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"Upground and belowground topographies": The Chronotopes of Skyscraper and Subway in Colum McCann's New York novels before and after 9/11

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Back down under the earth, where you belong. [. . .]. He could make a map of those words, beginning at the B and ending at the g—where all beginning begins and ends—and they would make the strangest of upground and belowground topographies. (*TSoB* 139)

Sometimes you've got to go up to a very high floor to see what the past has done to the present. (*LtGWS* 306)

In Colum McCann's *This Side of Brightness* (1998), the African American former sandhog, Nathan Walker, repeatedly invokes the blues song, "Looking Down at Up," recorded most famously by Big Bill Broonzy in 1940: "And he sang this song which is a blues song which don't go with no fiddle, and it goes: Lord I'm so lowdown I think I'm looking up at down."[1] In so doing, Walker attaches a spatial connotation (being "down") to the various traumas that afflict him and his descendants over the seventy-five-year span of the novel. The connection between space and trauma is not surprising since trauma is often configured as an alienation or estrangement from oneself or one's sense of emotional and psychological well-being. More interesting, I think, are the ideas conveyed by the two epigraphs to this article, one from *This Side of Brightness*, the other from McCann's post-9/11 novel, *Let the Great World Spin* (2009), both of which emphasise the inextricability of time from space in conceptions of trauma. In the first, we see the

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juxtaposition of beginnings and ends with "upground and belowground topographies"; in the second, the "very high floor" provides a vantage point from which to consider the past's interrelationship with the present. In other words, both novels qualify the blues song's interest in trauma and space (down/up) by incorporating a distinctly temporal dimension.

This article examines *This Side of Brightness* alongside *Let the Great World Spin*, arguing that McCann's emphasis on the interrelatedness of spatial and temporal dimensions of trauma offers a radical critique of the way in which much post-9/11 fiction and criticism leaves unchallenged trauma's temporal aspects. Trauma theory is characterized by an insistence on temporal rupture, a clear sense of before-and-after that is perceptible both in fictional texts about 9/11 and in critical commentary on those fictional texts. Building on Richard Crownshaw's recent work, I want to argue for the importance of acknowledging the inextricability of time from space in McCann's treatment of trauma, a connection which is illustrated most convincingly through his deployment of the chronotopes of skyscraper and subway. Through his conceptualization of the subway and skyscraper as spaces which can and must be viewed as part of a historical continuum, McCann undermines the notion of 9/11 as a moment of rupture. By blurring the boundary between these "upground and belowground topographies," which are endowed with distinct temporal resonances, McCann destabilizes the politically-suspect insistence on temporal rupture so pervasive in post-9/11 discourse and, instead, challenges readers to acknowledge the demonstrable continuities between pre- and post-9/11 moments.

Looking Up at Down: The Time and Space of Trauma

Recent scholarship has attempted to map the relationship between time, space and trauma in post-9/11 fiction. Most notably, an article by Richard Gray, in which he outlines the aesthetic and conceptual limitations of most post-9/11 fiction, appeared alongside a short rejoinder by Michael Rothberg in *American Literary History* 21.1 (2009). Whereas authors of trauma narratives should develop artistic strategies that do justice to the strangeness of the post-traumatic moment, Gray finds that the reliance on romantic and familial conflicts in such texts means that they "simply assimilate the unfamiliar into familiar structures."[2] As a result, "the crisis [becomes], in every sense of the word, domesticated."[3] Instead, Gray lauds the work of immigrant writers in the US who, over the past twenty years, have been engaged in literary acts of "bearing witness to the culturally other."[4] In other words, the strangeness of the post-traumatic moment (time) can be translated into fiction through "a strategy of deterritorialization" in which the US is imagined as

"a transcultural space in which different cultures reflect and refract each other" (space).[5] In his response, Rothberg welcomes Gray's "critical multiculturalism" and offers *Netherland* (2008), by McCann's fellow Irish-born resident of New York, Joseph O'Neill, as an example of the kind of work that might answer Gray's criticisms.[6] In a recent article, Crownshaw nuances and advances the Gray-Rothberg debate in significant ways. For Crownshaw, Gray and Rothberg "invoke the spatial—the domestic sphere, the homeland, the global" but "tend to focus on the time of trauma rather than on the imbrication of the temporal and the spatial."[7] In other words, while Gray is inclined to substitute space for time, Crownshaw emphasizes the inextricability of one from the other: "the spatialization of time is also the temporalization of space."[8] This article builds on Crownshaw's by drawing upon Bakhtin's conceptualization of the chronotope but, for now, I want to take issue with Gray's preoccupation with "the time of trauma."[9]

Gray calls for fiction that has "the capacity to recognize that some kind of alteration of imaginative structures is required to register the contemporary crisis, to offer testimony to the trauma of 9/11 and its consequences, but also the ability and willingness imaginatively to act on that recognition."[10] For Gray, then, 9/11 is "a turning point in national and international history," but post-9/11 fiction has not developed aesthetic strategies equal to the task of reflecting this.[11] Meanwhile, Rothberg also presupposes that 9/11 represents "epochal change."[12] While he acknowledges that "the failure Gray diagnoses [in contemporary US fiction] is not simply a formal one, but also ultimately a political one," in fact, neither Gray nor Rothberg recognizes what is at stake, politically, in their assumptions about pre- and post-9/11 time.[13] The two scholars are not unique in these assumptions. Much existing commentary on the September 11 attacks in American literary studies takes for granted the notion of temporal rupture and the appropriateness of trauma theory as an interpretive framework. In one of the first monographs on post-9/11 literature, Kristiaan Versluys observes, for example, that in "a time of globalized witnessing and shared vicarious experience, an event like 9/11 is a rupture for everybody."[14] Meanwhile, Martin Randall, in a book published in 2011, asserts that "9/11 was an epochal event that has had a profound effect on global politics."[15]

On the contrary, several scholars are suspicious of the politics that underlie the insistence on before-and-after in post-9/11 discourse. For instance, Neil Lazarus is highly critical of the notion that "the very sub-structure of the world changed as a result of these attacks." For Lazarus, the corollary to this belief is:

> that the ghastly and colossal (not to say terroristic) violence subsequently visited on Afghanistan and Iraq, and also the wholesale destruction of civil liberties on the "home"

> fronts in Europe and the United States, must be construed as responses (in the official versions, measured, defensive and corrective) to these cataclysmic, world changing, attacks.[16]

On this basis, Lazarus rejects the term "9/11" as a temporal marker, condemning its "obsessive and fundamentally decontextualising reiteration."[17] Lazarus cites the work of Neil Smith, who situates the war on terror on a historical continuum of what he terms "US global ambition" from 1898 to the present day.[18] Smith writes:

