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Doktorska disertacija

Amerika po 11. septembru 2001: odzivi v poeziji in kulturi

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Avtorica: Kristina Kočan Šalamon
Mentorica: izr. prof. dr. Michelle Gadpaille
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Povzetek

Namen doktorske disertacije z naslovom »Amerika po 11. septembru: odzivi v poeziji in kulturi« je analiza in sistematična razčlenitev takojšnjih odzivov v Ameriki na teroristične napade, ki so se zgodili 11. septembra 2001 v mestih New York in Washington D.C.

Doktorska disertacija se giblje od analize odzivov ameriških tiskanih medijev do odzivov na te dogodke sodobnih ameriških pesnikov. Prvi del študije je tako namenjen podrobni analizi retorike dualizma, patriotskega jezika kot tudi elementov ustrahovanja v uredniških uvodnikih v izbranih ameriških tiskanih medijih (uvodniki v štirih dnevnikih: *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Washington Times*, ter dveh tednikih: *The New Yorker* in *The Weekly Standard*). Ker se doktorska disertacija osredotoča na takojšnje odzive na napade, zajema raziskava izbranih uredniških uvodnikov obdobje štirih tednov v dnevnem časopisju in osmih tednov v tednikih. Metodologija za dokazovanje, da je bila uporabljena retorika domoljubna, da je pomagala širiti strah in paranojo v ameriški družbi ter da je bila nadvse podobna bipolarni politični retoriki tistega časa, je kvantitativna analiza vsebine (*content analysis*). Ta pristop omogoča analizo besedilnih podatkov v izbranih uredniških uvodnikih s pomočjo računalniške programske opreme za raziskovanje večih parametrov in potrditve prve hipoteze: da so mediji v veliki meri sledili načinu retorike takratne politične administracije. Ko je bila dokazana prva spremenljivka doktorske disertacije glede prevladujoče retorike, se doktorska naloga usmeri proti glavnemu argumentu. Glavna hipoteza doktorske disertacije je, da je po teh dogodkih vzniknilo veliko poezije, ki izraža poetično ter popolnoma osebno stran krize in ki v veliki meri odstopa od javnih odzivov medijev in politikov, kar predstavlja tudi jedro te študije. Tako smo priča številnim antologijam s poezijo o dogodkih, povezanih z 11. septembrom, ki so se pojavile v prvih letih po napadih leta 2001. Disertacija obravnava poezijo po 11. septembru, ki je bila objavljena v teh antologijah (*Poetry after 9/11: An Anthology of New York Poets, September 11, 2001*

American Writers Respond, An Eye for an Eye Makes the Whole World Blind, September 11: West Coast Writers Approach Ground Zero, 110 Stories), posameznih pesniških zbirkah in prestižnih revijah, kot sta npr. *The New Yorker* in *Michigan Quarterly Review*. Študija ne vsebuje poetičnih odzivov, objavljenih na številnih spletnih straneh, saj so bili tisti odzivi v veliki meri napisani izpod peresa ne-pesnikov, ki so se odločili le uporabiti pesniško obliko za izraz svojih mnenj. Ta doktorska disertacija se osredotoča izključno na raziskovanje odzivov med že uveljavljenimi sodobnimi ameriškimi pesniki. S pomočjo tematske kritike doktorska disertacija pokaže, kako raznoliki, a hkrati podobni so bili odzivi ameriških pesnikov.

Tematska kritika omogoča razdelitev pesmi v tematske sklope, ki se razlikujejo v slogu, retoričnih figurah in metaforiki. Še dodatno pa se doktorska disertacija opira na formalistični pristop natančnega branja. Ta novokritiška teorija omogoča interpretativno obravnavo posameznih pesmi in njihovih formalnih elementov, ki gradijo zgolj na zunanjih dokazih posamezne pesmi in ne upoštevajo ostalih kontekstov. S kombinacijo komparativnega (tematska kritika) in interpretativnega (nova kritika in natančno branje) pristopa doktorska disertacija analizira poezijo s formalističnega vidika, hkrati pa zaobjame tudi širši (zgodovinski) kontekst in variacije v odnosih v izbranih pesmih. Teza potrди pričakovani rezultat, da so se sodobni ameriški pesniki v največji meri odmaknili od prevladujočega mnenja javnosti tedanjega časa o terorističnih napadih 11. septembra 2001. Poleg tega odzivi na 11. september v ameriški poeziji kot tudi odklon teh pesnikov od tedanje politike in njene propagande do sedaj še niso bili sistematično raziskani in obdelani, zato je tako zastavljeno delo inovativen prispevek k literarni vedi na področju ameriške književnosti in primerjalne književnosti. Sleherne značilnosti odzivov v ameriški poeziji, ki se nedvomno razlikujejo od odzivov celotne ameriške družbe, so opisane in pojasnjene v luči sodobne teorije.

