

## Post-9/11 Narratives

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Burning burning burning burning  
O Lord Thou pluckest me out  
O Lord Thou pluckest  
burning

T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* (1922)

The attacks on September 11, 2001, ushered in the Age of Terror, which is an epistemic shift in American polity from the bright lattices of virtual capital that fueled the dot-com boom of the 1990s to a twenty-first century marked by asymmetrical warfare across the globe, not only in New York, Washington, DC, and Shanksville, PA, but also in London, Madrid, Bali, Boston, Beslan, North Ossetia, and Colombo, Sri Lanka. The US prosecution of a so-called War on Terror, in pursuit of a regenerative abstraction, has resulted in indefinite and worldwide conflicts not limited to Iraq and Afghanistan. For those who say that everything was changed, that day marked the termination of a univocal American exceptionalism; and for those who opined that nothing has changed, the globalization of the market state runs on unimpeded. In cultural matters, it's possible to

make assertions of periodization like those made for the postwar or postmodern era, that 9/11 either signals a rupture from the narcissistic narratives of an all-American future or a continuity with the past in that the terroristic ground was long sown with the abuses of power. Post-9/11 narratives may turn wholly on the spectacular events of that day, or they may take account of the collective transformation afterward in the social order, politics, psychopathology, or modes of representation in the arts. In either case, these novels register a shock to human consciousness not unlike that described by Virginia Woolf "in or about December, 1910" (1924, p. 91).

It would be inaccurate, however, to describe post-9/11 narratives as a subgenre of the novel because genres have rules of literary style and form, and fictions that reference 9/11 are too diverse to comply with such rules. As examples, William Gibson's *Pattern Recognition* (2003) is a speculative fiction, and on the morning of 9/11 Gibson, writing in Vancouver, BC realized that the event had "changed everything" for his brand-sensitive protagonist, Cayce Pollard, whose father, a Cold War security analyst, disappears in lower Manhattan. Jonathan Franzen's *Freedom* (2010) is a social and coming-of-age novel in which Walter and

Patty Berglund's son Joey blames the 9/11 attacks for his failures at college and turns to profiteering in war materiel. Ken Kalfus's *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* (2006) is a satire in which a divorcing Brooklynite couple are delighted by the prospects of each other's demise in the attacks, as a wave of "Epidemic terror" overtakes the nation. Art Spiegelman's *In the Shadow of No Towers* (2004) is a graphic memoir that offers "notes of a heartbroken narcissist" traumatized by history. And Laila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* (2007), in which a Jordanian couple encounter Islamophobia in Arizona after 9/11, incorporates features of the Arabesque tale in the narrative.

Rather than consider post-9/11 narratives as a single genre, this entry will collect prominent examples into four categories according to their modes of address (how the text speaks to its audience), their verbal mood (not strictly grammatically), or modality. First, the Indicative mood, in novels that make a direct address toward the event, in which the representation and experience of the attacks on 9/11 is a pivotal element of the narrative structure, and the protagonist is either a survivor of the fall of the towers or closely related to a victim. In these books, characters exhibit symptoms of profound psychological trauma, or post-traumatic stress disorder. Second, the Subjunctive mood, or indirect address, is used when the event occurs offstage and the characters are proximate witnesses to the attacks. The conditional modality of this group, or what might happen if circumstances were changed, lends itself to works of fabulation, reflexivity, or metafiction. In these books, alternate worlds are entertained and hypotheticals about the causes and repercussions of 9/11, or whether it need have happened at all, are considered. Third, the Interrogative mode is employed, in whose questioning of the nature of the attacks political, judicial, or cross-cultural arguments are broached. In these books, global,

transnational, or transversal inquiries of the post-9/11 subject are made, often with regard to xenophobia, Islamophobia, and oppression of the Other. Fourth, the Demonstrative or Imperative mood is used, in books that document that such a thing is (or was) the case; or that such a thing has (or must have) happened. Here are found narratives of historical realism that critique the social order both before and after 9/11. Unlike genres in which the rules of literary style and form are not made to be broken, these four modalities allow for the possibility of more than one address in a given work. So, a novel such as Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007) may feature a protagonist, Keith Neudecker, who is a traumatized survivor of the north tower's collapse (Indicative), but his estranged wife Lianne questions her religious or ideological beliefs (Interrogative). David Janiak, the performance artist known as Falling Man, and the tripartite recursive structure of the narrative, such that the novel ends in the towers shortly before it begins, are reflexive elements of an innovative literary form (Subjunctive).