> September 11 did not change the world. Horrific as the loss of life was when those symbols of the military and economic power of the American empire were leveled, they were exceptional events only for sweeping away the global insularity of the vast majority of the population cocooned within the national borders of the world's one remaining superpower. People in most other parts of the world had faced similar if not far larger traumas.[19]

In a similar vein, John Dunham Kelly adds that scholars "can and should attack the premise that history reset on September 11, by remembering all that led to, as well as from, the terrorist attacks and the quintessential U.S. responses to them."[20] Dissent from "the time of trauma" orthodoxy emerges not only from political scientists but also from literary scholars. According to Ulrike Tancke, for instance, the persistent invocation of trauma in post-9/11 discourse can have "an exploitative edge." It can be "creatively used, but just as easily abused."[21] Even Rothberg, a scholar sympathetic to the potentialities of trauma, acknowledges that "when the implications of trauma become social—and even national and global, as in the case [with 9/11]—questions about commodification and ideological instrumentalization necessarily emerge."[22]

The rejection of pre- and post-9/11 temporal markers poses a distinct challenge to the trauma paradigm. Or, perhaps more accurately, thinking beyond before-and-after allows for a more expansive notion of trauma, of the kind described by Colum McCann, when reflecting on the difficulties of writing about 9/11:

> anyone with any sort of heart had it broken that morning. And I'm not just talking about the hands-on grief, that *look-at-me-I'm-burning* sort of grief, I'm talking about what it meant for the world, the horrors that the Bush administration would unfold in its name, the terrible way they turned justice into revenge, the dark mark of hatred that reared itself both in the Islamic world and in Britain and here in the States.[23]

As an examination of McCann's two pre- and post-9/11 New York novels, *This Side of Brightness* (1998) and *Let the Great World Spin* (2009), demonstrates, assumptions regarding temporal rupture in both fictional and critical discussions of September 11 must be

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acknowledged and deconstructed if we are to move towards an understanding of trauma that does not simply reproduce the logic of the Bush administration's response to the events of that day.

In one of the few extant discussions of *Let the Great World Spin*, Eóin Flannery identifies the importance of the novel's treatment of both temporality and spatiality, but doesn't quite manage to link the two.[24] Building on Crownshaw's emphasis on "the imbrication of the temporal and the spatial" in post-9/11 fiction, this analysis of the novel is indebted to Mikhail Bakhtin's conception of the chronotope: "the intrinsic *connectedness* of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature." In the chronotope, "spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole."[25] Drawing on Bakhtin in an article on Jhumpa Lahiri's novel, *The Namesake* (2003) and Mira Nair's 2006 adaptation of it for the screen, Sue Brennan argues that Nair "relies on chronotopic motifs that unify multiple temporalities and histories through the representations of space."[26] In so doing, she challenges the "post-9/11 mythology" of that day "as a sui generis moment in American and world history."[27] Similarly, in *This Side of Brightness*, McCann establishes the skyscraper and the subway as chronotopes, which he revisits in *Let the Great World Spin*. The two motifs operate not only as chronotopes within the imaginative universe of each novel, but also beyond and across their respective fictional worlds and moments of publication. McCann's novels thus insist upon the proximity of before-and-after and of continuities between past and present, both formally and thematically, by connecting temporal concerns with spatial and architectural ones.

An Entirely New Calendar? Challenging Before-and-After in *The Good Life*

Before turning to *This Side of Brightness* and *Let the Great World Spin*, the latter of which was published after the appearance of Gray's article, I wish to examine briefly one of the novels that Gray does discuss, Jay McInerney's *The Good Life* (2006). For Gray, *The Good Life* is one of several post-9/11 texts that recognize "that the old mindset has been destroyed" but which are incapable of providing "a fictional measure of the new world view."[28] Certainly, McInerney's characters seems to believe that "[s]ex, love, the public and the private, art and economics everything has changed [since 9/11]."[29] Luke McGavock registers the Sunday after 9/11 as "the fifth day of an entirely new calendar."[30] On 15 September 2001, the *Guardian* published McInerney's personal reflection on the events which suggested that he shares McGavock's view: "I have a feeling that everything will be 'before' and 'after' now. As I walked through the streets at midnight, I thought of Frank O'Connor's line at the end of 'Guests Of The Nation': 'And anything that ever happened

me after I never felt the same about again.'"[31] Only four days after the attacks, McInerney articulates precisely the kind of assumption I seek to critique. However, *The Good Life*, published five years subsequently, complicates in fascinating ways the author's own statement on 9/11 as a moment of historical and traumatic rupture. Instead, it seems to bear out Ann Keniston and Jeanne Follansbee Quinn's claim that "the history of literary representations of 9/11 can be characterized by the *transition* from narratives of rupture to narratives of continuity."[32] McInerney's personal response is entitled "Brightness Falls," itself the title of his own 1992 novel, to which *The Good Life* forms a sequel. Against the backdrop of the stock market crash of 1987, *Brightness Falls* charts the troubled marriage of the Calloways: Russell, a literary editor, and Corrine, a stockbroker; fourteen years later, *The Good Life* resumes their story. Even the title *The Good Life* is lifted from *Brightness Falls* (*BF* 4). It is in its status as a sequel that McInerney's post-9/11 novel departs most obviously from his personal reflection on the events. For Marjorie Garber, there is "a paradox implicit in the very concept of the sequel": in *experiential terms*, a sequel is "a highly conservative genre that supplies the comfort of familiarity together with the small frisson of difference" (75); in *theoretical terms*, however, "the sequel is a more adventurous if not radical departure from the expectation of closure and the boundedness of the text."[33] The sequel form, through its obvious emphasis on continuities with what has gone before, destabilizes the apparently definitive notion of before-and-after that McInerney offers in "Brightness Falls."

While the central disaster of *Brightness Falls* is the stock market crash of October 19, 1987 (Black Monday), the primary catastrophe of *The Good Life* is the attacks on the twin towers. However, McInerney's prose in describing the stock market crash in *Brightness Falls* is very evocative to a reader who encounters the novel after 9/11:

> Corrine tried to reach Duane, but without success. Eventually there was nothing to do except watch the news and count the bodies. It felt absurd, after more than two years on the Street, to be watching this apocalypse on television in the family room in Stockbridge. Two hours or so after the market closed, the damage was finally tallied. [. . .]. Feeling left out, Corrine watched eagerly for familiar faces. The satisfaction she might have been entitled to, having anticipated disaster, was diluted by the sense that she'd been cheated of a ringside seat on a historical event, and by guilt about having left her former colleagues holding the bag.[34]

Even if the half a trillion dollars that vanished that day left behind "neither smoke nor rubble," the fact that "the buildings of the metropolis were still standing" (*BF* 380) only serves to reinforce the uncanny resonances of this passage in a post-9/11 moment.

