare to go. Beigbeder has found various narrative strategies to circuit the problems of the unnarratability of 9/11. At times, however, 'Beigbeder' admits that words fail him and concludes a chapter after a few sentences. Sometimes it seems that, especially in the American edition, Beigbeder (or his editor) seems to have lost his courage and he has left out many of the controversial passages. In what follows, I will analyze Beigbeder's narrative strategies and aesthetic devices that make the novel particularly interesting and special in the corpus of novels discussed in this study.

Authors such as DeLillo have asked themselves whether or not to write about the attacks at all. In the famous essay "In the Ruins of the Future," DeLillo addresses these issues and authors such as Martin Amis and Jay McInerney have uttered their concerns about the obsoleteness of their profession in the aftermath of 9/11 in interviews. Beigbeder chose a rather uncommon and unique way to reflect about the problems of fictionalizing the attacks. Maybe also due to the prompt publication of his work, Beigbeder has relocated this issue from the public media to the novel itself.

> A novel is a fiction; what is contained within its pages is not truth. The only way to know what took place in the restaurant on the 107th floor of the North Tower of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, is to invent it. Novels, I believe, are a means of understanding history; they can be windows on our world. But merging fiction with truth – and with tragedy – risks hurting those who have already suffered, something of which I was intensely aware when rereading the novel in English – the language in which the tragedy *happened*. There were, I felt, moments when it was starker and perhaps more likely to wound than I intended. Consequently some scenes have been revised for this edition. (*WWE* 307)

Porra sees the metadiscursive quality of French literature rooted in traditions such as the *Nouveau Roman*, which characteristically takes an anti-mimetic stance, and which has become one of the hallmarks of French writing (Porra 168).[76] In a metafictional discourse 'Beigbeder' muses about the legitimacy of

[76] Luc Lang's novel, *Onze Septembre Mon Amour*, like *Windows on the World*, uses the autofictional mode, and the author follows mimetic principles. In contrast, Didier Goupil's *Le Jour de Mon Retour sur Terre* is rooted in French anti-mimetic principles and drifts off into magic realism.

writing about the attacks on the one hand and about the accomplishment of this project on the other. He realizes that to critics the mere attempt at fictionalizing the terrorist attacks must seem barbaric: "A writer is a jackal, a coyote, a hyena. Give me my dose of desolation. I'm looking for tragedy; don't suppose you've got some little atrocity on hand? I chew on Bubble Yum and the heartache of orphans" (*WWE* 235). However, 'Beigbeder' also says that an event like 9/11, which was so tragic and traumatic, simply cannot be ignored. He states that "Writing this hyperrealist novel is made more difficult by reality itself. Since September 11, 2001, reality has not only outstripped fiction, it's destroying it. It's impossible to write about the subject, and yet impossible to write about anything else. Nothing else touches us" (*WWE* 8). As Porra has pointed out, French literature is strongly attached to its long tradition. Beigbeder, too, makes use of many traditionally French aesthetic features, especially autofiction. However, they do not seem to suffice in the face of the first great tragedy of the millennium, and so he attempts a blending of aesthetic features. He combines comical aspects with elements of the classical tragedy, such as the cathartic effect of the text. Moreover, he blurs the boundaries between High and Pop Art. The language of the novel is rather explicit, and so are the sex-scenes of a couple that makes love one last time in the inferno of their burning office.

For Beigbeder, "How?" seems to be the most pressing and interesting question which he tries to answer through the novel. However, he also already makes attempts to explain the "Why?" One of the ways to do so is to compare the towers of New York to the ones of Babel. By means of this allegory and with the help of citations from the bible, 'Beigbeder' explains why the terrorists chose to attack this symbol of capitalism. Besides their apparent visual similarities (their height), the towers, like the ones of Babel, accommodate people from many different nations. Although Beigbeder claims to be pro-American, the biblical quotations such as Genesis, XI,4, referring to the Tower of Babel, indicate that America had the attacks coming: "'And they said, Go to, let us build ourselves a city and a tower, whose top may reach into heaven; and let us make us a name…'"(*WWE* 82). Just like God punished his overly ambitious people, the jihadists punish America for always wanting more. Beigbeder's deliberations here reflect the European point of view in regard to the September 11 attacks, which may be acceptable to his European readers. To an American, the statement

that it was practically only a matter of time until somebody would punish America for her attitude and her behavior is quite a provocation.

Porra believes in the uniqueness of the attacks and that they indeed cause a change in the novel's aesthetical quality: "This particular form of violence becomes the breaking moment in the mimetic structure of novel writing" (164, translation mine). 'Beigbeder' in the novel reflects about how the violence of the attacks, that represent a hyperreal event, can be put into narrative. 'Beigbeder's' metatextual musings about the significance of writing a novel about 9/11 indeed mark an averting from mimetic structures, thus underlining the hyperreal quality of the attacks themselves. Like the towers' destruction destroyed our reality, hyperrealism destroys that of the novel. The novel develops from a means of entertainment to the place "where the legitimization and the ethical dimension of writing, and thus also the adequate reading, is reflected" (Porra 173, translation mine).

The author also plays with other stylistic inconsistencies. Although Beigbeder is aware of and thematizes the problem of representing the tragedy, he does repeatedly cross the boundaries not only between reality and fiction, but also between the comical and the tragic in his novel. Besides Kalfus, Beigbeder is the only other writer to interweave black humor with the discourse of trauma. For instance, his protagonist 'Beigbeder' plays with the name of the restaurant "Windows on the World". Amongst others, he names it "END OF THE WORLD" (*WWE* 9), "Windows on the Planes," "Windows on the Crash", "Windows on the Smoke", "Broken Windows" (*WWE* 60). Moreover, he makes puns with the verb "to land": in 'Beigbeder's' opinion, "to land" implies that there is indeed land under the wheels of the plane. As this is not the case with the crash in the Twin Towers, he searches for a new word to name this new kind of landing. His suggestion is "to skyscrape"[77] (*WWE* 90), a word which the captain can use in his announcement in case of another similar incident. It remains questionable why Beigbeder crosses these borders so soon after the attacks. For Beigbeder, just as for Kalfus, there is no need for political correctness; he uses the genre of the novel to develop his ideas and voice his opinion freely. Just like one of his idols, Bret Easton Ellis', to whose novel

[77] "atourissage" and "immeublir" in the French edition (*WWF* 121).

American Psycho 'Beigbeder' refers in *Windows on the World*, Beigbeder loves provocation. Defying critics that predicted the end of irony and of sarcasm, Beigbeder shows - differently and in a less sensitive manner than most of his American peers - that the attacks did not cause an aesthetic sea change and remains his old, provocative self.

However, similar to his colleagues, he draws on tried forms. France being the birthplace of Corneille and Racine, Beigbeder also uses elements of the classic tragedy, such as the peripetia: the novel's first sentences already point out that the attacks are the turning point that inevitably drives the action (in the sections narrated by Yorston) towards catastrophe. Also, in almost every single chapter, the action takes a new turn towards catastrophe for Yorston and his children or turns toward the solution of 'Beigbeder's' problems. Moreover, the metadiscourse in the novel deals with the cathartic function of art. Like a classical tragedy, 'Beigbeder's' story closes cathartically: despite the death of the protagonists and Yorston's accusations from his grave, 'Beigbeder' experiences an emotional cleansing and the novel ends on a positive note.[78]

Kristiaan Versluys criticizes that instead of using the protagonists to examine the event from different viewpoints ("participation and contemplation"), the two protagonists seem interchangeable (cf. *Blue* 134). Although the two protagonists come from very different backgrounds, both share resemblance with their creator. Besides political, linguistic and cultural issues, 'Beigbeder' also claims that he has personal reasons for feeling concerned by the attacks. He claims that he descends from the "'patriot' Amos Wheeler, hero of the American Revolution" (*WWE* 296). His paternal grandmother's name is Grace Carthew Yorstoun, who married Charles Beigbeder and moved to France (*WWE* 296).[79] It was her name that was the inspiration for his American protagonist's name: Carthew Yorston, who can thus be read as another alter-ego of Beigbeder. This comes through too obviously in some passages, for example when Beigbeder makes Yorston allude to *Nuit et Brouillard* (1955), a documentary about the Holocaust by Alain Resnais (cf. *WWE* 262). This is

[78] Writing is 'Beigbeder's' way to overcome his asserted trauma: "Pourquoi j'écris au lieu de crier" (*WWF* 264).

[79] Beigbeder keeps to this story in interviews, too. However, we cannot check the actual accuracy of his information. It can also be believed that Beigbeder plays with his audience and sticks to the story for reasons of image and marketing:

particularly disturbing since 'Beigbeder' sits in the *Ciel de Paris*, working on his novel while Yorston and his family are facing cruel death. Similar to Kalfus' protagonist Joyce, 'Beigbeder' suffers from what we can call trauma envy since he claims to be traumatized by the live footage on TV. The narratives of the two characters do not vary in style and register and so they seem to become but the two fictional halves of their creator, Frédéric Beigbeder. Nevertheless, Versluys' disappointment in regard to the characters is not justified. Both characters, like Beigbeder, are narcissistic attention-seekers who are obsessed with women. The author's split personality manifests itself in the two protagonists that are shaped after him: he is at the same time the fictional as well as the autobiographical I in the novel. Yorston offers the reader the unique possibility to share the experience of one of the victims, and 'Beigbeder' tries his best to understand the attacks; also, through his metatextual references he theorizes the ethics of writing about 9/11.

The novel begins with quotes by different artists such as Walt Whitman, Kurt Cobain, Tom Wolfe, and Marilyn Manson, already hinting at the mixture of registers and styles that is to follow in the novel proper. The narrative itself is also interwoven with actual quotes from other authors or allusions to other works and Beigbeder uses the words of others where he himself cannot find the right words. The novel's structure is also strongly reminiscent of George Perec's *W ou le souvenir d'enfance* (1975). Like Perec, Beigbeder alternates fictional and autobiographical chapters, and he constantly alludes to the Holocaust, the central theme of Perec's childhood memories. However, the comparison of 9/11 to, for example, Hiroshima or the Holocaust is highly debatable and questionable, and Beigbeder has been criticized for drawing inappropriate parallels between the two.

As Beigbeder mentions in various passages in the book, narrating this unbelievable event is difficult, and the intertexts are supposed to fill in where his own words fail him. Some of the novelists he mentions, such as Zola, Ellis, or Salinger, are his inspiration and influence his style of writing. Beigbeder sees himself as the "rich man's Zola" (*WWE* 204). Zola being the leading figure of naturalism in Europe, 'Beigbeder's' mention of him emphasizes the realist ambitions of the author, which may also be his excuse for the cruel way in which he deals with the attacks. Moreover, citing from Walt Whitman's poetry

collection *Leaves of Grass* (1855), Bret Easton Ellis' *American Psycho* (1991), or J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (195), Beigbeder does not only criticize society overtly but also does so covertly. While *American Psycho*, like *Windows on the World*, criticizes society's shallowness, the poems in *Leaves of Grass* celebrate America's emancipation from Europe and the greatness of the country. As I have argued above, Beigbeder criticizes America's sense of exceptionalism that is presented here through "Song of the Exposition" by Whitman, since he believes that the American feeling of global superiority and ignorance led to the terrorist attacks.

In the novel, Beigbeder uses interdiscursivity by interweaving the 9/11 tragedy with constant allusions and comparisons to the Holocaust, which are cause for complaint to Henningfeld in her article "9/11 als neuer Holocaust?" While, due to apparent American historical isolationism, Americans set the attacks into an American historical context and hence found the attacks to be similar to Pearl Harbor, Beigbeder, as a European, chooses the Holocaust as his point of reference. The author has been strongly criticized for this move[80] for many reasons. Roth argues that

> the Holocaust is the most striking example for a traumatic event that seems to call for remembrance and therefore representation, while it goes against any form of representation as something inadequate, if not obscene, at the same time. (170, translation mine)

The fact that only few books (both fictional and non-fictional) by survivors have been published proves that the speechlessness could not be overcome. Still, the generations succeeding the victims and survivors of the Holocaust attempted to find a narrative for the traumatic event and, partly, they succeeded. They broke through the wall of silence and speechlessness, and they gave a voice to the horror, thus triggering the discussion on this delicate and painful chapter in world history.

By alluding to the Holocaust, Beigbeder, on the one hand, seems to see himself in a similar position since he does not know how to narrate the

[80] In *The Culture of Commemoration* Simpson criticizes Foer for the same reason.

unnarratable; on the other hand, the language of the Holocaust seeps into his descriptions of the burning towers and the victims trapped inside of them like in a gas chamber (see *WWE* 274). Of course, 'Beigbeder's' dilemma cannot be compared to that of the victims of the Nazi regime. Still, provocative as always, the author coquets with the Holocaust topos by making reference to Resnais, Benigni, and Lanzmann: "Documentary filmmaker Claude Lanzmann says that the Shoah is a mystery: September 11 is too" (*WWE* 263). This statement is unacceptable and ignores the circumstances of this dark era of humanity during which millions of people were murdered in Europe. Moreover, he also uses Holocaust metaphors such as smoke, ashes etc. The question of guilt and responsibility and also the question about God are addressed explicitly. Although it is understandable that 'Beigbeder' needs a point of reference to set the events into a historical context, even provocation has its limits and Beigbeder's comparison is unacceptable. Yet, in the English version, the parallels are made less explicit: "In Windows on the World, the customers were gassed, burned and reduced to ashes" (*WWE* 274). In the French version, Beigbeder has Yorston say: "Le Windows on the World était une chambre à gaz de luxe. Ses clients ont été gazes, puis brûlés et réduits en cendres comme à Auschwitz" (*WWF* 234). In a letter to Durand, Beigbeder has explained these alterations by stating that leaving out these passages, like many others, from the American edition, happened out of respect for the victims. Yet, since the author usually does not refrain from provocation, it is also likely that Beigbeder gave in to the pressure of the publishers and his thirst for scandal was quenched by pecuniary interests.

'Beigbeder' also alludes to the film *Schindler's List* (1993) and states that he does not want to commit the same mistakes as Spielberg when it comes to the impossibility of representation of death in the gas chamber. In the movie, Jewish men, women, and children stand in a room with showers - a clear allusion to the gas chambers that were disguised as shower rooms during the Hitler regime. Yet, in the film, the showers work and the people are not gassed, which, according to Beigbeder, is unlikely and this ending of the scene is to be accounted for by the unrepresentability of gassing people. 'Beigbeder' does not have this problem; although a taboo topic, 'Beigbeder' writes about the different possibilities of dying explicitly: the two traders die in the fire while making love.

Jeffrey, the stockbroker jumps from the tower. At the beginning, it seems as if 'Beigbeder,' too, would let water come out of the showers when Jeffrey tries to plane to earth with the help of a curtain. At first, he seems to succeed, but then 'Beigbeder' takes away the audience's hope: "At first, the fabric billows like a parachute. His buddies cheer him on …. He picks up speed. His arms have too much weight to carry, the curtain tangles …. [H]e falls like a stone" (*WWE* 202). He also follows through when it comes to the death of the Yorston family: we stay with them until the father chooses to jump from the tower. However, he switches into the mode of hyperreality when the father addresses the audience from beyond the grave thereby reminding the reader that the story is fictional. Moreover, Yorston's monologue is not a "Je m'acccuse" but a "J'accuse" where 'je' criticizes the media's self-censorship which made the victims vanish from the public realm.

'Beigbeder' himself maintains that "[s]ince September 11, 2001, reality has not only outstripped fiction, it's destroying it. It's impossible to write about the subject, and yet impossible to write about anything else. Nothing else touches us" (*WWE* 8). To circumvent this dilemma, Beigbeder claims to write a "hyperrealist novel" (*WWE* 8). Versluys states that "[n]ot realism but a newly invented novelistic form is called upon to do the job of relating the unrelatable" (*Blue* 124), and so the author exploits the full potential of the novel genre. Still, Beigbeder's quotation of Tom Wolfe[81] hints at his aim to produce a specifically realistic narrative in the parts narrated by Yorston and the other victims trapped inside the tower. Overall, the novel shows its mimetic and realistic quality throughout the narration from inside the tower through the minute description of, for example, the spatial conditions and the attacks' details.[82] Beigbeder grounds the real horror of 9/11 in fiction by ticking down the countdown towards the death of thousands of people minute by minute. Moreover, in a direct address

[81] "A novelist who does not write realistic novels understands nothing of the world in which we live" (Wolfe qtd. in *WWE*, Introductory notes).

[82] "We know with reasonable certainty what happened at 8:46 A.M. An American Airlines Boeing 767 with 92 people on board, 11 of them crew, flew into the north face of One World Trade center, between floors 94 and 98; 10,5000 gallons of jet fuel immediately burst into flames in the offices of Marsh & McLennan. It was flight AA11 (Boston – Los Angeles), which had taken off from Logan Airport at 7:59 A.M. and was moving at 500mph. The force of such an impact is estimated as being equivalent to an explosion of 265 tons of dynamite (a 12-second shock wave measuring 0.9 on the Richter scale). We also know that none of the 1,344 people trapped on the 19 floors above survived. Obviously, this piece of information removes any element of suspense from this book" (*WWE* 55).

to the audience reminiscent of Jane Austen or James Joyce, Beigbeder starts his novel by revealing the - not surprising - ending: "You know how it ends: everybody dies" (*WWE* 1). He thereby takes away the readers' illusions about a possible, fictional happy ending and starts with the inevitable: death. Moreover, he shares a knowledge with the reader, who, like him and unlike his protagonist Yorston, know that the day will end in tragedy. The ending of the day's events also constitutes the end of his story.

One example for Beigbeder's destruction of reality is the ending of Yorston's storyline. The narrative does not end with the narrator's death; he talks to the reader from beyond the grave:

> There's nothing to understand, my little ghosts with your delicate little hands. We died for nothing …. Tower No. 1 took ten seconds to completely collapse, straight as a rocket ready for taking off with the film running backward. Remember us, please. We three are the burning phoenix which will rise from its ashes. (*WWE* 300)

Although Beigbeder's idea of hyperrealism is not linked to that of Baudrillard, Yorston's last words from beyond the grave can be read as a criticism of the media and their self-imposed censorship after the attacks. His last words give the novel a moral tinge and are a plea to the world not to forget the victims, something that has indeed happened in the attack's aftermath: 9/11 has become iconic, an abstract date, an 'event,' as it is often referred to: "[I]n the wake of 9/11, commemoration has been hijacked by revenge, there has been a visibly commodified national mourning, the image of death has been taken over by the image of falling towers" (Simpson, *Commemoration* 170).

> I was right to tell Jerry and David that we were on a imaginary theme park ride: now, there are guided tours of Ground Zero. It has become a tourist attraction, like the Statue of Liberty, which we will never get to visit …. There is a long line to climb the wooden podium that overlooks the desolate esplanade. The guide hurries the voyeurs. But there's nothing to see except an immense expanse of concrete, a parking lot with no cars, the biggest tombstone in the world. The night blushes with embarrassment at times to think of it …. We've become a tourist attraction. (*WWE* 297)

The victims who have died on the planes and in the towers seem to have vanished from people's minds. Beigbeder has observed this phenomenon very soon after the attacks and has severely criticized the press for its self-censorship. His work is a means of bringing the individual's suffering back to people's minds. However, Yorston's character also disturbingly shows that besides being a victim of the attacks, through his narcissism and belief in American exceptionalism, he also contributed to the causes leading to the attacks in the first place.

Just like his idol Ellis in *Lunar Park* or Foer in *Everything is Illuminated*, Beigbeder names his protagonist after himself, thus alluding to the autobiographical potential of the novel. The anti-mimetic metadiscourse is embedded in a presumably autobiographical frame, which again supports the idea of realism and authenticity. Also, the fact that 'Beigbeder' sits in the *Ciel de Paris* confirms my claim that by putting himself in a similar setting, he hopes to achieve a maximum of realism for his narrative. Although Porra is right when she argues that the metadiscursive passages destroy Beigbeder's aspirations for mimesis, the author gives these sections an authentic veneer by feigning autobiographical factuality. The narrator directly addresses his audience at the beginning of the novel and takes away any hope or illusion about a fictional happy ending. The first lines of the first of 119 chapters seem like a warning: 'Beigbeder' makes clear where the novel is headed and thus also implies that it will have considerable impact on the reader who will have to face destruction and death. He or she will have to live through the tragedy of the attacks once more and the author is not going to protect or spare them. The reader will have to deal with the attacks in all their amplitude, at least in the original version of the book. In the American edition of the novel, the most provocative and painful scenes are omitted out of respect for the American readership as is stated in an author's note at the end of the book. 'Beigbeder' represents the people who try to grasp the terrible events. In what I term a meta-autofictional narrative, he muses on the "Hows" and "Whys" of the attacks while at the same time elaborating on the problems of filling the "howling void" with narrative. His writing is autofictional, and the reader is never quite sure whether or not the thoughts and acts of 'Beigbeder' are true or not. In metafictional comments, 'Beigbeder' muses about the meaningfulness of fictionalizing the attacks. In his

opinion, 9/11 marks a zero hour, an apocalypse that heralds a new age and needs to be represented through hyperrealism. Derisory as it may seem to the reader, for 'Beigbeder,' the Tour Montparnasse seems ideal to put himself in the place of those he wants to write about. Consequently, starting in September 2002, 'Beigbeder' sits in the café *Ciel de Paris* situated on the 56th floor of the Tour Montparnasse and reflects on the tragic events of 9/11 and the way in which he is going to present the attacks in the novel he is about to write; the dimensions of the catastrophe make it a difficult task for him.