## FALLING (WO)MEN

DeLillo has said that he did not want to write a novel of 9/11 in which the protagonist gazed over his shoulder at the catastrophe but rather that he would place that character directly in the maelstrom (Binelli, 2007). Three novels in the Indicative mood place their protagonist, or a close relative, in the fall of the towers as a victim and/or survivor of the attacks. The direct address toward the character's experience of the event, however, poses the challenge of representing the unrepresentable for the writer. While the fall of the towers was the most widely broadcast event in history, the experience of those trapped in the towers (see the Franco-American Frédéric Beigbeder's novel, *Windows on the World*, 2004) must be unknow-

able, while the trauma of those who survive a near-death experience is inexpressible. And yet, novelists have brought the power to conjure affective and subjective states in their characters that would not otherwise be accessible in our primarily visual culture. In *Falling Man*, DeLillo focuses his narrative on the traumatic experience of one man, Keith Neudecker, a corporate lawyer who escapes from the north tower. Stunned and injured, Neudecker accepts a ride from a stranger, giving the address of his estranged wife, Lianne, and their son in uptown Manhattan, a decision that temporarily reunites the family. While being treated for his injuries by an emergency-room physician, Neudecker is told that survivors of suicide bombings often develop lesions that are, literally, “tiny fragments of the suicide bomber’s body,” bits of flesh and bone that become lodged beneath the skin of anyone within proximity of the blast. “They call this organic shrapnel” (2007, p. 16). Forcibly, physically penetrated by the body of his attacker, Neudecker – and the American psyche of which he is a symbolic case – bears in body and mind the internalized scars of this violation. The counternarrative to terror does not, to the consternation of some readers, involve a healing personal epiphany with the aid of his family. Keith seeks out another survivor, Florence Givens, a Black woman whose briefcase Keith carries from the north tower and returns, calling her “out of the blue” (p. 54). Instead, the figure of restitution rests with the performance artist, David Janiak, known as Falling Man, whose plunges from overpasses are intended to shock the New York commuters. Suspended upside down, “Was this position intended to reflect the body posture of a particular man who was photographed falling from the north tower of the World Trade Center, headfirst, arms at his sides, one leg bent, a man set forever in free fall against the looming background of the column panels in the tower?” (p. 221). As in the photograph by

Richard Drew, Falling Man emulates the Hanged Man of the Major Arcana in the Tarot, a figure not of death but of contemplative suspension. As terrible as the consequences of 9/11 were, those deaths were not to be avenged in a War on Terror. Rather, the novel bids us to stay retribution, ponder the consequences of our actions, and through selflessness gain illumination.

The youthful author of *Everything Is Illuminated* (2002), Jonathan Safran Foer returned with *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (2005), which features a precocious nine-year-old boy named Oskar Schell who has lost his father, Thomas Schell, Jr., in the collapse of the towers on 9/11. While examining his father’s possessions in the aftermath of this tragedy, he discovers an envelope in a vase, on which is written the word “Black.” Inside the envelope is a key, and extraordinarily, Oskar sets out to find every person named “Black” in New York City, an impossible task, with the hopes that the key, in the right lock, will reveal the fate of his father. The vase is symbolically a funerary urn, and yet what its blackness does not contain is the ashes of Oskar’s father, whose remains, like so many of those lost on 9/11, are undiscoverable, and so represent a haunting, negative, empty sign of trauma and loss. Foer’s novel is notably replete with photographs of doors, keys, and other images that appear to illustrate aspects of Oskar’s search for the safe-deposit box that the key marked “Black” fits. And yet, the inclusion of these and other graphical elements in the book, especially the concluding “flip book” of manipulated video stills of a person who appears to rise up rather than fall from the towers on 9/11, are not intended as an “illustrated” novel of 9/11 but rather as a multimodal image-text whose visual supplement compensates for the unspeakability of the event. Also included are a series of undelivered letters written by Oskar’s grandfather, Thomas Schell, Sr., to

