Editorial

Graham Holderness and Bryan Loughrey

This special issue of *Critical Survey* has a twofold purpose: to mark the twentieth anniversary of the events of 11 September 2001, when Islamic terrorists piloted two planes into New York's World Trade Centre, killing some three thousand innocent people; and to register some of the cultural changes that have taken place in the subsequent two decades, and can be directly or indirectly attributed to that world-changing day. The attacks of 9/11 soon came to represent an extensive typology of collisions: the 'clash of civilisations' between East and West; the unstable boundaries between war and peace in our contemporary world; and (to many, but not all academics) the destructive violence that potentially underlies Western values of liberty and peaceful co-existence. It has long been a commonplace that 9/11 profoundly and irreversibly changed our world. This issue sets out to represent and reflect some of those changes.

Critical Survey has, particularly in the last decade, energetically engaged in the cultural and philosophical aftermaths of 9/11, by publishing a number of key articles addressed directly to the atrocity, by acknowledging its global after-effects, and in particular by extending and deepening the journal's relationships with academics in Arab and Muslim societies, scholars drawn from the multiple and diverse peoples the 9/11 terrorists falsely and illegitimately claimed to represent. We are particularly proud of our two special issues on Arab Shakespeare from 2007 and 2016, edited respectively by Margaret Litvin, and by Margaret Litvin and Katherine Hennessy, which literally assisted in the founding of a new field of study.¹ We have sought, particularly over the last decade, not only to feature criticism, scholarship and creative writing on a global scale, but to achieve an equilibrium between the academies of the West and the East, by showcasing both European and American scholarship, and work from the Arab and Muslim worlds and from Asia. We have sought, in short, to build and maintain cordial academic links between the very countries and peoples the 9/11 hijackers, Al-Qaeda and their successor ISIS have sought to polarise and antagonise.

In a brilliant article from 2013, Robert Sawyer² traced links between the writing of literary biographies on Shakespeare and Marlowe and the enduring influences of 9/11.

While I understand the peril of making connections between an internationally tragic event such as 9/11 and literary biography, I think it is possible to see how in some ways the assault forced Americans to break through their illusion of safety, finally to find themselves, according to Slavoj Žižek, in 'the desert of the real', as the American 'holiday from history' suddenly ended. That the destruction wrought by the terrorist attack immediately became a worldwide phenomenon is suggested by Jacques Derrida's claim, just two months later, that the event had 'taken over our public space and our private lives' after the twin towers – 'the capital of capital' – were destroyed. Although it would be four more years before London experienced its own version of 9/11 (on 7/7/2005), Tony Blair (recorded in the *Guardian* on 2 October 2001) seemed confident in asserting the shared Anglo-American response in times of crisis: 'We were with you at the first. We will stay with you to the last'. George Bush's poodle or not, he was probably correct in proclaiming that '[t]here is a coming together' and that the 'power of community is asserting itself', for if 'order and stability' do not 'exist elsewhere', Blair continued, 'it is unlikely to exist here'. (23–24)

Drawing on the work of those critical theorists who have become indispensable for analysis and understanding of 9/11 – Jacques Derrida, Slavoj Žižek, Jean Baudrillard – Sawyer goes on to examine some of the troubled and troubling relationships between artistic production and the aftermath of 9/11, revealing a complex process of closing down and opening up, of vivid representation without reconciliation, the aestheticising of apocalypse and the forging of wisdom through suffering. He then goes on to demonstrate, by surveying recent lives of Shakespeare and Marlowe, how the apparently innocent practice of literary biography can be shaped by global events.

An example of the way in which the journal has reflected the abiding presence of 9/11 on our culture is Graham Holderness's essay 'Shakespeare Remembered'³ from 2010, which studies the Shakespeare monument in the Aldermanbury Gardens in the context of the church of St Mary Aldermanbury, that once inhabited the space, but was destroyed in the Great Fire, then rebuilt and destroyed again in the 1940 Blitz. The essay is haunted by the geographically more distant, yet temporally closer knowledge of the 9/11 attacks, and draws parallels between those world-changing atrocities across the centuries:

Jennifer Wallace wrote of another 'blitz', 11 September 2001, as an event that challenged the capacities of memory. She describes two 'public projects for retrieving and mourning the dead' from the World Trade Centre: One was the grim excavation of the rubble at Ground Zero and the search for traces of the 2,823 people who died there. The other was the daily publication in the *New York Times* of a brief biography of each victim, a 200-word profile accompanied by a photograph which soon became well known collectively as the 'Portraits of Grief'. (53–54)

