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# Plotting Justice

Georgiana Banita

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**PLOTTING JUSTICE**  
NARRATIVE **ETHICS &**  
**LITERARY CULTURE**  
**AFTER 9/11**  
**GEORGIANA BANITA**

University of Nebraska Press | Lincoln and London

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For Nicoleta Croitoru, with gratitude



If one has to do things for the good, in practice one is always faced with the question: for the good of whom? From that point on, things are no longer obvious. Doing things in the name of the good, and even more in the name of the good of the other, is something that is far from protecting us not only from guilt but also from all kinds of inner catastrophes.

JACQUES LACAN

The only true ethical stance is to assume fully the impossible task of symbolizing the Real, inclusive of its necessary failure.

SLAVOJ ŽIŽEK

Is it at all possible to read and interpret ambiguity *without reducing* it in the very process of interpretation? Are reading and ambiguity in any way *compatible*?

SHOSHANA FELMAN



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project first took shape in my mind in the fall of 2006. I had newly arrived in the United States, after six years in Germany, to study as a doctoral fellow at Yale University. On that fateful day in October, I was watching workers at Ground Zero as they laid the foundations for what was then called the Freedom Tower, the edifice meant to replace the Twin Towers that the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, had destroyed. The decision to embark on a book project about post-9/11 fiction seemed to me at the time as recklessly ambitious as the Freedom Tower itself. Only a handful of writers had responded to the attacks, and after a flurry of academic activity producing several books in 2003 (these were largely instant responses that had taken two years to be printed), little to nothing was going on in the field. Although I cannot entirely reconstruct the motives behind my decision (and the blurriness of the memory is significant in itself), my resolve was confirmed by 9/11 fictions that staged encounters resembling mine—resolutions and anxieties formed at Ground Zero—begging the question of what exactly I and other New York locals and pilgrims were responding to. And why did we feel impelled to take on life projects, as it were; what was the nature of this imperative, and what caused it? To what extent does the site elicit a personal reaction, and how do we, on an objective level, make sense of it as an ethical imperative? Part of my intention in this book has been to answer that question. In doing so I have attempted to put the ethical debates emerging from the attacks into conversation with transnational accounts of 9/11 as an event shaped and prefigured by global histories. In light of this international remapping of Ground Zero, the concept of post-9/11 ethics appeared even more

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stringent and unresolved, occluded by the imperious morality of the rapidly escalating War on Terror.

In the process of writing, I have incurred intellectual debts that are as transnational and wide-ranging as the book itself. I have been fortunate to receive financial support from several institutions. I am grateful to the Council for Gender Equality at the University of Constance for a generous fellowship in early 2006 and a three-month grant in 2009; the Baden-Württemberg Foundation for a two-year doctoral scholarship (LGFG) at the University of Constance, as well as for a ten-month doctoral fellowship at Yale University (2006–07); the German Research Foundation (DFG) for travel grants to attend conferences at the University of British Columbia and Syracuse University, as well as for a research grant to support my archival work at Columbia University in the fall of 2008. The staff of the Columbia Oral History Archives offered valuable suggestions in consulting the vast 9/11 archive hosted by the department.

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