

"That was some time ago. But it will not be used now," said Obi as he walked away. "What will the Government Education Officer think of this when he comes to inspect the school next week? The villagers might, for all I know, decide to use the schoolroom for a pagan ritual during the inspection."

Heavy sticks were planted closely across the path at the two places where it entered and left the school premises. These were further strengthened with barbed wire.

Three days later the village priest of Ani called on the headmaster. He was an old man and walked with a slight stoop. He carried a stout walking-stick which he usually tapped on the floor, by way of emphasis, each time he made a new point in his argument.

"I have heard," he said after the usual exchange of cordialities, "that our ancestral footpath has recently been closed. . . ."

"Yes," replied Mr. Obi. "We cannot allow people to make a highway of our school compound."

"Look here, my son," said the priest bringing down his walking-stick, "this path was here before you were born and before your father was born. The whole life of this village depends on it. Our dead relatives depart by it and our ancestors visit us by it. But most important, it is the path of children coming in to be born. . . ."

Mr. Obi listened with a satisfied smile on his face.

"The whole purpose of our school," he said finally, "is to eradicate just such beliefs as that. Dead men do not require footpaths. The whole idea is just fantastic. Our duty is to teach your children to laugh at such ideas."

"What you say may be true," replied the priest, "but we follow the practices of our fathers. If you re-open the path we shall have nothing to quarrel about. What I always say is: let the hawk perch and let the eagle perch." He rose to go.

"I am sorry," said the young headmaster. "But the school compound cannot be a thoroughfare. It is against our regulations. I would suggest your constructing another path, skirting our premises. We can even get our boys to help in building it. I don't suppose the ancestors will find the little detour too burdensome."

"I have no more words to say," said the old priest, already outside.

Two days later a young woman in the village died in childbirth. A diviner was immediately consulted and he prescribed heavy sacrifices to propitiate ancestors insulted by the fence.

Obi woke up next morning among the ruins of his work. The beautiful hedges were torn up not just near the path but right round the school, the flowers trampled to death and one of the school buildings pulled down.

. . . That day, the white Supervisor came to inspect the school and wrote a nasty report on the state of the premises but more seriously about the "tribal-war situation developing between the school and the village, arising in part from the misguided zeal of the new headmaster."

**Q** How does this story illustrate the conflict between tradition and innovation?

**Q** What might the path in this story symbolize?

### The Challenge of Globalism

#### Terrorism

80 Probably the greatest single threat to the contemporary global community is terrorism, the deliberate and systematic use of violence against civilians in order to destabilize political systems or advance political, religious, or ideological goals. As a combat tactic, terrorism is not new; however, rapid forms of communication and transportation, and the availability of more virulent weaponry, make contemporary terrorism both imminent and potentially devastating. Terrorist attacks have taken place all over the world, from Madrid to Mumbai. One of the most ruthless took the form of a coordinated air assault on New York's World Trade Center and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. On September 11, 2001, Islamic militants representing the radical Muslim group known as al-Qaeda ("the base") hijacked four American airliners, flying two of them into the Twin Towers in Manhattan, and a third into the headquarters of the U. S. Department of Defense near the nation's capital. A fourth crashed before it could reach its target: the White House.

Masterminded by al-Qaeda's leader, Osama bin Laden (1957–2011), the attack, now called "9-11," killed more than 3000 civilians. Bin Laden justified the operation as retaliation for America's military presence and eco-political interference in the predominantly Muslim regions of the Middle East. The recurrence of radical Islamist assaults on other primarily Western targets throughout the world underline the troubling rift between two principal ideologies: the modern and dominantly Western separation of Church and state, and strict Qur'anic theocracy, by which religion and religious leaders dictate the governing order.

100 Eighteen months after 9-11, on suspicions of an Iraqi stockpile of chemical and biological weapons, a multinational coalition force invaded Iraq; that military intervention, which led to armed conflict between Shiite and Sunni factions, complicated the already tense situation in the Middle East. The war on terror has since spread to other regions, such as Afghanistan, where militant Sunni insurgents known as the Taliban seek to establish the rigid enforcement of Islamic law. And, since 2003, movements to end autocratic rule in various parts of the Middle East (including Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Yemen, and Syria) have resulted in regional destabilization, and, in many cases, bloody civil wars.