The portraits are themselves 'powerful works of tragedy bringing a human dimension to an inhuman disaster', and 'giving shape to the disaster by transforming ordinary lives into significant narratives'. Wallace then compares the search for traces of the 2,823 people who died with examples from classical tragedy: the literal and figurative disintegration of the body, and the human effort to reassemble or reconstruct, to re-member what has been dispersed and

fragmented, to be found in *The Bacchae* and *Hamlet*. The archaeological excavation of Ground Zero was a search for certainty in the recovery of remains, a work of mourning like Agave's desire to have the limbs of her dismembered son 'joined decently together'; or like Hamlet's mission to 'set [...] right' a disjointed time. As the excavation progressed, it became increasingly obvious that nowhere near all the victims would be accounted for. Wallace quotes a firefighter, faced with a dwindling pile of rubble and a list of 1,800 people still untraced: 'You've got a great number of people that you want to find, and you've got a certain amount of dirt that's left. And there's a gap. That gap is going to be a sorrowful one'. The 'gap' is literally, as Wallace observes, between 'statistics and physical dust'. But as a 'gap' of sorrow, it also represents the space of tragedy, the lacuna between hope and despair, between 'consolation and disillusion'. Such gaps are the enduring legacy of unnatural disasters like the Blitz, or 9/11, or the 7 July bombings in London. But gaps to be bridged, as Wallace observes, holes to be filled with memory and mourning, spaces in which to 'write stories'.

This current issue of the journal gathers new work from across the globe that directly or indirectly registers the continuing after-effects of 9/11 on contemporary culture and society. Joydeep Chakraborty seeks to enlarge the scope of the current scholarly discussion on the trauma-related aspects of post-9/11 American literature through a focus on hallucinatory experiences in post-9/11 American poetry, and through the application of the information-processing models of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) to the interpretation of these experiences. The article focuses on a selection of poems from two of the major anthologies of 9/11 poems, *An Eye for an Eye Makes the Whole World Blind* (2002) and *September 11, 2001: American Writers Respond* (2002), that came into being in the immediate aftermath of 9/11.

Charles Campbell revisits the work of one of the most influential theorists of 9/11, Jean Baudrillard. Examining Baudrillard's *The System of Objects*, Campbell argues that in a totally functional world, people become irrational and subjective, given to projecting their fantasies and their power into the efficiency of the system, a state of 'spectacular alienation'. He goes on to propose that Americans as a society have accommodated themselves to such a system to the detriment of their ability to make sense in their public discourse. He presents evidence for the existence of a 'weapons fetishism' in American fiction, cinema, television and serious journalism. Then, using Baudrillard and other analysts of contemporary technological society, he attempts to show how the American obsession with the superior functionality of weapons combines with its myth of exceptionality and a preference for simulation over reality to create a profound American dream state that protects a very deep sleep.

Approaching similar territory from a very different viewpoint, Graham Holderness addresses the question 'can literature help us with terrorism?' by interrogating the common assumption that terrorism always 'has an agenda' that needs to be understood and addressed. The article offers a critique of Robert Applebaum's argument that Shakespeare's *Macbeth* represents a denial

of the political agenda of the Gunpowder Plot, and argues that terrorism – especially contemporary Islamic terrorism – is nihilistic, merely destructive and offers (in Derrida's words) 'nothing good to be hoped for'. The achievement of *Macbeth* is to expose the 'mystery of iniquity' (2 Thess. 2.7) that lies behind all terrorism.

In his article on *King Lear*, Mehrdad Bidgoli revisits the work of another key modern theorist, Emmanuel Levinas. Levinas's 'ethics of otherness', on how we should respond to those we regard as outsiders or enemies, exerted a profound influence on Jacques Derrida and on the scholarly literature of 9/11. Using *King Lear* as a case study, Bidgoli shows how Shakespeare critics who have engaged with Levinasian ideas often do not present a clear-cut account of Lear's status with regard to the authentic encounter with the destitute yet commanding face of the Other, and the ineluctably intervening third party. The article goes on to argue that while Lear does improve significantly with regard to his relationship with the Other, and thus appears to temporarily touch a Levinasian standpoint, his subjectivity nonetheless undergoes an apotheosis, eventuating in a deontological (or perhaps pre-ontological) status which cannot reconcile itself with the presence of 'the third party'. Lear's ethical awakening, Bidgoli suggests, fails to reconcile with and restore justice.

The eschatological vision of the 9/11 terrorists generated a new interest in the apocalyptic in politics and literature, developed especially by philosophers such as Derrida and Baudrillard, and ably discussed in Terry Eagleton's *Holy Terror*.⁴ Yasser Aman discusses how the apocalyptic vision that is deeply rooted in Christian religion develops into an ominous harbinger of the destruction of the modern world portrayed in William Blake's 'The Tyger' and W.B. Yeats' 'The Second Coming'. Tracing the presence of apocalypse in different religions and political philosophies, he goes on to argue that apocalyptic theory highlights man's retreat from Nature into a modern world that may literally fall apart.

