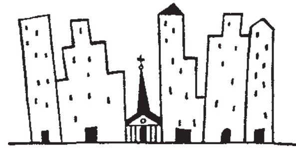
to eat the unborn"). It reminds me of this whole, unlovely decade, which started downtown, and made us all monstrous, me as much as anybody. I was for the war, at first. Later, I was pleased when President Obama promised to commit more troops to Afghanistan, not because I thought it would end that war but because I hoped it would win him the election. I sat at dinner parties and felt envious of people who had not supported the war, as if whether or not a lot of armchair intellectuals did or did not support a war was *what the war was actually about*. For a few Google-eyed hours, I thought that Sarah Palin was not Trig's mother. The rise of the Internet dovetailed with this tribalism. You could pass a decade online without ever hearing from the "other."

About one thing, though, we could all agree: everything had changed. Or had it? The 9/11 perpetrators wanted a world in which (their version of) religious belief trumped all other concerns. But in the real world our concerns are necessarily diverse: we must attend school and find work, provide for children, look after parents. And in these matters we cannot avoid one another for long. Of course, mixed communities are not without tensions—no such community exists. (Relative racial and cultural homogeneity—as Northern Ireland knows—is no guarantee of peace.) But we have many common causes and priorities. It's to be noted that class meant little to the terrorists: they saw only two human categories, believer and heathen. Here on earth, poverty and privilege cross the religious and the cultural divide. Look a little closer at the recent CCTV footage, in London: we riot together, and together we clean the streets.

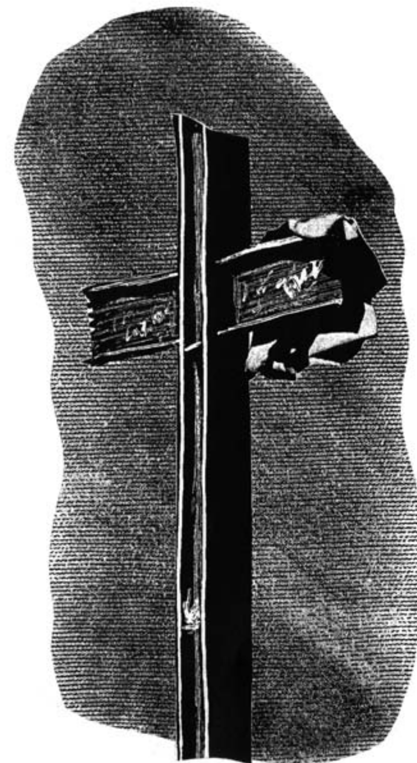
Last Christmas, standing in an apartment building in New York, I was struck by a hallway where papier-mâché Stars of David and holy crosses came together in a decorative seasonal theme. Here these "people of the book" (whose religious texts overlap and divide as deeply as either text with the Koran) lived peaceably in the same space, finding one another's religions by turns amusing, irrational, beautiful, banal. What enabled it? It took generations; it passed through periods of unspeakable horror; sometimes people forgot, sometimes they forgave, and they did both these things imperfectly. Practical matters helped. General economic parity, difficult acts of good will on both sides, and a democratic country in which the apparently impossible has the freedom to happen. It is not a perfect relationship—there's no such thing—and it took two thousand years to get this far. We forget: these things take time. "Let us realize the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice," said Martin Luther King, Jr., who presided over another meeting of supposedly irreconcilable peoples. Not everyone is a monster.

—*Zadie Smith*

ALL TOGETHER NOW



This summer, Jon Krawczyk, a sculptor who lives in Malibu, zigzagged across the country in a Chevy pickup with a fifteen-foot-tall steel cross strapped to the bed. It was a replacement for the crossed I-beams found amid the ruins after the towers collapsed—that famous hunk of metal which rescuers raised over the rubble, as a talisman and a beacon. Later, it was blessed by a Catholic priest, then installed across the street at St. Peter's Church, and finally, in July, transferred to the 9/11 Memorial Museum, which opens to the public next year. The city, having lost so much, made a fetish of what little it had found.



The idea for a substitute at St. Peter's came about by happenstance. Six years ago, Krawczyk sculpted other crosses—one for a church in Palm Springs, another for his alma mater, the Delbarton School, in Morristown, New Jersey—and had a few left over. His father's girlfriend gave one as a gift to a Catholic friend, who mentioned it while having dinner with Cardinal Egan, who, at the time, was the Archbishop of New York. Before long, Krawczyk had a commission from St. Peter's and then, once he was done, an occasion for a Dolorosan road trip through the heartland. Wherever he stopped, during his three-week trip, people flocked to his cross and volunteered their September 11th experiences, very few of which were first or second hand. "A lot of the time, they were crying and sobbing," he recalled last week. "They wouldn't even touch the cross. It was almost a religious experience for them." He couldn't decipher whether this was because of the cross itself—which had a shiny, undulating surface that brought to mind Umberto Boccioni, or the Terminator T-1000—or the terrible event to which it was to pay tribute. At any rate, he said, "once we got to New York, there were no more tears."