his son, "Why I'm Not Where You Are," beginning in 1963 and concluding on "9/11/03" (2005, p. 262). The elder Schell is a survivor of the firebombing of Dresden in World War II, in which he loses his pregnant fiancée, Anna. On arrival as a refugee in New York, he loses the power of speech, beginning with his beloved's name. His mutism takes the form of a book with blank pages on which he writes phrases such as "I don't speak, I'm sorry" (p. 262). Wanting to recapitulate his son's life, a son lost in the cataclysm of 9/11, Thomas needs "an infinitely long blank book and forever" (p. 280). He plunges into graphomania, which is the therapeutic resolution to his mourning, represented by black pages incrementally saturated with print. These pages are both illegible to the reader and filled with Thomas's impassioned address to his lost son.

In the opening chapter of Ken Kalfus's *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country*, Marshall Harri-man barely escapes with his life from his office on the eighty-sixth floor of the south tower. As Marshall struggles to carry a dazed man across the plaza between the two towers, a "woman in a navy business suit" hits the ground nearby and bursts (2006, p. 16), while Lloyd is killed by molten debris falling from the towers. The falling men and women were "colleagues and friends" (p. 14). In fact, Father Mychal Judge, the chaplain to the New York Fire Department, was struck in the head and killed by debris from the collapsing south tower, while praying in the lobby of the north tower. The removal of his body was captured by the documentary filmmakers, Gédéon and Jules Naudet in *9/11* (2002). Marshall learns that United 93 from Newark to San Francisco, on which his wife, Joyce, with whom he has been bitterly feuding, had been scheduled to fly, has crashed in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Among "the flood of refugees: filthy, dazed, grieved, bereft," he went "nearly skipping" over one of the East River bridges (2006, pp. 19–20). Kalfus remarks

that he had arrived at "a grim observation in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks, at a time when, in our grief, we were glorifying the victims of the attacks, calling them heroes, as well as beloved, perfect husbands and wives. My view is that through cliché we were dehumanizing the dead." His "point is satirical, of course, a rebuff to our assumed national piety" (2013). Like Keith Neudecker, Marshall escapes the falling towers with his life, but his life, like Keith's, is not saved by what comes after. In their marital dispute, Joyce and Marshall adopt the very same conspiratorial and terrorist tactics that were employed by al-Qaeda in the attacks. Their children, Victor and Viola, under Joyce's supervision, are injured "playing 9/11," as they jump repeatedly from a porch to the ground: "The World Trade Center was on fire and we had to jump off together! But he let go of my hand!" (2006, pp. 114–115). In this war of domestic terrorism, the two children are "their divorce's civilian casualties" (p. 7). Marshall becomes a self-radicalized martyr, donning a suicide vest under his bathrobe that he has assembled by following a printable diagram downloaded from a website in Arabic. He enters the apartment's kitchen, declares "God is great," and touches the wiring clips together. Nothing happens. Joyce and the kids offer to troubleshoot the wiring, and while they fail to fix the problem, they participate in an ironic exchange of unwitting victims and terrorist conspirators. Joyce declares, "You don't follow through with anything. That's what's wrong with you" (p. 191). Surely the American family should be united in time of crisis, but the Harrimans suffer, as the novel's title alludes, from the "peculiar malady . . . of Epidemic terror" (Klein, 2006).