If *The Good Life* is ghosted at all times by *Brightness Falls*, this raises questions about reading a stock market crash as analogous to a human tragedy on the scale of the September 11 attacks. Ethical issues aside, the analogy, if it is that, is effective in evoking the excess, braggadocio and ultimate vulnerability of US capitalism, as symbolized by the stock market and the twin towers, respectively. Indeed, as Benjamin Bird argues, "McInerney hints that the events of 1987 were significant for their intimation that wealth was no defense against sudden catastrophe and may even invite it. For the prosperous of Manhattan, therefore, 9/11 may have seemed like an apocalyptic confirmation of this message."[35] This is where McInerney's novel transcends the charge of "domestication" leveled at it by Gray. *The Good Life* is concerned with romantic and familial upheaval, but it is only when read in relation to the earlier novel that the larger importance of this domestic drama becomes apparent.

In *Brightness Falls*, the marital difficulties experienced by the Calloways are inextricable from the excesses of capitalism and consumption in the 1980s. McInerney draws a very clear connection between the Calloways' marriage and financial transactions, an alliance that becomes increasingly dysfunctional as the novel progresses. At the outset, their friends consider Russell and Corrine "a sort of model unit for those thinking of buying into the neighborhood of matrimony" (*BF* 7). Having married just out of college, the couple is "shielded from the bruising free market of romance" and instead inhabit "a hygienic welfare state the laws of which didn't necessarily apply outside the realm" (7–8). When the couple reaches a compromise (that favors Russell) over a recurring argument, Corrine likens it to "one of those corporate debt restructuring deals where you had to accept unredeemable paper in the hope that it might be worth something someday and because you had no choice" (276). Over a business lunch, tycoon Bernard Melman quips that, in this day and age, "[f]idelity's just the name of a discount brokerage house" (168), echoed in Russell's subsequent observation "*[t]rust* was just a word sometimes conjoined to *Bank*" (366, emphasis in original). Indeed, when Russell embarks on an affair, he reasons: "Why should pleasure be a zero-sum commodity, when the store of it could be so easily expanded, the wealth increased by sharing?" (258). As the marriage begins to unravel and Russell and Corrine separate, the stock market hurtles towards a crash. Crash is, not coincidentally, Russell's nickname (9, 36). Yet, at the end of the novel, the couple has reunited. The catalyst for their reconciliation is the death of Russell's best friend, Jeff Pierce, with whom Corrine had had an affair several years previously. Jeff, a heroin addict, dies of AIDS. The stock market crash, marital infidelity and the decadence and excess of the 1980s are intimately bound up with one another in *Brightness Falls*.

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Just as extramarital affairs and recriminations are played out in *Brightness Falls*, so the whole cycle repeats itself in *The Good Life*, in which Russell and Corrine are re-introduced to the reader as the parents of six-year-old twins. Russell's affair with Trina in *Brightness Falls* repeats itself in his liaison with the similarly-named, Trisha, in *The Good Life*. The death of Jeff Pierce has its counterpart in the death of Jim Crespi, who takes Jeff's place as Russell's best friend (*GL* 184) and is killed in the 9/11 attacks. In separate conversations with Luke McGavock and her husband, Corrine considers the extent to which the events of 1987 and 9/11 are actually linked. She recalls visiting Jeff Pierce in rehab in the 1980s, "being treated, as he said, for 'an *excess of excess*'" (154, emphasis in original). She and Russell "somehow failed to notice that the tracks on his arms were being replaced by the lesions of Kaposi's sarcoma. Carried away by the epidemic. Did that qualify as self-inflicted?" (154) She continues: "And their own destinies? They'd participated in the binge and contributed to their own undoing [. . .]. But this thing [. . .]. Surely they weren't responsible for *this*" (154). Russell observes subsequently that Jeff and Jim "both got taken away in a kind of mass catastrophe. [. . .]. Not that it was the same. I mean, obviously there was a self-destructive aspect to Jeff's death" (184).

In both examples, Corrine and Russell invoke and repress the notion of a connection between Jeff's death (as a result of heroin addiction and AIDS), their own decadence, a wider culture of excess and the events of 9/11. Similarly, McInerney hints provocatively at, though never states explicitly, the "self-destructive aspect" of rampant and aggressive US capitalism. As Bird puts it, the novel implies "a link between American economic policy and the widespread anti-American feeling that has erupted in international terrorism" (567) and it is precisely through the domestic drama that this issue is foregrounded. Corrine wonders if "this new apocalypse" will strengthen her relationship with Russell "or reveal the weakness of their foundations" (*GL* 154), a question which invites the reader to consider, equally, if the US capitalist system will prove more robust than its twin architectural symbols. The survival of the Calloways' marriage at the novel's end, when both Corrine and Luke seemed previously determined to leave their respective partners for each other, is thus an ambivalent confirmation of both the marital and political status quo. If the ending, and indeed much of *The Good Life*, seems "familiar," it is because, as a character in *This Side of Brightness* states "[w]e have all been here before" (102): *Brightness Falls* ends with the reconciliation of the Calloways; so too does *The Good Life*. Gray's critique of McInerney's novel finds fault with his (and others') reliance on "a series of familiar tropes" which "assimilate the unfamiliar into familiar structures."[36] However, Gray's discussion does not do justice to the function of that familiarity, which

is to reveal the continuities between 1987 and 2001, 1992 and 2006, the past and present of *Brightness Falls* and *The Good Life*.

"We have all been here before":
Continuities between Past and Present in McCann's Fiction

Although the more recent of the two novels is not a sequel, *Let the Great World Spin*'s (2009) relationship to McCann's earlier novel, *This Side of Brightness* (1998), complicates the notion of 9/11 as a moment of historical rupture in ways quite similar to McInerney's. Both novels are narrated at a temporal remove from the moments of their publication. *This Side of Brightness* spans seventy-five years from 1916 to 1991. Abandoned by his immediate family after making what his wife interpreted as sexual advances on their adolescent daughter, Clarence Nathan Walker, initially known to the reader as Treefrog, makes a "nest" for himself in a subway tunnel alongside other social outcasts, drug addicts, and voluntary exiles from the world "topside." When the novel opens, Treefrog has been living in the tunnel for four years. As the story unfolds, the reader realizes that Treefrog is the grandson of Nathan Walker, an African American sandhog who was one of the men responsible for building the tunnel in 1916. The novel charts the intervening years: Nathan Walker's marriage to Eleanor O'Leary, daughter of white Irish sandhog, Con O'Leary; the birth of their mixed-race children; the marriage of their son, Clarence, to Native American nurse's aide, Louisa, whom he meets while on tour of duty in Korea; the birth of their son, Clarence Nathan; the deaths of Eleanor and Clarence; the descent of Louisa into alcoholism, drug abuse and, eventually, death; Clarence Nathan's childhood, adolescence and early adulthood working on the construction of New York's skyscrapers; his marriage to Dancesca and the birth of their daughter, Lenora.