Instead, there were rituals of civic mourning—motorcycle escorts, firehouse visits, litigation. As he prepared to mount his sculpture at St. Peter's, a group called the American Atheists sued a range of public and private entities, from the Port Authority to the governor of New Jersey, over the inclusion, in an exhibition on state-owned land, of the original I-beam cross. The gist was that the cross, as an overtly Christian symbol, privileged one religion over many others, in a setting where perhaps none were appropriate. (If there had to be symbols at the museum, the Atheists suggested that theirs might be an atom.) Amid the jeering that greeted the lawsuit—the disdain echoed some of the hubbub, last year, over the so-called Ground Zero Mosque—nonbelievers everywhere asked themselves, "Is this bad for the atheists?," as they again scraped up against the question of whether the United States is a "Christian nation," and whether the events of September 11th were part of a larger holy war.

Joe Daniels, the president of the memorial and museum, said, "The cross meets the criteria of an authentic artifact that tells a critical part of the story of the event: that of the nine-month recovery period." The significance of the cross, he acknowledged, was spiritual but nondenominational. Last week, the Atheists' suit was moved to federal court. Both crosses, accidental and contrived, remained in place.

The evolving consecration of Ground Zero has been tortuous and fraught, occasionally a flea-circus pantomime of the historical and global frictions that, directly or indirectly, rendered this patch of Manhattan eligible for consecration in the first place. Constituencies of many stripes, and in many funny hats, have asserted some claim or another to speak for it, or to have it speak for them. Nonetheless, from the start people have tried to be inclusive. Two weeks after the terrorist attacks, Rudy Giuliani staged a prayer gathering at Yankee Stadium, with Oprah Winfrey as the ecumenical m.c. All the major faiths of New York City (and, therefore, of the world) were represented, except one. Nobody invited a Buddhist.

"I'll have the egg-yellow omelette."

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The president of the city's Buddhist Council at the time was a Japanese monk named T. K. Nakagaki. He was also the abbot at the New York Buddhist Church, a seventy-three-year-old temple on Riverside Drive. Noting the oversight, Nakagaki persuaded the other members of the council, typically an acquiescent bunch, to raise a ruckus. They sent the Mayor a letter of grievance and began organizing ceremonies of their own—interfaith undertakings that included, but did not rely on the hospitality of, their Abrahamic counterparts. If the Buddhist point of view was to be heard, the Buddhists, against their nature, were going to have to assert it more loudly. This was New York.

At the entrance of the New York Buddhist temple there is another war-scorched relic, a bronze statue of Shinran, the founder of Nakagaki's sect. (Like Krawczyk's cross, it is fifteen feet tall.) The statue had originally stood on a hill overlooking the city of Hiroshima. It survived the explosion of the atomic bomb, although its front, seared by the blast, is still visibly discolored. It was brought to America after the war, in the spirit of never-again, and mounted during a ceremony, as it happens, on September 11, 1955. For many years, the temple had held a small service on the anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing, commemorating the dead and praying for peace. Nakagaki, who came to the United States in 1985 and became the abbot in 1994, moved the service outside to the foot of the statue of Shinran, and invited religious leaders from around the city.

Forty-nine days after the terrorist attacks, Nakagaki organized a Buddhist interfaith remembrance in Union Square. And then, in the summer of 2002, he put together a 9/11-commemoration ceremony downtown, on the occasion of the Japanese midsummer memorial celebration called *obon*, which concluded with the release into the Hudson River of a hundred and eight floating rice-paper lanterns, not with the names of the dead on them, as is customary in Japan, but with various messages for peace. Securing permits was tricky, owing to security around Ground Zero (the solution was to start at St. Peter's and keep moving around) and the use of open flame (regardless of the fact that these were candles floating on millions of gallons of water). In 2004, the service was moved to September 11th, and Nakagaki enlisted the New York Kayak Club, which provided dock access to the water, at Pier 40, and whose members paddled out to round up the lanterns before they drifted into the Harbor. In 2006, organizers switched to battery-powered candles. Last year, there were about a thousand attendees, including, presumably, some atheists.

Afterward, Nakagaki stepped down as the head of the Buddhist Church to complete his doctorate at the New York Theological Seminary. (The subject of his dissertation is the swastika—the debasement and possible resurrection of an ancient spiritual symbol.) But he still presides over the lantern ceremony, with the help of the Interfaith Center of New York. Each religious leader (Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Shinto, Afro-Caribbean) has a minute in which to say a prayer—the Sikhs, notably, provide the food—and then Nakagaki chants as the congregants make their way down the dock to release the floating lanterns, with the twin beams of light from Ground Zero as a backdrop. The panorama of

light, and the array of beliefs, perhaps accomplish what the more contentious religious assertions in the neighborhood—the cross, the mosque—could not. And who would sue?