#### ALTERNATE WORLDS

The events of 9/11 were, as DeLillo observes, "an extraordinary blow to consciousness, and

it changed everything” (Ulin, 2003, p. E1). Writers of post-9/11 narrative, however, have refused to drape themselves in the cloak of national mourning, and recognizing the shock to the political order, turn to formally inventive presentations that acknowledge the event’s unpresentability. Such works are most prominently found in the Subjunctive mood, in which fabulation and metafiction are employed to explore the conditional or hypothetical “what ifs.” Paul Auster’s *Man in the Dark* (2008), as an example, ventures an alternative history of secession and civil war that erupts between Red states and Blue states in response to the illegitimate election of George W. Bush in 2000, instead of the imperial wars waged by his administration. In this counterfactual timeline, possible in a quantum universe or Giordano Bruno’s theory of infinite worlds, it is 2006, the “twin towers” are still standing, and “there’s no war in Iraq” (2008, p. 31). In this nocturnal narrative, an insomniac book critic, August Brill, invents the story of Owen Brick, who is conscripted to fight in the second civil war. In a piercing of the ontological mantle of the narrative, between a post-9/11 world and one in which the event never occurs, Brick is assigned to terminate the hypnogogic man who has summoned this internecine conflict into existence. The critic’s granddaughter, Katya, mourns her fiancé, Titus Small, a military contractor who has been abducted and executed by insurgents in the “phony, trumped-up war” in Iraq, “the worst political mistake in American history” (p. 172). One world collides with another, one war is exchanged for another, and the expression of political affect demands the in(ter)vention of literary form. Auster has said that ever since the presidency of Albert Gore was “taken away from him by political and legal maneuvering ... I’ve had this eerie feeling of being in some parallel world, some world we didn’t ask for but we nevertheless got. In the other world Al Gore is finishing his second

term now, we never invaded Iraq, maybe 9/11 never happened” (Flood, 2008).

The mode of address can shift within any post-9/11 narrative, and such is the case with the conclusion of Kalfus’s *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country*. The novel’s chapters progress chronologically from September 2001 to March 2003, as the drumbeat for war – from Colin Powell at the UN, Tony Blair before Parliament, Hillary Clinton in Congress, Leon Wieseltier in *The New Republic*, and David Letterman on the *Late Show* – grows louder in its “contempt for the doubters” (2006, p. 201). And then the novel, either because it has caught up with events or because of its utter disrespect for such mendacities, makes a proleptic leap into a fantasia in which “*Bush was right*” (p. 202). In its alternative ending to the War on Terror, Saddam Hussein is hanged by freedom-loving Iraqi forces; WMD are discovered in large stockpiles with the medium-range missiles to deliver them to Israel and Europe; Bashar al-Assad flees Syria; Iranian women doff their chadors; Osama bin Laden is captured in the Tora-Bora caves along the Afghan-Pakistani border; and most unlikely of all, the Harrimans reconcile at Ground Zero. The narratological shift into a counterfactual future arrives like “Shock and Awe,” obliterating the reader’s complicity with the conventions of realism, at least in so far as it is represented in nonfiction narrative and mass media. What is true is false; what is false is true. The formal rupture of the novel – its break with the assertions of realism – underlies its satirical attack on political discourse and social consensus, a “disorder peculiar to the country.”

## TRANSNATIONAL POLITICS

The domestic political satire of Kalfus’s novel can be compared with Jess Walter’s