'Beigbeder' returns to the *Ciel de Paris* regularly. One day, he decides to do an experiment; because he wants to put himself in the situation of those who had to walk down the steps in the World Trade Center, he walks down the steps of the 56 floors of the Tour Montparnasse. Yet, in the end, he has to admit that the comparison is misleading, and he comes to the conclusion that nothing can be compared to the traumatic experiences of those who were actually involved in the attacks and that no writer or any outsider will ever be able to imagine the actual horror. Here, it becomes clear that witnessing the events on TV cannot be compared to experiencing them. 'Beigbeder' seriously believes that he can put himself in the shoes of the victims by walking down some flights of stairs in Paris. The comparison is equally inappropriate as comparing the attacks to the Shoah. It proves that 'Beigbeder's' perspective is that of a true outsider. Wanting to get rid of anti-Americanism does not mean that he empathizes with the Americans. He victimizes himself by claiming that he was traumatized by the pictures on TV and also by sitting in the Ciel de Paris, which proves that he suffers from a severe case of trauma envy. 'Beigbeder' claims a 9/11 trauma for himself; after the attacks, 'Beigbeder' shows symptoms of PTSD. He is haunted by the pictures of the smoking towers and tries to find a narrative for the terrible event by imagining what the last hour and a half must have been like for the victims, that is, his cousin and his sons. This

> idiopathic identification is essentially self-referential, grounded on shared identity …. [O]ne evaluates the trauma of the other simply by asking, 'I wonder what it would be like if this happened to me'; thus, unfamiliar experience is not encountered on its own terms but assimilated to the self. (Bennett 134)

‘Beigbeder’ puts himself in the place of the victims and tries to analyze what his reaction would have been like in case of an attack. He decides that to get an authentic feeling, he must write the novel in a comparable environment, and he chooses to write it in the highest building of Paris, namely the Tour Montparnasse. Beigbeder, too, is re-experiencing the catastrophe. His novel is an attempt at reconstructing the events inside the towers. Like Oskar, ‘Beigbeder’ invents the death of others. Of course, ‘Beigbeder’s’ trauma envy is pure provocation. ‘Beigbeder’ also uses his time in the café for an “autosatiric” look at his childhood, criticizing his parents and their educational skills (*WWE* 214). He concludes that his childhood was an unhappy one although he was brought up very well: His parents got divorced when he was very young. This, once more, underlines ‘Beigbeder’s impudence: throughout the novel, ‘Beigbeder’ uses this childhood ‘trauma’ as an excuse for his oftentimes inconsiderate behavior and, of course, the protagonist’s complaints about his childhood are petty in contrast to the tragedy of 9/11. Although he writes about how terrible and tragic the attacks of 9/11 were, he cannot refrain from talking about himself. Just like Joyce and Marshall in *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country*, he is a self-absorbed hedonist. ‘Beigbeder’ maintains that talking about seeming banalities makes sense; he states that by talking about his life, he avoids having to talk about the death of others. However, when ‘Beigbeder’ finally visits Ground Zero, the horror becomes real to him; he is overwhelmed by emotion and starts to cry.

Windows on the World is one proof for Hutcheon’s observation that “[t]he most radical boundaries crossed, however, have been those between fiction and non-fiction and - by extension - between art and life” (10). While the ticking down of the countdown to death is plausible and sensible for Yorston’s part, it destroys the realistic veneer when it comes to ‘Beigbeder’s’ parts of the story. Since he says that he started writing the book one year after the attacks, the anachronism of the narration becomes clear. The chapters narrated by ‘Beigbeder’ are a direct metafictional response and comment on the chapter he has just written. The novel’s partly autofictional mode is a great example of how the author blurs generic boundaries. Through the use of a fictionalized autobiography, Beigbeder finds his means to work through his personal 9/11 experience, and he justifies the writing of fiction through the metatextual

comments of 'Beigbeder.' Beigbeder himself does not give away much information about his own private life; yet, the similarities between Beigbeder and 'Beigbeder' cannot be denied. Just like the truth about what happened inside the tower remains in the dark and the narrative is thus speculative, the reader can only speculate about the truth of the author's words in regard to his own person. Consequently, the novel becomes a mirror that reflects the author's own person but it is also an object behind which he, the author, can hide:

> Some critics claim cinema is a 'window on the world'. Others say the novel is. Art is a window on the world …. Writing an autobiographical novel not to reveal oneself, but to melt away. A novel is a two-way mirror behind which I hide so I can see and not be seen. The mirror in which I see myself, in the end, I give to others. When one cannot answer the question 'Why?' one must at least attempt to answer the question 'How?' (*WWE* 235-236)

In the novel, 'Beigbeder' talks about the hyperreal quality of the attacks and the hyperreal destroys reality in the novel. This is made clear at several points: as "Beigbeder moves physically closer to Ground Zero and as he does so there is a sense of gradual intermingling of the author and Carthew" (Randall 75). One particularly interesting passage is when the 'reality' of 'Beigbeder' clashes with the presumably fictional world of Yorston when 'Beigbeder' meets Candace, Yorston's girl-friend, at a bar in New York after Yorston's death:

> At the Taj, I admire a sad, long-haired blonde dressed in black, surrounded by brothers …. It is she who leans toward my mouth. She kisses me; her tongue is cold and wet from the ice …. I ask her name. Candace, she says …. I tell her I'm writing a novel about Windows on the World. Her face becomes blank. It is as though I'd hit her with a baseball bat. (*WWE* 229-230)

Although Beigbeder aims at a mimetic rendering of the victim's 9/11 experience, he destroys this by making the worlds of the two protagonists intersect. Moreover, this scene also underlines the workings of autofiction: although 'Beigbeder' confusingly resembles his creator, his encounter with Candace also destroys the illusion that they are one and the same. 'Beigbeder's' efforts at confusing the boundaries of reality and fiction also becomes clear inside the towers: "Jeffrey begins the paragraph as a fictional character; then he enters into

the realm of the real - as one of the people who jumped or fell from the towers; and then he dies as a fictional character again" (Randall 75). Conversely, 'Beigbeder' tries to tie himself in with reality by claiming that he is one of the descendants of John Adams. Beigbeder makes the historical reality clash with the fictional reality of his characters, thereby mirroring the perception of the attacks themselves.

In "Beyond Belief," Ian McEwan observes that "it was punishment to watch, and see replayed from new angles, the imploding towers, 102 storeys enfolding into their own dust. Or see the conflagration at the 'exit hole' of the second tower. Or see the women cowering in terror behind a car" (2). Beigbeder, too, thematizes the visual quality of the attacks, criticizing the censorship which made the victims disappear from the news. In *WW*, Beigbeder combines the literal visualization of Foer and the visual language of DeLillo; the trope of falling is omnipresent in the novel. Broadcast worldwide and thus a global tragedy, 9/11 was predominantly experienced as a visual event, and like many others, 'Beigbeder' witnessed the tragedy on television. In the immediate aftermath, the attacks triggered enunciations such as "We are all Americans" (Colombani). 'Beigbeder,' too, is thoroughly pro-American, but the solidarity with the U.S. in many countries in Europe soon changed into protest against America's precipitant retaliatory measures.

> Beigbeder does not hide his largely ambiguous motivations and shows himself in an often unflattering light but he does also show how the vast majority of people 'experienced' the attacks - through television images. In a sense the novel explores the highly mediated popular culture that dominates many lives[.] (Randall 74)

With his novel, particularly through the unique perspective from the victims, he states that he wants to bring back those brave people to people's minds and keep them alive in their memory.

The novel's aesthetics, too, pay tribute to the visuality of the 9/11 attacks. Like Foer, Beigbeder inserts pictures into the narrative, thereby aiming at giving the narrative an authentic and graspable frame. He thus underlines the realist intention of his work. Beigbeder has also inserted two questionnaires into the narrative, one, an imitation of a landing card that he had to fill out on his

flight to New York, the other a similar questionnaire on which the reader can check the applicable answers. The presumed authenticity of the landing card plays with our perception of what is real: is it real because we can see it in a picture? The faked landing cards' provocative questions prove the contrary. On the other hand, the picture of the Tour Montparnasse serves to underline 'Beigbeder's' statement that it is a miniature World Trade Center and allows the reader to visualize how 'Beigbeder' sat inside this tower and wrote the novel.

The last chapter, 10:28, the time of collapse of the North Tower, is written in the form of the two towers, the chapter title forming the antenna of the South Tower, and evokes the iconic picture of the Twin Towers that at this moment vanish from the surface of the earth but will remain an immortal symbol. Through the use of meta-autofiction and hyperrealism, Beigbeder chooses an unusual way to try to bridge the silence left by the collapsing towers. The combination of High and Pop Culture, the provocation are all attempts to fill the void and hint at the shortcomings of the existing narrative devices, while at the same time, he cannot offer a solution to this problem. Through the translation of Beigbeder's work into English in 2005, the novel is made available to an international audience, and so is his approach. The novel can be seen as one of the more innovative attempts at dealing with the topic, a fact that was also appreciated by critics.

V. The Transcultural Novel and Pseudocosmopolitanism: *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

Changez, a young Pakistani, meets a man, whom he rightly identifies as an American in the district of Old Anarkali in Lahore. He invites the American to have tea with him and then engages in a monologue about his life in America before, during, and after the September 11, 2001 attacks: Fresh from Princeton, Changez gets a job offer from Underwood Samson, an evaluation firm, as an analyst. Proud to be part of the team and vibrant New York City, Changez always has a nagging voice at the back of his head, questioning his ambitions. He witnesses the attacks from a hotel room in Manila and finds himself pleased by the fact that somebody has indeed succeeded to shake America's foundations. From then on, Changez' incomprehension for America, especially its war on terror, grows. At the same time, Changez tells his interlocutor about his infatuation with a girl named Erica, whose mental health is fragile and who kills herself eventually. While he is telling his unsettling story, the American's unease grows and doubts arise on both sides. Is the American man a CIA agent who plans on killing Changez or just a tourist? Or is Changez a fundamentalist who in turn tries to kill his interlocutor?

This study will show that the novel's aesthetic layout mirrors the themes Hamid writes about. It becomes clear that Hamid gives himself up to literary nostalgia both in regard to themes (Changez' longing for a time when the Near East was still a paragon of progress on the one hand, and (Am)Erica's longing for past simplicity[83] on the other) and aesthetics (parallels to *1001 Nights*, the monologic narration, the use of intertextuality and allegories). Statistics show the destabilizing effects that the attacks had on U.S. citizens: "In a recent poll of 1,007 U.S. citizens, 39 percent …. favoured requiring Muslims, including U.S. citizens, to carry a special identification 'as a means of preventing terrorist attacks'" (Bidwai). Many Americans were ready to give up their personal freedoms (for example through the PATRIOT Act), and racial profiling triggered a paranoiac witch hunt. Besides thematizing public violence against Muslims, a

[83] For example the simplicities of a clear-cut enemy image or America's position as an impregnable and uncontested world power.

fact also covered by U.S. media and many 9/11 novels,[84] *Reluctant* also deals with the government's activities after the initiation of the Department of Homeland Security. The novel allows for us to compare pre- and post-9/11 New York. Before the attacks, Changez describes that

> moving to New York felt … like coming home …. In a subway car, my skin would typically fall in the middle of the color spectrum. On street corners, tourists would ask me for directions. I was, in four and a half years, never an American; I was *immediately* a New Yorker. (*RF* 32-3)

However, this quote also shows that although Changez identifies with New York immediately, mostly because it reminds him of Lahore in many ways, and he is ready to play according to the rules imposed on him by the new culture and his new employer, he is not ready to give up his ancestral identity ("never an American"). He is thus aware of his hybrid status already before 9/11. After the attacks, the "Big Apple" closes ranks and becomes an intimidating and threatening sea of flags, with which people show their solidarity with the victims and allegiance to their country: "Your country's flag invaded New York after the attacks …. They all seemed to proclaim: *We are America* - not New York which, in my opinion, something quite different - *the mightiest civilization the world has ever you; you have slighted us; beware our wrath*" (*RF* 79, emphasis in original). The attacks triggered a new paranoia similar to the Cold War's Red Threat rhetoric.[85] Hence, although, as Changez points out, he felt immediately welcome in this vibrant city which seemed to have its place for every culture,[86] people falling into a certain visual schema have a hard time in the U.S. after the attacks and are stigmatized as the dangerous and fanatic other: "I was approached by a man I didn't know. He made a series of unintelligible noises - '*akhala-malakhala*,' perhaps, or 'khalpapal-khalapala' - and pressed his face alarmingly close to mine …. 'Fucking Arab,' he said" (*RF* 117). Hamid

[84] Especially Naqvi's *Home Boy*.

[85] Bush maintains that "[t]he murderous ideology of the Islamic radicals is the great challenge of our new century. Yet in many ways, this fight resembles the struggle against communism in the last century" (Bush).

[86] Changez feels very much at home because of "[t]he fact that Urdu was spoken by taxi-cab drivers; the presence, only two blocks from my East Village apartment, of a samosa- and channa-serving establishement called the Pak-Punjab Deli" (*RF* 33).

frequently thematizes the danger that his country, but more importantly, his family, is exposed to because of America's hastened retaliatory measures that affect civilian life abroad to a considerable extent. However, he not only refers to the actual American involvement with Pakistan but the generally problematic role of America in Pakistan and South Asia's history. The novel can thus be considered as a kind of writing back to America and counternarrating American authors writing about the attacks: "In the American context where is the articulate, educated Muslim response?" (Ansari). Hamid is anxious to point out the negative effects of the U.S.' global political influence and delineates this by outlining the effects that this influence has on his home country. Consequently, Hamid, too, approaches the topic from a particularly national stance.

According to Richard Gray, writers who are not native born Americans "present post-9/11 America as a transcultural space in which different cultures reflect and refract, confront and bleed into one another' (*Fall* 55). However, the term "transcultural" conveys the idea that cultural boundaries are permeable and crossed by more than one side. Yet, in Hamid's novel this is not the case: the use of monologue silences the American and although the attacks are looked at by a different side, as we shall see later on, Hamid caters to the same resentments and prejudices fostered by his American counterparts.

> Gray certainly favors narratives of liminality that refuse to simplify the Arab Other, move national narratives into transnational spaces, and hybridize individuals and communities; these novels enact the difference between a pre- and post-9/11 world. But the transnational narratives he lauds for effectively highlighting the value of hybridity are convincing without being set against what he perceives as failed sentimentalism. (DeRosa 613)

DeRosa convincingly points out what I have been arguing for, namely that juxtaposing novels by 'us' with novels by 'them' is not necessary and even counterproductive when we want to look at the aesthetics of insider/outsider novels. Moreover, my close reading of the text will reveal that such an easy thematic distinction between these two categories of authors cannot be maintained. The novels thematize that the "value of hybridity" becomes the

"burden of hybridity" after the attacks and, made to decide, Changez chooses the Pakistani side in him.

In his 2007 essay "The End of Innocence," Mishra is not convinced by the fictional responses to the attacks produced in the West. He observes that Americans, oblivious to the danger, had it coming:

> The aggressive paternalism and self-righteousness of American business and politics provoked resentment among even the beneficiaries of an American-ordered world, such as the secular middle-class Turks in Istanbul who told Orhan Pamuk on 9/11 that the terrorists had done the 'right thing'.

Mishra criticizes Western novel(ist)s for their biased perspective and, similar to Gray, lauds literature produced outside the capitalistic heart of the West: "There are no simple oppositions in these books [*Harbor, Maps for Lost Lovers, Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*] between 'Muslims' and the 'west'" (Mishra, "Innocence"). Mishra states that novels such as Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* point to the fact that many hybrids were pushed into an identity crisis since they are made to choose to be for or against "us." Yet, besides this obvious problem, Hamid's novel also points to the consequences of globalization for those who "cannot afford to see the west as an alien and dangerous 'other'" (Mishra, "Innocence"). Yet, by the end of the novel, this is exactly what America has become to Changez: a dangerous and exploitative enemy; Changez' inner conflict is (almost) resolved with his return to Pakistan. The novel's set up as a dramatic monologue stresses the fact that there are two opposite camps. "September 11 was a global event. It demands a literature that takes risks, speaks in multiple tongues, and dares to move beyond near-sightedness" (Rothberg, "Seeing Terror, Feeling Art" 140-41).

Although Rothberg's demand is justified, this quote contains two problematic ideas: first of all, it implies that before the risk-taking literature by predominantly non-western authors (although Gray classifies Hamid as an American author in his monograph), none has attempted to "move beyond near-sightedness." A close reading of the novels proves him wrong: French author Luc Lang makes serious allegations against the U.S. and their treatment of Native Americans in his novel *Onze Septembre Mon Amour*; in *Falling Man*,

Don DeLillo tries to explain the dynamics of terrorism by using the example of an alleged German terrorist, Martin Ridnour (aka. Ernst Hechinger) and Hammad, a fictional 9/11 terrorist. Moreover, all of the novels comment critically on the USA's historical role in world politics (WWII, especially Hiroshima and Dresden; Indian genocide). Yet, one could claim that Western authors only use these "transnational memories" (Hornung, "Terrorist Violence" 172) because the U.S.' history does not offer any comparable tragedy. And indeed, the comparison to earlier tragedies helps to situate 9/11 in world history and avoid an American exceptionalism of suffering. On the other hand, the authors praised by Gray and others do not represent what has come to be called "the transnational" unstintingly. Besides giving us their observations about the U.S. after the attacks, novelists such as Hamid, Naqvi, and Halaby also write about alterity, which eventually leads them to reconsider their feelings for America and to think in more nationalistic patterns again. Although their novels try to act as mediators between cultures and look at the global picture, these novelists, too, reinstate national discourses in their novels.

Changez repeatedly makes use of the terms "Pakistaniness" (*RF* 71) and "Americanness," (*RF* 124) terms that are highly problematic because they invite overgeneralizations and stereotypes. The protagonist never attempts to explain these two terms explicitly; however, it becomes clear over the course of the novel what these terms signify to him. "Pakistaniness" has a positive connotation and stands for his old, modest self, who is backed by his family. The term "Americanness,"[87] in contrast, stands for many negative features, for example, over-confidence, political ignorance, Imperialism, and serves to describe the American people and its bearing towards others - a bearing that is heavily criticized by the protagonist.

In the insider/outsider novel, the formation and re-invention of identity after the attacks plays an important role. I will look at how 9/11 has influenced the perception of self in the protagonist and how they deal with the emergence of exaggerated patriotism that frequently turns into racism. Since 9/11, questions of identity are raised inside the USA by many different sides. While mainstream Americans affirm their group identity as one, solidly united people immediately

[87] "Nevertheless, at the popular level, it is assumed that a 'true' American is (or should be) patriotic and capitalistic, and, less explicidy [sic], Christian and White" (Salaita 156).

after the attacks as the many American flags displayed in shops and private homes hint at, insider-outsiders are constantly confronted with issues of alterity: they are marked by "their (racial) appearance" (Mutimer 173). While they themselves often feel as multicultural and hybrid, embracing this status, they experience that the choice is not theirs and their group membership is not (only) influenced by their self-perception but by how they are perceived by others.

In an interview, Hamid introduced the term "post-postcolonial" ("Mohsin Hamid") to describe "people who never had a colonial experience," and "whose experiences grow out of the postcolonial condition but are more informed by the forces of globalization (Jay 91-2). According to his own definition, Hamid can be considered to be a post-postcolonial author. Yet, the novelist oftentimes follows in the steps of colonial writers because he tends to exoticize or re-stereotype his main character in the passages where Changez sits in a café in the district of Old Anarkali, Lahore. In contrast to the performance of Americanness that Changez attempts while he is in the U.S., the author wants to underline the protagonists' Pakistani heritage and makes the reader realize that, while hybridity may be desirable, the gap between Americanness and Pakistaniness is wide and cannot be bridged easily. This is also the reason why Changez constantly compares Lahore to New York, emphasizing the similarities but also stressing the differences that are striking and make him envious at times.

During his stay in America, Changez conducts his own "reverse racial profiling" (Banita, "Race" 243), thereby trying to define what makes 'Americanness.' In order to blend in with his peers at the university and later at Underwood Samson, but also with Americans in general, Changez watches and learns:

> I attempted to act and speak, as much as my dignity would permit, more like an American. The Filipinos we worked with seemed to look up to my American colleagues, accepting them almost instinctively as members of the officer class of global business - and I wanted my share of that respect as well. (*RF* 65)

After the attacks, a "moral racialization" takes place which is an "erosion of human rights and civil liberty … [and] a national rhetoric fuelled by misconstrued patriotism rushed to vilify and marginalize persons of an allegedly

suspicious racial makeup" (Banita, "Race" 243).[88] Changez tries to escape "racial determinism" by playing according to what he perceives as the American rules (Banita, "Race" 243). The protagonist makes several (futile) attempts at reshaping his identity until he realizes that this artificial construct does not withstand the scrutinizing looks of others. Just like the protagonist in Scott F. Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Changez creates his own character and tries to reshape himself according to American demands and principles, attempting to obliterate his old self. Yet, his transformation "only underwrites the barriers, of class in one case, culture in another, and the barriers of wealth and power, by attempting to erase them" (Gray, *Fall* 59-60). Moreover, Changez recognizes that to gainsay his identity does not bring any improvement for him but makes him feel like a masquerader. He does not want to become a hollow character that performs a certain role to fit in, and he prefers to return to his principles.

