

## THE WEST AND ITS OTHER: LITERARY RESPONSES TO 9/11

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Terror is now a part of our lives. Whether it is the bombing of defenceless villages in Afghanistan or Iraq, or the slaying of Daniel Pearl, terror is perpetrated by different people for different purposes. Terror is the employment of strategies to instill fear and insecurity in the victim. This can be achieved by the deliberate targeting of women and children as happened in Bosnia, in Bali and in Khandamal. It can happen when a victim is transported to Gautanamo Bay or Al Ghraib and water-boarding and other forms of torture are practiced on him. The world is still reeling at the picture of American soldiers laughing at prisoners who are on the point of being attacked by a dog. So terror is terror whether one's purpose is to defeat the axis of evil or jihad. This paper, therefore, deals with the impact of terror on people and the way in which literature on the subject has represented it. It begins with a consideration of the aftermath of 9/11 in America and the numbness which overtook American and British writers, explores the way those representations often demonize Islam when tackling Jihadi terror, the manner in which the representations underscore the Huntington thesis of the clash of civilizations and offer pseudo Islamic scholarship as a justification, or simply turn away from the large issues involved and concentrate on domesticity and the business of living as in Ian McEwan's novel. The paper goes on to consider the impact of 9/11 on a Pakistani-American writer —Mohsin Hamid— who is torn between his admiration for things American and his fascination with the terror

attack on 9/11 and its impact on his Pakistani identity. The paper next considers texts from Afghanistan and Pakistan. These are not direct representations of 9/11 but the discourse around 9/11 which throws up questions of civilizational identity, the nature of Islam, the nature of Islamic fundamentalism are all apropos. This event shook the whole of humanity and what happened afterwards was only the natural response of people faced with death, loss and suffering. The paper also asks fundamentally if the trauma of 9/11 can be represented, who can represent it, and the ethics of representing it.

If the world changed after 9/11, literature also changed. Anyone writing after that event was shaped and informed by the event. American writers like Don de Lillo, John Updike, and British writers like Ian McEwan faced up to terror in their own ways. De Lillo's novel *Falling Man* (2007) as the author himself put it could not ignore the event because it had been deeply ensconced in the "narcissistic heart of the West" (quoted in Mishra 2007: 4). This is because before the event the West had experienced a surge of capital markets and this had captured global consciousness. "The dramatic climb of the Dow and the speed of the internet summoned us all to live permanently in the future in the utopian glow of cyber-capital" (quoted in Mishra 2007: 4). Ken Kalfus in *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* (2004) a work written in the aftermath of 9/11 recalls the time before the event when "dissent required a kind of neurotic, life-denying pessimism" (quoted in Mishra 2007: 4). It was a time when everyone thought that New York slums would become gentrified and free markets would establish a future of prosperity. But 9/11 changed all that.

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A brief consideration of an almost inexhaustible stock of writing on 9/11, constituting a discourse, is appropriate at this stage and will serve to contextualize the literary texts. The final report of the 9/11 Commission came out on December 5, 2005 generating considerable anxiety in American society. Would the terrorists strike again, and if so, when? There were recommendations on foreign policy, public diplomacy, non-proliferation, all seen as affected by 9/11. There were recommendations on Homeland security and the Patriot Act. Much of this was drafted by Michael Hurley, a career CIA Officer. Ten members of the 9/11 Commission, determined not to let the official findings disappear from the public gaze formed a non-governmental organization called the 9/11 Public Discourse Project, to make an effort to educate the American public on the findings of the 9/11 Commission. The results are well-known. There was an increase in security measures which were often intrusive, anti-Islamic rhetoric, paranoid suspicion of coloured immigrants, special treatment for Muslims, an aggressive drive to dismantle terrorist networks by going after them, and a discourse of war. Iraq became a convenient ploy and Saddam Hussein's own wrongdoings made him a natural target, an enemy now of the USA and of the free world (Montgomery 2005: 149-180).

