9/11, 9/11: Chile and Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

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"Je suis née le 11 septembre 2001."
—Annie Dulong

"No es la primera vez."
—Ariel Dorfman

One of the most striking aspects of the seemingly endless discourse on September 11, 2001 is the reluctance of artists and scholars to explore the possibility that the event is already historical—that is, that it may have a past. Instead, there is a tendency to adopt apocalyptic or religious explanations for what likely has geopolitical roots, most conspicuously Chile's US-backed coup d'état of September 11, 1973. Among the few writers who have gestured toward a linkage between the two occurrences is Mohsin Hamid in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, a novel about a young financial analyst who experiences a political epiphany in the South American country and decides to abandon his remunerative Wall Street job and return to his native Lahore, Pakistan. To be sure, there is no direct reference to Chile's 9/11 in Hamid's dramatic monologue, whose central character, Changez, attempts to justify his embrace of Pakistani nationalism to a silent American. Still, the fact that Changez discovers his true self in the land of Pablo Neruda and Salvador Allende can hardly be a coincidence; this is something that is only reinforced by Mira Nair's decision to excise the pivotal Chile episode altogether in her film adaptation of the novel and relocate Changez's political awakening to Istanbul. As I will argue in this essay, an examination of the oblique treatment of Chile in Hamid's international bestseller sheds much light on the novel's politics, especially its ideological orientation.

Don DeLillo's essay "In the Ruins of the Future" perhaps best exemplifies the dominant discourse on the US 9/11. In his meditation on the event, which was first

Canadian Review of Comparative Literature / Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée
CRCL SEPTEMBER 2015 SEPTEMBRE RCLC
0319–051x/15/42.3/241

published in the December 2001 issue of *Harper's* magazine, DeLillo largely dismisses the legitimacy of the possible political motivation for the coordinated attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. While he concedes that the aggression may have had something to do with "the blunt force of our foreign policy," he maintains that what really elicits it is "the high gloss of our modernity. It is the thrust of our technology. It is our perceived godlessness. [...] It is the power of American culture to penetrate every wall, home, life, and mind" (33). DeLillo charges that the perpetrators cannot accept what "we mean in the world—an idea, a righteous fever in the brain"—since "[o]ur tradition of free expression and our justice system's provisions for the rights of the accused can only seem an offense to men bent on suicidal terror" (34). For an acclaimed political novelist, one who supposedly "invented" 9/11 (Junod), as reflected in his much-discussed 2007 novel *Falling Man*, DeLillo can sound astonishingly naïve or imperialist. Thus he explains the actions of the attackers by saying that they are "men who have fashioned a morality of destruction. They want what they used to have before the waves of Western influence. They surely see themselves as the elect of God whether or not they follow the central precepts of Islam" (38). Curiously, DeLillo makes this observation right after saying about the United States, "Technology is our fate, our truth. It is what we mean when we call ourselves the only superpower on the planet. The materials and methods we devise make it possible for us to claim our future. We don't have to depend on God or the prophets or other astonishments. We are the astonishment" (37). Needless to say, his United States has much more in common with the world of the 9/11 attackers than DeLillo appears to realize. Like its enemies, the US also sees itself as a chosen people. So exceptional is it, in fact, that it does not even need a deity's blessing to know it is the elect.

As depicted by DeLillo, the events of September 11, 2001 occur in a political and cultural void, a conception of historical innocence that echoes the widespread belief that "the cause of terrorism is the failure of Islamic countries to modernize" (Asad 17) and makes it impossible to fathom why anyone might contemplate attacking the United States. This notion of historical purity, though, is seriously complicated when another US 9/11 novelist like Jess Walter states that as recently "as 2007, 41 percent of Americans still believed Saddam Hussein was behind 9/11" and, even more significant, that a "similar percentage thought it was possible [their] own government had something to do with the attacks" ("9/11" 2). If so many Americans suspect that their government was implicated in the strikes against the World Trade Center, then it is not inconceivable that the assaults may be related to other events. In other words, it is probable that US culture does not become the dominant force in the world simply because the country's technology is embraced by the multitudes around the globe, but because the United States has become "a crusading nation intent on Americanizing the world by force if need be" (Hilal 186). That is, often, US ways become hegemonic only after the United States exerts its political and military might elsewhere, actions that are not always appreciated, much less welcome, by the local population.