Last week, Nakagaki, who is fifty and lives in Brooklyn, dropped by the Kinokuniya Bookstore, in midtown, to buy rice paper for the ceremony this Sunday. He wore navy-blue robes and sandals. His head was shaved, and he smiled a lot, especially when saying things that he felt he shouldn't be saying. He was accompanied by his friend Matthew Weiner, an associate dean in the office of religious life at Princeton, who is writing a book about his own work as a community organizer with the Interfaith Center. "T.K.'s an in-your-face Buddhist, with a smile," Weiner said. "A Buddhist troublemaker. A provocateur with a noble purpose."

"Buddhists tend not to push their views," Nakagaki said. "But this is a country of talking, so I have to talk." Weiner cited the Buddhist term *upaya*—skillful means.

After browsing the aisles for a while, Nakagaki chose three sheaves of rice paper from a shelf. Glancing at the price, he told Weiner, with a big grin, that he expected to be reimbursed.

—*Nick Paumgarten*

WIZARDS

Like many people, I watched 9/11 on television from a thousand miles away. Also like many people, I found myself asking, among the dozens of terrified questions that crossed my mind, Do I know anyone who works in the World Trade Center? I was pretty sure that I didn't. And I was about to relax ever so slightly and guiltily, when I suddenly remembered—wait a minute—that my brother worked there. Or had. He'd been there during the first bombing, in 1993, and I wasn't certain whether the state administrative office he worked for was still situated there.

It turned out that his office had moved just across the street. My brother was in the W.T.C. subway station when the first tower was hit, and, after the second one was hit and the adjacent buildings were evacuated, my brother, covered in ash, and unreachable by anyone, walked eight hours home to Queens. The next day? He returned to work and sat there at his desk for two hours, waiting for others to show up—until at last it became clear that not a single other person was going to. And so he left. The cough he already possessed became permanently worse.

When I think about his returning to his empty office and just sitting there, I like to imagine that it was not out of some heartbreakingly robotic sense of duty that might run in our family but, instead, due to the universal human desire to return to the fictional normal; the normal and the everyday are often amazingly unstoppable, and what is unimaginable is the cessation of them. The world is resilient, and, no matter what interruptions occur, people so badly want to return to their lives and get on with them. A veneer of civilization descends quickly, like a shining rain. Dust is settled.

In the past ten years, we have done that only sort of. The absurd, brutal cycle of revenge that 9/11 was part of, that all war is part of, has continued. (Terrorism is arguably real war waged by stateless and underfunded communities—or at least the gullible, restless young men within them.) Opportunists who wait for acts of war in order to take material advantage of the chaos will quickly set up their schemes and profiteering. They showed up for work—perhaps not the very next day but soon enough, and the invasion of Iraq ensued, the anniversary of which is less likely to be remarked upon or even precisely remembered. (Politics, as David Rieff has written, is the ghost at the banquet of any national commemoration.) Instead? This year, the death of Osama bin Laden was cheered by many members of a generation reared on the good-versus-evil wizardry of J. K. Rowling. I recently taught a class of quite brilliant university students, most of whom, when asked to name their desert-island book, said "Harry Potter" and then good-naturedly debated among themselves which volume was best. (They noted, too, that they were the same age as Harry Potter, having begun middle school exactly when he began Hogwarts. I remarked that I was the same age as Osama bin Laden and received some startled looks.)

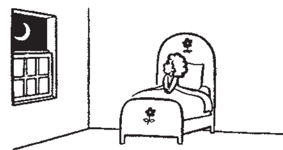
A magical, Manichaean, neo-Biblical view of the world may be less possible for those belonging to an older generation, whose desert-island book might be, for example, Graham Greene's "The Power and the Glory," and so the death of bin Laden was, in general, treated more soberly by them. The new boss, as Pete Townshend once suggested, may be the same as the old boss. And one whiskey priest can be replaced by another.

The idealism of younger generations continues in every part of the world. And yet who would want to rid the young of their idealism? It leaves us without even the gruesomely cheering "Harry Potter" readers. It would leave us with people even more mysterious and unnerving. Who may or may not optimistically show up for work the next day. Whose commitment to the resumption of the everyday may be as shaky as terrorism's proponents would like it to be.

Ten years ago in these pages, writers grappled eloquently with the bombing of the Twin Towers, meticulously describing the billowing smoke, the blue sky, the recurrent dreams of flying low through a city. The word "cowardly" was semantically parsed. Bravery was praised. Middle-of-the-night calls were confessed to, and an intelligent attempt was made to contextualize the event in a longer global history of political tragedy and war conducted in urban streets. Yet what has transpired in the ten years since 9/11, both here and in the Middle East, was not anticipated by any of these writers, all of whom are paid for their finely tuned imaginations. J. K. Rowling, showing up at her desk in the aftermath, feeling a generation's bolt-of-lightning scar, and imagining a long battle laced with fantasy, may have outwritten everyone.

—*Lorrie Moore*

SPEECHLESS



There was a period, about a year ago, when every few nights my wife and I would be awakened by the sound of little steps in the darkness. Then our son's quick breathing in our room, and finally his trembling voice from the