Michael Moore, the progressive filmmaker, produced *Fahrenheit 9/11* which documented President Bush's ties with Saudi Arabia, focusing on America's search not so much for terrorists as for oil and in a way holding the American government as complicit in the attacks on the twin towers. Along with war was the need to protect democracy which in President Bush's speeches was posited as the opposite of Islamic terror, which in turn was conflated with Islam itself. The process of 'othering' Muslims was thus begun ironically in a free democracy where presumably all were equal before the law. Democracy was 'our way of life', terrorism always seen as Islamic was the other. Democracy was the watchword with which America could go to war as part of her "globalized humanitarianism" (Mummery and Rodon 2003). In this masculinist discourse, of course, women were left behind. In the media, in citizen commentary and Presidential speeches there was an open acceptance of a gendered nationalist identity which valued masculine macho behaviour (President Bush's "I will smoke them out" is illustrative), encouraged punitive responses to conflict (Gautanamo Bay, Al Ghraib), a paternalistic attitude to injury and trauma, both seen as weak and feminine (Drew 2004). Conspiracy theories were floated along with the growth of a public '9/11 truth Movement'. The playing on public fears that Islamic Terrorists were intent on infiltrating America combined with intrusive searches and invasion of privacy erected an atmosphere of suspicion, anxiety and vulnerability. Naturally humour was at a premium. "People", says Giseline Knipes, "asserted that Sept. 11 was the death of comedy. After 9/11 Americans have stopped laughing" (Knipes 2005). The mind set of Muslim minorities, Pakistanis like Mohsin Hamid, demonstrated a visible internalization of a negative representation of Muslim and South Asian identities. 9/11 changed vocabulary in America. A volume of essays concentrated on the rhetoric of war on terror and showed "how discursive production of identities takes place, how ideologies and collective understandings in response to 9/11 determine how enemies are defined and identified, how politicians and citizens react, how members of societies understand their position in the world in relation to terrorism" (Hodges and Nilep 2007: 3). 9/11 also manufactured a new American nationalism which enabled the US to see itself as innocent in relation to the demonic other, but this was after all only a variation of the old theme of American exceptionalism. An "US & Them" Conference was organized in Helsinki, which underscored this othering process. If one scrutinizes President Bush's speeches during this period, one notices the messianic Biblical Born Again Christian rhetoric of the Bible belt. US allies like Israel took a leaf out of this book and used the War of Terror to increase their influence and to legitimize military repression in Palestine. Ann Keniston and Jan Follansbee Quinn in *Literature after 9/11* (2008), draw on trauma theory, genre theory, political theory, theories of post-modernity, space and temporality to suggest ways in which these discourses

can be reconstituted and set into a dialogic mode with one another in the act of explaining 9/11. Scholars have argued that the literature of 9/11 and after constitutes a 'pornography of grief', that it is an event which is uncommemorable, that it has changed literary studies. America has been set adrift post 9/11 and fiction represents that.

De Lillo's *Falling Man* concerns a survivor of the 9/11 attacks and the effect of that experience on his life thereafter. Keith Neudecker, a 39-year-old lawyer who works in the World Trade Centre escapes from the building, injured slightly, and walks to the apartment he has previously shared with Justin, his son, and his estranged wife, Lianne. The trauma of the attack brings the family together as Keith convalesces. While resuming his routine at home Keith also gets romantically attached to Florence, another survivor of the attack. Keith has by mistake taken her suitcase in the confusion following the attack. Lianne, meanwhile, gets frustrated with a neighbour who plays middle eastern sounding music, witnesses the dissolution of a writing group she had run for patients with alzheimer and spends time with her intellectual mother, Nina, and Martin (her mother's boyfriend) who has presumed terrorist links with a German group. Keith travels around the world playing professional poker and recalls one of his poker mates who died in the 9/11 attacks. In the novel Lianne sees a performance of an artist who is called Falling Man. He does all kinds of tricks, the best being suspending himself upside down with rope and harness in the pose of a man in the famous 9/11 photograph of Richard Drew. The novel explores the symbolic nature of terrorist violence and the way in which the media exploit that violence. It therefore throws up important question about the ethical dimension of literary engagement with the trauma of 9/11. It also poses other questions of moment. Does trauma have a redemptive role and if one forms part of a group, is one participating in a herd mentality with little appreciation of individual choice. Is there a way in which individuals can reinvent themselves or are they condemned to a group identity? Don de Lillo's usual vibrance with language is missing because the event itself was so debilitating and could not be commemorated. While this might be true, the point to note is that the novel exploits a chilling symbol of 9/11 flashed on TV. The horror of the event gets sanitized and blunted by a Baudrillardian hyper-reality of the image. The novel too gets appropriated to the discourse and loses its human impact.