Set in the 1974, against the backdrop of Philippe Petit's famous tightrope walk between the twin towers, *Let the Great World Spin* provides a panoramic view of New York by focusing on a cluster of characters, the various traumas that afflict them and the connections that develop between them: an Irish priest (Father John "Corrie" Corrigan) and an African American prostitute (Jazzlyn) who die in a hit-and-run accident on their way back from a hearing at which the prostitute's mother, also a prostitute, is detained; the drug-addled artist couple responsible for the hit-and-run; the priest's brother, newly arrived from Ireland; the judge (Soderberg) who presides over the prostitutes' hearing and that of Petit after he is arrested; the judge's wife (Claire), a Park Avenue resident, who participates in a support group for mothers who have lost sons in Vietnam; another member of the group (Gloria) who becomes guardian to the prostitutes' child/grand-

child, and so on. Though set in the 1970s, the notion of the novel as a meditation on 9/11 is both confirmed by McCann (he calls it "a pretty straightforward 9/11 allegory") and telegraphed in the text.[37] The Prologue foregrounds the spectacle of Petit, its references to "a shirt [. . .] falling, falling, falling" reminiscent of the falling man that has become something of a signature of post-9/11 fiction.[38]

In his two New York novels, McCann nuances discussions of the city's urban space in which the relationship between skyscraper and subway is often imagined to be oppositional. After all, the one is vertical, the other horizontal; the one reaches into the sky; the other involves burrowing below ground. According to Michael Brooks, New York's vision of itself at the turn of the twentieth century was "founded on a dialectical opposition" between "Wonder City" and "urban hell," which, in turn, were mapped onto the symbols of the skyscraper and subway respectively.[39] Artistic treatments of the subway and skyscraper in the 1920s "interpreted the relation between skyscraper and subway as a complex opposition between upward and downward, aspiration and confinement, freedom and compulsion, and ultimately, life and death."[40]

Indeed, on the surface, *This Side of Brightness* might seem to uphold the notion of rupture between the before-and-after of a traumatic event by relying on a distinction between subway and skyscraper. After Clarence Nathan's grandfather is crushed to death by a subway train in his grandson's presence, Clarence Nathan falls into a deep depression. He blames himself for the accident/suicide because, having reached down to grab his grandfather "under the armpits," he loses his grip and his grandfather falls/jumps to his death (*TSoB* 222). One day, while pushing his daughter on a playground swing and, presumably recalling his failed attempt to save his grandfather, he suddenly finds "his hands are at her armpits and he wishes he could lift his history out of her, his daughter, he is touching her and he will touch her again and he will be found out and he will come down the tunnel and he will try to murder his hands in shame" (105). His wife interprets this "touching" as sexual abuse and she leaves him, taking their daughter with her. After this, Clarence Nathan opts out of his life, retreats to a subway tunnel, and lives on the margins of society. His days are characterized by repetition ("Each day begins like any other" [23]). He is haunted by visions of his daughter Lenora "swimming towards him, arms stretched wide; or his wife moving through the blackness, slender, dark-eyed, forgiving" (25) and flashbacks of Lenora sitting on the playground swing (33). All of these temporal references (repetition, flashbacks) appear to invite a post-traumatic reading of the text. The protagonist even has pre- and post-traumatic names: Clarence Nathan and Treefrog. Certainly, the novel has been read in terms of the subway as a space either of post-traumatic refuge or displacement. For Eóin Flannery, for example, the "torrid emo-

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tional and psychological traumas of two generations of the Walker family are satiated by the repose of these tunnels that are 'high and wide and dark and familiar' (*TSoB* 2)."[41] According to Liam Kennedy, Clarence Nathan falls "from supreme spatial control working on the skyscrapers to extreme spatial dislocation living in the tunnel."[42] Meanwhile, Marie Mianowski claims that the "narrative clearly opposes the 'underground,' 'tunnel,' 'beneath the river' to the 'topside world' from the very beginning of the novel."[43]

However, the skyscraper and subway have distinct temporal resonances that provide ways into thinking about the two in complementary rather than oppositional terms. "Skyscraper modernity" certainly symbolized unambiguously "an organized, objective, legible, engineered society" in the early part of the twentieth century.[44] Indeed, this is how Judge Soderberg, in *Let the Great World Spin*, conceives of the twin towers: they are "forward-looking"; they represent "progress, beauty, capitalism" (*LtGWS* 248). However, many commentators since the 1970s have conceived of modernist architecture as a failed experiment. Intriguingly, around the same time as the North (December 1970) and South (January 1972) towers of the World Trade Center were opened, demolition began on another of the architect Minoru Yamasaki's creations, the high-rise Pruitt-Igoe housing project in St. Louis, Missouri. On 16 March 1972, the first of Pruitt-Igoe's thirty-three high rises was razed.[45] Rather than "forward-looking," the twin towers emerge, when read in this context, as anachronistic. In 1977, architectural historian Charles Jencks famously proclaimed the demolition of Pruitt-Igoe to be the day on which "Modern Architecture died."[46] The decision to raze the eleven-story towers was an acknowledgment that the project, which had been "constructed according to the most progressive ideals of CIAM (the Congress of International Modern Architects)," had failed utterly in the CIAM's mission to provide the towers' inhabitants with the "sun, space and greenery" which Le Corbusier had called "the three essential joys of urbanism."[47] Similarly, the associations of the subway vacillate between "qualities attributed to modern infrastructure—controlled, ordered, quotidian, and banal—and qualities attributed to the archaic underground and the mythic underworld—shelter, riches, hidden knowledge, atavism, danger, death."[48] As Brooks notes, "the most important thing about the evolution of the [New York] subway as a symbol is that it starts by expressing faith in the city's future and, once built, quickly becomes a handy rhetorical tool for expressing discontent with its present."[49] Put succinctly, both skyscraper and subway have been imagined to be modern and progressive *and* atavistic and regressive. The relationship between skyscraper and subway is important for an additional reason; that is, both are now considered extremely vulnerable to terrorist attacks. The attacks on the twin towers in 2001 were followed up, in July 2005, by suicide bombings detonated on three underground trains in London, resulting in the deaths of fifty-two people.