Post-9/11 culture saw a burgeoning of 'trauma studies', research and inquiry connecting post-traumatic conditions in individuals (e.g. PTSD) with the collective disruptions effected by massive social crises such as directly experienced warfare, or terrorist attack. Linhan Gan takes Shakespeare's George of Clarence as an example of a war veteran traumatised by his wartime experience, who can be regarded as a prototype of the modern shell-shocked soldier. Seizing on Jonathan Shay's study on war trauma, the article explores how Clarence becomes traumatised through a trajectory of degradation of personality due to his commander's breach of *themis* in 3 *Henry VI*. Clarence is haunted by his war trauma, which powerfully symbolises the medieval veteran's post-war dilemma.

Aamir Aziz and Frans Willem Korsten reconsider Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* not as a play linked to the American past, but rather focused on the present and the future. Aziz and Korsten interrogate how the play deals with the past in the way that the Salem trials (1692) relate, by means of a theatrical intervention, to a future (i.e. the modern witch-hunts of the McCarthy era).

Using Brecht's theory of alienation, the article claims that the play 'makes people see behind the scenes of the socio-political and economic system ... and become able to act in order to change the course of history'.

Intellectuals struggling to understand the post-9/11 world often returned to Edward Said's influential 1978 book *Orientalism*, which established controversial though undoubtedly influential parameters for understanding political and cultural relations between the West and the Arab and Muslim worlds. Inspired by Said's methodology of contrapuntal reading, Bilal Hamamra and Sanaa Abusamra examine Edward Said's references to *Hamlet* in his memoir, *Out of Place* (1999) to shed light on his experiences of exile and displacement. They argue that while Said points out that Shakespeare is an extension of imperial authority, his presentation of *Hamlet* with his mother destabilises the colonising force of Shakespeare, and displaces Western hegemony over performance and interpretation.

Drawing on the theoretical underpinnings established by Edward W. Said's *Orientalism*, *Culture and Imperialism*, and *Covering Islam*, Shireen Alkurdi, Awfa Hussein Al-Doory and Mahmoud Al-Shetawi study Henrik Ibsen's little-known interest in Egypt and the Arab world, especially the influence of his tour in Egypt during the opening of the Suez Canal. Foregrounding Ibsen's correspondence, plays and other works that include references to his two-month stay in Egypt and to his encounter with the Arab culture, the article shows how Ibsen validates the Western stereotyping and ideology that have influenced a wide array of Western writers in the ways they misrepresent and misinterpret Arab culture.

Hussein A. Alhawamdeh presents a study of the Dryden-Davenant adaptation of *The Tempest*, which reflects the kind of new and increasingly common work on revaluating the relations in earlier historical periods between the West and the Muslim world. This article analyses the filtering of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611) in the Restoration drama repertoire, showing the Restoration revision of the Shakespearean stereotypical delineation of the 'half-moor' Caliban in the light of Restoration England's complex relations of admiration and trepidation with regard to the Muslim Moors and Turks. Dryden-Davenant's *The Tempest or The Enchanted Island* (1667) complicates the figures of Caliban and Sycorax as Muslim Moorish friends or foes, and possible subjects of Charles II's English Tangier on the Barbary coast. Dryden-Davenant's *The Enchanted Island* makes historical parallels and allusions to Charles II's marriage to the Portuguese Catherine of Braganza and the English possession of Tangier as a part of the marriage dowry.

In 'Othello's "Travellous History"', Samira al-Khawaldeh, Soumaya Bouacida and Moufida Zaidi aim to relocate Shakespeare's Othello the Moor in the cultural roots of Moorish Spain, arguing that he is not a Moor in the inclusionary, monolithic sense of the term, but a diasporic Iberian finding refuge in fifteenth–sixteenth-century Venice. It seeks to contextualise Shakespeare's play by setting the Othello/Iago binary as an epitomisation of the Spanish inquisition. Giving *Othello, the Moor of Venice* an allegorical reading against its

historical background facilitates better perception of the play's motivational dynamics: why a Moor? And why such extreme enmity?

Notes

1. *Critical Survey* 19, no. 3 (2007), *Arab Shakespeare*, edited by Margaret Litvin; *Critical Survey* 28, no. 3 (2016), *Arab Shakespeares*, edited by Margaret Litvin and Katherine Hennessy. We are also pleased to have been instrumental in establishing the global reputation of Anglo-Kuwaiti dramatist Sulayman Al-Bassam. See for example Graham Holderness, 'From Summit to Tragedy: Sulayman Al-Bassam's *Richard III* and Political Theatre', *Critical Survey* 19, no. 3 (2007), and "'An Arabian In My Room': Shakespeare and the Canon', *Critical Survey* 26, no. 2 (2014); and Adam Hansen, 'Shakespeare and Extremism', *Critical Survey* 30, no. 4 (2018).
2. Robert Sawyer, 'Biographical Aftershocks: Shakespeare and Marlowe in the Wake of 9/11', *Critical Survey* 25, no. 1 (2013), *The Life of Shakespeare*, edited by Paul Edmondson and Paul Frannsen.
3. Graham Holderness, 'Shakespeare Remembered', *Critical Survey* 22, no. 2 (2010).
4. Terry Eagleton, *Holy Terror* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).