One part of the world that did not instinctively come to admire US realpolitik was Chile, which experienced its own 9/11 in 1973, twenty-eight years before the one in the United States. For some scholars, the bloody coup d'état against Salvador Allende signalled "the beginning of the end of one historical epoch and the start of another" (Burbach 1). In retrospect, writes the historian Roger Burbach, it is now clear that "the overthrow of the first and only democratically elected socialist government marked the inevitable decline of 'actually existing socialism'," and represents "an upheaval in some ways even more profound than that which occurred in the aftermath of the destruction of the World Trade Center towers" (1). Although "the precise role of the CIA at the time of the coup is still shrouded in mystery," there is "no doubt that the US government worked incessantly to overthrow Allende during his three years in office" (Burbach 15; see also Hitchens 66-71). Henry Kissinger, who was President Richard Nixon's National Security Advisor during the coup and soon would become his Secretary of State, made little effort to camouflage his belief in the right of the United States to intervene in the affairs of other states, famously telling a meeting of US policy and intelligence planners that "'I don't see why we need to stand idly by and watch a country go Communist due to the irresponsibility of its own people'" (qtd. in Burbach 10). Kissinger was fully aware that Allende had been "elected legally," reminding Nixon that his was "the first Marxist government ever to come to power by free elections. He *has* legitimacy in the eyes of Chileans and most of the world; there is nothing we can do to deny him that legitimacy or claim he does not have it" ("Memorandum" 382; italics in the text). Yet Kissinger, who considered Allende "a radical Marxist ideologue bent on imposing a Castro-style dictatorship with the aid of Cuban-trained militias and Cuban weapons" ("Pitfalls" 89), obviously did not accept the reasoning of the Canadian novelist and publisher Dave Godfrey that "[e]very nation should have the right to screw up the way it wants" (38). This was especially true of societies from the so-called South, since Kissinger was convinced that "[n]othing important can come from the South. History has never been produced in the South" (qtd. in Hersh 263). Therefore, when a South American polity like Chile tried to shape its destiny, "the malignant gods of random history" (Dorfman, "Last" 1) unleashed "a nightmare" of violence against the country from which it still hasn't been able to "awaken" (3). It is evident that among those vengeful deities were Kissinger and the higher echelons of the US government, which had been "Allende's most formidable adversary" ever since he declared his candidacy for the presidency of Chile (Burbach 10), and whose impact on Chilean history is immeasurable.

Writers and scholars on the US 9/11 tend to stress the uniqueness of the event, deeming it "a moment of historical rupture [...] that drew a clear line through world history" (Holloway 1). It purportedly either demarcates when "the twenty-first century finally begins" (Auster 35) or "the weirdly abrupt instant when the American Century came to an end" (Smith). In particular, it is supposed to be the result of "a new virus," initiating a "new age of terror" (National Commission 106, 463; see also DeLillo, *Falling* 112-13). But, regardless of the havoc caused by the attackers on

the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, one thing is certain: they did not invent terrorism (Asad 7-38). Chile's 9/11 itself does not mark the genesis of terrorism. The translator of Latin American literature Hugh Hazelton reminds us that the anti-Allende "coup-d'état was part of a series of similar military takeovers inspired by the United States that began in Brazil in 1964, continued on to Uruguay in 1973, and befell Argentina in 1976." The ultimate consequence of these "meticulously planned projects" is that, by "the end of the 1970s, most of southern South America was under military rule, a trend that was to continue in Central America during the 1980s" (182), and which would leave millions of people displaced. This history of anti-left coups actually was not restricted to the Americas. As Peter Dale Scott writes in *Coming to Jakarta: A Poem about Terror*, the people who "machine-gunned Allende" were responding to a coded message labelled "*Djakarta se acerca*," or "*Jakarta is coming*" (136; italics in the text), which was an allusion to an earlier politically sanctioned bloodbath of southern "insurgents" and which already had precedents of its own:

> But when you control
> most of the world
> you cannot stop
>
> it has been managed before
> so you are expected
> to manage it again
>
> the cunning plan
> becomes in the streets of Santiago
> a biblical whirlwind (135-36)