Consistent with the ambivalent connotations of skyscraper and subway in a more general sense, a closer look at *This Side of Brightness* reveals significant continuities between pre- and post-traumatic moments through the similarities that McCann suggests between skyscraper (and high-rise buildings more generally) and subway. Throughout the novel, McCann insists on the proximity in time and space of the subway and skyscraper to such an extent that the two become almost inextricable from one another. These examples of proximity are no more evident than in the parallels and overlaps in the lives of the novel's characters from generation to generation: Nathan Walker was a sandhog working on the subways in the 1910s; his grandson, Clarence Nathan (Treefrog) becomes a construction worker building skyscrapers in the 1970s. McCann makes several allusions to Nathan's working boots (*TSoB* 45, 75) and these are precisely the boots that his grandson wears as he enviously watches the laborers working on the construction of the twin towers. The "series of hard hats going back and forth" (173) on the skyscrapers recalls "the geography of hats" of the sandhogs entering the tunnel (3). When Clarence Nathan becomes a construction worker himself, his co-workers start their day's work "look[ing] as if they might have stepped out of advertisements for very strong cigarettes. Eyes are bleary from nights of love and drink and television and cocaine" (194), while the sandhogs are "diligent in the smoking of cigarettes" and "can perhaps still smell last night on their bodies—they might have been drunk or they might have been making love or they might have been both at once" (3).

If the skyscraper and subway are sites of labor for Nathan and his grandson, they are also ambivalent spaces of habitation. Height is, in this novel, associated with social and economic deprivation and marginalization as well as with privilege. If Clarence Nathan takes refuge in the subway tunnel, his grandfather "exile[s] himself to the air" (81). An interracial couple in the 1930s, Nathan and Eleanor Walker suffer taunts and abuse from those living in the same apartment building. In response, Nathan "rents an apartment higher up, unreachable from the street by stone or rock" (81). At the precise point in the narrative at which the two temporal threads are fused, Nathan Walker is sitting in the same apartment contemplating "[t]he view from the window [that] has changed in recent years—the sunlight is blocked out by large housing projects that step their way across the city. Giant grey and brown buildings [. . .] frown against the skyline" (166). The New York skyline, so often a symbol of modernity and wealth, is here reconfigured in more critical terms. If, for Flannery and Kennedy, the subway tunnel is a post-traumatic space for Clarence Nathan, his traumatic state-of-mind is also likened to "a hollow corridor along which he walks, as high with despair as Manhattan" (222). Like the refrain repeated from "Looking Up at Down" (85, 217), the notion of being "high with despair" actually

problematizes the distinction between down and up. Moreover, the faces "graffitied on the stairwell wall" of the high-rise apartment building in which Clarence Nathan grows up are the aboveground counterpart to the beautiful murals drawn by Papa Love, a fellow tunnel inhabitant, belowground. In the high-rise, there are "Huey Newton and Bobby Seale wearing dashikis [. . .]. Beside that: PIGS AREN'T KOSHER. Beside that: EAT YOUR DRAFT CARD" (172). In the tunnel, there are "the faces of Martin Luther King, John F. Kennedy, Miriam Makeba, Mona Lisa with a penis in her mouth, Huey Newton being crucified beside two white thieves, Nixon and Johnson" (65). Graffiti is, in other words, a significant visual feature of both the high-rise (111, 171–172) and the subway (26, 64, 96, 220).

Even the names "Clarence Nathan" and "Treefrog" cannot be linked unambiguously to pre- and post-traumatic moments. As an adolescent, Clarence Nathan likes to climb up to the roof of his apartment building and "walk the edge of the wall, acrobatically above a seventy foot drop to the street below" (170). Like Petit's wire-walk, Clarence Nathan's acrobatics are characterized by "a fusion of ecstasy and danger" (171). As a teenager, he takes the subway to Battery Park and admires the men who work on the construction of the twin towers, who are "seen only as specks moving on naked beams" (173). The men "move as if on solid ground; their feet never slip; there is no need for them to spread their arms wide for balance" (174). When he, in turn, becomes a construction worker, there is nothing he likes more than challenging and being challenged by a co-worker to "walk blind across the beams. They move as if on solid ground" (197). His fellow construction workers christen him "Treefrog," a name "he doesn't much care for" (198). After Treefrog retreats to his tunnel, from skyscraper to subway, he still engages in balancing acts. Accessing or leaving his nest requires him to walk "along [a] beam with perfect balance" (2); below him is "a twenty foot drop to the tunnel" (25).

It is through the upground and belowground artistic endeavours of balancing acts and graffiti that *This Side of Brightness* connects most obviously with *Let the Great World Spin*. Having established skyscraper and subway as both progressive *and* atavistic, forward-looking and anachronistic in *This Side of Brightness*, McCann returns to these chronotopes in his 2009 novel. However, in the latter novel, skyscraper and subway are invoked not only to interrogate the relationship between trauma and time but also to consider another question closely related to trauma discourse: the ethics of representation and the limits of what is acceptable or appropriate to confront artistically. Questions of ethics, art, and time are foregrounded early in the novel in "A Fear of Love," the section devoted to the artist couple (Blaine and Lara) responsible for the hit-and-run in which Corrie and Jazzlyn are killed. On their return to their home in upstate New York, Lara is

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wracked by guilt at having left the scene of the accident. She yearns to reverse time, "to arrest the clocks, stop everything for half a second [. . .], uncrash the car, run it backward" (*LtGWS* 128). On the other hand, Blaine feels no remorse and is more interested in the aesthetic, rather than the moral, connotations of time. In the post-accident confusion, Blaine and Lara remove their paintings from the back of the car and leave them outdoors, where they are destroyed by heavy rainfall. Blaine becomes excited by the "radical" aesthetic possibilities of what has happened (133, 134). He sees the destruction of the paintings as "a comment on time," the weather an "imaginative force" that "works on your art" (134). Blaine's total subordination of questions of moral responsibility to aesthetic concerns links emphatically to McCann's interest in the ethical implications of artistic endeavours on top of skyscrapers (the wire-walk) and in subway tunnels (graffiti). This is nowhere more apparent than when Lara compares the graffiti on a Park Avenue overpass to Blaine's paintings, which are "a sort of graffiti too, nothing more" (154), thus implicitly equating moral and artistic degeneracy.

Ruth Mackay argues that revisiting Philippe Petit's "man-on-wire" feat of August 1974 has become a recurring preoccupation of post-9/11 narratives in an attempt to retrieve notions of art and creativity from the association of the twin towers with destruction. Mackay is most interested in positing a distinction between the ways in which the documentary film, *Man on Wire* (dir. James Marsh, 2008), confronts this apparent opposition compared with textual representations of the wire-walk. For Mackay, "texts portraying the wire-walk can be seen to emphasize Petit's performance in distinction to 9/11," whereas "*Man on Wire* stands out for the way it presents the two as interrelated: the film is simultaneously a riposte to, and a displacement of, the events of 2001."[50] Emblematic of texts that posit a distinction between creation and destruction through the motif of the wire-walk, according to Mackay, is *Let the Great World Spin*. In that novel, McCann is "determined to place the wire-walk and the 'towers disintegrating' at opposite ends of a spectrum."[51] Although McCann's remarks in an interview appear to bear out Mackay's claim ("What a spectacular act of creation, to have a man walking in the sky, as opposed to the act of evil and destruction of the towers disintegrating"), the novel itself does not uphold such a distinction between creation and destruction.[52] On the contrary, it reinforces what Mackay argues of *Man on Wire*, after Frank Lentricchia and Jody McAuliffe, that "Terrorism, in its desire to 'undo' systems of order, shares a common drive with transgressive art."[53]