In "The Cult of Ethnicity," Arthur Schlesinger argues that "[t]he US escaped the divisiveness of a multiethnic society by a brilliant solution: the creation of a brandnew national identity. The point of America was not to preserve old cultures but to forge a new, *American* culture" (26, emphasis in original). This "brandnew identity" is endangered by growing discourses on diversity and hybridity, and, as the novel shows, the "national identity" propagated by the author proves to be illusory. Especially in the years after 9/11, the venture that "[i]n a world savagely rent by ethnic and racial antagonisms, the US must continue as an example of how a highly differentiated society holds itself together" proves utopian (Schlesinger 26). With 9/11 as a catalyst, the novel shows that instead of a homogenizing "melting pot," the US resembles a "salad bowl" where many different identities co-exist. The protagonists' attempt to create a group identity clearly fails for racially marked people who stand on the side of the rejected and feared Other. As the example of Changez shows, "[c]elebrated by some and rejected by others, multiculturalism is controversial precisely because of its real and perceived (in)compatibility with national unity" (Stratton/Ang). As one of the facets of his identity, Pakistaniness comes to

[88] Changez is astounded by the effect of his newly grown beard on Americans: "It is remarkable, given its physical insignificance … the impact a beard worn by a man of my complexion has on your fellow countrymen. More than once, traveling on the subway - where I had always had the feeling of seamlessly blending in - I was subjected to verbal abuse by complete strangers, and at Underwood Samson I seemed to have become overnight a subject of whispers and stares" (*RF* 130).

Changez naturally: he feels Pakistani by birth, and his color of skin and demeanor are visible features of his heritage. Later, he consciously emphasizes his foreignness by growing his beard. "Americanness" is rather something that he feels he has to perform in order to fit in, thereby nullifying Schlesinger's theory: "I lacked a stable *core* …. Probably this was why I had been willing to try to take on the persona of Chris, because my own identity was so fragile" (*RF* 148, emphasis in original). Changez creates an Americanized version of himself which he uses to his advantage, for example in order to gain access to Erica and America. However, at times he identifies with this American persona so much that he also feels uncomfortable and insecure in his Pakistaniness because it differs so much from what he believes to be typically American, especially after the attacks.[89] On the one hand, he fears that his performance might be uncovered as such;[90] on the other hand, his initial discomfort about being American resurfaces. Although he attempts to blend in with the tribe prior to September 11, he is constantly haunted by doubts whether this is really necessary and whether he really wants to fit in. In retrospect he says: "I wonder now, sir, whether I believed at all in the firmness of the foundations of the new life I was attempting to construct for myself in New York. Certainly, I *wanted* to believe" (*RF* 93, emphasis in original). Although his 'Americanness' earns him the respect of his colleagues and, more importantly, it earns him the envy of the less privileged, he later changes sides.

Coming from an aristocratic family in Lahore, Changez expects that his transition from one world to the other will happen smoothly since he is confident that he fits in with the American upper-class citizenry: "I felt I was entering in New York the very same class that my family was falling out of in Lahore. Perhaps this accounted for a good part of the comfort and satisfaction I found in

[89] Halaby and Naqvi's novels also address the idea of the performance of an American self. Especially Halaby's novel illustrates that the unlimited opportunities offered in America do not always have a positive effect, especially on people who cannot handle these new freedoms. By trying too hard to become true Americans, both Salwa and Jassim destroy their lives: "That was the America Way after all, wasn't it? Let your soul get sucked out but work hard in the meantime. White and wet and impossible. The promise of American romance was a lovely box filled with teeth that devoured you with gigantic gnashing and crunching …. The kiss had lifted from her eyes the last threads of the remaining tidy veil of name brands and small talk, the cellophane promise, the two-ply vow that anything you wanted could be yours. Anything. From a Mercedes to a house in the foothills to sex with your coworker. It was all. Down to the last breath, a neatly packaged lie to disguise real life" (*OPL* 189-190).

[90] In front of his colleagues, he has to hide his true feelings about the attacks and mimics his peers by feigning shock and distress at the sight of the crumbling towers on TV.

my new environment" (*RF* 85). His initial conviction soon makes way for doubts about his identity since he realizes that the two classes do not correspond at all and that Lahore cannot be compared to New York. According to Gray, the relationship between First and Third Worlds is like a "one-way mirror" (Gray, *Fall* 87). In contrast to the temporary Americanness of Changez' gaze, which makes his old home look shabby,

> [s]ome in the Third World, perhaps most, can see through it [the mirror], obliged to gaze at a consumer paradise, a world of surfeit that is determinately not theirs. The result, obscene though as it might seem, is that some of them, at least, have ended up responding to the events of 9/11 not with the disgust that Amis recommended to the Westerner but with something not far short of delight. (Gray, *Fall* 87)

Even Changez, far from being a classical Third World citizen but belonging to the class of what Koshy terms South Asian exceptionalists, cannot hide his satisfaction. Through his new, American gaze, his Third World sensibility is heightened. He tries to dispel his doubts and starts to design a new, more American identity for himself. And at first, he seems to be satisfied with his new role and people seem to be satisfied with him: "Most people I met were taken in by my public persona" (*RF* 11). However, he soon realizes that he is well-liked as an "*exotic* acquaintance" (*RF* 17, emphasis mine). Hence, it is exactly this otherness that he frequently tries to hide that makes him popular with his friends and colleagues and also earns him a job with Underwood Samson.

Cara Cilano claims that "part of the entire novel's [*The Reluctant Fundamentalist*] irresoluteness stems from Changez' self-conscious performances of his own otherness, which leave the reader wondering when and if Changez ever asserts his identity ingenuously" ("Manipulative" 205). Although Changez' retrospect comments show that he was pushed into the role of the Other and suffered an identity crisis, in pre-9/11 New York, he frequently takes advantage of these clichés and displays his exotic otherness. He admits that he "was aware of an advantage conferred upon me by my foreignness" which he "tried to utilize as much as I could" (*RF* 42). This serves him both in his work life but also when he is courting his fellow student Erica: She feels comfortable around him because he "'give[s] off this strong sense of home'" (*RF* 19). His restraint and even shyness makes him stand out from his peers who display their

interest in Erica more aggressively on their holiday in Greece; eventually, he wins Erica's sympathy and later also her trust. When he is invited to her parents' home, he also emphasizes his otherness when he combines a white kurta with a pair of jeans, an outfit that pleases both him and his hosts: "I took advantage of the ethnic exception clause that is written into every code of etiquette and wore a starched white kurta of delicately worked cotton over a pair of jeans" (*RF* 48). He thus confirms his hosts' expectations, taking on yet another role of what he calls an "exotic acquaintance" (*RF* 17).

His exoticness, but more importantly the fact that he comes from South Asia, a region regarded as poor and underdeveloped, make him interesting for Jim, his future boss at Underwood Samson. It is not his good grades that make him stand out, but his ambition: it is exactly because he comes from a downwardly mobile family that Jim is interested in him. He senses that Changez is keen on living his own American Dream and on losing his Third World stigma, which Changez uses to his advantage: the job interview is successful. Here, it is interesting that his otherness regarding both his behavior around people and his work ethics is exactly what helps him to be accepted in the American pre-9/11 meritocracy:

> [M]y tenacity was frequently commented upon, with approval, by our instructors. Moreover, my natural politeness and sense of formality, which had sometimes been a barrier in my dealings with my peers, proved perfectly suited to the work context in which I found myself …. Perhaps it was my speech: like Pakistan, America is, after all, a former English colony, and it stands to reason, therefore, that an Anglicized accent may in your country continue to be associated with wealth and power, just as it is in mine. (*RF* 42)

The audience feels Changez' ambivalence about his identity: he feels he is a New Yorker, but does not consider himself an American. Instead of covering up the differences, the attempt at reshaping an American identity furthers the surfacing of his Pakistaniness. The fall of the Twin Towers then becomes the moment when Changez fully realizes that his reinvention was not successful when he, to his and the audience's surprise, smiles at the thought that "someone had so visible brought America to her knees" (*RF* 73). Besides the literal fall of the

towers in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, falling, just like in Foer and DeLillo's novel, is used as a trope. However, in contrast to the virtual fall in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and the metaphorical fall in *Falling Man*, Hamid makes intertextual references to "falling" by alluding aesthetically and thematically to Camus' *The Fall*. Like *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Camus' novel is a dramatic monologue in which Jean-Baptiste Clamence reflects on his life, giving a *récit de vie* to a complete stranger, just as Changez does in Lahore with his American interlocutor. When Changez tells his life story, the reader gets to see behind the façade of this foreigner who tells about his rise and eventual fall (from grace) in America. Moreover, the audience gets to know that behind the friendly and attentive stranger, there is also a dark side to Changez. Yet, while Camus' novel centers on the personal, the personal in Hamid's novel only is a stand-in for a global problem. Changez' business trip to Valparaiso and his encounter with Juan-Bautista serves as a last eye-opener.

Camus' Jean-Baptiste Clamence serves as the name-giver for Juan-Bautista, a Chilean publisher whose enterprise Changez is evaluating. Although Changez generally rather fits the role of the "judge-penitent" of *The Fall*, when he is in Chile, these roles are assigned to two different characters: Juan-Bautista becomes the judge who opens Changez' eyes, and Changez becomes the penitent who finally comes to his senses and realizes that he does not want to "focus on the fundamentals" at all (*RF* 98): "*Thank you, Juan-Bautista*, I thought as I lay myself down in my bed, *for helping me to push back the veil behind which all of this had been concealed!*" (*RF* 157, emphasis in original). Disgusted, he suddenly finds that instead of doing something beneficial, he betrayed his ideals in order to belong to the meritocratic elite; he is a traitor, a janissary, a "servant of the American empire at a time when it was invading a country with a kinship to mine" (*RF* 152). Hamid then does affirm his Pakistani identity, which already manifests itself to the reader through his reaction to 9/11. Although Changez' new, artificial identity helps him to realize what he takes to be his dream, after 9/11, the protagonist distances himself from the U.S. and finds solace in patriotism for his home country. His co-workers cannot seem to cope with this new facet of Changez' otherness, particularly in the context of the attacks: facing increasing racism and prejudices, he slowly lives up to people's expectations of the vilified Arab, destroying, in Jean-Baptiste Clamence's words, "that flattering

reputation" (Camus 326). His otherwise very ambitious work performance now gives way to listlessness and doubts and eventually, he keeps the beard he grew when he visited his parents in Pakistan.

Consequently, we can argue that while the novelist indeed analyzes "threshold situations," he cannot be taken as an example for a transnational stance since he thematizes a retreat into national(istic) beliefs on a personal and political level. Globalization makes it possible for Changez to study and work in the United States in the first place. Moreover, his employer is a global player, and through his travels the protagonist is made more and more aware of his own country's unimportance and backwardness. Changez' transformation does not come suddenly; he has his reservations right from the beginning. However, his business trip to the Philippines marks a large step in his transformation, not only because he witnesses the attacks from there. He is envious when he notices that Manila is not as 'Third World' as he had expected: "[W]hat I found instead was a place of skyscrapers and superhighways. Yes, Manila had its slums .... But Manila's glittering skyline and walled enclaves for the ultra-rich were unlike anything I had seen in Pakistan" (*RF* 64). As a consequence, Changez is "uncomfortable with the idea that the place I came from [is] condemned to atrophy" (*RF* 97). Globalization and capitalism have proven a disappointment and incite a feeling of growing nationalism in him.

Although *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* was mainly praised, one reviewer criticizes it for its "Islamic minstrelism" (Marlowe) and thus, even if slightly exaggerated, also criticizes the author for his use of exoticism. Interestingly enough, the novel indeed features some passages where we can accuse the author for making use of exaggerated exoticism and for drawing on clichés, seemingly giving in to the audience's expectations that are also fuelled by the book's front cover. Besides criticizing Hamid's usage of clichéd American stock-characters, Marlowe states that even Changez cannot be considered a successful attempt at creating an authentic hybrid character torn between two worlds. Instead, she argues, the author's depiction of Pakistan and especially of his protagonist Changez is sheer mimicry. Changez' language, especially during his conversation with the American, for example, seems put on and unmimetic: "Night is deepening around us, and despite the lights above this market, your face is mostly in shadow. Let us, like the bats, exercise our

other senses, since our eyes are of diminishing utility" (*RF* 76). Through the language, Hamid wants to underline Changez' newly found self-confidence and at the same time not disappoint the audience's expectations of an exotic Other. The choice of dramatic monologue underlines this even more. Morley maintains that Changez is only a thinly veiled version of the author. Through him, she argues, Hamid can voice his anti-American stance without having to fear consequences. She does not understand the novel's success with critics and readers alike, since Changez's point of view is provocative and even shocking at times:

> I stared as one - and then the other - of the twin towers of New York's World Trade Center collapsed. And then I *smiled*. Yes, despicable as it may sound, my initial reaction was to be remarkably pleased .... I was caught up in the *symbolism* of it all, the fact that someone so visibly brought America to her knees …. Do you not feel the joy at the video clips - so prevalent these days - of American munitions laying waste the structures of your enemies? (*RF* 72-3)

This crucial passage in the novel reveals Changez' changed way of thinking. The protagonist feels that his reaction to the falling towers is justified. Although he does not approve of the 'an eye-for-an-eye mentality' frequently exhibited by the American government, he feels satisfaction because finally somebody has succeeded in paying America back. Instead of taking the opportunity to give the "educated Muslim response" (qtd. in Ansari) that Hamid felt was missing in American novels about the attacks, he retreats into very clichéd depictions of both Changez and his silenced interlocutor. Although Hamid indeed points out many interesting and true facts to the (apparently ignorant western) reader, he sometimes overstrains his status as hybrid Other and the stock-characters at times remind the reader of Updike's novel *Terrorist* in which the author draws upon his stereotyped and narrow knowledge of Islam and Fundamentalism.

> Affronts were everywhere; the rhetoric emerging from your country at that moment in history - not just from the government, but from the media and supposedly critical journalists as well - provided a ready and constant fuel for my anger. It seemed to me then - and to be honest, sir, it seems to me still - that America was engaged only in posturing. As a society you were unwilling to

> reflect upon the shared pain that united you with those who attacked you. You retreated into myths of your own difference, assumptions of your own superiority. And you acted out these beliefs on the stage of the world, so that the entire planet was rocked by the repercussions of your tantrums, not least my family, now facing war thousands of miles away. Such an America had to be stopped in the interests not only of the rest of humanity, but also in your own. (*RF* 167)

Tompkins does not believe that the use of stereotypes has to have negative connotations since "[s]tereotypes are the instantly recognizable representatives of overlapping racial, sexual, national, ethnic, economic, social, political, and religious categories; they convey enormous amounts of cultural information in an extremely condensed form" (qtd. in Hale 539). Although this may be true, Hamid's excessive use of clichés helps to establish the new 'us vs. them' where the West now becomes an evil Other because of its exploitative imperialistic ambitions.[91]

It is not only since 9/11 that the ethnically marked other has fallen prey to stereotyping. After the end of the Cold War, and the end of Russian Communism as America's number one enemy image, another enemy had to be found. Since then, Muslim fundamentalists have developed into the new bogeyman. Even Walt Disney movies such as *Aladdin* (1992) do not shy away from using clichéd images of the Middle East and from rendering a stereotyped image of the oriental villain. Movies such as *True Lies* (1994) and innumerable other Hollywood productions underscore this idea of the fanatic Muslim who is ridiculed and of course defeated by the righteous forces of the West. The first wave of 9/11 novels, which includes the insider/outsider novels discussed in this study, often too, steps into the trap of stereotyping and, more importantly, Othering Muslims/racially marked people. In the post-9/11 rhetoric, nobody seemed to consider that the terrorists who attacked the United States were only a few men who do by no means reflect the attitude of their respective home countries.

[91]In *Falling Man*, while planning the attacks of September 11, the terrorists discuss the meaningfulness of the death of their future victims: "What about the others? Amir says simply there are no others. The others exist only to the degree that they fill the role we have designed for them. This is their function as others. Those who will die have no claim to their lives outside the useful fact of their dying" (*FM* 176).

Although *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* may contain autobiographical fragments, we cannot assume that Changez reflects the author's point of view. Hamid plays with this ambiguity: in various interviews Hamid has professed that the book is a piece of fiction and that the protagonists' opinion does not mirror his own. Already in the novel, Changez tries to counteract the accusations voiced by Marlowe: "It seems an obvious thing to say, but you should not imagine that we Pakistanis are all potential terrorists, just as we should not imagine that you Americans are all undercover assassins" (*RF* 183). Yet, despite this statement that clearly speaks against overgeneralizations and false conclusions about the counterpart, the rest of the novel frequently makes use of stereotypes, which, in the case of Changez describing his home country, can at best be explained as nostalgia. Hamid does not only render a clichéd image of the American interlocutor and of America in general, but also seems to re-stereotype his protagonist. Like the author himself, Changez is not really an outsider/Other since he is an American Ivy-league student and has a job with an American evaluation enterprise.

In contrast to Marlowe, who is of the opinion that Hamid is taking advantage of his status as a hybrid by exploiting his exoticism and voicing drastic opinions that offend his interlocutor, and by extension, the American readership, I am of the opinion that Hamid uses what Huggan calls "strategic exoticism." This is "the means by which post-colonial writers/thinkers, working from within exoticist codes of representation, either manage to subvert those codes … or succeed in redeploying them for the purposes of uncovering differential relations of power" (Huggan 32). The novel uncovers the global imbalance of power. Similar to (Judeo-Christian) westerners, Muslims all over the world were deeply shocked by the attacks. However, it is especially the insider-outsider who had to worry after September 11, 2001. Knowing the West, they were afraid of retaliatory measures against their home countries. However, the American Islamophobia and paranoia sparked off by the attacks constituted a more immediate threat to these people. The novel wants to highlight this issue but also draws people's attention to the fact that the reaction to the attacks had serious global repercussions. The whole western hemisphere closed ranks in the face of this evil; however, the measures were not restricted to America.

Even though Hamid does not use the novel to spread overt anti-Americanism, he uses it as a platform to voice certain criticism of the U.S. and to give the audience food for thought: "Will you give [the beggar] something? No? Very wise; one ought not to encourage beggars, and yes, you are right, it is far better to donate to charities that address the cause of poverty rather than to him, a creature who is merely a symptom" (*RF* 40). The usually far removed and abstract Third World reality breaks in on the American when a beggar approaches their table. People give money to charity organizations and can thereby silence their conscience. Through the beggar, the suffering is suddenly personalized and real, and the American finds him repulsive. Ironically, the American constitutes part of the cause himself since the capitalist First World actually has no interest in correcting the imbalances and exploits countries such as Pakistan.

Besides raising and discussing identity issues, Hamid paints a nostalgic portrait of America through the characters of Erica and Chris. Yet, Changez, too, wallows in memories: he yearns for the long-gone past when roles were distributed differently and Pakistan and South Asia were not labeled as backward Third World countries but were the cradle of culture. While he is away from home and lives at the empire's center, he indulges in the past of his own country and resents its current state of underdevelopment:

> Four thousand years ago, we, the people of the Indus River basin, had cities that were laid out on grids and boasted underground sewers, while those who would invade and colonize America were illiterate barbarians. Now our cities were largely unplanned, unsanitary affairs, and America had universities with individual endowments greater than our national budget for education. (*RF* 34)

Already the name of the protagonist is historically relevant since, as Hamid explains, it does not signify 'change' but is Urdu for 'Genghis' as in Genghis Khan,[92] the fierce Mongol conqueror "who attacked the Muslim world" (Reese). In Hamid's opinion this proves that "Changez can't really be a religious

[92] Hamid explains: "It's the name of a warrior, and the novel plays with the notion of a parallel between war and international finance, which is Changez' occupation. But at the same time, the name cautions against a particular reading of the novel. Genghis attacked the Arab Muslim civilization of his time, so Changez would be an odd choice of name for a Muslim fundamentalist" (qtd. in Eads).

fundamentalist" (Reese). In my opinion, it does even more than that: just like the Christian janissaries who turned against their home countries, Changez becomes an economic janissary and his attempt to lose his third world stigma, and hence his Pakistaniness, can also be considered an attack on the Muslim world of his forefathers. Through historical nostalgia, he glorifies the past South Asian Empire and resents the U.S. for taking over this role, adding another layer to the critique of America while at the same time pointing to the (cultural, political, economic) situation in South Asia today.

Medovoi argues that over the course of history, one empire always was replaced by the next and that the decrease of importance of South Asia is a natural process. Still, Changez painfully recalls the times in which South Asia was the dominating power while the U.S. was still a tiny colony and how this has radically changed today: "I said I was from Lahore, the second largest city of Pakistan, ancient capital of the Punjab … layered like a sedimentary plain with the accreted history of invaders" (*RF* 7). Changez criticizes America for her faked historicity because she pretends that her culture is ancient: "When I first arrived, I looked around me at the Gothic buildings… and thought, This is a dream come true. Princeton inspired in me the feeling that … everything was possible" (*RF* 2). It is made clear that over time Changez' deception with the United States grows and he constantly points out that in contrast to the U.S.' relatively short history, his home country can look back at a long history and cultural development, which, in his eyes, should have led to the superiority of his home country over an America that had much less time to develop. Changez also reminisces about his childhood and his parents in Lahore, suffering class nostalgia when he thinks about how the economic situation has deteriorated over time. Still it is all about keeping up the appearance.