*The Zero* (2006), in which Brian Remy, a cop with a possibly self-inflicted headwound, awakens five days after the attacks with episodic amnesia. As Mayor Rudolph Giuliani urges New Yorkers to return downtown and “go shopping” only days after the attacks, Remy passes a signboard that reads, “God Bless America. New Furniture Arriving Every Day” (2006, p. 120). And yet, the Interrogative mode of political inquiry, questioning the 9/11 Commission’s report on the origins of the al-Qaeda plot against America and the rationale for war in the Middle East, turns in the hands of American writers to an interrogation of the linkage between non-state terrorism and globalization, xenophobia and transmigration, national populism and cosmopolitanism. Laila Halaby is a multilingual global citizen, born in Beirut, Lebanon to a Jordanian father and an American mother; she grew up mostly in Arizona, where her novel, *Once in a Promised Land*, is set. It’s the morning of September 11th, and Jassim Haddad, a hydrologist specializing in water conservation in arid lands, and his wife, Salwa Khalil, a banker, real estate agent, and self-styled Queen of Pajamas, awake in Tucson to a changed world after the destruction of the World Trade Center “by Arabs, by Muslims. . . . But of course, they have nothing to do with what happened to the World Trade Center. Nothing and everything” (2007, p. viii). Salwa fears “repercussion toward Arabs in this country” and wonders whether Americans are “so ignorant as to take revenge on” Jordanians, Lebanese, or Sikhs “for the act of a few extremist Saudis” (p. 21). Halaby is agitated by a pervasive “American ‘jahiliyya,’ or generalized ignorance of other cultures” (2008), that under routine circumstances might be expected from the people of a continental nation and a dominant mass culture but which under duress turns into a toxic and indiscriminate

Islamophobia. Jassim, who has built a well-respected professional career in water conservation in the desert southwest, suffers a cold-sweat panic attack when he realizes that he is nothing more than a “visitor to this country” (2007, p. 153), one who is no longer welcome. This destabilization of his identity – that he is not an assimilated “Jordanian-American” but remains a Jordanian expatriate – is compounded by an accident in which a young skateboarder swerves in front of Jassim while driving his Mercedes and is killed. The Arabesque design in Jassim’s life unravels after an investigation reveals the teen had been “freaked out” by 9/11 and began talking like a racist who “wished he could kill an Arab” (2007, pp. 200–201). Salwa has come under suspicion as an Arab Muslim woman – although she is not veiled – and yet it is America that has become alien to her. As a natural-born American citizen of migrant refugee parents, twice-displaced, once by the Palestinian exodus, “al-Nakba” (the catastrophe), and once by an accident of birth, she pointedly refuses to assert her citizenship, that she is just as American by law as other native Tucsonans. She purchases a single ticket to Amman where she intends to rejoin her family. Salwa realizes that the American Dream she has pursued is a “huge lie,” and that “she did not come from a culture of happy endings” (2007, pp. 316–317). By unofficially renouncing her American citizenship, Salwa fully embraces and honors her global, diasporic Palestinian identity.

Islamophobia and remigration are likewise visited in Amy Waldman’s novel, *The Submission* (2011). Mohammad Khan, an American-born architect and non-observant Muslim, wins the juried, blind-submission competition for the 9/11 Memorial on the site of the World Trade Center. His selection is opposed as insensitive to the families of the victims, not only by the fictional mayor of New York

City but also by a xenophobic hate group called Save America from Islam. As one of the jurors opines, "It's Maya Lin," the Chinese-American architect who designed the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in 1981, "all over again. But worse" (2011, p. 18). When he eventually testifies at a hearing to decide the fate of the memorial, Mo doesn't help his cause with the SAFI (in Arabic, *sāfi* means pure, clear, unmixed; but here the acronym alludes to white supremacist objectives of racial purity and ethnic cleansing) who suspect the Islamic origins of his design, building a Muslim prayer garden on harrowed Ground Zero. Nor does he satisfy the Muslim advocacy groups who recoil at his blasphemous speculation that "man wrote the Quran" in part to create a "model for paradise" (p. 246), questioning belief in its divinely inspired origin. The cashiering of Khan's design for the memorial has the ironic effect of leading an agnostic, highly-educated Western professional to eventual "submission to God's will" (p. 81), the Arabic meaning of Islam. Unlike the martyrs who refuse to renounce their faith, Mohammad's trial causes him to reconsider his secularism and disbelief. For their part, the fanatical SAFI foment anti-Muslim hatred, which leads to the stabbing death of an undocumented immigrant, Asma Anwar, the widow of a Bangladeshi man killed in the collapse of the towers. Asma's son, Abdul Karim, who is entitled to birthright US citizenship, is brought to Bangladesh to be raised by relatives. Though his "parents idealized America" (p. 328), and in receipt of his father's 9/11 death benefits, Abdul refuses to return to the US for his education. For his part, Mohammad Khan, unable to recognize himself in the factionalized controversy over the 9/11 Memorial, relinquishes his parents' dream of life in America and "traced his parents' journey in reverse: back to India, which seemed a more promising land" (p. 330).