All that is "quite new in world affairs" about September 11, 2001, posits Noam Chomsky, is not the scale or the character of the violence but "the target. For the United States, this is the first time since the War of 1812 that the national territory has been under attack, or even threatened" (11; see also Auster 35). Chomsky underscores the momentousness of the occurrence, noting that, besides the "colossal" number of victims, for "the first time, the guns have been directed the other way. That is a dramatic change" (12). Indeed, as the authors of the *9/11 Report* emphasize, the reason the 2001 attacks were so "devastating" is that they were "carried out" not by a major power but "by a tiny group of people" (National Commission 486), intimating that empires may not be as invulnerable as both they and their victims often believe.

Empires of course have long been able to impose their ways on what they consider the history-less countries of the world with almost universal impunity, at least when it comes to suffering retaliation on their own territory. Not surprisingly, this state of affairs is deeply resented by many citizens of those subjugated nation-states (Hilal 168), whether real or fictional, such as Hamid's protagonist in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. The single-named Changez, whose moniker evokes the fearsome Mongol emperor Genghis Khan, is not always the most admirable of

characters. Particularly during the early stages of his financial career, he lacks both self-knowledge and the ability to empathize with the every-day challenges faced by the overwhelming majority of the world's populace. His dearth of introspection is flagrantly reflected in his conviction that his meteoric rise is due solely to his being part of "a meritocracy" (35). As the vice-president of the valuation firm that hires him right out of Princeton University tells him and his new colleagues, "We believe in being the best. You were the best candidates at the best schools in the country. That's what got you here" (35). Changez himself often boasts that he is "something special" (5), stating at one point that "I was, in my own eyes, a veritable James Bond—only younger, darker, and possibly better paid" (63-64). He appears oblivious to the impact that money and social class have in his life, the fact that, as the protagonist of Hamid's most recent novel asserts, people who "have greater opportunity for corruption" are "both better off and held in higher regard by society" than those with fewer connections (*How* 23). To begin with, as even Changez concedes, the reason his "mannerisms" so appeal to his "senior colleagues" almost certainly has to do with his "speech: like Pakistan, America is, after all, a former English colony, and it stands to reason, therefore, that an Anglicized accent may [...] continue to be associated with wealth and power" (41-42). Or as his mentor at Underwood Samson, Jim, tells him: "You're polished, well-dressed. You have this sophisticated accent. Most people probably assume you're rich where you come from" (8). In addition, even though Changez's family has been declining financially for decades, the ancestral home still sits "on an acre of land in the middle of Gulberg, one of the most expensive districts" in Lahore and they continue to "employ several servants, including a driver and a gardener" (9-10). Finally, Changez is the third generation of the men in his family to be educated overseas (9). In other words, for a self-made man, he had quite a head start.

The other troubling aspect of Changez, especially for the central figure of an ostensibly anti-imperialist novel, is that he seems impervious to the pain his decisions are bound to inflict on others. The reality is that, at least in his glory New York days, Changez is an amoral venture capitalist whose only god is money (Perner 28). He has been hired by a firm that made its name determining the value of businesses with no consideration whatsoever for human costs, and he unquestioningly accepts its "ethos" (35). As he remarks, "Maximum return was the maxim to which we returned, time and again" (37). In fact, one of the great ironies in Hamid's novel is that the fundamentalism that permeates the narrative does not refer to religion but to economics, particularly the raw capitalism of Wall Street high finance. "*Focus on the Fundamentals*," discloses Changez, is "Underwood Samson's guiding principle, drilled into us since our first day at work" (98; see also Hamid, "Focus" and *How* 195-210). As he expands later in the text, "I suspect I was never better at the pursuit of fundamentals than I was [...] analyzing data as though my life depended on it. Our creed was one which valued above all else maximum productivity" (116). He even confides to his silent interlocutor (and the reader) that the day he starts to work as a

financial analyst, he does not think of himself as "a Pakistani, but as an Underwood Samson trainee, and my firm's impressive offices made me *proud*" (34). Considering that the first letters of Underwood Samson spell US, there is little doubt which side he has chosen.