Updike's *Terrorist* is clearly a more frontal response to 9/11. It is about an American teenager, Ahmad Ashmawy Mulloy, and his high school counsellor, Jack Levy. The novel seeks to explore the world view and motivations of religious fundamentalism, but this is in America, and the novel is at one level an indictment of the American way of life, its morality, decadence and life style. The novel begins with a monologue by Ahmad about the condition of his peers, who, for him are

morally impure. He gets into a fight with Tynelol who thinks that Ahmad is flirting with his (Tynelol's) girl friend, Joryleen. While Ahmad is sexually attracted to the girl he is influenced by his Islamic learning and represses those instincts. His teacher at the mosque is Shaikh Rashid who is linked with Jehadi elements. Ahmad, in fact, thinks he is superior to the Shaikh in his Islamic convictions. He has ironically the support of his mother, Teresa, who, though raised a Catholic, has lapsed in her faith and is in fact a believer in sexual freedom, besides being a disbeliever. Ahmad sees her as typical of the degradation of America and yearns for his father, an Egyptian immigrant, who had abandoned him and Teresa. Jack Levy, who thinks that Ahmad has a great academic future and that he should go to University, is puzzled by Ahmad's desire to drive trucks. Levy visits Teresa to counsel but soon they have an affair. Levy is an American Jew, and he too is lapsed. His view of America is that it is materialistic and greedy and his criticism of the land is similar, but different, from Ahmad's condemnation which is fired by Jihadi enthusiasm. Ahmad drives trucks as he wants to, but soon he is sucked into a Jihadi plot. Levy gets to know this and hops on to the truck which is loaded with explosives meant to blow up a subway. Levy manages to talk Ahmad out of his mad adventure. The novel is in the third person narrative mode and the shifting narrative voice allows us to get a glimpse of the reflections and psychological anxieties of on the one hand Ahmad, the Islamic fundamentalist, on American Jews and on the other Teresa, the typical materialist hedonist American. Thus the narrative involving Ahmad tends to be about truth-telling and intense religious questing. When Levy takes over the narrative he is wry and disillusioned about almost everything. In spite of this his intense desire to save Ahmad endears him to the reader. Both Teresa and her sister Beth get space and the result is a multi-voiced and gripping exploration of the American way of life and its Islamic other. It is also an adventure story and Updike's considerable story-telling skills are very much visible. It is a bracing exposé of America and one is clear that Updike has struck a fine and difficult balance in his treatment of the theme. However, in a way, Updike falls into the contemporary trap laid by the Huntington thesis and exploits the clichés of our times. Updike has done his research but according to Pankaj Mishra he has visited websites of Islamic pseudo-scholarship on the Koran much as Martin Amis has on the same issue. Mishra says that in *Terrorist*, Updike appears as keen as Amis to optimize his research. Invoking the raisin-virgin controversy, one of Updike's fanatical Muslim characters echoes Amis's little joke that the substitution of virgins for dry fruits "would make Paradise significantly less attractive for many young men" (Mishra 2007: 4). It is this kind of flippancy which infuriates and one is quite able to see how the binary opposition of civilizations posited by Huntington, takes a literary toll in terms of credibility. Updike is quite unable to evoke the puritanism of Ahmad and his efforts are comic in the extreme and border on caricature. Talking

about terrorists is risky and Updike has had to overcome both fear and revulsion in tackling the subject. Mishra writes: "Their novelist-host has to overcome much fear and revulsion in order to take seriously murderous passions aimed at their own society. Sympathy often breaks down and hasty scholarship results in stereotypical formulations" (Mishra 2007: 4). This suggests that the trauma of 9/11 affected a major writer like Updike and compelled him to write a book which leaves one with unanswered ethical questions. In order to attack terror was it necessary to distort Islamic faith?