> I am not poor; far from it …. Our family home sits on an acre of land in the middle of Gulberg, one of the most expensive districts of this city. We employ several servants, including a driver and a gardener - which would, in America, imply that we were a family of great wealth. But we are not rich …. But status, as in any traditional, class-conscious society, declines more slowly than wealth. (*RF* 10-11)

Here we can see that the decline in status and wealth in his family are what drives Changez to become part of the American meritocracy in the first place. He attempts to keep up his masquerade in order to support his parents, who have become dependent on their son's income to keep up their lifestyle.

As pointed out above, Changez renders a rather glorified picture of his home country. This is emphasized when he talks about food and instructs his interlocutor about the different dishes they are eating and also particularly about how to eat them. Changez's class nostalgia and his identity crisis lead to a rekindled nationalism on his part. What Hamid's novel also illustrates is that despite the fact that the world becomes more and more globalized, nations and national awareness still exist and were on the rise after the attacks: with the people in the U.S. closing ranks against "The Rest," Changez is made painfully aware of his otherness. Additionally to the racism and xenophobia he and others experience, his depictions of his old and new home and the situation of the people living there makes clear that while globalization may make boundaries fuzzier, a strong demarcation line does exist between prosperous First and exploited/overlooked Third Worlds. There is clear evidence that Changez sees his home country through the rose-colored glasses of nostalgia. While he criticizes the actual political situation in the USA, he only points out the good qualities of his home country. He mentions some girls that attend the arts college and wear short-sleeved shirts instead of a veil or a burka, but not once in his nostalgic retrospection does he mention the threat posed by the Taliban, who are against education, especially for women. Instead, he constantly links Lahore to New York, pointing out how similar the two cities are. This caters to my argument that Changez is on an increasingly nationalist mission, only looking at the aspects by which Pakistan is victimized from the outside, i.e. the U.S. A role reversal takes place and America becomes the evil Other that threatens his country.

In his novel, Hamid finds many playful possibilities to deliver realism while at the same time subverting it in the same playful manner.[93] Hence,

[93] In an interview, Hamid states: "I'm not among those writers who have magical realistic sympathies. For me personally - not for other writers but for me personally - it's a rather dull exercise. What interests me is realism. But how do you deliver realism is the question. And I think we often deliver realism in playful ways (qtd. in Jabberwock).

although the novel does not belong to the typical genres in which dramatic monologues are used, Hamid decided to use this device to give a voice to those who have been silenced after 9/11: the presumed Other. Yet, this form also assigns a particular importance to the silent interlocutor, "whose role and reactions are inferred from the speaker's words" (Cuddon 240). In the novel, the narrator often describes his interlocutor's reactions and paraphrases his replies. Yet, they are described from Changez' subjective perspective, and Hamid leaves it to the reader to decide whether the narrator's portrait of his interlocutor is realistic/authentic or not.[94] Through the form of monologue, Hamid enters into a dialogue with his audience: "By taking readers inside a man who both loves and is angered by America, and by allowing readers to feel what that man feels, I hope to show that the world is more complicated than politicians and newspapers usually make it seem" (Blankenship). It is clear that while the protagonist's addressee is the American tourist/CIA agent, Hamid's addressee is his American audience. The choice of a monologue allows the author to get the audience more involved and the reader feels as if it is herself that is addressed by the protagonist. Changez' addressee is a white Judeo-Christian American who is, presumably, ignorant of the role of the U.S. in world politics; this, Hamid assumes, is also the case with most of his also mainly white Judeo-Christian Anglophone audience. Besides crossing generic boundaries, Hamid thus also attempts to bridge the divide between perpetrators and victims. The novel is a plea that "[a] shared humanity should unite us with people we are encouraged to think of as our enemies" (Blankenship). However, the novel was rather noticed by critics because of its exceptional form (monologue) and the provocative comments of Changez. While strong binaries may have weakened today, and American readers are aware that real and innocent people were and are still killed in Iraq and Afghanistan, there is still room for improvement when it comes to a "shared humanity."

Although many scholars have commented on the shortness of the novel on the one hand, and its unconventional form on the other, only very few have indeed outlined the consequences that this might have for the narrative and also

[94] The character's speech "is offered without overt analysis or commentary, placing emphasis on subjective qualities that are left to the audience to interpret" and the monologue gives the reader a lot of importance/influence ("Poetic Technique").

for the interpretation thereof. Hamid himself has commented on the rather unusual choice. In the case of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, form follows function, and the novel mirrors the way that people from different parts of the world see each other. According to Hamid, it is not only the West that is critically eying the Muslim world, wondering about whether the Other wants to attack the West or whether Muslims are just 'normal' people with families who want to live peacefully. The Muslim world, too, has a certain idea of what the West, and especially America, looks like. There is uncertainty as to whether Americans are like the friendly, sociable people one sees in American sitcoms such as *Seinfeld* or *Friends* or "a bunch of completely aggressive maniacs" (qtd. in Bhandari). The novel and its two main characters mirror this uncertainty and ambiguity: who is the protagonist and who is the antagonist in this story? Changez is depicted as a reasonable, ambitious young man who is deeply disappointed by America and who has every reason to be suspicious of the tourist's behavior. Changez' motivations for returning to Pakistan are plausible. Yet, his reactions to the 9/11 attacks puzzle and shock the reader, making the reader perceive as the threatening and unpitying Other. On the other hand, the tourist/CIA agent is not depicted in a very favorable manner throughout the novel, and the audience is kept in the dark about the reasons for his visit to Pakistan. However, the audience has to keep in mind, that we see the tourist/CIA agent only through the eyes of the narrator, of whose neutrality the reader can be doubtful. The novelist has been criticized for his supposed perspective because the American interlocutor is silenced. The monologue upsets hegemonic realities: here, it is the American who is silenced, and it is one of the rare occasions, in particular after the attacks, in which, in Spivack's words, the subaltern indeed can speak. Hamid himself admits that he likes "the idea of the dramatic monologue because the other guy doesn't get to speak, he is captured .... A first person narration is saying what it is saying, a monologue is doing that AND holding someone else quiet. If that sounds unfair well it is unfair" (qtd. in Ansari). For Hamid, the form is well-suited for his project since he wants to shift the balance from a U.S.-centered perspective to that of the Pakistani protagonist. The novel's brevity furthers the impression that it could well be a long poem. In Hamid's opinion, a monologue does not necessarily have to do with the negative aspect of silencing the interlocutor but "[a]fter all, a novel can often be a divided man's conversation

with himself" (Hamid, "My Reluctant Fundamentalist"). Hence, as with other stylistic devices used in the text, the form always serves to underline the themes presented in the novel, predominantly the theme of the divided self. Although only one person is speaking, the reader experiences a double voice in the text.

Hamid cannot wholly block out the dialogic nature of a regular conversation, and Changez echoes the American's reactions and remarks. The reader has to trust that Changez is reliable as a narrator and renders the interlocutor's statements correspondingly. The novel's form reminds one of drama rather than of a novel and makes for a less realistic impression. Hamid's mimetic aspirations are subverted by the novel's monologic quality. This underlines the playfulness with which Hamid renders reality: he deals with a very real and acute problem but brings it to the reader in very unusual apparel, emphasizing that the text is a piece of fiction and Changez is not Hamid. Moreover, just like Camus, Hamid philosophizes about abstract concepts such as innocence and truth, and the monologic quality of the novel and its open ending encourage the reader to form her own opinion. At the same time, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* holds a mirror to the audience and reveals possible biases. Especially towards the end of the novel, Changez' reliability becomes increasingly dubitable. While the mutual suspicion between the protagonist and his interlocutor increases, the reader, too, becomes suspicious. Depending on what the audience has 'learned' about prejudices and imbalances, they will see Changez as a politically engaged and linguistically adept intellectual who is interested in bringing his country forward and is assassinated by a CIA agent, or as a not-so-reluctant fundamentalist and cold assassinator. If the American is indeed an agent, Changez' monologue is the perfect confession of a terrorist and appears to be reason enough for the American to stop Changez. Kerr suggests that "maybe the book is intended as a Rorschach to reflect back our unconscious assumptions." Uncertainty prevails and evil may appear to us in the guise of Changez or of his interlocutor, an effect intended by the author in order to challenge the audience's self-perception.

Something fairy-tale like adheres to *The Reluctant Fundamentalist.* The novel consists of a frame tale which is then filled with Changez' tale about his American Dream and how it was destroyed. He directly addresses the reader and invites her to spend some time with him in order to listen to his rise and fall.

Furthermore, Karen Olsson points out that the plot bears resemblance to *1001 Nights* since "the end of the story may mean the death of the teller." As soon as Changez has ended his story and the two men leave their table, a growing tension becomes noticeable, and, most probably, the story ends with the violent death of the narrator. The subservient and overly polite language, too, seems to be borrowed from an oriental fairy tale:

> Will they provide us with cutlery, you ask? I am certain, sir, that a fork can be found for you, but allow me to suggest that the time has now come for us to dirty our hands. We have, after all, spent some hours in each other's company already; surely you can no longer feel the need to hold back. There is great satisfaction to be found in touching one's prey; indeed millennia of evolution ensure that manipulating our meals with our skin heightens our sense of taste – and our appetite for that matter! (*RF* 123)

Hamid is willfully evoking an exoticized version of Changez, who introduces his guest to the pleasures of ancient traditions and thereby it almost seems as if he tries to seduce his interlocutor, to win him over and convince him that he is a harmless man who enjoys life and his country's customs. The author, as he claims in an interview, is concerned with rendering an authentic picture of both the setting and the protagonist. However, partially due to the monologue-form, Changez' way of speaking does not appear authentic, and at times it sounds put on as if Hamid himself was only poorly mimicking his compatriots: "Excuse me, sir, but may I be of assistance? Ah, I see I have alarmed you. Do not be frightened by my beard: I am a lover of America" (*RF* 1). The opening sentences of the book are already telling: Changez sounds subservient on the one hand, slightly arrogant on the other. His later employer, Jim, also notices Changez' literary language and appearance: "'You're polished, well-dressed. You have this sophisticated accent. Most people probably assume you're rich where you come from'" (*RF* 8). Changez realizes that for the first time since his arrival in the U.S. his otherness is of advantage to him. The character Changez seems flat and his language artificial. However, the language fits the staginess and artificiality of a monologue. Hamid justifies the language as follows: It is "a voice born of the British colonial inflections taught in elite Pakistani schools and colored by an anachronistic, courtly menace that resonates well with popular western

preconceptions of Islam" (Hamid, "My Reluctant Fundamentalist"). Just like his exoticness is of advantage to him in the novel, Hamid expects this to be the case in regard to the audience, too. However, the language adds an additional layer of exoticism and the artificiality of it, especially when Hamid repeats the American's utterances, raises the audience's awareness in regard to the staginess of the monologue. Moreover, the presumed influence of the colonial past again harks back to the idea of nostalgia in the text but also emphasizes the long-lasting effects of colonialism. Hamid here, too, willfully wants to paint a picture of the cosmopolitan Changez, who was and is shaped by historical forces. The presumed British accent does not evoke the picture of a Muslim terrorist although the author tries to combine the staged language with all kinds of preconceptions of Muslims.

As "manish" convincingly shows in "Anatomy of a Genre," book covers are designed in response to the market place situation and readily make use of clichés and stereotypes in order to attract the, in this case, Western audience's attention. Publishers willfully play with the notion of exoticism to promote literature written by South Asians and thereby sell these novels as a specific genre to the reader. Nowadays, in the age of presumed world literariness, books by non-mainstream authors are on the rise. Since publishing houses are aware of this fact, they cater to the audience's expectations. The color green figures in many of the various cover editions of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* since it is the color of Islam and of the Pakistani flag. Other covers show a man of oriental apparel looking at an apparently western skyline through the window of what looks like a mosque. Yet another cover features a man dressed in western clothes and a dark-skinned, bearded man in a kurta, hinting at a "Clash of Civilizations" à la Huntington. The publishing house plays with the audience's expectations that are evoked both by the cover and the novel's title so that the reader might expect a novel in the manner of Updike's *Terrorist.* Especially after 9/11, it seems that we as western readers are conditioned to connect the word "fundamentalist" to Islamic fanaticism, and the novel's title suggests a thrilling story about a religious fundamentalist. Instead, what the reader gets is a well-wrought "bi-national allegory, personifying an America confronted with an opportunity to grasp for the first time the actual nature of its relationship to Pakistan" (Medovoi 646). In place of a clash, Changez' inner conflict as an

Americanized Confused Desi[95] (= ABCD) is brought to the reader and the novel reveals that Changez is repulsed by the Americans' fundamentalism: the only people talking about fundamentalism are indeed his employers at Underwood Samson, an American valuation firm whose credo is to "focus on the fundamentals" (*RF* 98). Consequently, capitalism has become his employer's religion, and economic fundamentalism has taken over the place of religious zeal. Both with the cover and the title, Hamid purposefully guides the reader in a certain direction only to destroy the reader's initial interpretations of the book's title while she reads it. This, of course, depends on whether the reader is willing to accept Changez' assertions that he is not a terrorist; however, if the reader thinks that Changez assassinated the American, the novel's title proves correct, too.

In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist,* it is globalization that allows for the protagonist to travel the world, which, in turn, makes him aware of global imbalances and inequities. During his business trips, Changez begins to feel that he is not as American as he attempted to be: he is shocked that even the Philippines have overtaken South Asia in regard to progress, but he also experiences a shared "Third World sensibility," which makes him feel "much closer to the Filipino driver than to" his American colleague (*RF* 39-40). Yet, Changez works for Underwood Samson, where he "went about the task of shaping the future with little regard for the past" (*RF* 116). He performs his job less and less enthusiastically and sees himself as "a form of indentured servant whose right to remain was dependent upon the continued benevolence of my employer" (*RF* 157). Contradicting Hamid's idea of post-postcolonialism, Medovoi reads *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* as a part of "literatures of the American imperium" (649). Although looking at the novels from the perspectives of political science rather than of the literary sciences, Medovoi still has a point. He explains that "[s]uch a category of literary analysis - world-system literature - would therefore rigorously consider how literature from different locations in the global order registers unequal exchanges and politico-military applications of power" (Medovoi 653). In this respect, the novel is indeed part of a world-system literature since Hamid's focus is very much on the

[95] Desi is a slang term used by South Asians, predominantly form India, to refer to themselves.

economic and political imbalances on a global level. Thus, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* does not only constitute a counternarrative to the construction of Muslims as the evil Other after the attacks but also looks at the situation outside America. Changez was already sensitive to the political and social inequalities, and 9/11 thus does not mark the turning point in the narrative but only serves as an amplifier of his aversion to inequality for which the First World, and particularly the USA, is responsible:

> The last thing is that, even if we do think about the idea of America or Pakistan or nations in this way, we have to also remember taking a broader perspective that these are illusions which are beginning to recede. Part of the struggle we face now is that nations all over the world are trying to assert that they exist, but they remain basically imaginary concepts …. If we begin to step back from these groups that we think of as being solid and in opposition to each other, they start to dissolve. These are the ideas my novel is continually playing with as it creates a sense of trying to negotiate such different and often dauntingly limited perspectives. (Yaqin)

Although Hamid clearly attempts to negotiate boundaries, the novel strongly points to the fact that such a thing is illusory and thus falls in Medovoi's category of world system literature since it clearly deals with power relations and the inequality in the distribution thereof by referring to the U.S.'s seemingly insurmountable influence in the world. By the end of the novel, the boundary between East and West seems even less defeatable than in the beginning when Changez is still optimistic and tries to accommodate and assimilate. Moreover, the novel delineates that these are not the only boundaries. Religion is only thematized tangentially, politics and history, however, are important. They help to outline ideological boundaries on the one hand and also the boundaries between center and periphery if we take over Medovoi's perspective. Hence, the novel, too, like its American counterparts, is essentialist. Besides using the narrative, as Hamid claims, to get a grip on America and look at it through the eyes of an aspiring immigrant, the novel also uses a lot of clichéd depictions of both the immigrant and the Americans in the novel.

Hamid (like Naqvi) comes from a former colony and focuses on questions of identity. He does not write back to the former colonizers, and, thus,

one could assume that the text is indeed post-post colonial, focusing on new, national topics. Although this may be true in general terms (see Hamid's debut novel *Moth Smoke* [2000]), Hamid's second book proves that in lieu of writing back to the original colonial powers such as Great Britain, Hamid, Naqvi, and Sengupta now attempt to write back to a new empire, whose rise has been brought forward due to globalization and whose justification for its proliferation, its new manifest destiny, is the "War on Terror." Especially Hamid talks about the era of post-postcolonialism where "people are writing about the subcontinent with eyes that are not meant to be seeing for someone who doesn't live there, people who are not exotizing where they come from" (qtd. in Jay 106). Yet, he contradicts his own theory with his novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. As discussed above, already the novel's various covers and the title seem to be designed specifically for a western audience and cater to a notion of the exotic.[96] Halaby, Naqvi, and Hamid's target audience is predominantly Anglophone, white, and Western. This is maybe the reason why, contrary to his statement, Hamid indeed spends a lot of time describing the details of Lahore, the food, and the customs to his American interlocutor, and, hence, to his audience. Additionally, instead of writing "about the subcontinent," the novel is mainly set in the U.S. Still, Hamid manages to thematize topics that preoccupy him since the U.S. has brought certain issues to his home land (war, questions of identity and ethnicity etc.). By connecting the old world to the new, the author tries to bridge the gap that, after 9/11, seems insuperable. The "War on Terror" has made globalization, war, and identity one of his very own subjects, and he now tries to counter the 9/11 discourse, which is until now dominated by western authors. Hence, despite the fact that Jay is right when he points out that "[t]he mobility of the colonizer has become the mobility of the colonized" (*Global* 155), we must not forget that, especially when it comes to Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan, the imperial machinery is still in full swing. Consequently, the novel points to the fact that while national boundaries may be transcended more easily, cultural and political boundaries are not as easy to overcome.

In *Global Matters*, Jay discusses Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* in which "the descendents of those dislocated by colonial conquest have relocated to the

[96] See manish "Anatomy of a Genre."

very center of colonial power, and it is Englishness, not indigeniety, that is at stake" (*Global* 155). In novels such as *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, *Home Boy*, and *Once in a Promised Land*, the protagonists have relocated to the center of *global* power, and the multiculturality or even "post-multicultural[ity]" of New York proves that foreign cultures have indeed exerted some influence on its culture (Nava). Still, this city has to be seen as an exception. While it appears extremely open and welcoming before the attacks, it becomes one of the most hostile places to be for the protagonists after 9/11. And again, it is the Other's identity and not Americanness that *is* at stake. One of the ways in which 9/11 changed the world is in regard to tolerance for the Other. While Jay states that due to globalization, nationalism seems obsolete, in a different passage, where he analyzes Desai's novel *The Inheritance of Loss,* he observes that "nationalism is figured not as something that came before globalization but as its inheritance" (*Global* 136). I believe that this is the more correct observation, especially after the attacks. Particularly Changez is concerned not with the colonial past but with the colonial future. Although *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is not the only text to deal with aspects of neo-colonialism, this novel displays the strongest concerns. To Changez, globalization is a one-sided affair: the west benefits from cheap labor force and accumulates more and more wealth while the exploited countries' development stagnates.

Changez is expelled from the Promised Land, and, consequently, leaves the country, disappointed and disillusioned. Rowe observes that "[a]s terrible as the events on September 11, 2001 were, this attack on the USA by a non-state organization, al Qa'eda, had at least something to do with the global perception by many that the USA is the major neo-imperial power in the post-Cold War era" (827). The novel supports Rowe's argument because it constantly underlines that the USA are considered the world's new and sole empire, which makes Changez aware of his status:

> I was struck by how traditional your empire appeared. Armed sentries manned the check post at which I sought entry; being of a suspect race I was quarantined and subjected to additional inspection; once admitted I hired a charioteer who belonged to a serf class lacking the requisite permissions to abide legally and forced therefore to accept work at lower pay. (*RF* 157)

The novel points to the fact that in a globalized world, people from totally different spheres and continents can still influence, affect and harm each other massively. It seems like a vicious circle: the U.S. are attacked because of their dominant and invasive behavior in global politics and as a retaliatory measure, the U.S. even increases this pressure through her warfare against terrorism in South Asia. Along with paternalism, humiliation, and exploitation, America now brings death and fear to this apparently not so far-removed part of the world. Globalization, the text seems to say, is inseparable from the history of colonization and neo-colonization. It is not astonishing that in reaction to these neo-imperialistic attempts of the U.S., the protagonist of the novel reacts with resistance. The U.S.' aspirations lead to a range of issues that the protagonist has to deal with: "identity and its relationship to ethnicity and culture, [and] the challenges of developing a cohesive sense of social belonging among disparate populations" (Jay 96-7). Hence, we can argue that in contrast to their western counterparts, the South Asian novelists are much more sensitive to world political issues of the new millennium (and historical events leading to them) and thus have succeeded in "capturing the new world order" (Mishra "Innocence").