Something crucial happens to Changez, though, when he travels to Manila with a group of his colleagues on his first assignment to assess a record company. Much of the transformation is precipitated by the city itself. As he informs his auditor:

> I was telling you about Manila. Have you been to the East, sir? You have! Truly, you are well-traveled for an American—for a person of any country, for that matter. [...] Since you have been to the East, you do not need me to explain how prodigious are the changes taking place in that part of the globe. I expected to find a city like Lahore—or perhaps Karachi; what I found instead was a place of skyscrapers and superhighways. Yes, Manila had its slums; one saw them on the drive from the airport: vast districts of men in dirty white undershirts lounging idly in front of auto-repair shops—like a poorer version of the 1950s America depicted in such films as *Grease*. But Manila's glittering skyline and walled enclaves for the ultra-rich were unlike anything I had seen in Pakistan. (64)

Changez says that he tries "not to dwell on the comparison" between the Filipino metropolis and his hometown but he is shaken by the contrast in their recent fortunes, for it was "one thing to accept that New York was more wealthy than Lahore, but quite another to swallow the fact that Manila was as well" (64). As he adds, he "felt like a distance runner who thinks he is not doing too badly until he glances over his shoulder and sees that the fellow who is lapping him is not the leader of the pack, but one of the laggards" (64-65). In short, his trip to the Philippines forces him to re-evaluate his native land's place in the world, leading him to conclude that it is even poorer than he had assumed.

So affected is Changez by his initial impressions of Manila that, for the first time in his life, he attempts "to act and speak, as much as my dignity would permit, more like an *American*." He learns "to cut to the front of lines with an extraterritorial smile" and, when asked where he is from," replies "New York" (65; italics in the text). His reasoning is that he assumes that the Filipinos with whom he works "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" (65). Changez clearly has become divided against himself. On the one hand, he enjoys flying "first-class" and being "served champagne by an attractive and [...] *flirtatious* flight attendant" (63; italics in the text). More critical, he feels "enormously powerful" knowing that the decisions he and his colleagues will make about the record company will determine if the "CDs [will] be made elsewhere" and thus if the local "workers [will] be fired" (66). Yet, on the other hand, he starts to believe that he has political and cultural affinities with the Filipinos, including those from the lower classes. For instance, as he and the other Underwood Samson analysts are being driven in a limousine through Manila's nightmarish traffic, he senses "undisguised hostility" in the eyes of a driver of a local bus (66). So he tells himself that he and the Filipinos

"share[] a sort of Third World sensibility" (67), a claim that even he does not find too persuasive, given their contrasting means of transportation, and standards of living.

The magnitude of the identity crisis undergone by Changez becomes apparent one night after he gets back to his hotel and turns on the TV. At first, he assumes that he is watching a film. But as he pays more attention, he realizes that it is "not fiction but news." As he describes the incident, "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" (72), a response that comes to epitomize the politics of Hamid's novel. Considering that Changez is a self-professed "lover of America" (1), his pleasure at watching the news footage of the World Trade Center towers falling is perplexing. He himself observes, "I was not at war with America. Far from it: I was the product of an American university; I was earning a lucrative American salary; I was infatuated with an American woman. So why did part of me desire to see America harmed?" (73). Later on, when Changez sees photographs of the 9/11 dead, he says that the photographs "reminded me of my own uncharitable—indeed, inhumane—response to the tragedy, and I felt from them a constant murmur of reproach" (79). Still, at the time, he rationalizes his reaction by saying, "I was caught up in the *symbolism* of it all, the fact that someone had so visibly brought America to her knees" (73). Or as he reflects after he returns to New York, "I wondered how it was that America was able to wreak such havoc in the world [...], with so few apparent consequences at home" (131). In other words, he comes to resent that the United States appears to have immunity for its actions, which is why he rejoices when he sees somebody doing to the US what it is used to doing to scores of other countries.