By forging a structural connection between the wire-walk and subway graffiti, the novel challenges the notion of an easy opposition between creation and destruction *and* between skyscraper and subway. There are three passages devoted to Petit's walk

in McCann's novel: one at the very beginning of the novel; one at the end of Book One and one at the end of Book Two.[54] Like *Man on Wire*, *Let the Great World Spin* proposes "Petit's walk as both similar to and radically different from the crimes committed on 11 September."[55] The spectacle of Petit on the wire causes onlookers to speculate that the man is "some sort of cat burglar, that he'd taken hostages, he was an Arab, a Jew, a Cypriot, an IRA man" (*LtGWS* 5), simultaneously invoking and displacing the threat of terrorism to the novel's immediate temporal frame of reference, the 1970s. The references to Arabs and Jews recall the Munich massacre at the Olympic Games of 1972 while the "IRA man" alludes to the Troubles in Northern Ireland that were escalating in the 1970s. Indeed, the bombing of Dublin by loyalist paramilitaries in May 1974 is the reason for Ciaran Corrigan's decision to leave Ireland to join his brother, Corrie, in New York later that summer. However, the references to "cops [. . .] sprinting across the marble floor" of the World Trade Center and "fire trucks [. . .] pulling into the plaza" (7) evokes a setting far less remote than the 1970s. *Let the Great World Spin* emphasizes the plotting of Petit's wire-walk just as Lentricchia and McAuliffe argue that the attack on the towers of the World Trade Center could be construed as "performance art": Petit and his friends "spread out plans of the building and learned them by heart. The stairwells. The guard stations. [. . .]. It was like they were planning a bank raid" (163). Ultimately, the terror and threat invoked by Petit's feat is inextricable from its aesthetic beauty: "The core reason for it all was beauty. Walking was a divine delight. Everything was rewritten when he was up in the air. New things were possible with the human form. It went beyond equilibrium" (164).

If Petit's walk is the most obvious structuring device employed by McCann in *Let the Great World Spin*, the axis on which the novel itself spins is the subway section that occurs in the dead center of the novel (pages 167 to 174 of 349 pages). Entitled "Tag," this short section treats of Fernando Yunqué Marcano, a young Hispanic barber and aspiring photographer who rides the subways in order to take pictures of the graffiti daubed on tunnel walls. Like Petit, Fernando forces himself to perform a precarious balancing act in order to carry out his artistic impulse: he perches on the "thin metal platform" between two subway train carriages, "one hand on his camera, the other on the car door [. . .] looking for new tags" (167). Capturing the graffiti involves "tottering on the steel plate" (169). Similarly, if Petit is "like a pencil mark, most of which had been erased" (7) and his walk enables "[e]verything [to be] rewritten," this links emphatically to the textuality of graffiti. Like the Petit sections, the language in this fragment evinces a clear connection between art and terror. For Fernando, who is fascinated by graffiti, the taggers are engaged in "Guerrilla work" (170). The passage also makes much of the double connotations of the term "bomb," as part of the graffiti lexicon and as a word that inevitably

invokes the explosive device and thus terror: "Used to be, he dug the bombings, riding in a swallowed-up train, where he was just another color himself, a paint spot in a hundred other paint spots. [. . .]. Not just anyone could bomb a whole train. You had to be at the heart of things" (168). The "bombing" of "a whole train" evokes, for a post-9/11 reader, both the Madrid train bombings of May 2004 and the 7/7 bombings in London.

Indeed, when the tag "Taki 183," the handiwork of a young, Greek American graffitist, began to appear in New York's public spaces in the early 1970s, some New Yorkers speculated "that the letters and numbers were a coded reference to an upcoming terrorist action, a kind of warning for those who could decipher the code."[56] The "Tag" section of *Let the Great World Spin* references a debate about subway graffiti which played out very publicly in the pages of New York's newspapers and magazines in the 1970s. Broadly summarized, this involved discussions over whether graffiti, which became pervasively present on New York's subways in that decade, constituted art or vandalism. Beginning in 1972, Mayor John Lindsay waged a battle against graffiti by introducing legislation that made "carrying an opened spray-paint can or ink marker in a public area a crime punishable by a fine of $100, six months in jail, or both."[57] He also set up an Anti-Graffiti Task Force and looked into the possibility of a "technological solution" to graffiti, "something like a chemical coating that would prevent ink and spray paint from adhering to building surfaces, or a solution that would easily remove ink and spray paint from existing surfaces."[58] Lindsay's conviction that graffiti constituted a crime was echoed by the influential sociologist Nathan Glazer, who argued that the fact that graffitists obscure maps, signs and windows contributes to commuters' sense that they are living in "a menacing and uncontrollable city" (8). Certainly, this is the view of Claire Soderberg, the bereaved Park Avenue mother who travels to the Bronx on the subway to meet with mothers of other dead soldiers in *Let the Great World Spin*. For Claire, the carriage "covered head to toe in graffiti," in which "[e]ven the windows were blotted out," is "[h]ardly a moving Picasso" (*LtGWS* 78). Glazer suggests, moreover, that graffitists might move on to "more serious crimes."[59] For Norman Mailer, on the other hand, who, with the photographer, Jon Naar, published *The Faith of Graffiti* in 1974, graffiti sits easily alongside other examples of modern art. Mailer's suggestion that certain creative and imaginative ideas and impulses "migrate" from, say, Joan Miró to "an *espontanéo* with a spray can" refutes Claire Soderberg's oppositional view of the Miró print above her mantelpiece (art) versus the graffiti on the subway carriage ("Hardly a moving Picasso").[60]

If both the skyscraper wire-walk and subway graffiti are linked via their dual associations with art, criminality and terror, McCann also places them in close proximity within the space of the novel. The wire-walk passage that ends Book One is followed

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by "Tag," which opens Book Two. At the end of "Tag," Fernando steps off the subway at Wall Street, climbs the steps to ground level and emerges to the hullabaloo caused by Petit's walk. Although this is not recounted in the narrative, we are led to believe that he photographs the event because the image that appears on page 237 is attributed to Fernando Yunqué Marcano. Thus, subway graffiti and skyscraper wire-walk become connected through Fernando's attempts to photograph both. As McCann acknowledges in his author's note, the photograph was actually taken by Vic DeLuca but the key point here is that the image captures the simultaneous threat of danger and spectacular beauty of Petit's feat, as one of McCann's characters, now in possession of the photograph, recognizes from the vantage point of 2006: "As if the walking man were somehow anticipating what would come later" (325). The airplane flying over the tower evokes, for a post-9/11 viewer of the photograph, the horror of the airplanes that flew into the towers some twenty-seven years later.