Ian McEwan is no less disappointing in *Saturday* (2005). It is a novel set against the backdrop of the London Protest march against the Iraq war. His protagonist is the forty-eight-year-old neurosurgeon Henry Perowne. He is thoroughly domesticated and has planned a series of activities on Saturday. He, like his author, won't engage with the large issues of the day and he is content to play squash, have sex with his wife and eat with his family. The narrative is in the third person omniscient. It lingers on the small pleasures of life and the British way of life. He has a happy marriage with Rosalind, his son is a Blues player and his daughter Daisy is a poet who lives in Paris. She is visiting, so is Rosalind's father, John Grammaticus, who is a drunkard and lives in a chateau in the South of France and with whom Perowne is hoping to effect a reconciliation over the weekend. Perowne is satisfied with his life and its pleasures and would like to keep it that way. He is not unaware of the Saturday March but has ambivalent feelings about Iraq. He loathes Saddam Hussein and his cruelties but is equally suspicious of American motives in going to war. *Saturday* may be read as a metaphor for the weekend when one is retiring into domesticity and awaiting the pleasures of Sunday. Perowne's day starts early. It has been a busy week and while looking out of his window he spots a Russian aeroplane, its engine on fire. For him this is an ominous start to the day and he is anxious about how this has occurred. Is it the handiwork of terrorists? Are the pilots Islamist terrorists? Is this a replay of 9/11? On his way to the squash court he has a minor accident and an encounter with a group led by Baxter, which attempts to extort money from him. He escapes them but not before he has indicated to Baxter his suspicion that Baxter is suffering from a debilitating disease, interestingly called Huntington! Baxter is interested enough in his condition to invade Perowne's home, and there he terrorizes the family, even threatening Daisy with rape. Baxter is distracted about his illness and in a soft moment allows himself to be overpowered, while his companions abandon him. Later Perowne is summoned to hospital where he operates upon Baxter. He returns home and has sex with his wife. Domestic life is seen as something which has to be cherished and his knowledge of the terror lurking out there is something which needs to be put aside so that he, like other Brits can go about their lives in their insular fashion. *Saturday* is a depiction of that attitude. In an interview McEwan

said that he was, after 9/11, wanting to know more about the world because the changes the world had gone through compelled writers to go to school again. He was tired of invented characters and wanted the real thing (Mishra 2007: 4). However, this novel does not meet that ideal, and *Saturday* turns out to be a weak response to a momentous event like 9/11, which is the motivation behind the Iraq war, the backdrop to this novel.

It is as though Anglo-American writers are unable to confront the big events of their times and prefer to sink into supra-reality like de Lillo, stereotypes like Updike, or domesticity like McEwan. If we are looking for more adequate responses perhaps we need to turn to ethnic writers in Britain and America like Kiran Desai who seem to have understood the changes in the world and may be said to speak to all of us about a world where terror is a fact of life and 9/11 has changed things. This is the burden of her excellent post 9/11 novel *The Inheritance of Loss* (2005). And Mohsin Hamid, too, is a case in point: a consideration of his work shows a vital difference in perspective between ethnic writers and their Anglo-Saxon counterparts. In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) we see a sensitive response to a post 9/11 world. Hamid has lived in America and is a highly acclaimed writer and has the advantage of the insider-outsider perspective. He is a participant observer. A successful career in America was cut short by the events of 9/11 and Hamid has in several interviews given expression not only to his love of America but his fascination with terror and his satisfaction at seeing the twin Towers demolished. In his novel this dual perspective is brought out successfully in the character of Changez, a possible terrorist, meeting a CIA agent in Lahore. The monologue begins with the words: "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" (Hamid 2007: 1). The monologue gives us the minutiae of the daily existence of Changez, the rise and fall of a man from Princeton, his employment in a prestigious firm, his love affair with the American Erica, and the mixed feelings of revulsion, hate and attraction he feels after the events of 9/11 unfold. "I turned on the television and saw what at first I took to be a film. But as I continued to watch, I realized that it was not fiction but news. I stared as one —and then another— of the twin towers of New York's World Trade Centre collapsed. And then I smiled. Yes, despicable as it may sound, my initial reaction was to be remarkably pleased" (Hamid 2007: 72). Unlike Updike and de Lillo Hamid has the advantage of making the 9/11 event the central moment of his novel because it alters Changez's life irrevocably, while in the others it is a reaction to the event and the aftermath of the attacks. The narrative is cleverly deployed because we are never sure from Changez's statements whether he is a terrorist or not and we are left in suspense about what will happen next. The radicalization of Changez is a possibility and Erica's hysteria and disintegration are convincingly portrayed as the natural fallout of 9/11. The personal becomes the

political and the metaphoric force behind the individual character —each one becoming a symbol of the significance of 9/11— makes this novel a gripping and authentic presentation of the meaning of a trauma. It is a challenge to the West and it is an ethical challenge in its insider-outsider response and its ambivalence about the event. There is no posturing of the Updike variety with its pseudo-scholarship and no McEwan-like domestication. It confronts the world frontally. As a consequence, I would rate it an artistic success.