## SOCIAL HISTORIES

As we pass the twentieth anniversary of 9/11 and the 1776-foot-tall Freedom Tower with its blast proof glass has risen over Ground Zero, the events of that day are now decidedly a part of history. But in its aftermath, novelists considered how that transformational moment might be represented in a work of fiction that would combine the imaginative construction of characters with the facts as they were known. Two novels in the Demonstrative mood, Jay McInerney's *The Good Life* (2006) and Claire Messud's *The Emperor's Children* (2006), are works of an immediate history that documents and preserves the sensibility of a nation under assault, of what the world was like both before and after it all changed. Their narrative arcs span the divide between pre- and post-9/11 New York, and their characters dramatize the shock of what sociologist Erving Goffman called a frame-breaking event, in which the conceptual frameworks that bind a particular social group are suddenly inadequate to a rational understanding of what has happened (1974, p. 27). In fact, McInerney abandoned a novel in which a terrorist bombing in New York City is perpetrated by a radicalized Muslim who has taken offense with American cultural imperialism and the extravagances of global capitalism – a premise at once prescient of and insufficient to the enormity of 9/11. Despite his reservations that a novelist's "invention [would] be overwhelmed and overshadowed by the actual catastrophe," he decides that he must be willing to "engage the 'post-9/11 era'" in all its daunting scope and complexity (2005). Russell Calloway, an ambitious "editor at one of the big houses" (2006, p. 53), lives in a refurbished railroad apartment in TriBeCa with his wife, Corrine, who has quit her job to raise their six-year-old twins conceived with ova donated by her younger sister. Russell

entertains the literati of New York in their home with gourmet cooking and wine pairings, “all the trappings of the good life” (p. 323). Further up the social register, Luke McGavock, an investment banker on voluntary leave from his firm, his socialite wife Sasha, and neurasthenic daughter, Ashley, occupy a lavish duplex on the Upper East Side, decorated to merit feature treatment in *Architectural Digest*. But then, “That Autumn” (p. 71), these pairings of precious and privileged New Yorkers will intersect beginning on Ash Wednesday – September 12th – as the debris and particulate matter sift down over lower Manhattan. Luke, who “was supposed to meet [his] friend Guillermo at Windows on the World” (p. 74), has spent the day fruitlessly digging for survivors on the pile. Corrine is similarly drawn to Ground Zero where she encounters an exhausted Luke and offers him water. She learns that Russell’s friend, the film producer Jim Crespi, is also among the missing. It seems that everyone in New York, a city teeming with strangers, knows someone who has disappeared in the ashes of the World Trade Center. Luke and Corrine volunteer at an ad hoc relief station on Bowling Green, supplied with donations scavenged by a burly carpenter named Jerry. There they befriend Captain Davies, a policeman from Brooklyn, other first responders, and families displaced by the disaster. Corrine’s story, however, is not “part of the narrative of heroic acts, random acts of kindness, last words to loved ones on cell phones, bizarre coincidences, missed planes” (p. 95) and late arrivals that have become the stock devices of 9/11 narrative. In the soup kitchen, the frameworks that define social groups are dissolved and aid to those most in need is rendered by those willing to suspend personal drives. The affair between Luke and Corinne is born of mutual solace and generosity, rather than the aspirations and acquisitions of the self-absorbed class that

populates McInerney’s New York. Would they “ever feel guilty” (p. 220) that their meeting resulted from such terrible tragedy? Yet nothing can be as it was on September 10th, and their bonding is a counternarrative to a traumatized society in which “everything’s falling apart” (p. 83).