I wish to conclude by considering the endings of *This Side of Brightness* and *Let the Great World Spin*, both of which endorse the novels' problematization of trauma's reliance on temporal rupture by engaging ambivalently with the notion of resurrection. *This Side of Brightness* ends where it begins, its cyclicality a confirmation of continuities between past and present. At the very beginning of the novel, Treefrog discovers a crane trapped in the frozen waters of the Hudson River and tries to liberate it by throwing bricks at the ice. At the end of the novel, Clarence Nathan destroys his "nest" and decides to leave the tunnel for good. In order to do so, he must embark on one final balancing act, here configured as "crane-dancing" (*TSoB* 247). Like the bird, whose neck is "tucked under its wingpit" (1), Clarence Nathan "tucks his head into his armpit" (247). He turns on the icy catwalk and thus completes, significantly, the "full circle" (247). The novel ends with the "single word, resurrection" (248), which in its implication of the possibility of returning to a state of "before" seems to uphold, rather than challenge, the before-and-after of post-traumatic discourse. However, as John F. Healy argues, the novel remains sceptical of the notion of resurrection: "McCann hardly romanticizes the possibilities of resurrection, describing [it] as a fleeting, unsustainable, and obscure ascension above suffering."[61] Indeed, despite Clarence Nathan's attempt to resurrect the bird at the outset, he realizes that "it would sink to the depths of the Hudson or get frozen in the ice once more" (*TSoB* 1). In *Let the Great World Spin*, Ciaran articulates precisely how the ending of the earlier novel might be read: "Coming to the city was like entering a tunnel [. . .] and finding to your surprise that the light at the end didn't matter; sometimes in fact the tunnel made the light tolerable" (*LtGWS* 155). The conclusion of *This Side of Brightness* is not so much about resurrection (or the light at the end of the tunnel) as it is about coming to terms with the tunnel itself.

In an interview, McCann recalls how, when he was concluding the writing of *Let the Great World Spin*, "it suddenly struck me that two human towers [Corrie and Jazzlyn] had fallen early on in the novel, and we spend the rest of the time trying to build them back up again."[62] Here, McCann appears to believe, along with Lara, that trauma produces the desire to reverse time, to resurrect the "two [human] towers" that were destroyed on 11 September. However, Book Four of *Let the Great World Spin*, which jumps forward from 1974 to 2006, puts forth a subtle distinction between resurrection and continuity. In this section, Jaslyn, the daughter of Jazzlyn, boards an airplane in Little Rock, meets a doctor named Pino, and, the narrative implies, will embark on a relationship with him. If many of the continuities between past and present in *This Side of Brightness* are expressed through the direct, biological relationship between Nathan and Clarence Nathan Walker, *Let the Great World Spin* proposes continuities between past and present by positing Pino as the symbolic, rather than literal, descendant of Corrie. As a child growing up in Dublin, Corrie develops an extraordinary form of empathy for the marginalized and disaffected. To local drunks, he is "a mad, impossible angel" (*LtGWS* 17). After becoming a Jesuit priest, he spends "a while in the slums of Naples, working with the poor in the Spanish Quarter" (22) before being shipped off to New York where he ministers to the city's "cast-offs": "the whores, the hustlers, the hopeless—all of those who [hung] on to him like he was some bright hallelujah in the shitbox of what the world really was" (15). A doctor for Médicins Sans Frontières who has worked in Africa, Russia and Haiti and now "runs a mobile clinic for veterans home from the wars" (328), Pino is strikingly reminiscent of Corrie. Just as the priest develops relationships with Dublin's homeless, "as a child in Genoa, [Pino] used to go to the soccer games and help bandage the wounded who were involved in stadium fights" (329). If Corrie's childhood prayers are "a sort of jazz" (13), it is significant that Pino is a fan of jazz music (331). Pino is not Corrie resurrected; his presence indicates simply that there are considerable continuities between the beginning and end of the novel, between 1974 and 2006, that "The world [keeps] spinning" (349).

John Cusatis observes that "[m]aintaining or restoring balance has always been a concern of McCann's work" and, indeed, both novels emphasize the beauty of balance through their explorations of upground and belowground balancing acts.[63] Yet they also hint paradoxically at the restorative possibilities of imbalance. As such, they challenge the notion of a linear trajectory from pre-traumatic equilibrium to post-traumatic imbalance to post-therapy equilibrium. One of the symptoms of Treefrog's post-traumatic emotional state is that his early appreciation of balance becomes a self-destructive obsession. Having inflicted a knife wound on a man who steals one of his cigarettes, Treefrog feels he has

"to stab himself on the opposite side of the ribcage [. . .] just to get the balance" (*TSoB* 30). In the subway tunnel, he plays games with a handball and imposes very strict rules on himself: "he must maintain the balance of his body, keep the equilibrium, never hit out of sequence" (26). It is significant, at the end of the novel, that the word "resurrection" rests on Treefrog's tongue as "a thing of imbalance" (247). Imbalance, here, has redemptive potential. In *Let the Great World Spin*, Jaslyn's attraction to Pino is expressed in similar terms: "She wishes she could turn and say: I like people who unbalance me" (*LtGWS* 331). Far from evincing a desire to return to an uncomplicated pre-traumatic state, then, McCann's *Let the Great World Spin* revisits ideas articulated in his earlier novel to elucidate significant continuities between pre- and post-9/11 moments and to critique the politics of an all-too-vigorous insistence on the before-and-after of trauma discourse.

Notes

1. Colum McCann, *This Side of Brightness* (London: Phoenix, 1998), 217, 85. Subsequent references will appear in parentheses in the main body of the article. Many of the quotations I cite from this edition contain differences—sometimes minor, sometimes substantial—from those that appear in US editions of the novel. It is beyond the scope of this essay to speculate as to why this might be the case, but it would certainly make an interesting project in itself.
2. Richard Gray, "Open Doors, Closed Minds: American Prose Writing at a Time of Crisis," *American Literary History* 21.1 (2009): 134.
3. Gray, "Open Doors," 134.
4. Gray, "Open Doors," 140.
5. Gray, "Open Doors," 141.
6. Michael Rothberg, "A Failure of the Imagination: Diagnosing the Post-9/11 Novel: A Response to Richard Gray," *American Literary History* 21.1 (2009): 153. Indeed, *Let the Great World Spin* could also be read as an example of Gray's "critical multiculturalism." McCann's New York, which incorporates Irish, Guatemalan, and Italian immigrants, African Americans and Jews, transplanted Southerners and Midwesterners, and American soldiers in Vietnam, is such a space. In the extended version of his argument in *After the Fall* (2011), Gray admires *Netherland* for disclosing "a series of faultlines, the interstices that exist between individuals and cultures as they go about the business of living and coming to terms with each other in an environment where all the borders, all forms of demarcation are porous and negotiable," comments that could equally be applied to *Let the Great World Spin*. See Richard Gray, *After the Fall: American Literature Since 9/11* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 73.
7. Richard Crownshaw, "Deterritorializing the 'Homeland' in American Studies and American Fiction after 9/11," *Journal of American Studies* 45.4 (2011): 757.
8. Crownshaw, 775.