#### The Arts and Terrorism

Initially, artists responded to the events of 9-11 by commemorating the destruction of the World Trade Center and those who died in the assault. One year after the attack, the composer John Adams (whom we met in chapter 37) premiered his choral eulogy *On the Transmigration of Souls*, which was awarded the 2003 Pulitzer Prize in music. Numerous photographs and films have revisited the tragic circumstances of the event, especially the experience of victims who escaped the burning buildings by jumping to their death. The American visual artist Carolee Schneemann (b. 1939), best known for her body-oriented

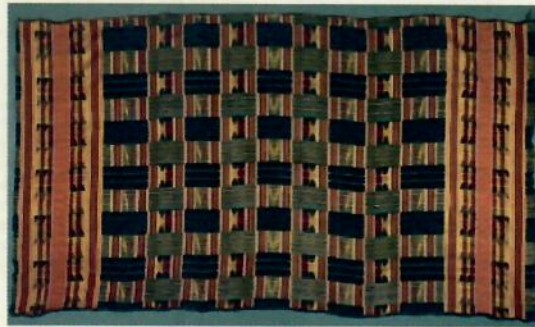


## MAKING CONNECTIONS



**Figure 30.3** EL ANATSUI, *Between Earth and Heaven*, 2006. Aluminum, copper wire, 91 × 126 in. Widely regarded as Africa's most significant sculptor, El Anatsui teaches at the University of Nigeria.

The sculptures of the Ghanaian artist El Anatsui (b. 1944) reveal the intersection of traditional and contemporary African themes. *Between Earth and Heaven* (2006) consists of thousands of aluminum seals and screw caps from bottles of wine and liquor (Figure 30.3). The caps are flattened and woven with copper wire to create large, shimmering metal tapestries. El Anatsui recycles discarded objects into compelling artworks whose designs and colors (gold, red, and black) have much in common with the decorative cotton-cloth textiles known as *kente* (Figure 30.4). The handwoven *kente*—the name derives from the designs of baskets traditionally woven in the kingdom of Asante (modern Ghana)—belongs to a royal textile tradition that reaches back to the eleventh century. Vibrant in color and complex in their patterns, these textiles have come to be associated with a pan-African identity.



**Figure 30.4** Asante *kente* textile, mid-twentieth century. Cotton, 3 ft. 11 in. × 9 ft. 7 in. The individual designs on the cloth are associated with seventeenth-century Asante kings who are said to have laid claim to specific signs and patterns.



performance pieces, treated the "jumper" image in stunning mixed-media artworks. One of these, *Terminal Velocity*, is a vertical grid of scanned newspaper photographs showing nine of the 200 or so individuals (some still unidentified) who leapt from the upper floors of the Twin Towers before the building collapsed (Figure 38.5).

Literary reflection on 9-11 and its aftermath inspired (among other works) the novel *Falling Man* (2006) by Don DeLillo (see chapter 37), and Laurence Wright's carefully researched nonfiction study, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9-11* (2007). In 2013, the Canadian writer Margaret Atwood (see chapter 37) completed a fictional postapocalyptic trilogy, involving a lethal man-made plague unleashed by an ecoterrorist hacking collective called MaddAddam.

The global sense of insecurity in the face of international terrorism was powerfully voiced by two recently deceased Nobel Prize-winning poets: Wisława Szymborska (1923–2012) and Seamus Heaney (1939–2013). Szymborska lived most of her life in communist-controlled Poland, a country that lost nearly one-fifth of its population during World War II. Her poems, while straightforward and conversational in tone, address personal and universal subjects and matters of moral urgency. "The Terrorist, He Watches," written in 1976, is a prescient anticipation of our current unease and apprehension.