Medovoi asks: "Has the American novel become worldier since 9/11? Has the force of the World Trade Center attacks led writers toward a sustained inspection of America's relationship to the rest of the globe?" (644). Looking at the novels discussed here, I would answer the question with 'yes,' for even the early responses already point out the global dynamics of the attacks. At the same time we can ask: Is the novel of the insider-outsider as "worldy" as scholars claim? This question can be answered in the negative and in the affirmative at the same time. These novels place the U.S. within the frame of world history, making it an important participant of said history, and not a City upon a Hill, an isolated island autarchic from the rest. On the other hand, Hamid, too, follows a national agenda, bringing his point of view to the Anglophone audience. Catering to an American audience and published in the U.S. by an Anglo-Pakistani author who has lived in the U.S. for much of his childhood and has

also studied and worked there, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* cannot be considered world literature.[97]

The novel cannot be considered transnational either, since, although it transcends national boundaries, it still depicts essentialized versions of both Americans and immigrants. However, the novel does register and criticize global imbalances of power and, thus, participates in what Medovoi terms world system literature: "Jameson's point could be applied equally to world-system literature, which differs from the category of the 'third world literature' primarily in that the geopolitical relationships that it avails allegorically, by exceeding the forms of national narrative, express instead a broader network of relationships across the unequal exchanges that striate the globe" (Medovoi 657). This network of relationships is something that figures prominently in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist.* Besides the one-on-one situation between Changez and his unnamed interlocutor, one of the most striking and important lines of action is the triangle relationship between Chris, Erica, and Changez, which can be read as allegories of this "broader network."

As indicated by the book's title, the novel deals with fundamentalism, the nature of which is revealed when Changez tells about his job at Underwood Samson, the evaluation firm that preaches fundamentals, namely the fundamentals of economy. The enterprise has specialized in valuing businesses, a venture that costs many employees their jobs. The name of the company was carefully chosen by Hamid, given that the abbreviation of the enterprise's name is U.S. The enterprise Changez works for, too, allows for an allegorical reading in which Underwood Samson stands for the economic and rational side of the U.S. The firm is driven by economic interests and does not care for the fate of individuals as long as the economy is doing well. Besides seeing the complicated love triangle of Chris, Erica, and Changez as an actual love story between persons, the waning relationships can be read allegorically. And so, like his travels that gradually awaken feelings of nationalism in him, his relationship to Erica depicts the complicated and seemingly impossible relationship between the East and the West which, in the novel, fails eventually.

[97] As noted before, Gray even considers Hamid an American author.

Nostalgia, as I have pointed out, is a vital component in the novel. Nostalgic feelings for Pakistan, the country of Changez' youth, seep through in many parts of the book; but also nostalgia in regard to the form of the novel as the allusion to *1001 Nights* and the monologue form prove. Yet, nostalgia is also a prime characteristic of Erica, whom I read as an allegory for America and its nostalgia for things past (in the form of Chris). Consequently, Changez and Erica's relationship exemplifies his failed love affair with America. However, in contrast to his growing feeling of alienation towards America and his growing distance to American ideologies on a political and economic level, his love to Erica, who at first welcomes him but later rejects him physically as well as emotionally, becomes stronger and more desperate over time. For Changez, the attacks do not mark the turning point, but his reaction to the collapse of the towers becomes only the last evidence concerning his alienation from the U.S. For Erica, whose mental health was already weakened by the death of her boyfriend Chris, the attacks cause a massive relapse.[98] Just like America, she breaks down in shock and grief.

When Changez enters her life, Erica seems to him the incarnation of the perfect American woman: beautiful, wealthy, ambitious, friendly, the classical WASP, Ivy League college girl. Like America herself, "[s]he attracted people to her; she had presence, an uncommon *magnetism*" (*RF* 22, emphasis in original). Changez, too, leaves an agreeable impression with Erica, who welcomes him as a pleasant companion also because he is different from the students surrounding her. As their relationship grows closer, she tells Changez the tragic story of Chris, her high school sweetheart, who died of lung cancer, and for whom she still has very strong feelings. Although he should have known better and been warned by Erica's skittishness, he becomes more and more involved and falls in love with this woman. Being well-behaved, wealthy, and smart, he is also welcomed by her family. After the attacks, when Changez' relationship to America deteriorates and Erica's physical and mental health become more and more fragile, her relationship to Changez becomes more distanced, too. Although Erica does not hold Changez liable for the terrible tragedy, her growing

[98] Medovoi defines her first breakdown as her "'first Chris' - the Vietnam War, the collapse of the Bretton Woods system, the dismantling of its Fordist industrial economy, and the vulnerability of an economy increasingly dependent on finance and debt managed by Wall Street" (Medovoi 656).

nostalgic feelings about Chris come in the way of their relationship and she pushes him away. “Hamid thereby construes 9/11 as the natural culmination of a long trajectory of American decline, productively contesting the exemplarity of 9/11 as an event” (Anker 8). When at one point Changez attempts to sleep with Erica, her body rejects him. In order to obtain access to Erica’s body, Changez pretends to be Chris. And just like being Chris gains him entry into Erica, putting on the capitalist attitude by focusing on the fundamentals gains him entry to the American business world.

Although Changez is already used to performing a certain identity in his work life, now is the first time that he also has to resort to performing a drastically different identity in his private life. Like his Americanness, which was geared toward economic success, brought him the respect and acceptance of his co-workers and access to the meritocracy, his private performance of Chris gains him access to Erica’s body after the attacks. However, his intrusion/invasion of her body is the ultimate cause for her (mental) breakdown and for her presumed suicide. This is already foreshadowed when, after sleeping with Erica, Changez’ description leaves the impression that he has slept with a corpse: “When I tried to kiss her, she did not move her lips or shut her eyes. So I shut them for her” (*RF* 105). Here, the parallels between the character Erica and America become obvious: after 9/11, Changez tells his American interlocutor, it became more and more difficult for him to enter the country after his business trip; although he pretends to be part of the tribe, America cannot be deceived, and so Changez is singled out at the airport upon arrival from a business trip to Manila. While his colleagues have long reached their homes, he is still detained at the airport and interrogated.[99] After this, Changez becomes more self-absorbed and grows irritated with the U.S., but is also disappointed by Erica’s reaction. Still, he clings to his life in America and his relationship with Erica. He does not want to give up on neither of his dreams. Changez is very concerned about Erica’s well-being and does not accept that she does not want

[99] Changez talks about his experiences at the airport: “When we arrived, I was separated from my team at immigration …. The officer who inspected my passport was a solidly built woman with a pistol at her hip and a mastery of English inferior to mine; I attempted to disarm her with a smile …. In the end I was dispatched for secondary inspection …. By the time I entered the customs hall they [his team] had already collected their suitcases and left. As a consequence, I rode to Manhattan that evening very much alone” (*RF* 75).

him in her life anymore. Just like he cannot release Erica, and although his work performance declines strongly, he is not ready to let go of his idea of America as the Promised Land yet. Changez makes one last effort to remain in the privileged circle and accepts a job in Valparaiso, Chile.

The attacks of September 11 stir Erica up and make the fragile tissue of her scar burst: "The attacks churned up old thoughts in my head …. I haven't lost it. But I feel haunted, you know" (*RF* 80). Just as he does not know what to make of Erica's nostalgia, Changez is shocked by the U.S.' reverting back to a nostalgic past:

> [I]t seemed to me that America, too, was increasingly giving itself over to a dangerous nostalgia at that time …. I had always thought of America as a nation that looked forward; for the first time I was struck by its determination to look *back*. Living in New York was suddenly like living in a film about the Second World War; I, a foreigner, found myself staring out at a set that ought to be viewed not in Technicolor but in grainy black and white. What your fellow countrymen longed for was unclear to me - a time of unquestioned dominance? of safety? of moral certainty? I did not know – but that they were scrambling to don the costume of another era was apparent. (*RF* 114-5)

Since Changez has to live the consequences of the nostalgia, he feels the potential danger coming from it. Threatened by a seemingly invisible enemy, America seems to long for the times when the clear-cut enemy image of communism was still present and America knew whom to fight against. The invasion of Iraq shows that the U.S. now fights an enemy whom she cannot grasp. In order not to let this enemy escape, the measures are far reaching, and so are their consequences.

Besides drawing on political nostalgia, Changez sees (Am)Erica's obsession with Chris(tianity) as a form of religious fundamentalism. Chris can be read as an allegorical figure representing Christianity, which is threatened by the Other after the attacks. The Other, in this case, comes in the guise of Changez, who tries to win Erica over and snatch her from Chris(tianity). He doubts the sensibility of their relationship and, hence, capitalist America's strong connection to religion and religiosity especially after September 11: "I did not know whether I believed in the truth of their love: it was, after all, a religion that

would not accept me as a convert" (*RF* 113-114). Chris' strong presence after the attacks hints at a return to old values in the wake of terror and that religion, in America, cannot be separated from politics: "Suffice it to say that theirs had been an unusual love, with such a degree of commingling of identities that when Chris died, Erica felt she had lost herself: even now, she said, she did not know if she could be found" (*RF* 91). When Changez visits Erica's room, he "notice[s] a sketch on the wall. It depicted under stormy skies a tropical island with a runway and a steep volcano; nestled in the caldera of the volcano was a lake with another, smaller island in it – an island on a island – wonderfully sheltered and calm" (*RF* 52). Chris' painting of an island underlines once more how America has seen itself prior to the attacks, namely as a sheltered island inside the volcano of political crises and wars around the globe, and as isolated and immune to intrusion. The painting, according to Erica, was inspired by a Tintin comic, *Flight 714* (1975), in which the protagonists, reminiscent to 9/11, are hijacked in a plane. In the comic, the volcano erupts due to an earthquake and explosion, and the island is destroyed. It is difficult not to read this story as an allegory for America and how it is shaken when the 'volcano' of 9/11 erupts. However, unlike the victims of the attacks, the heroes of Hergé's comic can escape their fate with the help of extraterrestrials, and the villains are themselves kidnapped by the extraterrestrials. In the case of post-9/11 America, such a deus ex-machina cannot be found and although the U.S. would have liked to erase evil smoothly just like in Kalfus' *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country*, reality shows that the after-effects of the attacks are long lasting, especially outside the U.S.

In the comic, the protagonists have been hypnotized and cannot remember their adventure anymore. It seems that America, too, somehow would like to forget about the attacks and move on since everything went back to how things were before quite soon. The attacks did only shake up the nation temporarily but did not have a long-lasting effect. Just like the American tourist/CIA agent still ignores that his home country is partly responsible for the economic situation of Pakistan, protests against the war were sparse and America's awareness of its global influence was short-lived. The ending of Erica's story is open and the audience is left in the dark about whether or not she has killed herself. Just like Erica's fate that of America remains open; she can choose to jump, remaining isolated and fighting her wars (almost) alone, or she

can face the problems and try to solve them by overcoming nostalgia for a romanticized past:

> I thought of Erica removing her clothes and then, having shed her past, walking through the forest until she met a kindly woman who took her in and fed her. I thought of how cold she would have been on that walk" (*RF* 168).

Eventually, Erica has let go of the past by shedding her clothes and can attempt a new beginning. Here, the "shared humanity" Hamid talks about surfaces in the book: he hopes that time will heal all wounds and that America will be able to forgive. And no matter how "cold" this walk towards a new beginning will be, America will survive the crisis and have a future.

Like Erica, who is stuck in some nostalgia about the past, after her disappearance and his return to Lahore, Changez, too, is stuck in the past and phantasizes over his and Erica's common future in Lahore. He thinks about how things could have been if 9/11 and thus (Am)Erica's backslide into nostalgia would not have taken place. Changez becomes the personification of the enemy force which conquered the U.S. with violence. This destroys Changez' personal American Dream as he personally calls his stay in the U.S.[100]: "All I knew was that my days of focusing on the fundamentals were done" (*RF* 153-4). Hamid points out once more how paranoid the U.S. has become in the scene when Changez leaves America for good. Leaving behind his jacket as a token, he causes a security alert:

> And so I left my jacket on the curb as a sort of offering, as my last gesture before returning to Pakistan, a wish of warmth for Erica - not in the way one leaves flowers for the dead, but rather as one twirls rupees above the living. Later, through the window of the terminal, I saw that I had caused a security alert, and I shook my head in exasperation. (*RF* 168)

[100] "Certainly I wanted to believe; at least I wanted not to disbelieve with such an intensity that I prevented myself as much as was possible from making the obvious connection between the crumbling of the world around me and the impending destruction of my personal American dream. The power of my blinders shocks me, looking back – so stark in retrospect were the portents of coming disaster in the news, on the streets, and in the state of the woman with whom I had become enamored" (*RF* 93).

When his offering is rejected, Changez sees how tangled and emotionally loaded the situation is and that his gesture came too early.

Concluding, Hamid's use of allegory and the relationship between Chris and Erica and Changez and Erica points to the dangers of living in a nostalgic past. Hamid lets Chris, who represents Christianity, Erica who stands for emotionality and nostalgia, and Underwood Sampson, which stands for economic rationality, stand together against Changez, the intruder, who then leaves disappointedly. "America serves as the novel's geopolitical raison d'être and as the object of its rhetorical design rather than as its generative cultural ground" (Medovoi 346). The novel is an appeal for a more thorough engagement of the West, and especially America, with global dynamics and is a critique of and an encouragement for the U.S. to give up their isolationism and exceptionalism. Besides rubbing the reader's face in the message openly through Changez' critique of the country, the message to the reader is to deal with actual events openly instead of grieving for a (seemingly) more innocent past represented by the teenage couple Erica and Chris. Hamid's protagonist lectures his readers, and through the use of allegory, Hamid indirectly does so, too. But what makes him believe that he is morally superior? Does he have to offer an alternative? Changez resorts to a very own kind of nationalism. His nostalgia for his home country plays an important role in his transformation. Like Erica, who is stuck in a nostalgic past that eventually drives her mad, Changez' nostalgia leads him back to Lahore where he lectures his American guest about the U.S.'s failures and flaws. Moreover, despite the fact that Erica and Changez' relationship shows stark parallels to (political) events in the world around them, their relationship differs from the general mood in some points. Unlike the supposed rest of America, Erica does not feel threatened and intimidated by Changez' beard: "'You look cute,' she said. 'Your beard brings out your eyes'" (*RF* 134). By inserting this line, Hamid once more, points out the ambiguity in the perception of the Other: while to some, the beard is a marker for a particular mindset or religious affiliation and therefore causes suspicion and fear, to others, it is simply facial hair that serves as ornamentation of the male face. The novel is different and exceptional because through the nostalgia for things past, it conveys the message that we have to look forward. Changez, although

disappointed and sad, has not given up hope and remains a lover of AmErica, just as he had claimed at the beginning of the story.

VI. The Emigration Novel and the Aftermath of 9/11: *Home Boy*

In *Home Boy*, the protagonist, Chuck, states that "every New Yorker has a 9/11 story, and every New Yorker has a need to repeat it, to pathologically revisit the tragedy, until the tragedy becomes but a story" (*HB* 119). In the novel, the first person narrator Chuck renders his version of this story. The novel was highly praised by critics and readers alike and was awarded the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature in 2011. Award winners "could belong to this region through birth or be of any ethnicity but the writing should pertain to the South Asian region in terms of content and theme" ("About the Prize"). *Home Boy* was No. 3 of the *Huffington Post*'s Top Ten Books of 2009, and it hit the Top Ten in India and was also very well received in the author's native country Pakistan. The novel was translated into German, Italian, and Portuguese. Despite its success, it has not found its way into academic discourses on 9/11 and the novel. In what follows, I will do a close reading of the book, looking at thematic specificities, which are reminiscent of the Tragic Mulatto, and argue that, like the other novels discussed here, although there is no aesthetic sea-change, Naqvi has found his very own way to come to terms with the unrepresentability of the attacks. Since Naqvi does not examine the tragedy itself but portrays its aftermath, he does not have to deal with the same problems as, for example, Beigbeder. Instead, he focuses on thematic aspects, treading new ground in comparison to the Western novels. And although he discusses the same topics as Hamid, namely the problems of 'The Brown Man' in post-9/11 New York, he uses an entirely different approach: while Hamid deals with global politico-economic inequalities, Naqvi points out the socio-political problems encountered in the aftermath of the attacks.

The story centers on three modern-age Pakistani musketeers, who claim the city of New York as their very own territory. Similar to Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, *Home Boy* is a "[l]ove song of New York City" (Larson). However, this song gets out of tune after the 9/11 attacks. All three protagonists are secular Muslims, and the story focuses on how the lives of the three "renaissance men," "bons vivants," and "Metrostanis" (Blurb *HB*) in New York City change drastically after the September 11 terrorist attacks, after which they are no longer perceived as aforesaid "Metrostanis" but as "'A-*rabs* …

Moslems, Mo-hicans, whatever'" (*HB* 30). Shezad, aka Chuck, the narrator and main character, has arrived in New York City four years earlier from Karachi to attend college in the U.S. By the beginning of the novel, he has earned a degree in Literature and feels very much at home in New York, a place where race and heritage do not seem to matter. He fits in with the New York City in-crowd, drinks alcohol, takes cocaine, and likes to go to "it" places with his friends such as the "Tja." Ali Chaudhury, aka AC, is a PhD student whose Green Card was sponsored by his older sister Mini Auntie, who immigrated to the U.S. in 1981. Jamshed Khan, aka Jimbo or DJ Jumbolaya, is the only of the three friends to actually have been born in the U.S. He lives in Jersey City with his very conservative Pathan[101] father, 'Old Man Khan,' and his younger, hijab-wearing sister, Amo. Despite his conservative upbringing, he is also the best-'assimilated' of the three friends. He has a steady girlfriend he calls "the Duck," who belongs to the American "East Coast aristocracy" (*HB* 6). Jimbo is a typical ABCD, an American Born Confused Desi, who floats between the strict tradition of his father's generation and the laissez-faire attitude in the land of opportunities.

Complying with his mother's wishes for a steady and lucrative job, Chuck becomes an investment banker after graduation.[102] However, one year later, he experiences first-hand what it means to live in a capitalist society: due to a crisis in the business, he gets fired. By chance, he meets the Pakistani cabbie Abdul Karim and although "[t]he pursuit of happiness for us was material," he decides to become a cab-driver himself (*HB* 33-34). Because of his drop in social status and despite financial losses, he pretends to still work in finances in front of his mother and keeps sending money home every week. His job as a taxi driver leads to an adventurous tour to Connecticut where he, AC, and Jimbo want to visit an acquaintance named Mohammed Shah, alias the Shaman. When Shah appears not to be at home, they break into the house and stay overnight to wait for their friend's return. However, in post-9/11 America the New York Yellow

[101] "Old Man Khan was as much a citizen of Jersey as a Pathan, which commentators were reporting 'is the broad ethnic umbrella covering a portion of northern Pakistan *and* most of Afghanistan'" (*HB* 71).

[102] His job choice is preassigned by his mother, who wants her son to be successful: "I became a banker, an investment banker … because my mother told me to. A woman of the world, ma was cognizant that banking and 'aiytee' had displaced medicine and engineering in the last decade as coveted careers for able young Pakistani men" (*HB* 33-34).

Cab raises the neighbors' suspicion and the FBI turns up at the door to arrest the three friends:

> 'We [the FBI] received an anonymous tip last night that there's been some … suspicious activity in this house. We were told that a cab - a New York City yellow cab - has been standing outside all night, and these days we take these things seriously. So if you've got nothing to hide, I'd strongly recommend you to cooperate with us. This *is* a matter of public safety'. (*HB* 127)

At the Metropolitan Detention Center, "'America's Own Abu Ghraib'," Chuck and his friends get physically and mentally abused (*HB* 133): "It seemed routine, the invective, casual violence, the way things are, the way things are going to be: … I would be smacked around, molested, hauled back and forth between cells and interrogation sessions" (*HB* 42). After his release, Chuck applies for a new job but, being thoroughly depressed by the changed situation in the U.S. after the attacks, he attempts suicide. Although he indeed gets a job offer, his disappointment with America is so great and his homesickness gets the better of him. Tired of keeping up appearances in front of his mother, he tells her about his decision to come back home on the phone, thus becoming the title's 'home boy.' Shortly before his departure, he sees Shah's *Portrait of Grief*. Ironically, Shah, who was suspected to be a Muslim terrorist by the police, was himself a victim of the attacks. As a gesture of respect and as a last step in the transformation from Metrostani to Pakistani, Chuck rolls out his still virginal prayer rug to pay his respect to his dead friend.

During his stay at the Metropolitan Detention Center, Chuck bitterly notes how times have changed for people of the likes of him and how people's perception of them has shifted from 'good' to 'evil': "Just like three black men were gangbangers, and three Jews a conspiracy, three Muslims had become a sleeper cell" (*HB* 153). It is interesting to note that not their race but their faith makes South Asians appear dangerous to the general public. Eventually, Chuck has to admit to himself that no matter how he sees and defines himself, i.e. as a non-practicing Muslim, and although he believes to fit in perfectly with the New York crowd, he "couldn't change the way [he] was perceived" (*HB* 130). Chuck and his friends, who have meticulously constructed their identity as hedonistic Metrostanis now completely lose agency and are exposed to other people's gaze.

Interestingly, while they fitted in with the color-blind meritocracy prior to the attacks, their color of skin now becomes a signifier for religious fanaticism.