Even more fateful than the trip to Manila, however, is the one that Changez subsequently undertakes to Valparaíso, Chile. Despite being assured that he is "the best analyst in [his] class by a long way" (137), Changez gradually becomes disillusioned with the world of high finance and, in the process, with the United States. His disenchantment with his host country is not a complete surprise. Changez's trip to Manila is an unqualified success, with his manager, Jim, telling him during a visit that "[e]veryone's saying great things about you" and complimenting the young analyst by calling him "a shark" (69, 70). His achievement is even more noteworthy since Changez is "the only non-American" in the group (71). During his stay in the Filipino capital, he had started to believe that his "Pakistaniness was invisible, cloaked by my suit, by my expense account, and—most of all—by my companions" (71). But that sense of belonging dissipates soon after they land back in New York. He is "separated from [his] team at immigration," with the others joining "the queue for American citizens" and he "the one for foreigners" (75). In addition, he is the only one who is "dispatched for a secondary inspection" and, by the time the interrogation is over, his colleagues have "already collected their suitcases and left" (75). So, after his great professional triumph in the Far East, he finds himself riding to Manhattan alone.

The degree to which Changez ever belongs to either Underwood Samson or the

United States is obviously not easy to determine. This is underscored both by his enigmatic "smile" in Manila and by his acknowledgment that he knows his feelings about US foreign policy are "unacceptable to [his] colleagues," which is why he strives "to hide them" the best he can (73). The chief conflict between Changez and his associates involves the relations between the Muslim world and the West in general and the United States in particular, and is manifest from the beginning. For instance, Changez often professes to be an ardent "New Yorker" (33), yet he also confuses a group of US acquaintances over dinner by claiming that his dream is "one day to be the dictator of an Islamic republic with nuclear capability." While he promptly explains that he is "joking," he notes that only his girlfriend Erica grasps his "sense of humor" (29). Like many of Hamid's other personages, Changez is deeply troubled by the prospect of a war between India and Pakistan, an anxiety that is relieved somewhat once Pakistan builds a nuclear bomb (Perner 26). As a character in Hamid's first novel states, "Everyone has a bomb. And now the Muslims have a bomb. Why should we be the only ones without it?" (*Moth* 146). Or as Hamid says in an interview, "The difference between Iraq and Pakistan is that Pakistan happens to have nuclear weapons, otherwise who knows what would have happened after 9/11?" (Hamid and Chambers 182). Changez too seems to come to the realization that, in order to establish their modernity, Pakistan and the Muslim world have to enter the nuclear race. Yet he cannot help but suspect that, even with nuclear weapons, Pakistan remains a marginal player in world politics. This marginality becomes quite evident when the United States invades neighbouring Afghanistan, an event that Changez says "upset my equanimity," causing him "to tremble with fury" (99, 100), and which will precipitate his return to Pakistan.

The main catalyst for Changez's psycho-political transformation is one Juan-Bautista, the esteemed head of the publishing house that he travels to Chile to value for Underwood Samson. Juan-Bautista, who reminds Changez of his "maternal grandfather" and whom he likes "at once" (141), leads the budding financier to admit that he comes not only from a family of lawyers but also of writers, revealing that his "father's uncle was a poet [...] He was well-known in the Punjab. Books are loved in my family" (142). Needless to say, the fact his family appreciates books is not necessarily something to exult, since among the things he learns in Chile is that the "literary" is "defined for all practical purposes as commercially unviable" and has to be subsidized by the company's "profitable educational and professional publishing arms" (142). Yet the literary is also often linked to a sense of memory and to an appreciation of the beautiful, even if only through fragmentary traces. So when Changez learns of the "former aspirations to grandeur" of Valparaíso, Neruda's hometown, he is reminded of the glorious past of his native Lahore. In particular, he recalls a "saying, so evocative in our language: *the ruins proclaim the building was beautiful*" (144; italics in the text), showing how one can derive pride—and power—even from the remnants of former glory.