The Irish Seamus Heaney shared with his countryman W. B. Yeats (see chapter 34) the gift of lyric brilliance. Heaney's ability to translate the small details of everyday experience into transcendent ideas was unsurpassed. While much of his poetry reflects his deep affection for the "bogs and barnyards" of rural life, one recent volume of poetry, *District and Circle*, responded to the violence of our time, specifically the 2005 terrorist attacks on London's subway system of which the District and Circle lines are a part. Prompted by the Roman poet Horace, Heaney grapples with the sobering fact that "anything can happen."

### READING 38.2 Szymborska's "The Terrorist, He Watches" (1976)

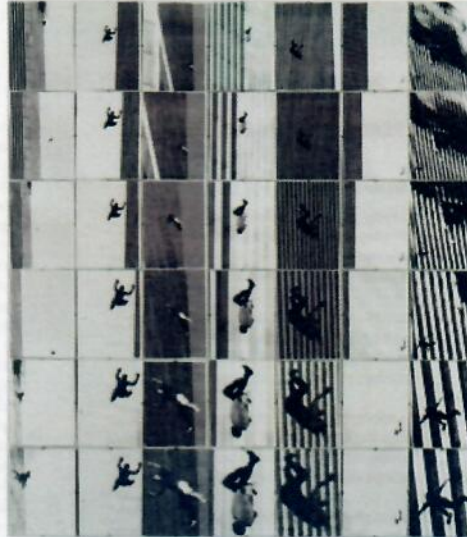
The bomb will explode in the bar at twenty past one.  
Now it's only sixteen minutes past.  
Some will still have time to enter,  
some to leave.

The terrorist's already on the other side.  
That distance protects him from all harm  
and, well, it's like the pictures:

A woman in a yellow jacket, she enters.  
A man in dark glasses, he leaves.

Boys in jeans, they're talking.

Sixteen minutes past and four seconds.  
The smaller one, he's lucky, mounts his scooter,  
but that taller chap, he walks in.



**Figure 38.5** CAROLEE SCHNEEMANN, *Terminal Velocity*, 2001–2005. Black-and-white computer scans of falling bodies from 9-11, inkjet on paper, 8 × 7 ft. Collection of the artist. Schneemann enlarged scanned newspaper photographs (some by the American photojournalist Richard Drew). Collaging the photos onto a huge grid, she created a haunting image of corporeal vulnerability.

Seventeen minutes and forty seconds.  
A girl, she walks by, a green ribbon in her hair.  
But that bus suddenly hides her. 15  
Eighteen minutes past.  
The girl's disappeared.  
Was she stupid enough to go in, or wasn't she.  
We shall see when they bring out the bodies. 20

Nineteen minutes past.  
No one else appears to be going in.  
On the other hand, a fat bald man leaves.  
But seems to search his pockets and  
at ten seconds to twenty past one  
he returns to look for his wretched gloves. 25

It's twenty past one.  
Time, how it drags.  
Surely, it's now.  
No, not quite. 30  
Yes, now.  
The bomb, it explodes.

**Q** What does this poem suggest about the life of the individual in the global village?



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### READING 38.3 Heaney's "Anything Can Happen" (2002)

After Horace, *Odes*, I. 34

Anything can happen. You know how Jupiter!<sup>1</sup>  
Will mostly wait for clouds to gather head  
Before he hurls the lightning? Well just now  
He galloped his thunder cart and his horses

Across a clear blue sky, it shook the earth  
and the clogged underworld, the River Styx,<sup>2</sup>  
the winding streams, the Atlantic shore itself.  
Anything can happen, the tallest towers

Be overturned, those in high places daunted,  
Those overlooked regarded. Strapped-beak Fortune  
Swoops, making the air gasp, tearing the crest off one,  
Setting it down bleeding on the next.

Ground gives. The heaven's weight  
Lifts up off Atlas like a kettle lid.<sup>3</sup>  
Capstones shift. Nothing resettles right.  
Telluric<sup>4</sup> ash and fire-spores boil away.

Q How does the poet's use of ancient mythology contribute to the poem?

#### China: Global Ascendance

It is widely believed that the People's Republic of China will be the next great global power. In the last three decades, China has experienced a cultural transformation of enormous proportions. Once a country of rural villages, this vast nation now claims more than 160 cities with a population of one million or more people in each. Currently, China is the largest exporter on the planet. Still governed by a communist regime, its rapid advances in industry, technology, and the arts have made it a formidable presence on the global stage.