But Muslim writers with a purely insider view also have something to say about a 9/11-stricken world. Mukhtar Mai, the Pakistani woman writer's narrative *In the Name of Honour: A Memoir* (2006) is a case in point as are Afghan writer Khalid Hossaini's novels *The Kite Runner* (2003) and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007), both typical of the 'Other' way of doing things. Here are writers who have experienced Talibanist fanaticism and the ravages of war and colonialism and they respond in humane ways to human suffering. Mukhtar Mai is an illiterate Pakistani woman who was gang raped by the enemies of her family as a part of the honour tradition of the Frontier Provinces. Her life became an attempt to come to terms with her shame and to end the gender injustices a patriarchal society visits on Pakistani women in the name of religion, honour, and the Shariat Law. This is a view from inside, from an insider, and it is told to a westerner who in some way is used as an authenticator of the narrative. Mukhtar Mai's slow inexorable rise to fame and honour in a brutal Islamic society is nothing if not heroic and inspirational. It shows Islam in a bad light and it embodies the backwardness of the culture and it is calculated to make the West feel complacent about its civilized ways and to feel superior because the help Mukhtar wants is from the West. She even attempts to go to the West for an award and is prevented by her government but it becomes an international issue and finally she travels abroad, now an ambassador of her narrative. She is feted there and her fame in the West leaves her somewhat like the Kenyan Nobel Laureate Wangari Mathai, a celebrity in her own land. She has recently married but her life exemplifies the quiet struggle of a woman who has done the right thing for women in a patriarchal culture. Hers is a gendered narrative and speaks for the woman in an oppressed and oppressive system, the double jeopardy of being a Pakistani in relation to the West, and a Pakistani woman in relation to her community and religion. Be that as it may I still feel constrained to draw attention to its compromised character. While one is sympathetic about Mukhtar Mai, one is suspicious that this is a narrative written by the West to confirm its views. But then again, was there any other route open to Mukhtar to gain visibility and have her voice heard? While these are troubling questions the main impact of the narrative is to get a view of things from within Talibanized Islam. To that extent it speaks truth to power and is a valuable document. The ethical imperative legitimizes this narrative of trauma visited by



state power and the ideological apparatus of an illiberal society. But in spite of the inwardness of the voice it speaks the language of the Huntington thesis. If Mukhtar Mai had written her book in her native Pashtun the authenticity of the narrative would be relatively unproblematic but then there would have been a translation. Indeed the authenticating strategy of this narrative is complicit in an act of translation and translation in our present context is into English. That was the only way a Pashtun would be heard but Mukhtar Mai has to count her cost. She has had to give up her voice to American journalists.

In Khaled Hosseini's brilliant writing we have a variation of the language question and the nature of a comprador writer. An Afghan, no doubt, but an Afghan with half a foot in America where he has migrated, Khaled Hosseini is also compromised. It is important to know the location of a writer and to know whom he is addressing his tale to because these factors determine the nature of the narrative. *The Kite Runner* (2003) is the story of Amir, a boy from the Wazir Akbar Khan District of Kabul, who is haunted by guilt for betraying Hassan, his childhood friend. The story is set against the backdrop of tumultuous historical events in Afghanistan —the Monarchy has fallen, the Soviets have invaded Afghanistan, the Taliban has risen leading to reprisals and the flight of Afghan refugees to Pakistan and the United States. Amir is a Pashtun and Hassan is a low caste Hazara boy, the son of the servant of Amir's father, Baba. Baba loves both boys but is critical of Amir for not being manly enough. Amir must prove himself and draws comfort from Rahim Khan, Baba's friend, who is understanding and compassionate. But Amir is unable to help Hassan when he is sodomized by Assef, a bully who taunts Amir for consorting with a Hazara. Hassan, on an earlier occasion, had helped Amir by blinding Assef and this is Assef's revenge. Amir is jealous of Hassan's proximity to Baba and frames him for theft in order to compel Baba to get rid of him. Amir is eaten up with remorse. In the meanwhile the Russians invade Afghanistan and Amir and Baba go to Peshawar in Pakistan and then to Fremont, California in the USA. There Baba lives modestly and Amir becomes a writer. He marries a fellow refugee, Soraya, the daughter of an army officer in the Afghan services. Baba dies, Soraya's father is not happy that his son-in-law writes novels and the two cannot have children. Rahim calls up one day and Amir goes to Taliban-run Afghanistan where he learns that Ali and Hassan are both dead, the latter at the hands of the Taliban which has tried to take away Baba's house from Hassan. It turns out that Baba is Hassan's father, that Amir and Hassan are half brothers. Rahim Khan wants Amir to save Hassan's son Sohrab from the Taliban and take him away to America. The Taliban official who is holding Sohrab happens to be Assef and now he has his moment. Sohrab saves Amir from sure cruelty by fulfilling his father's promise to take Assef's other eye. Amir and Sohrab go back to America and there they begin a troubled life together but Hassan's memory brings them together.