More important, it is in Valparaíso that Changez becomes aware of the janissar-

ies, a discovery that precipitates his "great change" (150). The symbolically named Juan-Bautista (John the Baptist), who senses that Changez is "very unlike [his] colleagues" (146), invites the visitor to lunch at his favourite restaurant, since "it would be a shame to have visited Valparaiso without having tasted sea bass cooked in salt" (150). Then after asking Changez if "it trouble[s] you [...] to make your living by disrupting the lives of others" (151), he proceeds to tell him about the janissaries. As Juan-Bautista explains, the janissaries were "Christian boys [...] captured by the Ottomans and trained to be soldiers in a Muslim army, at that time the greatest army in the world. They were ferocious and utterly loyal: they had fought to erase their own civilizations, so they had nothing else to turn to" (151). It is upon learning about the Ottoman soldiers that "became the terror of Europe" (Goodwin 26) that Changez is compelled to evaluate what he stands for. As he relates:

> Juan-Bautista's words plunged me into a deep bout of introspection. I spent that night considering what I had become. There really could be no doubt: I was a modern-day janissary, a servant of the American empire at a time when it was invading a country with a kinship to mine and was perhaps even colluding to ensure that my own country faced the threat of war. Of course I was struggling! Of course I felt torn! I had thrown in my lot with the men of Underwood Samson, with the officers of the empire, when all along I was predisposed to feel compassion for those, like Juan-Bautista, whose lives the empire thought nothing of overturning for its own gain. (152)

Following his conversation with Juan-Bautista, Changez is uncertain of what he will do next, but he knows that his "days of focusing on [capitalist] fundamentals" are over (153-54), and so is his Wall Street career.

Changez's comparison of himself to the janissaries is problematic for, rather than being taken captive by US-centered global capitalism as a child, he voluntarily joins it as a young adult. Still, the episode underscores his profoundly divided loyalties, especially if a war between Pakistan and India were to break out. While still living in the United States, Changez had long feared that "despite the assistance we had given America in Afghanistan, America would not fight at our side" (127); at one point, he even worries about rumours that "India was acting with America's connivance, both countries seeking through the threat of force to coerce our government into changing its policies" (148-49). So he now regrets not having acted on his intuition and believes that his failure to face his complicity with US foreign policy makes him "a man lacking in substance" (125). According to him, he is someone who has been "looking about me with the eyes of a foreigner, and not just any foreigner, but that particular type of entitled and unsympathetic American who so annoyed me when I encountered him in the classrooms and workplaces of [the] country's elite," a discovery that propels him "to exorcise the unwelcome sensibility by which I had become possessed" (124). Convinced that he has forsaken his people when they most needed him, Changez becomes "filled with contempt for myself, such contempt that I could not bring myself to converse or to eat" (129). Thus soon after his visit to Valparaíso, he not only quits his Wall Street position and returns to Pakistan to be a university

professor, but makes it his "mission on campus to advocate" for his homeland's "disengagement" from the United States, determined to ensure "greater independence in Pakistan's domestic and international affairs" (179). If he is to help Pakistan ensure its sovereignty, he discerns, he must cease working for a foreign financial institution, particularly one from a superpower that has so little regard for the rights of small countries such as his own.

Although Changez describes his trip to Chile as an "inflective journey, a journey that continues to this day..." (146; ellipsis in the text), as I mentioned at the outset, he never refers directly to September 11, 1973. But given the impact of the incident that a US Naval attaché has called "'our D-Day'" (qtd. in Hitchens 67), it is hard to imagine that Hamid does not hope his readers will make the link between the two events. As he has told an interviewer, "September eleventh [2001] didn't come out of the blue. 9/11 is an event in a long history of conflict" (Hamid and Singh 154). It is certainly telling that his protagonist's epiphany takes place in a country whose "9/11 [...] kept on killing for a generation" (Barlas 729). After he returns to New York from South America, Changez is grateful for the Chilean experience that made his political awakening possible. As he says to himself as he lies in bed one night, "*Thank you, Juan-Bautista [...], for helping me to push back the veil behind which all this had been concealed!*" (157; italics in the text). In other words, whatever else it may achieve, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* suggests that one should not dismiss the likelihood that not only were the September 11 attacks on the United States politically motivated, but so was the date itself.