China's ascendance has not been unmarred by internal strife. Following the death of Mao Zedong in 1976 (see chapter 34), communist officials tightened control over all forms of artistic expression. Nevertheless, young Chinese artists and writers continued to work, either in exile or at their own peril. In June 1989, at Tiananmen Square in Beijing, thousands of student activists demonstrated in support of democratic reform. With Beethoven's Ninth Symphony blaring from loudspeakers, demonstrators raised a plaster figure of the goddess of democracy modeled on the Statue of Liberty. The official response to this overt display of freedom resulted in the massacre of some protesters and the imprisonment of others.

Since Tiananmen Square, literary publication has remained under the watchful eye of the state, but efforts to

<sup>1</sup> Roman sky god.

<sup>2</sup> River in the underworld crossed by the souls of the dead.

<sup>3</sup> Mythic Titan condemned to support the heavens on his shoulders.

<sup>4</sup> Terrestrial.

control music and the visual arts have been relaxed. A large body of Chinese literature, much of it written by women, has examined the traumatic years of Mao's Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). The enormous popularity of Western classical music in China has created a talent pool of highly trained performers. Outstanding filmmakers, such as Zhang Yimou (see Film and Activism) have received worldwide attention. Even more dramatic is the upsurge in painting and sculpture, where the Chinese have broken into the world art market with works that depart radically from Chinese tradition (and command huge prices in the West).

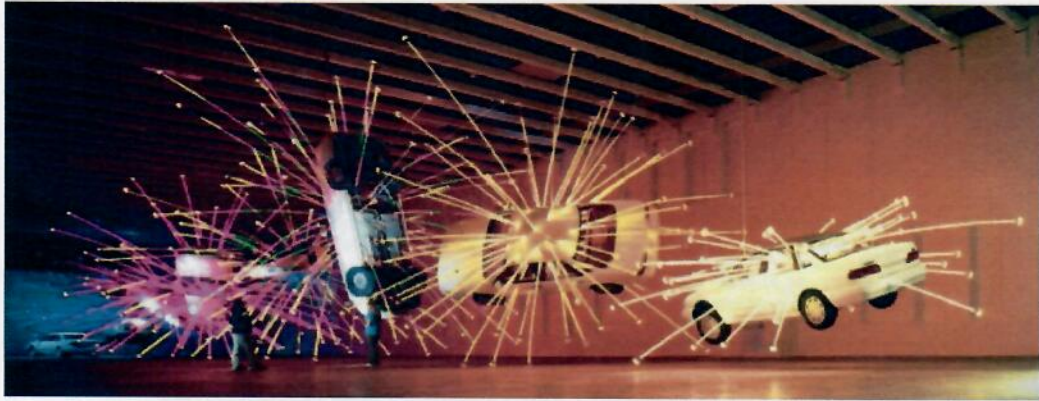
In the past four decades, artists—most of them rigorously trained in China's Central Academy—have had the opportunity to explore the major styles and techniques of their Western contemporaries, through international travel and mass electronic communication. In the early 1990s, there emerged two overlapping (and still flourishing) styles. The first, *political pop*, seized on Western icons and images to glamorize or discredit various aspects of Chinese life. The second, *cynical realism*, engaged commercial painting techniques to satirize social and political issues. Both of these styles are evident in the "Great Criticism" series by Wang Guangyi (b. 1956).

In one painting from the series (Figure 38.6), bright colors and broad, simplified shapes, reminiscent of the Soviet-approved posters of the 1920s (see Figure 34.5), send a sly and subversive message: three Maoist workers, armed with the red flag of China, its mast an oversized pen, advance boldly into the arena of commercial combat, their mission approved by the official government stamps stenciled on the surface of the canvas. Here, collectivist



Figure 38.6 WANG GUANGYI, *Coca-Cola*, from the series "Great Criticism," 1993. Enamel paint on canvas, 4 ft. 11 in. × 3 ft. 11 in.





**Figure 38.7** CAI GUO-QIANG, *Inopportune: Stage One*, 2005. Mixed media. Cai's installations are two- and three-dimensional "narratives" that regularly consume a series of rooms.