There are many features which make this one of the most moving novels written in recent times. And yet the ethical questions keep cropping up. Hosseini himself is an immigrant Afghan writer living in the USA. He cannot help being beholden to the Americans for his freedom and clearly a novel appearing post 9/11 which rubbishes the Taliban, as this novel does, cannot escape being seen as a support to the West's ideas. The way the novel deals with the Taliban and its fundamentalism confirms the worst fears of the West about Islamic societies. The nobler aspects of Islam are elided and we only see the essential hypocrisy, fanaticism, sexual depravity of some Jehadi Islamists. They do not represent Islam. But to the West informed by the Huntington thesis this is an opportunity to savage a whole culture and not just those aspects of it which are a distortion of Islam.

As if this were not enough, Hosseini has another novel titled *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007). This is a later novel and it is no less gripping and moving but it suffers from the same compadror dimension which the earlier novel had. It is an intense story of gender discrimination, rape, cruelty to women and patriarchal authoritarianism. It is set in Taliban ruled Afghanistan and it is about Mariam, the illegitimate daughter of a rich businessman, and Laila, a woman married by force to the brutal Rasheed, Mariam's husband. The two victimized women show courage in attempting to escape the Taliban and in bonding together against Rasheed whom they murder. The freedoms women had during Soviet rule are now gone with the departure of the Russians and the rise of the Taliban. These two women have to devise ways to survive. Laila is helped by Mariam to reach her lover Tariq, while Mariam herself is executed by the Taliban. Laila and Tariq look after Aziza, Mariam's child, who has been sent to an orphanage. It is a searing exposure of the fundamentalist culture unleashed by the Taliban and in the present context of Huntington inspired hardening of cultural boundaries it is not calculated to bridge the chasm. Also Hosseini now lives in America and he is more compromised. If he had lived in Afghanistan, as Mukhtar lives in Pakistan, it would be different.

This essay has tried to show that location and cultural identity determine the way representations of traumatic events are done. 9/11 was one such trauma. The American and British novelists either caricature the Islamic fundamentalist or attempt to marginalize him. This cannot be done by those who have experienced terror and its aftermath —Hamid, Mukhtar Mai and Hosseini. But their various strategies to cope with this trauma leave many ethical questions unanswered. It is not the purpose of this paper to say that one way of representing is better than the other but to point to differences and variety in response, to account for them and to point to the essential humanity of writers anywhere in the world, whatever their compulsions. The representation of 9/11 and post 9/11 compulsions is fraught with questions about the nature of trauma and the morality or ethics of attempting

to represent them. Can trauma be represented at all? Should anyone sitting in the luxury of an air-conditioned apartment preach about terror and its aftermath? What gives them the authority to do so? In what way is their view authentic? Should trauma be written about by those who have not experienced it or is it the preserve of those who have experienced it first hand? Does this mean that our common humanity cannot be pressed into service and does it mean that we have no say in the affairs of our times unless we are victims in a direct way? That would mean that Mukhtar Mai alone can speak of her humiliations and none of us can. That would mean that Updike has no business getting into the consciousness of his terrorist protagonist and that this can be done only by a terrorist himself or herself. But this is absurd and denies the whole project of the Humanities which is based on the assumption that all of us have a right to express ourselves and that it is through the untrammelled expression of our views that a civil society can come into being and exert moral pressure on those who commit evil acts. Clearly these are ethical questions and it would appear that when we are dealing with a traumatic event like 9/11 ethical questions about whether it can be spoken about at all, and if it can who can speak for whom, how much, to whom and how exactly, come dramatically into the forefront.

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