

## Editors' Introduction

On 11 September 2001, nineteen hijackers flew three airplanes into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon outside Washington, failing to reach their target with a fourth plane that crashed in Pennsylvania.

Rightly or wrongly, the events of that day – only a decade after the collapse of Soviet Communism had brought an “end of history” for some observers – have been seen as the opening of a new era for the US and the world. Certainly, the subsequent intervention in Afghanistan, which continues more than ten years later, the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the “War on Terror,” and now the risings throughout North Africa and the Middle East have brought shifts in power, even if the significance of those shifts is hotly debated.

Beyond geopolitics, however, there is the issue of “America.” 9/11 did not create an American identity; it merely added another substantial marker to the ongoing negotiation – sometimes deliberative, sometimes agonized – over what constitutes country, nation, and people.

We offer the essays in this special edition as both a marker of and a contribution to that discussion of identity. Moving between politics, literature, and film, the authors in this collection consider memory, trauma, sacrifice, anxiety, and resilience. They do so both with the familiar (the image of New York City in a movie, a novel of loss) and the unexpected (a man falls to his death from a skyscraper). They do so not to define what “America” is, a decade after that September morning, but to add to the perpetual negotiation of the idea and the reality.

In addition to the works in the print volume, further essays can be found at <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayJournal?jid=AMS>.