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9. Crownshaw, 757.
10. Gray, "Open Doors," 134.
11. Gray, "Open Doors," 134.
12. Rothberg, "Failure," 155.
13. Rothberg, "Failure," 153.
14. Kristiaan Versluys, *Out of the Blue: September 11 and the Novel* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2009), 4.
15. Martin Randall, *9/11 and the Literature of Terror* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2011), 7.
16. Neil Lazarus, "Postcolonial Studies after the Invasion of Iraq," *New Formations* 59 (2006): 10.
17. Lazarus, 10.
18. Neil Smith, "After the American *Lebensraum*: 'Empire,' Empire, and Globalization," *Interventions* 5.2 (2003): 249.
19. Smith, 263.
20. John Dunham Kelly, "U.S. Power, after 9/11 and before It: If Not an Empire, Then What?" *Public Culture* 15.2 (2003): 348.
21. Ulrike Tancke, "Uses and Abuses of Trauma in Post-9/11 Fiction and Contemporary Culture," *From Solidarity to Schisms: 9/11 and After in Fiction and Film from Outside the US*, ed. Cara Cilano (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), 79, 90.
22. Michael Rothberg, "'There is No Poetry in This': Writing, Trauma and Home," *Trauma at Home: After 9/11*, ed. Judith Greenberg (Lincoln: U of Nebraska Press, 2003), 150.
23. Colum McCann, "*Let the Great World Spin* Q&A," Columnccann.com, 7 Jun. 2011 <http:// www.columnccann.com/interviews/LTGWSinterview.htm>.
24. Eóin Flannery, *Colum McCann and the Aesthetics of Redemption* (Dublin: Irish Academic, 2011), 206–209.
25. M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: U of Texas Press, 1981), 84, emphasis added.
26. Sue Brennan, "Time, Space, and National Belonging in *The Namesake*: Redrawing South Asian American Citizenship in the Shadow of 9/11," *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 3.1 (2011): 4.
27. Brennan, 8.
28. Gray, "Open Doors," 132.
29. Gray, "Open Doors," 131.
30. Jay McInerney, *The Good Life* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 75. Subsequent references will appear in parentheses in the main body of the article.
31. Jay McInerney, "Brightness Falls," *Guardian* 15 Sept. 2001. 7 Jun. 2011 <http:// www.guardian.co.uk/books/2001/sep/15/september11.usa1>.
32. Ann Keniston and Jeanne Follansbee Quinn, "Introduction," *Literature after 9/11*, ed. Ann Keniston and Jeanne Follansbee Quinn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 3, emphasis in original.
33. Marjorie Garber, *Quotation Marks* (London: Routledge, 2003), 76.

34. Jay McInerney, *Brightness Falls* and *The Story of My Life* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), 378–379. Subsequent references will appear in parentheses in the main body of the article.
35. Benjamin Bird, "History, Emotion, and the Body: Mourning in Post-9/11 Fiction," *Literature Compass* 4.3 (2007): 566.
36. Gray, "Open Doors," 133–134.
37. Rosita Boland, "Tracing what's left after the dust settles," *Irish Times* 22 Aug. 2009: WeekendReview 9.
38. Colum McCann, *Let the Great World Spin* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009), 7. Subsequent references will appear in parentheses in the main body of the article.
39. Michael W. Brooks, *Subway City: Riding the Trains, Reading New York* (New Jersey: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1997), 106–107.
40. Brooks, 123.
41. Eóin Flannery, "Rites of passage: migrancy and liminality in Colum McCann's *Songdogs* and *This Side of Brightness*," *Irish Studies Review* 16.1 (2008): 7.
42. Liam Kennedy, *Race and Urban Space in Contemporary American Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2000), 69.
43. Marie Mianowski, "Down-and-outs, Subways and Suburbs: Sub-versions in Robert McLiam Wilson's *Ripley Bogle* and Colum McCann's *This Side of Brightness*," *Sub-Versions: Trans-National Readings of Modern Irish Literature*, ed. Ciaran Ross (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), 91.
44. Juan A. Suárez, "City Films, Modern Spatiality, and the End of the World Trade Center," *Film and Television after 9/11*, ed. Wheeler W. Dixon (Carbondale: U of Southern Illinois Press, 2004), 103.
45. William G. Ramroth, *Planning for Disaster: How Natural and Manmade Disasters Shape the Built Environment* (New York: Kaplan, 2007), 188, 166.
46. Charles Jencks, *The New Paradigm in Architecture: The Language of Post-modernism* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2002), 9.
47. Jencks, 9.
48. David L. Pike. "Hiding in Plain Sight: Cinematic Undergrounds," *Strange Spaces: Explorations into Mediated Obscurity*, ed. André Jansson and Amanda Lagerkvist (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), 320.
49. Brooks, 3.
50. Ruth Mackay, "'Going Backwards in Time to Talk about the Present': *Man on Wire* and Verticality after 9/11," *Comparative American Studies* 9.1 (2011): 17.
51. Mackay, 10.
52. Bret Anthony Johnston, "2009 National Book Award Winner Fiction: Interview with Colum McCann," *National Book Foundation* <http://www.nationalbook.org/nba2009_f_mccann_interv.html>.
53. Mackay, 10.
54. It is significant that the Petit sections of Books One and Two are entitled, respectively, "Let the Great World Spin Forever Down" and "The Ringing Grooves of Change." The resumption of the line from Alfred Lord Tennyson's "Locksley Hall" (1842), across apparently discrete sections of the novel, itself suggests continuities of time and space.

55. Mackay, 7.
56. Joe Austin, *Taking the Train: How Graffiti Art Became an Urban Crisis in New York City* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2001), 80.
57. Austin, 84.
58. Austin, 86.
59. Nathan Glazer, "On Subway Graffiti in New York," *National Affairs* 54 (1979): 8.
60. Norman Mailer and Jon Naar, *The Faith of Graffiti* (1974; New York: Harper Collins, 2009), 18.
61. John F. Healy, "Dancing Cranes and Frozen Birds: The Fleeting Resurrections of Colum McCann," *New Hibernia Review* 4.3 (2000): 109.
62. Johnston.
63. John Cusatis, *Understanding Colum McCann* (Columbia: U of South Carolina Press, 2011), 176.