Sitting in the Shaman's living room, the three friends have to watch helplessly as President George W. Bush adds fuel to the fire with his address to Congress after the attacks. They rightly suspect that the government's attitude will contribute to the deepening of the Us vs. Them divide and "the dark ages so many Americans fear will be spread by the Other is more often than not an inner darkness within the perceiver" (Larson). The supposed enemy within becomes fair game since the authorities also take drastic measures in their fight against terrorism on home ground. Although Chuck has sensed a change in atmosphere in his normal life because "[s]uddenly everybody's become an expert on different varieties of turbans in the world" (*HB* 114) and he is roughed up in a bar because he is an "A-rab" (*HB* 30), he really learns what it means to be an outsider when he is at the MDC. Hailing democracy and the pursuit of happiness of the individual, the United States seems to deprive the Other of that right, and the inmate's situation in New York becomes comparable to that of the detainees in the judicial limbo land of Guantanamo Bay prison: "'I want to make a phone call. I know my rights.' 'You aren't American!' he fired back. 'You got no fucking rights'" (*HB* 135).[103] This quote ironizes President Bush's speech on September 20, 2001: "As long as the United States of America is determined and strong, this will not be an age of terror; this will be an age of liberty, here and across the world" (Bush). The guard's outburst of rage shows that in post-9/11 America, liberty is apparently linked to the condition of non-Muslimism.

After his time in prison, Chuck suffers from a post-9/11 trauma. In the following scene, the author points out the effects of racial profiling and general paranoia on the likes of Chuck - a fact that Americans or Westerners in general may not be aware of:

> When I glanced back nonchalantly, I saw the cop making her way to me, gesticulating wildly …. When I returned back to consciousness, I was on my back with several diapers cushioned beneath my bruised head …. 'You all right, honey?' … I wasn't alright. I felt panicky, paralyzed, and there was a ringing in my

[103] The text features many more examples of police violence, torture, and racism. The following quote highlights the clichéd view that terrorism is linked to the Muslim religion: "'I'm trying to understand why Muslims terrorize. I want you to think about this issue, and then tell me what you think'" (*HB* 146).

> ears like rattling chandeliers …. It was later that I realized that I had been in the throes of some sort of culture-bound psychomatic psychosis …. The authorities gave existential heebie-jeebies. (*HB* 249-50)

His stay at the MDC becomes the story's turning point: Chuck is now hyperaware of his Otherness and develops paranoiac feelings. He is crazy with fear and feels isolated and misunderstood. These feelings become his constant companions. His experiences in prison make him revise his opinion about the U.S. Since most people do not wear their religion on their sleeve, racial profiling becomes a usual device to expose people of a certain skin color as Muslim fanatics as the prologue to Leila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* or Changez' experiences at the airport show quite well.[104] Although the encroachments seem blown out of proportion, the fact that Naqvi has had such cases in his own family makes the novel a critique of the U.S. government whose disproportional measures are based on Orientalism and racism[105]: "'So you cooperate with us, or we can lock you away for a long time - no phone call, no lawyer, no nothing. And if you're lucky, someday we'll put you on a plane - a one-way ticket back to Bumfuckistan. We can and will deport you. We can and will deport your pals" (*HB* 135). Freshly out of prison, Chuck is traumatized by the violence and hatred and also baffled that the FBI even considered that he is a terrorist, the more so, since they do not hold any charges against him and he has never done anything wrong but is just a regular young adult living his dream in New York.

In *Windows on the World*, written from a white, Western perspective, 'Beigbeder' notes that the U.S. takes drastic measures against her presumed enemies outside while inside the country, solidarity amongst the American people becomes most important. However, this is perceived quite differently by people of a different skin color or religious belief living in America, who now face groundless hostility, racism, and exclusion. The pre-9/11 'whiteness' of South Asians has vanished, and they have become "sand niggers." Their new

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[104]The hardcover edition of Halaby's novel features a long prologue ("Before") about a person at the airport. The speaker addresses the audience directly and encourages us to get rid of all our clichéd prejudices toward Arabs ("terrorists, veils, oil, and camels" [viii]) and also lose the "hateful names" (ix) ("Sand Nigger, Rag Head, Camel Jockey" [ix]).
Moreover, Beigbeder pokes fun at the authorities' methods to uncover potential terrorists in the fictitious landing card he has to fill out upon his arrival in the States.

[105] At the MDC, the guards use a rude, racist language when they are addressing Chuck: "'Take off everything, sand nigger'" (*HB* 137).

"Blackness" automatically deprives them of their former style of living. Naqvi then draws a connection between 'Brown People' as the new "Japs, Jews, Niggers" (*HB* 1) and the long history of racism against Blacks and, thus, avoids a South Asian exceptionalism of suffering. For African Americans, the newly opened hunting season for Muslims does not make their situation any easier. Roger, a sommelier and friend of Chuck, tries to console him by telling him that what Chuck experiences now is something that he has to live with every day: "'[W]hen a big black guy moves quickly, they take cover: mothers fear for their children, I've even seen cops reach for their batons'" (*HB* 153). This quote also points to the fact that although South Asians in general and Muslims in particular face hostilities after the attacks, this has not been the case before when they were considered as an assimilated group. Just like the protagonists of *Falling Man*, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, *Windows on the World*, and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist,* who feel that either their identity, their insouciance, or their future has been hijacked by the 9/11 terrorists, Chuck feels like a victim of the attacks since the terrorists have stolen his joie de vivre and the prospect of living his personal American Dream. Because of the attack, they have turned his stay in the U.S. into a nightmare. Consequently, following Roy's reading of the novel, Chuck's story can be seen as a relaunch of the Tragic Mulatto myth[106]: Although they are not mixed race persons, Chuck, Jimbo, and AC suffer an identity crisis because after the attacks they are perceived as the 'Brown People' they are. They fail to fit either the world of the New York tribe or that of the Muslim terrorist. Suddenly finding himself in the position of the social outcast, Chuck becomes suicidal. In a society newly divided by racial or ethnic origin, his successful immigration story eventually turns into an emigration narrative, when, shunned by the public, he decides to return home.

Although the novel does not center on religion, it still makes a strong case against Muslim terrorism. At the same time, it condemns stereotypical perception of Muslims in America in the time following the attacks. Naqvi thematizes how young Muslims in the U.S. see themselves and tries to get rid of prejudiced views and attitudes toward this religion. He covers a wide range of religiosity, from atheism to believing, traditional Islam. The three friends are as

[106] Cf. David Pilgrim's "The Tragic Mulatto Myth"

secular as can be, and the Metrostanis' large circle of friends consists of many colorful people:

> We got word that summer when my gay friend Lawrence né Larry introduced us to a pair of lesbian party promoters who called themselves Blond and Blonder, and ever since the beau monde included a Pakistani contingent comprising Jimbo, AC, and me. (*HB* 4)

Chuck emphasizes the fact that he is a non-practicing Muslim and that religion does not play a role in the three friends' lives. He takes to drinking and drugs. When asked by the prison guard whether he is a practicing Muslim, he argues that the rules prescribed by the Koran can be interpreted generously. However, the Koran does not allow for any wiggle room when it comes to the consumption of pig. Since their religion belongs to their identity, Jimbo and Chuck "weren't frum but avoided pork" (*HB* 2). AC on the other hand propagates a "vigorous atheism" (*HB* 2). It is for this reason that he is the strongest opponent not only of the attacks but of Islam. The friends' portrayal does not contribute to but counteracts the stereotypes voiced by the prison guard who represents the general opinion in a country paralyzed by fear of Muslim terrorism. The three are depicted as part of the pre-9/11 hedonistic, coke-sniffing New York City it-crowd that could have sprung from McInerney's *Bright Lights Big City*.

In his address to Congress on September 12, 2001, which is quoted in the novel, President Bush states: "*Its [Islam's] teachings are good and peaceful*" (*HB* 122, emphasis in original). AC, however, contradicts Bush and condemns not only Islam, but religion in general since it has been cause for death since the beginning of time: "'Islam's not good and peaceful, chum,' AC protested. 'It's a violent, bastard religion, as violent as, say, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, whatever. Man's been killing and maiming in the name of God since the dawn of time'" (*HB* 122). While AC receives Bush's address critically, his populism and appeal to national solidarity seem to have struck a chord with Chuck: "Stirred by the words, I too had the urge to applaud; *Thank God for the Union!*, I thought, *and that justice will be done!*" (*HB* 118, emphasis in original). His reaction at the Shaman's house, but also his and his friends' response to the attacks themselves, show that far from feeling as the Other that they have become after 9/11, they feel as solidary with the victims as any other American.

Chuck even compares the tragedy to the feelings he had after the death of his father:

> I remained in a daze for weeks. At the Shaman's, however, I began to sob unexpectedly and ridiculously. Closing my eyes, I repeated the koranic mantra Ma would repeat after my father died - … 'We come from God and we return to God' - as the presidential address continued in the background. (*HB* 121)

Ironically, it is the intellectual atheist AC, who will be detained at the MDC longest. The indictment for building an explosive charge is withdrawn since the FBI mistook the *Anarchist Cookbook* for a bomb-building manual. And so, not his alignment with religious zealots but his western yuppie lifestyle becomes his downfall, and he is arrested for drug possession. Although Naqvi tries to portray the problems of ethnically marked people in a nuanced way, the Pakistani characters belong to an upwardly mobile social class, and except for Old Man Khan, they are secular, Americanized Muslims. These are juxtaposed to the 9/11 terrorists who are condemned for their deeds by the three and their friends. Naqvi, however, neglects 'regular,' i.e. practicing but non-fanatical Muslims, and their situation after the attacks, making Jimbo's father their only spokesperson.[107] At the end of the novel, when Chuck reads that the Shaman died inside the Twin Towers, he instinctively says a prayer for his friend. The protagonist's transformation from Pakistani to Metrostani to Pakistani has come full circle with this ritual of prayer.

The novel also pays particular attention to the role of the media in the witch hunt following 9/11. To stress the fact that the novel is based on reality, Naqvi often uses real-life events and news reports to make the witch hunt that the three experience believable. Reassured by the government's encouragement to watch out for suspicious activities, the media focus on the evil-doers and the media's propaganda triggered paranoia. In an interview with *usatoday*, Naqvi talks about the difficulty of being a Muslim in the time following the 9/11 attacks: "You find yourself in the peculiar position that you are reeling from this great tragedy and then you are subsequently and consequently suspected of being

[107] In her novel, *The Groom to Have Been* (2008), Saher Alam picks up this issue and describes how religious Muslims are prevented from going to the Mosque and the drastic measures that the city of New York has to take to make sure that these people can practice their religious beliefs.

somehow part and parcel of it" (Memmott). While newspapers and TV call for the pursuit of alleged terrorists,[108] the "Portraits of Grief" manipulate popular opinion in a different way: Mohammed Shah, the Pakistani Gatsby-figure, is transformed into an average insurance agent - an image that contrasts strongly with the FBI's picture of a supposable terrorist involved with the September 11 attacks. The friends paint yet another faceted and hence more realistic picture of the Shaman, whom they have known as a bon-vivant involved in shady business dealings that made possible his style of life. Naqvi thus points out the role of the media after an event that was mediatized right from its beginning. Although a visual event - the crumbling towers were shown on TV again and again - it is not on the victims that the coverage focuses; they very soon vanished from the coverage and were banned to the highly artificial and stylized "Portrays of Grief" or other artful representations, such as Eric Fischl's sculpture *Tumbling Woman* (2002), which leave no space for the personal and private tragedies resulting from the attacks but only abstract ideas thereof, as represented by the term "9/11."

To the three Pakistani Musketeers, New York City plays a vital role for their re-invention as Metrostanis. The book description on Naqvi's homepage states that "[i]n a city where origins matter less than the talent for self-invention, three 'Metrostanis' have the guts to claim the place as their own". It seems to be an ideal city to realize one's own potential: "Sure, they said institutionalized racism was only a few generations old and latitudinally deep, but in New York you felt you were no different from anybody else; you were your own man; you were free" (*HB* 20). In contrast to Hamid's Changez or Halaby's Salwa and Jassim who strive for economic success, the three friends seek social recognition: "'You're meeting special people tonight, people without whom New York's not New York! These are the famous Pakistanis!'" (*HB* 23). Their plan seems to work and the three become part of the colorful New York City tribe since "the morphing of race into ethnicity has been possible for intermediary racial groups and has functioned to open up an avenue and

[108] Chuck reports on the tense atmosphere in New York City and he, as is shown by his use of the pronoun 'we,' still believes to be part of the New York City tribe: "The news was all bad. There were reports that the tap water might be poisoned, that anthrax permeated the air; … sightings of dark men with dirty bombs and devices in their shoes. Planes appeared and disappeared over the horizon. Our nerves already frayed, we were told to report suspicious activities, to be vigilant" (*HB* 70).

affiliation with whiteness" (Rottenberg 77). Consequently, the three feel particularly comfortable in New York City because it is a multicultural island where race and descent do not seem to matter. According to Roy, "Pakistani identity within this formulation functions along the lines of Jameson's conception of 'neo-ethnicity' in *Postmodernism*, in which ethnicity is conceived in terms of fashion and consumption, and is argued to be primarily 'a yuppie phenomenon' (Jameson 341)." This interpretation fits the protagonists' attitude. They do not define themselves along the lines of race or nationality but through their (social) environment and their outward appearance. All three, although they are not wealthy, have carefully constructed their identity and now believe to have their "fingers on the pulse of the great global dialectic" (*HB* 1). Just like Hamid's Changez in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, the three benefit from their exotic Otherness; their Pakistaniness as such is not threatening to New York's party community but is an enrichment, adding another facet to its society. Yet, the religious aspect that their Pakistaniness brings with it becomes an obstacle for their continuance in the tribe, and they painfully discover that there are limits to their self-invention. Their religion suddenly poses a massive threat to society and leads to the Metrostranis' falling out of grace. While 'Beigbeder,' Keith Neudecker, and Thomas Schell, Sr. try to reinvent themselves as post-9/11 family men, in *Home Boy*, like in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, the protagonists' new home country America, and particularly New York City, triggers a desire and, more importantly, the opportunity, to reinvent oneself pre-9/11. They are not the destitute and exploited illegal immigrants depicted in novels such as Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) or lower-class immigrants who work very hard to offer their children better opportunities, like the cab driver Abdul Karim and his wife. The three are upwardly mobile intellectuals who invent themselves as hybrid beings who pick and choose the best of both cultures. They are comfortable in their role as exotic hybrids who feel very much at home in the city that accepts and even welcomes these extravagancies.

Naqvi presents us with three different characters that are in different phases of their Americanization. Born in the U.S., Jimbo is the one who feels torn between his Pakistani and American identity, and he is depicted as the classical 'ABCD': "Have you decided what you are all about yet? Why is it so

strange that our behavior is, um, defined by certain contexts? Do you snort coke in front of your parents? I mean what's this really all about?" (*HB* 93). Although Jimbo is "born and bred in Jersey" and hence a "bonafide American" (*HB* 3), his assimilation rests on shaky foundations and he has difficulties to straddle both cultures. It is particularly difficult for him since his father is a traditional Pathan and his sister wears hijab. He, by contrast, is a drug-taking dreadlock wearing Metrostani DJ who is in a relationship with "the Duck," whom he keeps from his father. Through Jimbo, Naqvi points out the problems that even second-generation immigrants have to face. Especially his father, who clings to the old traditions, makes it difficult for him to feel 'American.' However, by the end of the novel, Jimbo's identity crisis is resolved when he finds out that he does not have to choose, that his father accepts his girlfriend and he can indeed be Pakistani and American at the same time.

In contrast to Chuck, AC is comfortable in his hybridity; still, it is exactly this lifestyle that will seal his fate. Chuck is to be situated somewhere in-between: he feels comfortable in his new home land (until 9/11, that is) but at the same time feels a strong connection to Pakistan through Mini Auntie, AC's older sister, whose apartment is the meeting place for friends and family from Pakistan, and especially through his mother who also keeps him updated on the goings-on after 9/11 at home. He is very considerate when it comes to his family and friends: he does not let down his friends and drives to Connecticut with them although this will cost him his job. He vehemently opposes AC and Jimbo's arrest and comes through for Jimbo when he and the Duck are about to split up. After the attacks, a feeling of alienation sets in, which becomes stronger by the day; the outside pressure becomes too much for him to bear, and, having remained a home boy at heart and disillusioned by the American Dream, he leaves the country.

Chuck's decision to become a cabbie instead of pursuing his profitable career in the banking business marks an incisive step in his retrogression. His choice of employment draws him nearer to the diasporic community. Going to Little India in the middle of the night because he feels "faint and forlorn" (*HB* 42), he meets the cabbie Abdul Karim who, recognizing Chuck as a fellow countryman, invites him to eat with him. Chuck is caught up by nostalgic memories evoked by the food.

> It harkened back to simple times and simple pleasures …. There was much to recall: Bundoo Khan's legendary seekh kababs, picnicking in the shade of the palm trees at the Jinnah Mausoleum, riding pillion on a Honda C70, the tangy whiff of the Arabian Sea. Swept by sentiment, by the idea of driving fast and carefree at night, I heard myself say, 'Karim Sahab, I want to become a cab driver'. (*HB* 43)

Parallel to Hamid's Changez, he identifies more and more with the "colonized subject" and works in a business typically performed by immigrants:

> There were nineteen of us, none of whom was Pakistani (although I learned that South Asians comprised a third of the New York cabbie population, distributed almost equally among Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, and Indians) …. Our instructor, the sole Caucasian in our midst, introduced himself as Gator. (*HB* 45-6)

By getting insight into the life of 'regular' immigrants and their daily struggles during his training and on his visits to Abdul Karim's house, he becomes grounded in the immigrant reality, and he gets a glimpse at what impact 9/11 had not only on him but on the Pakistani diaspora:

> The air was cool and smoky like November in Karachi and, as usual, wafting mutton biryani …. Little Pakistan was unusually tranquil, as if the natives, bracing for a hurricane, had left town in a hurry …. Later I'd learn that in the sweeps following 9/11, many had fled across the border, to Canada, to Mexico, with not much more than the clothes on their backs. Many would leave for the homes they had left decades ago, never to return. (*HB* 229)

As Chuck morphs from successful banker to (soon unemployed and arrested) cab driver, we can see how much talent he has for this re-invention, or more precisely, his transformation into an 'ordinary' immigrant. After 9/11, however, especially Chuck realizes that the possibilities for self-invention are limited: On their way to the Shaman's place, the three friends get waved down by the police in a road block and Chuck is shocked to see that "*[w]e were a bunch of brown men in a car, the night of heightened security in the city* …. I could have been silly or paranoid, but it was the first time I had felt this way: uneasy, guilty, criminal" (*HB* 97, emphasis in original). Chuck suddenly comes to realize that

no matter how he invents himself,[109] he can neither change the way others see him nor change that he is made into somebody: loyal son and friend, Metrostani, terrorist. The friends' artfully crafted world clashes with reality, and religion comes in the way of the friends' cosmopolitanism. All three are arrested and detained at the MDC where their Americanized names do not help them. In the world of make-believe, relationships and friendships are volatile and insincere: just like the three friends have befriended the Shaman because of his extravagant life-style, the it-crowd has befriended the three because of their exoticness. After 9/11, this exoticness comes in their way and they are cast out of Paradise.

Like James Gatz, who reinvented himself as Jay Gatsby, Mohammed Shah becomes "The Shaman," a dubious figure whose American Dream is ironically ended by the terrorists. While he himself and the three friends consider him a player, after his death, his identity is re-invented without his assistance through the "Portraits of Grief": The Epigraph for Shah gives the novel a twist and shows impressively that the victim's origins are manifold. Here it is the suspected terrorist who is tragically proven to be innocent when he died along with so many others. Besides the protagonists' problematic situation after the attacks, where they fall prey to a suspicious people and government, 'the Shaman' becomes the most literal victim. Although he is indeed not a terrorist, the epigraph paints a most favorable picture of Shah, leaving out his illegal activities. While the FBI relied on dubitable sources when they suspected Shah of terrorist activities, the newspaper, too, relies on the assertions of a co-worker, who, of course, has a different impression of the Shaman, who officially worked for a life insurance: "Mr. Shah was attending a conference at the World Trade Center when tragedy struck. He called Mr. Leonard to ask to cover for him. A plane had hit the building, he said. He was going to be late" (*HB* 270). The epigraph also does seem hypocritical if we contrast it to the fate of Chuck and his friends after the attacks. The portrait is written in a benevolent tone and does by no means mirror the post-9/11 reality of Chuck and the likes.

Jimbo's sister Amo, too, reinvents herself in a surprising way. Whereas the three friends try to fit in, she is not ready to deny her heritage. Unlike her brother and his friends who believe to be particularly cosmopolitan, Amo seems

[109]At the beginning of the novel, Chuck states self-confidently: "We were mostly self-invented and self-made and certain we had our fingers on the pulse of the great global dialectic" (*HB* 1).

to be a more traditional immigrant who welcomes the opportunities that her faith offers her: "A few weeks into her freshman year at Rutgers … she donned a hijab. I did not know why she did it" (*HB* 61). Amo later explains that the hijab is more than a commitment to religion; to her, the traditional scarf signifies protection from the gaze of others, and it gives her more security.