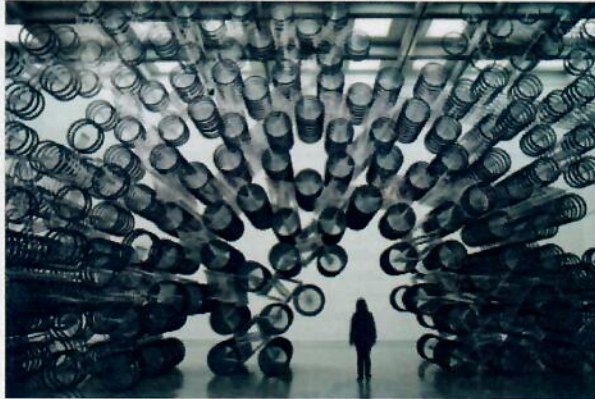
socialism engages capitalist consumerism, represented by such populist commodities as Coca-Cola, McDonald's hamburgers, and Marlboro cigarettes.

More recently, the Chinese art scene has exploded with an outpouring of photographic and video projects (see Figure 14.16), and elaborately choreographed mixed-media installations. The Chinese-born Cai Guo-Qiang (b. 1957) moved to Manhattan in 1995, bringing with him the age-old literary and artistic traditions of his homeland. Trained in stage design at the Shanghai Drama Institute, Cai captures in his public works the disquieting nature of contemporary life. Many of his installations explore the properties of gunpowder—an explosive invented by the Chinese for firework displays.

Cai's most ambitious project was an installation in 2004 of four works. The first piece, *Inopportune: Stage One*, featured a brilliant array of colored lights pulsing from long transparent rods that burst from nine identical Ford sedans (Figure 38.7). The cars, suspended in midair along a 300-foot gallery, called to mind a sequence of images unfurling in a Chinese scroll, or a series of frozen film frames. *Inopportune: Stage Two*, installed in an adjacent gallery, consisted of nine prefabricated life-sized tigers pierced by hundreds of bamboo arrows—a reference to a popular thirteenth-century Chinese tale glorifying a hero who saves his village from a man-eating tiger. *Mission* is a startling three-channel, ninety-second film projected on a huge screen of a phantom car bursting silently into flames, then

floating in a dreamlike manner through Manhattan's bustling, nocturnal Times Square. In front of the screen is an actual car filled with used fireworks. The fourth work is *Nine Cars*, a huge two-dimensional wall-hanging on which one sees nine exploding cars as "painted" by ignited gunpowder on paper. In this project Cai has mixed an assortment of traditions, symbols, and images to capture the violence of contemporary urban life. He claims that he uses the tools and materials of destruction and terror for healing purposes—the Chinese character for "gunpowder" translates literally as "fire medicine," which was once thought to cure the ailing body.

One of China's foremost (and most politically controversial) contemporary artists, Ai Weiwei (b. 1957), produces multimedia sculpture, photography, films, and performance art; but he is best known in the West as an outspoken critic of China's authoritarian regime. Ai's large installations, such as *Forever Bicycle* (Figure 38.8), reference Chinese tradition by repurposing the most common



**Figure 38.8** AI WEIWEI, *Forever Bicycle*, 2011. Deeply concerned with freedom of expression, Ai Weiwei attempts to transform China's "social landscape" both through his colossal installations and by way of critical commentary posted online.



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mode of transportation in China. ("Yong jiu," the name of China's best-selling brand of bicycle, means "forever.") For this huge installation, Ai assembled 1,200 steel bicycles, which, while totally stationary, are layered so that they seem to be in motion. At once "social sculpture" and an expression of the artist's wit, the work is both visually provocative and obliquely personal—especially since the Chinese government has immobilized the activist artist by withholding his passport.