Claire Messud’s *The Emperor’s Children* shares a cast of editors, pundits, producers, and poseurs – the “glitterati” of New York’s culture class – with McInerney’s *The Good Life*. The plot is triskelion in design, turning on three college friends, Danielle Minkoff, Marina Thwaite, and Julius Clarke who, possessed of a fine Ivy-league education, have come to New York in the 1990s in order “to do something important” (2006, p. 73) with their lives. But at thirty, Danielle is the only gainfully employed musketeer, as a producer of documentary segments for public television (one imagines the investigative journalism of *Frontline*), although her piece on reparations for African Americans through the lens of the Australian government’s formal apologies to the Aborigines is killed. Marina, who had been “a young intern at *Vogue*” and “celebrated native beauty” (p. 26), has gotten and spent an advance for a book on the social significance of children’s clothing, on which she is now stalled. Julius, gay, Eurasian, libertine, and writing pithy but unremunerative columns for *The Village Voice*, is kept in style by an aspiring young businessman, David Cohen. These three adult children turn in thrall around the famous liberal columnist, Murray Thwaite, who is retreading his best work on Vietnam, civil rights, Iran Contras, Kosovo, and Operation Desert Storm as a distinguished speaker. More disturbingly, he is a sexual predator, made even more monstrous in the era of the #MeToo movement. From March to September 2001, these New Yorkers embody a weak cosmopolitanism – sophisticates, attuned to world culture – yet narcissistic (as satirized by



Saul Steinberg's cover for *The New Yorker*, View of the World from 9th Avenue) in their unfulfilled, or in the case of Murray, insatiable desire for personal gratification. Into this eddy drops Ludovic Seeley, an Australian editor who plans to launch a "revolutionary" magazine of literary and cultural commentary, *The Monitor*, "an instrument to trumpet that the emperor has no clothes" (p. 123). Murray's nephew, Frederick "Bootie" Tubb, from Watertown, NY, abjures the fakery of higher education, and though he extols Emerson's "Self-Reliance," insinuates himself into Murray's Central Park West household as amanuensis, only to grievously betray his confidences. Marina finally publishes her book, *The Emperor's Children Have No Clothes*, the title suggested by Ludovic, but it is they and their friends, the children of "entitlement" (p. 401), whose fatuousness is made glaringly plain in the catastrophe that ends the novel. When September 11th comes, it catches them unawares, as was the case for us all. Danielle and Murray are caught in flagrante delicto after spending Monday night together, and Murray abandons her to return to his wife. The launch date for *The Monitor* is to be that very day, but "nobody wanted such a thing in this new world, a frivolous, satirical thing. . . . So much for revolution. The revolution belonged to other people now, far away from them, and it was real" (p. 449). Apropos, Jonathan Franzen's novel, *The Corrections* (seen on the nightstand in Luke McGavock's Village apartment where he trysts with Corinne in *The Good Life*) was published on September 15th. That "big social novel" is immediately declared "laughably archival," surpassed by a cultural and political cataclysm that it could not have anticipated, by Messud's husband, the literary critic James Wood (2001). Bootie disappears among the missing on 9/11 only to reemerge in Miami, Florida, to live as Emerson advised: "Great geniuses have the shortest biographies. Their

cousins can tell you nothing about them. They live in their writings, and so their house and street life was trivial and commonplace" (2006, p. 105). Perhaps Messud's New Yorkers would dare to become stronger cosmopolitans after 9/11, both attentive to revolutionary change in the world and changed in turn by the world beyond themselves.

SEE ALSO: After Postmodernism; Auster, Paul; DeLillo, Don; Fiction and Terrorism; Foer, Jonathan Safran; Franzen, Jonathan; Gibson, William; Globalization; Periodization; Trauma and Fiction

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