> I started to change … and the same guys who were calling me names in the seventh grade were hitting on me and everything. I was so disgusted by the whole thing that I was like, bring it, bring on the hijab. And it's not like I'm not Muslim. I've been to Sunday school all my life, and I say my prayers and everything and I am proud of who I am. (*HB* 265)

Amo wears her headscarf voluntarily and thus combats long-standing prejudices surrounding the scarf as a signifier for the oppression of women.[110] Although they seem worlds apart, Chuck still sees a connection between the two of them: like his own performance of a Metrostani identity, he sees her hijab as another way of performance: "In a sense, we were peas in a pod, she and I, denizens of the Third World turned economic refugees turned scenesters by fate, by historical caprice" (*HB* 16). Chuck believes that she is an extravagantly dressed "scenester," which she later explains she is not. She sees the hijab as an authentic garment, a veil that unveils her true self. Amo is the steadiest character in the novel that does not attempt any extravagant re-invention but bethinks of her roots. Yet, by the end of the novel, another transformation takes place, and the hijab-clad willful side liner becomes an all-American girl in jeans and sneakers. Like her brother, she, too, seems to have found her identity. Apparently because she has feelings for Chuck, she takes off her headscarf because she does not mind his gaze. Although Chuck is fascinated by her beauty and feels flattered, it is too late. His home-sickness has gotten the better of him.

Chuck's attempt to connect both worlds shows to be delusive. As Roy argues, "what are frequently offered as examples of hybridized 'global' culture often reveal American pluralism writ large: not the end of nationalism, but the universalization of American national identity." This "universalization" also manifests itself in the new, American-sounding names that the three main

[110] In Nafisa Hadji's *The Writing on My The Writing on My Forehead* (2009), the Pakistani-American protagonist Saira also is surprised that during her visit home to Pakistan, she does not experience the headscarf as a form of oppression but, like Amo, as a comfort and protection from male gazes.

characters take on: Chuck, AC, and Jimbo. While Chuck's "all-American sobriquet" (*HB* 193) is merely accidental, the other protagonists' names hint both at the wish to veil their origins in order to fit in and a spreading of Americana. Chuck's twisted idea of America and the American way of life upon his arrival show the omnipresence of American cultural assets on a global level. However, Chuck is not the only one to fall for this constructed version of the U.S. Beigbeder's alter-ego 'Beigbeder,' too, confounds the bits and pieces of American artifacts that spread globally for the real America. And even in the end, when Chuck has lost all of his illusions, we can see how deeply he has been marked by his life in America. After he has come back down to earth due to the attacks, his dreams have become more humble. Just like the average American, he dreams of raising a family and moving to the suburbs.

The ethos of the American Dream seems worn and clichéd to the Western reader. However, for the protagonists of many South Asian novels the idea of upward mobility through hard work is still valid.[111] The protagonists' aspirations mirror the mindset of many South Asian immigrants to the U.S. The American Dream is not some kind of clichéd trope but something which is to be taken serious. According to a survey in *The Indus Business Journal*, "South Asian Americans are having the most success achieving the American Dream. Forty-one percent say they have achieved the Dream, compared with just over a third (34 percent) of all Americans, and among South Asian Americans who haven't yet achieved the Dream, 8 in 10 think it is possible" ("South Asians Shifting their View of 'American Dream'").

Since the pursuit of their goal to prosper and succeed in life has reached its limits in their home country, the protagonists come to America, the land of opportunity and the birthplace of said dream. Their hope for a better future is fuelled by TV and the global screening of American movies and TV series. The prospective immigrants are made to believe that everything is possible in the

[111] The protagonists of Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land*, Sengupta's *Big Apple Two Bites*, and Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* all go to the United States in hope of a better future. Mostly, pecuniary interests have priority for the well-educated and aspiring protagonists. Seemingly successful at first, but long-term, their clichéd expectations are not fulfilled, and they leave the country. One of the few exceptions is Haji's *The Writing on My Forehead*, where the protagonist, a young Pakistani-American woman, finds fulfillment by crossing national as well as psychological borders.

Land of Opportunities.[112] Chuck's description shows that he confounds fiction with reality, and by watching these shows, he feels well-prepared for his travel to a seemingly familiar world.

> The enigma of arrival was compounded by the fact that the New World was so unexpectedly new. Before I arrived, America had become terra cognita as I had been educated by classics such as *Coming to America*, *Crocodile Dundee*, and *Ghostbusters*, and by American programming on PTV that included the *A-team* and *Manimal*." (*HB* 160)

Hamid's Changez points out that New York bears semblance to Karachi in some aspects as both cities are very large and vibrant. Still, the newcomer is soon disillusioned and has to admit that the harsh reality of trying to gain foothold in a new country has nothing to do with the unrealistic world of TV-series and movies such as *Coming to America* "'[I]t's so familiar … but it isn't at all … I've realized I don't know anything … about anything'" (*HB* 162). He experiences the much-cited clash of cultures and also realizes that his newly gained freedom comes at a prize; although he knows many people, he is alone and turns to his mother in Pakistan for comfort and advice.[113] Still unimpeded by the repercussions of 9/11, Chuck seems to be able to live his personal American Dream: he is popular with his friends, has earned a degree in literature, and now earns enough money to live his extravagant life in the city and is still able to send some money home to his mother. This dream is shattered after the attacks when the mood turns. His idealized image of the Promised Land becomes damaged: "In the latter half of 2001, however, my dreams had turned to shit" (*HB* 180). After 9/11, Chuck's isolation becomes even worse because 'real Americans' shun him. His "brownness" excludes him from mainstream

[112] Chuck hopes to be able to offer his mother a better life in America, too."And the grand plan was that after the bank sponsored my green card … I would sponsor Ma's. Then we would live happily ever after like a happy, all-American family, minus father figure" (*HB* 35).

[113] In an interview for the Pakistani magazine *Newsline*, Naqvi shares his experiences of living in the U.S. He reveals that life there contrasts strongly with that in Pakistan and that the individualism that is possible in America comes at a price: "Life in the States is very lonely, in many ways. You are completely on your own. If you're your sick, for instance, you're lucky if someone will bring you a bowl of soup. The States has many freedoms but with those freedoms comes a sort of a darker dimension to life abroad …. Here [in Karachi] you've got a place and you're known for what you do, you have a history, and even if you don't have a large family you've got people who will somehow or the other come to your help if need be. There [in New York] you rely on the state and on institutions and there's a comfort and security in that but relying on the state is very different from relying on your family …. So there are many freedoms that the West offers but with that they're scuttled with a kind of loneliness, a kind of solitude" (Ahmed).

Americanness and from his aspirations. AC has more intellectual motivations for liking America and, consequently, his disillusionment is of a different nature: "'Why do you want to become an American?' … 'Hail Emma Goldman! Hail Chomsky! Hail Zinn! Hail Mary! *Yo, I thought this country was based upon freedom of speech/Freedom of press, freedom of your own religion/To make your own decision, now that's baloney/Cause if I gotta play by your rules, I'm bein' phony—*'" (*HB* 123, emphasis in original). This passage shows once more that the picture that AC and Chuck had of the U.S. was deceptive. AC notes that even in a country that brought forth latitudinarians and critics of America such as the political scientist and historian Zinn, the politically active anarchist Goldman, or the linguist, scientist, historian, and activist Chomsky, in the aftermath of 9/11, freedom has its limits, especially for a Pakistani like AC, who gets arrested eventually.

At the MDC, he and his friends experience a totally different interpretation of America's (career) opportunities, which can make a torturer out of a regular prison guard: "As per his instructions, I sat glued to the seat, braced for the worst: hamstringing, kneecapping, garroting, shock therapy, Chinese water torture. In a changed America, it *seemed anything could happen*" (*HB* 142, emphasis mine). Contrary to his own belief, namely that he stands on the same side as any patriotic citizen in post-9/11 America, at the MDC, reality descends upon him: his American Dream now officially turns into an American nightmare.[114] Naqvi tries to counteract the paranoia and uses the prison officer's stereotyped and racist questions as an opportunity for Chuck to set the record straight(er) by stressing the fact that, like everybody else, he deplores the attacks:

> As a Muslim, he figures, I would have special insight into the phenomenon - knowledge of the relevant fatwa or some verse in the Koran - just like a black man, any black man, should be privy to black-on-black violence or the allure of a forty-ounce. But like everybody, I figured the hijackers were a bunch of crazy Saudi bastards. (*HB* 146)

Despite being a secular Muslim, Chuck, of course, knows more about Islam than the prejudiced, racist prison officer. He tries to remove the stigma of being

[114] With hindsight, Chuck explains: "[W]e would later learn that the worst abuses in the American prison system after 9/11 took place at MDC, the Metropolitan Detention Center. According to later, possibly hyperbolic headlines, MDC was 'America's Own Abu Ghraib'" (*HB* 133).

Muslim and humorously explains that terrorist activities are not limited to Islamists. The novel thus also serves a mildly didactic purpose:

> 'I guess the first terrorist of the twentieth century was the Serbian guy who kicked off World War I … Anyway, the whole Palestinian-Jewish thing began next. Funny thing is that before 1948, the Jews were the terrorists …. [S]uicide bombing was pioneered much later … by the Hindus, the Tamil Tigers. Muslims are like Johnny-come-latelies.' (*HB* 147)

Chuck wants to break down the perceptions of civilized first world and barbarian and fanatic third world by pointing to the fact that terrorism was not invented by Muslim fanatics. The prison officer interprets Chuck's remarks as follows: "*Defended Islamic religion, terrorism*" (*HB* 148, emphasis in original). Besides attempting to bridge the divide between us and them, the scene also shows that the writer makes use of very clichéd characters, such as the apparently simple and biased guard. However, he makes up for this later when said officer comes through for Chuck, who is then released from prison. The novel frequently points to the fact that even in this very dark post-9/11 era, not everything is of a grainy black and white as depicted by Hamid.

In *The Cosmopolitan Vision,* Ulrich Beck states that "[i]n a world of global crises and dangers produced by civilization, the old differentiations between internal and external, national and international, us and them, lose their validity and a new cosmopolitan realism becomes essential to survival" (14). *Home Boy* makes a strong case against this argument. While this may be the case for Western nations, in Naqvi's novel, however, Chuck has to learn the painful lesson that cosmopolitanism is but an illusion and that the divide between Us and Them has even deepened. Moreover, the utopia of a transnational identity is destroyed for the protagonist and his friends in the wake of September 11. Chuck is devastated that his utopian image of America could not withstand reality. Yet, equipped with an all-American name, even in his panicky escape, he sees an all-American theme. He consoles himself by stating that heroes are often unrecognized and pursued instead of hailed. The life of Butch Cassidy and the likes becomes a metaphor for Chuck's enterprise that was doomed from the beginning:

> Suddenly I had the urge to escape, make a clean break, skip town. When you think about it, the peculiarly American trope of escape has informed narratives spanning the western to the road comedy, from Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid to Thelma and Louise. The protagonists, often paired, are not in pursuit of golden fleeces or holy grails, like the heroes of yore, but are pursued, usually by the long arm of the law …. And though you root for the youthful antiheroes, you know damn well they cannot, will not succeed. In fact, you realize that they were doomed from the word go. They will never make it to the Promised Land. Escape is not so much a destination as a frame of mind. (*HB* 252)

Although he philosophizes about misjudgment and its consequences prosaically, he cannot live with the role of anti-hero assigned to him, and so, like Thelma and Louise, he seeks to escape his perpetrators by killing himself. A job offer becomes his apparent lifesaver. Although the job would offer him a second chance at living his dream and would end his financial problems, economic success is not enough for him. Denied the social acceptance he sought for all along (he wants to be the hero in the story), he confides in his mother:

> What do you want me to tell you, Ma? That life's changed? The city's changed? That there's sadness around every corner? There are cops everywhere? You know, there was a time when a police presence was reassuring, like at a parade or late at night, on the street, in the subway, but now I'm afraid of them. I'm afraid all the time. I'm a marked man. I feel like an animal. It's no way to live …. I heard myself say, 'I want to come home, Ma.'(*HB* 261-2)

Despite the fact that Chuck is permanently disillusioned after his arrest, he still fantasizes about what his life would have been like if it were not for the evil terrorists who burst the bubble. Yet, his dreams have become humbler after his stay at the MDC, and instead of social recognition and success, his focus lies on private fulfillment. However, even after his rather long stay in the country and the, at times, painful experiences he has had, he falls prey to clichéd visions of his future life in the States. He dreams of a life together with Amo in the cultivated suburbs of New York, with children, and an SUV. His new dream shows that he has become less ambitious and more mainstream. Having learned the hard way, he has become more realistic after he had to realize that the America of *Manimal* and the *A-Team* does not exist. Sadly, in a changed America, even this humble dream to settle down to family life is denied him.

Unlike Jimbo, who finally seems to be able to settle down, Chuck's disappointment is too deep, and he has to leave. As the novel's title already indicates, Chuck is a home boy, whose identity becomes more and more linked to Pakistan over the course of the novel. The re-invention of a hybrid identity has failed when the protagonist decides to go back to his home land. Following Roy, I maintain that the novel paints a utopian image of New York, depicting it as a cosmopolitan island in which, had it not been for 9/11, Chuck believes he could have flourished till his death. The attacks become an incisive moment after which everything changes, marking at least a thematic caesura in the novel. New York, and not the U.S., was Chuck's Promised Land which he sees himself forced to leave. Despite his presumed knowledge about the U.S. and his good upbringing, Chuck's stay abroad is still experienced as a clash of cultures. Even the individual freedom that is lauded by immigrants suddenly becomes intimidating and even threatening: being alone when sick with nobody around to care for them or being at the mercy of the authorities after the attacks, individual freedom is not for everyone. Chuck tries to compensate his 'freedom' by staying in close touch with the diasporic community (Mini Auntie) and his mother at home. However, this is not enough for him.

Unlike in the Western novels, where the family assumes a nostalgic importance after the attacks, in *Home Boy*, Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land,* or Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, nostalgia is not only strongly bound to the family but also to the home land per se, which takes over the role of an idealized Promised Land after the attacks for the protagonists. This is emphasized by the novel's title, which highlights that, just like *The Reluctant Fundamentalist,* this is going to be an Emigration Novel. However, in contrast to Hamid's novel, it is the changed situation after 9/11 that triggers Chuck's yearning for home that cannot be ignored. While Changez' inner conflict is present right from the beginning and he cannot oppress his doubts about his identity, Chuck's homesickness quickly gives way to fascination for New York City. Only after the attacks, by which he is as shocked as anybody else, is he made aware of the fact that he does not belong to the tribe. Slowly, he (re)discovers his emotional attachment to Pakistan and his mother.

At the beginning, shortly after his arrival in the U.S., Chuck makes fun of his mother and her parental care for her only son. He talks about her naivety:

"The suitcase had been my father's and was produced from storage after a thorough dusting and presented to me by Ma as some coming-of-age guerdon" (*HB* 159). The survival kit his mother has packed for him consists of items that Western readers would identify as typically South Asian:

> Lying on the plastic-wrapped mattress, using an undeclared mango for a headrest, I counted the hours. I figured I one hundred and forty nine to kill, less an estimated fifteen minutes, the time it would take to pack my belongings, an inventory that included a rug which, Ma averred, could also serve as a prayer mat), an unnecessary stainless steel lota, … and a lifetime supply of Chili Chips, jammed somehow into a single suitcase. (HB 159)

Naqvi here plays with clichés and outlines Chuck's development at the same time: he does not believe in the kitsch his mother has packed for him, however, he is homesick and grateful for the "palm-sized diary in which she had painstakingly catalogued the numbers of her friends and friend's friends in America" (*HB* 161). It is only thanks to his mother's diary that he gets to know his future best friends AC and Jimbo and eventually sees the cosmopolitan magic of the city that soon embraces him as one of its own.

However, when eating out together with Abdul Karim, nostalgic feelings overwhelm Chuck: "[T]he thought of eating home food, comfort food, alone made me shudder" (*HB* 32). After the attacks, his attitude suddenly changes, and he longs for his mother's care in a world that is more brutal than he ever could have imagined. In the end, America leaves Chuck a broken man. Although he experiences are similar to those of Hamid's Changez, Naqvi's protagonist chooses a different road, which emphasizes the novel's focus on the social changes that occurred after the attacks; *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, in contrast, thematizes the global political repercussions of 9/11. The novel stops with his decision to go back, and we do not know what will become of him. However, unlike Changez, who starts teaching and organizing Pakistani students and is involved in politics, it is apparent that Chuck's disappointment with the U.S. and his beloved city of New York is more on a personal than political level: instead of taking action, Chuck attempts suicide. Almost like Erica, who cannot let go of the past, Chuck's memories of pre-9/11 New York make him sad and nostalgic.

Roy argues that the novel could well be considered an American novel due to the author's connection to the U.S. and also due to the novel's setting. Moreover, the novel's ideological outlooks promote Americanization since it "leaves the broader political relations between America and the 'Muslim world' unquestioned" (Roy, "Mulatto"). *Home Boy*, together with Kalfus' *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country*, can be seen as one of the more successful attempts at fictionalizing 9/11, because, although written from the perspective of the "Other," the novel is not an essentializing payoff but credibly relates the problems of the Other while also thematizing (admittedly in a side note) the consequences of the attacks outside the U.S. Although the protagonist is deeply disappointed, the novel ends on a conciliatory note and, unlike many American novelists or even Arab-American author Laila Halaby,[115] he avoids essentialism: "It doesn't matter if a person is Eastern or Western, black or white, from New York or from New Jersey. In my experiences, each human needs the same things: food, water, shelter, loving" (*HB* 178).

The novel's cover already hints at the fact that the novel is about 9/11: the face of an oriental-looking man is combined with the Island of Manhattan in the background. Yet, as is the case with *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, the novel's title is misleading since it is reminiscent of gang membership. Although Chuck is somehow also part of a gang of Metrostanis, the title refers to Chuck's disillusionment with America. and he thus is nothing more than a boy going home. Like many other novelists, Naqvi only mentions the tragedy in passing and concentrates on the attacks' aftermath. Even less explicitly than some of his peers, he only alludes to the event, relying on people's knowledge of the tragedy that is firmly situated in the cultural memory: "Downtown seemed festive, lit up with floodlights, but the buildings obscured the mayhem, the mountains of rubble behind them" (*HB* 8). The protagonists' characterization right at the beginning leaves no doubt that, unlike Updike's *Terrorist*, the novel will not try to explain the attacks from the vantage point of the perpetrators. Still, Däwes situates the text in the category of "Diagnostic Approaches" because Naqvi diagnoses the U.S. after the attacks, realistically describing how the atmosphere

[115] In *Once in a Promised Land*, Halaby falls prey to an essentialized depiction herself. The theme 'Us vs. Them' is present in this novel, too. However, this time, the two protagonists become the innocent 'Us,' who have to fight against the hostile American 'Them.'

changed, racial targeting began, and how this affects immigrants (*Ground Zero* 197). Instead of focusing on the trauma that the attacks caused for people, the author thematizes the tragedy's aftermath and the repercussion for non-'mainstream' Americans, making it a "9/12" novel. [116] Moreover, he also briefly addresses the repercussions from which people living in countries associated with 9/11 terrorism (i.e. his home land Pakistan) suffer, when his mother describes to him the tense situation back home, which also contributes to his growing unease with the U.S. and its political decisions. However, the protagonists leave no doubt about which side they are on. At the same time AC senses that the attacks will have wide-ranging consequences: "'Those bastards,' he [AC] continued, 'they've fucked up *my city*! THEY'VE FUCKED UP EVERYTHING'" (*HB* 29).

While the above sections have made clear the novel's thematic focus that is characteristic of the insider/outsider novel, in the following, I will focus on how these issues are realized aesthetically. Naqvi himself states that his writing style has been inspired by various influences. Originally a slam poet, the author says that his writing has been influenced by contemporary American novelists such as Michael Chabon, Dave Eggers, David Foster Wallace, and Rick Moody.[117] These influences are clearly perceptible in *Home Boy*, which shows all the characteristics of a postmodern novel. Consequently, Naqvi's book, although outstanding in many aspects, did also not contribute to a typical aesthetic of what scholars term '9/11 novel.' Nevertheless, one striking aspect is how he and the other novelists discussed revert to historiographic metafiction. Naqvi tries to connect his fiction to reality by sticking very much to the historical facts and context when it comes to the tragedy and its aftermath, mirroring the general atmosphere. He uses authentic newscasts and President Bush's speech as 'hard facts' that are interwoven with the fictional world of Chuck and his friends. Like Chabon in *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* (2000), a novel in which fiction is combined with the historical frame of WWII, the

[116] The term 9/12 novel is frequently used for novels that do not deal with the day of the attacks but focus on their aftermath. I however, will not employ this term since many novels are a combination of both. A term that rather applies to these texts is post-9/11 novel for works such as Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*, a text that has a more global scope and which looks at the post-9/11 world in general.

[117] According to Marc Smith, "[s]lam poetry is a style of poetry that's composed for the purpose of being performed in front of a live audience and in a competitive arena" (3).

audience tags along with the protagonist of *Home Boy* through the 9/11 attacks' immediate aftermath. David Foster Wallace's novels are shaped by the protagonists' search of identity. In *Home Boy*, too, Chuck's capacity to suffer is stretched to its limits when he tries to define his identity in a world that no longer accepts his hybrid status. Naqvi states that "[o]ne of the ambitions of 'Home Boy' was to fuse several genres into coherence'" (Dawood), and his attempt is successful. Besides using the Bidungsroman or the immigrant's tale as a template, the novelist, cannot deny his interest in slam poetry in the book. The novel's rhythm is melodious and informed by the spoken word: "smoothing vinyl like it was chapati" *(HB 4).* Typical of postmodern literature, and also present in the novels of Foer and Beigbeder, there is a constant fusion of "highbrow and lowbrow discourse, employ text and lyric, and summon hip hop and Yiddish, Urdu, Hindi, and Punjabi, to create a voice that feels native to New York City" (Shivani). This is already indicated in the paratext where Naqvi quotes the famous American writer F. Scott Fitzgerald, whose Great Gatsby mirrors the life of Mohammed Shah, the Urdu poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz, and Eric B. & Rakim, who are hip-hoppers. The novel also marks a balancing act between comedy and tragedy: Chuck, although detained at the MDC, still finds the courage to delve into humoristic interpretations of the Koran. Humor and irony, both presumably dead after the attacks, experience a revival in fiction and thereby also constitute a counter-narrative to the fear and paranoia spread by the terrorists and the warriors against terror.