The US-based Chilean writer and scholar Ariel Dorfman has done much to remind the world that the strikes against the United States do not constitute "la primera vez," or the first time, that civilians have been wantonly killed ("Último" 17), for he himself has "been through this before" ("Last" 1). Dorfman also confesses that, since the 2001 attacks, "I have puzzled about this juxtaposition of dates; I cannot get it out of my head that there is some sort of meaning hidden behind or inside the coincidence" ("Epitaph" 17). Yet there is one critical difference between the two events, one that Dorfman does not always emphasize. As Patricia Keeton points out, "the perpetrator of Chile's September 11 terror was the United States" (115). In her comparative analysis of films about the two events, Keeton goes further and states that "the 'other 9/11' [has] hovered like a specter over the dominant narrative" about the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon (115). As well, she adds that the significance of Chile's 9/11 lies not only in its historical importance, but in the fact that it is not yet fully historical. That is, it remains a current affair, and its lack of closure may have repercussions for the individuals responsible for it, both in Chile and in the United States.

Chile's 9/11 actually could yet serve to indict those responsible for the US foreign policy at the time, notably Kissinger. Such an outcome is unlikely, however, since the United States refuses to accept the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court in cases involving its own operatives (Mandel 207-53). Still, around 2001, Kissinger

became perturbed enough about one such lawsuit against him (Keeton 118) that he launched a frontal attack on the "unprecedented movement [...] to submit international politics to judicial procedures" (Kissinger, "Pitfalls" 86; see also Roth). His presumptive fear was that such practice could "risk substituting the tyranny of judges for that of governments," being outraged by the argument that "heads of state and senior public officials [like himself] should have the same standing as outlaws before the bar of justice" (86, 87). One can understand Kissinger's anxieties about a world in which international law deals equally with anyone found guilty of "criminal conduct", be they "Balkan war criminals" or former Nobel Peace Prize laureates (94). But perhaps Kissinger need not have become so distraught over such an eventuality. The singer and songwriter Bruce Cockburn, who happens to "*share a birthday*" with the former US Secretary of State, remarks that, "*in 2013, Kissinger enjoyed a ninetieth-birthday bash*" at one of the ritziest hotels in Manhattan, a gathering that "*drew an astonishing lineup of luminaries,*" from Hillary and Bill Clinton, through Condoleeza Rice, to the former president of France, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing" (Cockburn and Hill 259-60; italics in the text). As Cockburn comments, "*That a man who was apparently indispensable to the design and policies that killed millions of unarmed, innocent peasants in Southeast Asia, was feted so lavishly instead of being consigned to a bare cell is evidence of the power of the 'principalities and powers' that run the world*" (Cockburn and Hill 260; italics in the text). Cockburn is best known as the author of protest songs, such as "If I Had a Rocket Launcher," a poetic response to state-sponsored terrorism in which he envisages making "somebody pay" for mass violence against civilians (Cockburn; see also Cockburn and Hill 226). In light of the apparent immunity of those of make such atrocities possible, even he must question the effectiveness of art in the world.

That said, the general reluctance of writers and scholars to explore the apparent commonality between the malfeasance of those responsible for September 11, 2001 and of the engineers of calamities like "its Chilean *doppelganger*" (Barlas 731) has consequences. If you are mentally unable to imagine that there are "past victims of your own terror," and that they "deserve [...] some measure of justice" (Dorfman, "Letter" 22), then the discourse you produce on the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon is bound to remain fixated on what has been called the idea of "American innocence" (Smith). To be fair, it is not easy for US writers and intellectuals to even suggest that September 11, 2001 could have geopolitical roots, given the risks of being "'Dixie Chicked'" (Walter). This reality was dramatically illustrated by the visceral reactions to the critiques by Susan Sontag, to say nothing of those by Ward Churchill or Amiri Baraka. Within a week of the event, the "appalled, sad American, and New Yorker" Sontag wrote a short essay for *The New Yorker* magazine expressing her disbelief at the absence of voices stressing that "this was not a 'cowardly' attack on 'civilization' or 'liberty' or 'humanity' or 'the free world' but an attack on the world's self-proclaimed superpower, undertaken as a consequence of specific American alliances and actions" (105). Her call for an honest dialogue

on the possible causes of the violence was "fiercely criticized" across the country (109), which may account for the highly irregular tone and content of her subsequent interventions. Sontag admits that "America has behaved brutally, imperially, in many countries" (113). At the same time, she vehemently disagrees with those who claim that "America itself is, in part, to blame for the deaths of these thousands upon its own territory" (113). In fact, within a year, Sontag unequivocally affirms that "America has every right to hunt down the perpetrators of these crimes and their accomplices" (123), raising the question of whether she believes that the countries that have been victims of US-sponsored violence, such as Chile, should also have the power to exercise those rights.