The building boom that China has enjoyed in the early twenty-first century was markedly accelerated by Beijing's role as the site of the 2008 Olympic Games. Representative of the global perspective, the architectural projects for the Olympics involved multinational participation and cooperation: the extraordinary Beijing airport—now the largest in the world—was the brainchild of the British architect Norman Foster (discussed later in this chapter); the National Stadium (nicknamed the "Bird's Nest" to describe its interwoven steel latticework) was designed by the Swiss architects Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron in collaboration with Ai Weiwei; and the Aquatic Center (known as the "Water Cube") was designed and built by a consortium of Australian architects and Chinese engineers.

### The Global Ecosystem

The future of the environment has become a major global concern. While modern industry brings vast benefits to humankind, it also threatens the global ecosystem (the ecological community and its physical environment). Sulphur dioxide emissions in one part of the world affect other parts of the world, causing acid rain that damages forests, lakes, and soil. Industrial pollution poisons the entire planet's oceans. Leaks from nuclear reactors (as occurred in 2011 at Japan's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear facility following a devastating tsunami) endanger populations thousands of miles away, and greenhouse gases (produced in part from the burning of the coal, oil, and natural gas that power the world's industries) contribute to global warming and increasingly dangerous changes in the earth's climate. Although such realities have inspired increasing concern for the viability of the ecosystem, they have only recently attracted the serious attention of world leaders.

A landmark figure in the study of ecological systems is the American sociobiologist Edward Osborne Wilson (b. 1929). A leading defender of the natural environment, Wilson's early work in evolutionary biology examined parallels between ants and other animal societies, including those of human beings. More recently, he proposed a new type of interdisciplinary research (which he calls "scientific humanism") that works to improve the human condition. In *The Diversity of Life*, Wilson makes a plea for the preservation of biodiversity, the variation of life forms within a given ecosystem. He seeks the development of a sound environmental ethic, shared by both "those who believe that life was put on earth in one divine stroke" and "those who perceive biodiversity to be the product of blind evolution." Wilson pleads for a practical ethic that will ensure the healthy future of the planet.

### READING 38.4 From Wilson's *The Diversity of Life* (1992)

Every country has three forms of wealth: material, cultural, and biological. The first two we understand well because they are the substance of our everyday lives. The essence of the biodiversity problem is that biological wealth is taken much less seriously. This is a major strategic error, one that will be increasingly regretted as time passes. Diversity is a potential source for immense untapped material wealth in the form of food, medicine, and amenities. The fauna and flora are also part of a country's heritage, the product of millions of years of evolution centered on that time and place and hence as much a reason for national concern as the particularities of language and culture.

The biological wealth of the world is passing through a bottleneck destined to last another fifty years or more. The human population has moved past 5.4 billion, is projected to reach 8.5 billion by 2025, and may level off at 10 to 15 billion by midcentury. With such a phenomenal increase in human biomass, with material and energy demands of the developing countries accelerating at an even faster pace, far less room will be left for most of the species of plants and animals in a short period of time.

The human juggernaut creates a problem of epic dimensions: how to pass through the bottleneck and reach midcentury with the least possible loss of biodiversity and the least possible cost to humanity. In theory at least, the minimalization of extinction rates and the minimalization of economic costs are compatible: the more that other forms of life are used and saved, the more productive and secure will our own species be. Future generations will reap the benefit of wise decisions taken on behalf of biological diversity by our generation.

What is urgently needed is knowledge and a practical ethic based on a time scale longer than we are accustomed to apply. An ideal ethic is a set of rules invented to address problems so complex or stretching so far into the future as to place their solution beyond ordinary discourse. Environmental problems are innately ethical. They require vision reaching simultaneously into the short and long reaches of time. What is good for individuals and societies at this moment might easily sour ten years hence, and what seems ideal over the next several decades could ruin future generations. To choose what is best for both the near and distant futures is a hard task, often seemingly contradictory and requiring knowledge and ethical codes which for the most part are still unwritten.

If it is granted that biodiversity is at high risk, what is to be done? Even now, with the problem only beginning to come into focus, there is little doubt about what needs to be done. The solution will require cooperation among professions long separated by academic and practical tradition. Biology, anthropology, economics, agriculture, government, and law will have to find a common voice. Their conjunction has already given rise to a new discipline, biodiversity studies, defined as the systematic study of the full array of organic diversity and the origin of that diversity, together with the