There are only very few instances where Naqvi breaks out of the frame of "contemporary American fiction." At times, the author makes reference to South Asian writers and artists, thereby adding an individual facet to his otherwise thoroughly American work. A specificity of South Asian writing seems to be the detailed description of food, which mostly triggers home land nostalgia in the narrator and gives the novel an exotic touch. This can particularly be found in Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist,* where the narrator describes the food that is served with much detail; the consumption of traditional food is described as a sensual experience. Since Naqvi is guided by American authors and shaped by postmodernism, his novel, unlike that of, for example, Halaby, mostly refrains from exoticism. Roy argues that

> [f]raming the discourse of hybridity within the context of what Brennan identifies as 'the American empire' demands a rethinking of what constitutes 'American' literature beyond a narrow territorially based definition. From this perspective, *Home Boy* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* might be considered American novels … because of the extent to which their aesthetic and ideological outlooks promote Americanization.

Going along with Roy, this study maintains that in contrast to its content that is very much oriented towards bringing the South Asian perspective closer to a white Judeo-Christian audience, while at the same time voicing critique of Americana, the novel indeed is aesthetically bound to the American literary tradition. It is exactly this critique of Americana that distinguishes Naqvi from many of his American peers at that time. Moreover, the perspective of the hybrid Pakistani-American is based on real-life experiences, and the novel can thus not be read as an American novel proper. Although aesthetically influenced by American novelists, the novel's ideological orientation does not promote Americanization. Chuck's renderings of how he got to know America through TV series points to the centrifugal spreading of America but also warns against taking these fictions for real. Chuck's disillusionment is particularly tough because he believed in these fictions of America that then proved deceptive. He blames the terrorist attacks for the swing in mood in the U.S. and for the conclusive failure of his dream. Although Chuck has been strongly influenced by the American way of life during his stay, the U.S.' centripetal attraction is not strong enough to hold him. The novel is thus a critique of Americana and Americanization while, through the novel's style, the author proves that it cannot be escaped. Still, the novel can rather be considered as what Schoene terms the cosmopolitan novel since Naqvi points out the globality of today's world and, at the same time, also delineates its limits in extreme globally relevant events such as the September 11 attacks. Although he was very much inspired by American novelists but also by traditional genres such as the Bildungsroman or the immigrant tale, both of these genres are modified, as I will point out in sections below.

The combination of fiction with the mimetic depiction of historical reality has been tackled differently by the various authors discussed here. Their creative interweavement of both shows that there simply is no clear demarcation

line between literary eras and genres and that the novel per se is still as flexible and accommodating as Bakhtin has described it and makes it the ideal medium to overcome the crisis of representability. The circumstances of 9/11 demanded a particular way of approaching the topic. Non-fiction publications about the attacks were innumerable in order to quench people's thirst for the answer to the imminent question "Why?" Fiction had to fulfill two very difficult tasks after the attacks: on the one hand, novels still had to be entertaining, on the other hand, the historical reality of 9/11 loomed over the novelists' heads, and expectations were great and at the same time hard to fulfill. How, then, should writers deal with the tragedy in their works? All of the novelists discussed here make efforts to respect the historical frame and to stick to mimetic principles. By writing about 9/11, authors, we can argue, signed what Craig Howes terms the "mimetic contract" (101). Like "the story's epigraph, from the *9/11 Commission Report*, sets the terms of Amis's mimetic contract," newscasts and the story of Ansar Mahmood's arrest set the terms for Naqvi's *Home Boy* (Howes 102). In Naqvi's opinion, his novel is a "'permutation of reality'" (qtd. in Mahmood). One author who inspired Naqvi is Dave Eggers, who wrote the memoir *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius* (2000). The novel, too, bears similarities to a memoir since we follow the protagonist over a limited period of time that has had deep impact on his life. Moreover, Naqvi himself has been personally affected by the 9/11 attacks since he "'had worked at 7 World Trade, the third building that went down on September 11; I had lost a friend. And almost everybody I knew had been visited by the authorities. It was a fraught time'" (Dawood).

Whereas the largest part of the novel is narrated by the first-person narrator Chuck, in the novel's epilogue, narratee and protagonist coincide because Naqvi uses a second-person narrator. In the epilogue, the you-narrator recounts Chuck's arrival in the United States four years before the 9/11 attacks. By addressing the 'you,' the reader suddenly becomes part of the experience. We experience his arrival and the way he sees New York through his eyes. The 'you' also emphasizes that Chuck loses agency upon immigration. Just like in *Bright Lights Big City* (1984), Naqvi merges the narrative 'you' with a commercialist voice that addresses a 'you' as well. The 'you' of the commercial is not a personal one: "You give us 22 minutes, we'll give you the world" (*HB* 273). It becomes clear that the 'you' is directed at a general audience since

Chuck, instead of the world, is given insight into the dynamics of politics and is caught in the middle of it all. By using this second-person narrator, Naqvi breaks the mimetic contract. However, the 'you' makes Chuck's experience more universal and it mirrors the hopes and expectations of many immigrants upon arrival. As the cab driver wisely foreshadows: "'Down the road … you will find out who you are'" (*HB* 273). With hindsight, the audience knows that after 9/11, this decision is taken out of Chuck's hands.

Even though Naqvi states that the novel is grounded in the literary tradition of the Bildungsroman, it is not a classical coming of age story. Although the novel describes the development of the young immigrant Chuck, in contrast to the classical Bildungsroman, where the protagonist faces hardships and difficulties at the beginning, a "rupture between a soul filled with ideals and a resistant reality" (Jacobs 271, translation mine), Chuck's life in the U.S. develops very positively thanks to the network of South Asian immigrants in New York. The rupture between expectation and reality only happens in the aftermath of 9/11 for Chuck. His negative experiences in the U.S. trigger his development from happy Metrostani to disillusioned Pakistani immigrant. The ups and downs in his life indeed make the young man mature, the process of which is described in the novel. Chuck's maturity sets in suddenly after his stay at the MDC. Hence, the traditional structure of "Jugendjahre, Wanderjahre, Meisterjahre" is turned upside down for Chuck. It is a 'from rags to riches to rags' story, where the immigrant's tale with the protagonist's seeming realization of his American Dream slowly transforms into an emigration story.

In an interview Naqvi states that his novel is "'also, in a way, an immigrant's tale, a particularly American tradition that spans the previous century'" (Dawood). With its heavy emphasis on the American Dream, the novel's beginning shows all the signs of an immigration novel with Chuck conquering, if not the whole country, then at least the city of New York: "[Y]ou could … spend ten years in Britain and not feel British, but after ten months in new York, you were a New Yorker, an original settler, and in no time you would be zipping uptown, downtown, crosstown, wherever, strutting, jaywalking, dispensing directions to tourists like a mandarin" (*HB* 19). However, unlike his predecessors, Chuck's way is paved by his education. He does not have to overcome a language barrier since he comes from an educated family and a

former British colony. This directly influences his job opportunities. After graduation, Chuck enters the profitable world of Wall Street and does not have to think about the jobs unskilled or illegal immigrants have to do.

His story of success suddenly turns into a catastrophe after the attacks when Chuck suffers an identity crisis due to the othering by people. The successful immigration story eventually turns into an emigration story when the protagonist decides that he cannot bear the situation any longer. He gives up: "In the end you make your peace and say your goodbyes, not necessarily in that order. You improvise because you didn't anticipate the end, just like you were unable to anticipate the beginning" (*HB* 263). Eventually, his idealized image of the U.S. has faltered, and he cannot take it. All the parameters that should have led to a story of success and have indeed made his arrival in the new country very agreeable and easy now make his fall even more dramatic and painful. The tale becomes one of failure, not because of personal failure, but because the circumstances make it difficult for the protagonist. Chuck cannot accept this, and escape seems the only solution. Being depicted as 'mother's boy' from the beginning, the return to her protective and comforting arms is conclusive. The novel suggests that it is only due to the attacks that Chuck is disillusioned with the U.S., and had it not been for the terrorists who triggered a witch hunt for the brown man, he would have had the possibility to live in America unmolested. But is this realistic? He dreams of marrying Amo and moving to the suburbs - what would have happened to him after leaving the protection of the cosmopolis? Just as Changez looks back at his time in America and his relationship to Erica and dreams of an alternative, yet unrealistic, ending to their story, Chuck, too, gives in to unrealistic and unrealizable daydreams of his perfect life in America. Although he leaves the country disillusioned, he does not look back in anger but with sadness about his lost dreams.

Conclusion

In "The Heart of the West," I have introduced the term 'insider/outsider novel' to denominate the novels discussed in this study, thereby avoiding the ambiguous umbrella term '9/11 novel.' I have argued that the so-called 9/11 novel, despite the fact that it comprises a wide range of topics, does not constitute a genre of its own since it has not developed its own aesthetics. Consequently, it can be considered a subgenre of the postmodern novel. Nevertheless, the authors of the novels discussed in this study do not only follow the aim to entertain their readers with their books. As I have shown, the insider/outsider novels are transformed into a psychological and social tool by their respective authors: Through their protagonists, the novelists introduce their readers to the different reactions to the event and give complex insight into experiences of trauma, shock, fear, but also racism and the Othering of Oriental-looking people. The insider/outsider novel gave authors the opportunity to catch the atmosphere of post-9/11 America from, first, European and American and, shortly after these, also South Asian perspectives. Although an important cultural document of the immediate post-9/11 era, these first fictionalizations of the terrorist attacks failed in the eyes of critics and scholars. They were disappointed by the authors' lack of creativity and literary innovations in dealing with the 'epoch-making' event by harking back to literary nostalgia. However, in this study, I illustrate that the trend to return to well-known aesthetics was already observable prior to the attacks by authors such as Eugenides and was merely continued after September 11, 2001. The presumed crisis of representation was due to the fact that, briefly after 9/11, it was difficult for authors to find a vehicle for their emotions and be innovative at the same time. Mirroring the general insecurity of the time, these authors alternated between the urgent need to write and doubts about the sense of writing at all.

As I have shown in Chapter One, the critical reaction toward the so-called '9/11 novel' was immense. Nevertheless, the discussion of texts is one-sided since many scholars have neglected to consider fiction from outside the West although these novels contribute immensely to the corpus of novels about 9/11 in regard to their number, themes and aesthetics. This study provides

answers to the following queries and creates insight into the perception of 9/11 by novelists from different countries and different cultural backgrounds.

Scholars, critics, and readers alike wondered: *What took so long?* or *Has it really been long enough?* Opinions concerning the timely responses of novelists are contradictory. Considering the difficult circumstances and the pressure under which (American) authors found themselves, many readers and scholars thought that novelists had jumped the gun and that the novels were aesthetically ill-conceived. Others, however, found that 9/11 novels translated "current events into a language of the heart. How could it be 'too soon' to do that?" (Glass). My study shows that the first wave of novels addresses concrete issues which arose in the aftermath of the attacks. While Foer, DeLillo and Kalfus deal with the effects of the attacks on American citizens, Beigbeder looks at the event from an outsider's perspective, trying to put himself in the shoes of the victims, thereby showing strong empathy with the American people. Hamid, Naqvi, and Halaby, in contrast, deal with the repercussions of 9/11 on Oriental-looking people, illustrating to the (predominantly European/American) readership that they, too, have become the victims of the attacks.

Is it even possible to write a novel about 9/11 that is actually 'good'? As I have shown in Chapters Two to Six, it is not easy to classify the novels discussed in this study. Therefore, the term insider/outsider novel is introduced to include novels that discuss the attacks from different perspectives, and to avoid the ambivalent term '9/11 novel.' While Hamid and Naqvi's novels shed light on the attacks from a different perspective, showing the effects of the attacks on Oriental-looking people, especially Hamid establishes a strong national agenda by showing the global consequences of America's (military) reactions to 9/11 and by depicting her as an imperial superpower to whom the attacks serve as an excuse to take over the world. Although critics put high hopes on these authors, their expectations, in my opinion, were not fulfilled. Even if they examine the attacks from a different viewpoint, they, too, show prejudices and biases, this time against the West. Western authors, such as Foer and DeLillo, in contrast, see the attacks as an event that emotionally brought America to her knees. Beigbeder, writing from the perspective of an outsider who was neither affected by the attacks themselves nor by the U.S.'s retaliatory measures, manifests his solidarity with America and its people. Nevertheless, what all of

the novels have in common is that their authors transport the tragedy to the level of the individual. Moreover, they all use tried and trusted elements of the postmodern novel.

One important question was whether novels written after the attacks of September 11, 2001 managed to appropriately represent the crisis or rather illustrated a crisis of representation. In regard to the topics and themes of these novels, one can see that the focus of the novels lies on the emotional representation of the crisis that, for most novelists, predominantly consisted of the attack on the World Trade Center and the consequences thereof. Concerning the aesthetics of novels about 9/11, we can observe that the novels were born in a certain literary conjuncture and that the phenomenon of the so-called 9/11 novel was rather short-lived. The corpus of novels in which the attack on the World Trade Center serves as a catalyst for the narrative is very limited. As this study shows, the insider/outsider novels are firmly grounded in postmodern aesthetics, which led, according to many scholars and critics (for example Rachel Donadio), to a crisis of representation. In this context, it is not surprising that, in his latest monograph, *The Dream of the Great American Novel* (2014), Lawrence Buell only attends to novels published in the 21st century in the epilogue to his book. Although Buell discusses novels that deal with events that have marked turning-points in American history, the insider/outsider novels discussed in this study are not or only marginally mentioned. Buell acknowledges that DeLillo's *Falling Man* is "one of the first major post-9/11 novels" (462); yet, he does not enlarge upon the topic and elaborate on this statement. Although not groundbreakingly new on the aesthetic level, these novels are still worth our while because they translate the atmosphere reigning at the time into words. These texts are important contemporary witnesses that represent the helplessness and chaos that the terrorists brought not only to the U.S., but, through America's reaction to the attacks, to many parts of the world.

One more expressive example of the insider/outsider novel is Laila Halaby's novel *Once in a Promised Land* (2008). In her novel, Halaby, an Arab-American author, describes the problems for ethnically-marked people after the 9/11 attacks. Because the novel is thematically similar to those of Naqvi and Hamid since it, too, deals with the perspective of the Other on post-9/11 America; because the story is not set in New York City but Arizona, I have

refrained from devoting a separate chapter to this novel. Yet, the book is exceptional due to Halaby's representation of core issues such as xenophobia, prejudice, and an ensuing disappointment with the seeming Promised Land on the aesthetic level. The protagonists Salwa and Jassim are a modern Arab-American couple living in Phoenix, Arizona, and the novel is not set in New York City. The setting strongly caters to the couple's longing for 'home' since the climate and landscape remind especially Salwa of her home country, Jordan. Although spatially remote from the actual site of the tragedy, the repercussions of 9/11 for "the Brown Man" do not stop at New York City's boundaries, and the couple becomes more and more isolated from the society around them. Salwa and Jassim work hard and have achieved a high living standard. Salwa works at a bank and also as a realtor. Jassim works as a hydrologist at an American enterprise. Their perfect American Dream is destroyed after the terrorist attacks when even their friends and co-workers turn on them, suspicious of their every move.[118] In an (unconscious) attempt to fit in with the American way of life, both spouses begin affairs with American partners. Their American Dream turns into an American Nightmare for good when Jassim loses his job because some co-workers have denounced him with the FBI, which has accordingly instigated ascertainments. Salwa is almost killed by her lover, Jake, when she tells him that she wants to return to Jordan, which, in his eyes, is like a "pigsty" (*OPL* 320).

The narrative of *Once in a Promised Land* is framed by elements of Middle-Eastern fairy tales. Unlike Hamid's novel, which only makes some vague attempts at blending the postmodern novel with Oriental components, Halaby's novel is framed by an introduction, "Before" (*OPL* vii-viii), and an ending, "After" (*OPL* 331-335), which is, unlike in fairy tales, an unhappy one. The novel begins "Kan; ya ma kan; fee qadeem az-zamaan" (*OPL* vii). Translated into English, this means: "They say there was or there wasn't in olden times a story as old as life, as young as this moment, a story that is yours and mine" (*OPL* vii), which is the opening sentence of many Palestinian folktales. The novel's aesthetics are innovative since Halaby tries to combine the western tradition of the novel with oriental fairy tales; and so, the novel's aesthetics mirror at the same time the U.S.' centripetal power and Salwa's inner conflicts.

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[118] *"[W]ith or against*. But was he not *with*? *I understand American society*, he wanted to scream. *I play your game. I have a right to be here*" (*OPL* 234, emphasis in original).

The tale of the ghula[119] is constantly interwoven with the main narrative; the red threads serve as a metaphor for Salwa's inner conflict of longing for home on the one hand and her ambitions to live a life in luxury on the other.

> The hairy hideous ghula saw the beauty in the child's face and grew madly jealous, wanted the baby for her own, but knew she wouldn't get past security, so she took out her wild ghula threads and began to stitch them under the baby's skin in all sorts of places - between finger joints, next to her nipples, under her eyes, at the base of her neck. When the ghula was dine, the baby lay asleep with a thousand and one red threads hanging from her, the ghula held the end of the threads together and pulled a skein from under one of her large, dangling breasts. After she secured them, she said some magic ghula words and the threads became invisible …. Periodically the ghula would tug at one strand or another and the little girl would feel a pang, a prick, an ache for something else. These pangs and pricks always came at particular times - when an auntie brought gifts of silk pajamas, for example. (*OPL* 331-2)

The ghula, that is America, lures Salwa in with the wealth and prestige she promises. The tugs she gets lead her to marry Jassim, not out of love, but because he can offer her a better life in America. Hassan, her boyfriend, but also the hero in the ghula tale, remains in Jordan. In the end, the ghula reveals herself and nearly destroys not only Salwa's dream but herself.

Halaby inserts the folk tale about Nus Nsays. Unlike the baby girl, Nus Nsays manages to escape the ghula. He resists her "gold and silver and money" but wants "peace for my village" (*OPL* 97). Jassim, who in the beginning goes to the U.S. only to get a good education from which his home country then can benefit, can thus partially be read as Nus Nsays. Yet, eventually, Jassim also succumbs to the "gold and silver and money" offered to him in America. Hence, unlike in the fairy tale, the novel's protagonists are not the heroes but only people whose fairy tale has been destroyed. Hassan, on the other hand, who only is a side character, stays true to himself and loyal in regard to Salwa and his country. Like Hassan in the tale, who accidentally kills the love of his life but breaks the

[119] In his essay, Mudasir Bhat elaborates on the meaning of the two mystical figures: "In Arabic culture, a ghula is a female demonic entity that ensnares victims only to gorge on them when they are within her reach. Only the truly wise, such as Nus Nsays … can escape this fate" (Bhat).

ghula's spell, Salwa's conversations with Hassan and talking about him to her family back home, weaken the U.S.' spell on Salwa.

The novel's opening lines, although in Arabic, can be read as a perfect example for the blending of East and West, not only on a thematic but on the aesthetic level, too:

> 'Kan ma kan' is often used in Arabic literature (*The Thousand Nights and One Night* is the classic example) to introduce a tale, like in English, 'Once upon a time' and if one puts that together with the prepositional phrase 'Fi qadim azzaman' one gets what is often found in English folktales, 'once upon a time, a long time ago'. (V. Mishra 400-401)

The novel's opening merges western and oriental story-telling traditions. In the introduction, the author directly addresses the reader, asking her to leave behind prejudices against Middle Eastern people. At the same time, she uses well-known and worn clichés about Americans and America throughout the novel, thus stepping into the trap herself (although she is American). Moreover, the orientalization of the novel through the tale was also criticized by Middle Eastern people because through this, the author seems to be straining after effect and wants to cater to the Western audience's thirst for the exotic. Halaby switches back and forth between oriental tale-telling traditions and the western novel to depict the protagonists' disruption. They are torn between two worlds: the one they left behind becomes idealized; it is like a tale while the hard reality of the "now" is dealt with in a more realistic way. Using the fantastic, she manages to underline the real problems in post-9/11 society, namely xenophobia and the Othering of Middle-Eastern (looking) people.

Once in a Promised Land is a valid attempt at transferring thematic issues to the aesthetic level and thus giving them more prominence. Novels such as Halaby's try to find new ways to represent the tragedy and especially its cultural aftermath. It is plain to see that authors try to move away from the domestication of the events and to look at the attacks' global repercussions. Yet, novelists still seem in search of an explanation for what happened on that day. In search of the meaning of 9/11, the so-called 9/11 novel has been replaced by what scholars term the 'post-9/11 novel,' which "functions … as a window into the cultural miasma still swirling in the wake of the attacks" (Franklin). The fact

that the characters in novels written by American authors, such as the Berglunds in Jonathan Franzen's *Freedom* (2010), "are often in thrall to forces they don't understand" (Franklin), shows that, even a decade later, novelists still cannot fully make sense of what happened to America and the world on that day.

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