More surprising, even writers outside the United States have a tendency to treat the US 9/11 as if it could not possibly be connected to any other political events. For example, in the passage that serves as the first epigraph to this essay, the Québec author Annie Dulong states that she was "née le 11 septembre 2001." Dulong, who is both a fiction writer and a specialist on cultural representations of the US 9/11, then explains that the attacks on New York not only led her to become more aware of the world but also to consider her "écriture en terme d'américanité." Since Chile too is an American society, one cannot help but wonder why September 11, 1973 is not part of her continental imaginary. Interestingly, in the introduction that Dulong and Alice van der Klei wrote for a special issue of the journal *Moebius* that they edited on Québec fiction on September 11, 2001, they observe that most of the contributors avoid the Pentagon. For Dulong and van der Klei, this suggests that "la notion d'innocence était peut-être plus difficile à soutenir" in representing the Washington attacks than those on the "symbole du pouvoir du commerce (voire du rêve américain) où les victimes étaient, par définition, innocentes" (8). However, this innocence is precisely what Hamid problematizes in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* when he has Changez describe Underwood Samson's financial analysts as "officers of the empire" (152). Or as Changez elaborates, he knows from his "experience as a Pakistani—of alternating periods of American aid and sanctions—that finance was a primary means by which the American empire exercised its power" (156). In short, politically, there appears to be no such clear separation between the military and financial sectors. But then, as the Québec journalist Chantal Guy writes in an article on Dulong, when it comes to representations of September 11, 2001, there is "beaucoup d'autocensure" and also "beaucoup de sacralisation qui impose le silence." One of those silences, it would seem, is the strategic avoidance of any linkage to Chile's 9/11. The most conspicuous effacement of the potential connections between the two 9/11s arguably occurs in Mira Nair's film adaptation of Hamid's novel. Besides turning Changez's confession into an interrogation, Nair relocates his epiphany from Valparaíso to Istanbul. So while Changez is still led to see himself as a modern-day janissary by a cosmopolitan publisher whose business he is assessing, the latter's name is no longer Juan-Bautista but Nazmi Kemal. Perhaps more significant, Nair has Changez visit a mosque during his stay in the Turkish metropolis, creating the impression that his transformation

from "a gung-ho American corporate raider" into a Pakistani patriot (Alam) may be due to religious factors, not political ones. The film leaves little doubt regarding the nature of the fundamentalism that Changez resists throughout his life, something that is accentuated by the religious music playing on the soundtrack as he leaves Istanbul on a ferry. That is, by expunging the Chile episode, Nair precludes her viewers from ever making a link between the two events.

In conclusion, one of the most compelling aspects of Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is that, in a subtle way, it suggests that there may be a reason why the 2001 attacks on the United States occurred on September 11—as opposed to, say, September 10 or 12—and that reason is history. Consequently, by examining the treatment of Chile in the novel, we may better be able to understand its politics, not the least the notion that we ought to try to discern the political motivation of the attackers. Such an approach does not require that one reject the premise that the strikes against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon "challenge[] [...] the moral imagination" (Gopnik 40), although it does demand that we jettison the notion that "those we call terrorists were the products of spontaneous generation, the way medieval people accounted for maggots in their meat. No causality" (Smith). As Changez protests to his interlocutor, part of his disillusionment with the United States after September 11, 2001, has to do with the fact that, collectively, Americans "were unwilling to reflect upon the shared pain that united you with those who attacked you." That United States, he stresses, "had to be stopped in the interests not only of the rest of humanity, but also in your own" (168). Furthermore, there is at least one other justification for connecting the two events, a paradoxical one. Dorfman has identified the considerable differences between the two 9/11s. As he states, "The depraved terrorist attack against the most powerful nation on Earth has and will have consequences which affect all humanity." In contrast, "very few of the eight billion people alive today could remember or would be able to identify what happened in Chile" ("Last" 1). One of the repercussions of historicizing September 11, 2001 is that it may lead to the rediscovery of September 11, 1973.

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