Ključne besede: 11. september 2001, sodobna ameriška poezija, odzivi, mediji, politika, kultura, kriza, travma, analiza vsebine, nova kritika, natančno branje, tematska kritika

Post-9/11 America: Poetic and Cultural Responses

Abstract

The doctoral dissertation with the title “Post-9/11 America: Poetic and Cultural Responses” examines the immediate responses that emerged in American media and poetry after the terrorist attacks on 11 September, 2001 in New York City and Washington, D.C. The research proceeds from the analysis of responses to 9/11 in several American printed media, to the reading of poetic works by contemporary American poets. Using the resources of the editorials in four major daily American newspapers (*USA Today*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Washington Times*) and two leading weekly American magazines (*The New Yorker* and *The Weekly Standard*), the research employs the theoretical approach of content analysis to examine the rhetoric used. This method enables textual data analysis in selected editorials associated with the language of 9/11 to confirm the first variable of the thesis; i.e. that the media reproduced the manner of the rhetoric of the then current government administration. Seeking to explain the rhetoric of the politicians and the media after 9/11, the analysis explores several parameters. This kind of rhetoric addressed the issues connected to 9/11, and employed a great deal of patriotism-related words as well as a language that could help instigate fear and paranoia in Americans and their culture. After the first hypothesis of the thesis has been established, the study turns towards the primary argument of the thesis. The main crux of the study is to show that the majority of the poets deviated from the prevalent rhetoric of the time, and did not resort to the language of fear and intense patriotism. This in-depth study of contemporary American poetry that came into existence as a response to the events of 9/11 focuses on poems published in several anthologies (*Poetry after 9/11: An Anthology of New York Poets; September 11, 2001 American Writers Respond; An Eye for an Eye Makes the Whole World Blind; September 11: West Coast Writers Approach Ground Zero; 110 Stories*), prominent American journals (such

as *The New Yorker* and *Michigan Quarterly Review*), and poetry collections. Focusing on portraying the manifold poetic responses to 9/11, this study leans on thematic criticism as a comparative approach for creating a collectivity of poems that differ in metrics, style, tropes and figures of speech. Thematic criticism provides a foundation for organizing the poems into thematic clusters, not by determining unique thematic features of a specific poem, but by establishing attributes that unite several poems into a thematic cluster. The thesis divides the 9/11 poems into eight thematic clusters, which are then analyzed in detail. Additionally, the study uses another method to analyze individual poetic responses to 9/11, which is the formalist theoretical approach, New Criticism. This interpretive method of close reading enables an interpretation of a poem by analyzing its formal elements based on internal evidence. With the combination of the interpretive and comparative approach, the thesis has confirmed the main postulate and has established that most post-9/11 American poetry eschewed the prevalent patriotic rhetoric of the then current U.S. media. The study has shown that post-9/11 poetry is a marginal genre in comparison to the 9/11 novel when it comes to the critical examination of the post-9/11 literary responses. Hence, this study is novel in providing a substantial scholarly examination of post-9/11 poetry written by American poets. Chapter 2 investigates fear, patriotism and language issues in politics and the media after 9/11. Chapter 3 establishes the prevailing rhetoric in the immediate post 9/11 response of U.S. media with the help of the theoretical framework of content analysis. The pre-existing scholarly work on literary responses to 9/11 and the problems with representation of 9/11 in American culture occupy Chapter 4, while Chapter 5 sets out the selected methodology (Thematic Criticism and New Criticism) for studying post-9/11 American poetry. Chapter 6 deals extensively with thematic representations in post-9/11 American poetry.

Keywords: events of 9/11, contemporary American poetry, responses, media, politics, culture, trauma, crisis, content analysis, New Criticism, close reading, thematic criticism

1. Introduction

The destruction on 9/11 of American symbols that were highly valued by American society undermined the feeling of safety in the USA. With the assault on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, American prosperity, and financial and military power were under attack. The initial reaction was shock, general angst and trauma, later followed by more insight and even self-reflection. The crisis, being a mass global event, was witnessed by the entire world, and it truly exhibited many traits of a televised blockbuster. Philosopher and cultural critic Slavoj Žižek suggests that 9/11 occurred as much on television as it did at the site of the attacks, the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. He further affirms that, with the TV spectacle of the attacks, people “were introduced to the ‘desert of the real’” as “the landscape and the shots of the collapsing towers could not but be reminiscent of the most breathtaking scenes in big catastrophe productions” (Žižek 18). Media constantly repeated the footage of the World Trade Center towers falling, and Žižek recalls that, “days after September 11, 2001, our gaze was transfixed by the images of the plane hitting one of the WTC towers, we were all forced to experience the ‘compulsion to repeat’ and *jouissance* beyond the pleasure principle¹: we wanted to see it again and again; the same shots were repeated *ad nauseam*...” (Žižek 13). It seems that because of the ongoing repetition of the towers collapsing, people now associate the attacks almost exclusively with the WTC. Sandra Silberstein agrees: “The twin towers, a symbol of New York, became the symbol of “The Attack on America” (Silberstein xiv). Marc Redfield validates Silberstein’s claim and explains that this is the case,

because the socio-geographical space inhabited by the World Trade Center was
(and is) so heavily mediatized, so utterly penetrated by representational

¹ Žižek has adopted Lacanian terminology in his philosophical writing. See Jacques Lacan's Seminars, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*.

technologies of global reach, and so symbolically at the heart of the world's various political, financial, and semiotic webs of power that the destruction of the towers could not help being at once the ultimate media event and (therefore) a haunting image of the deracinating force of communicational technology at work, disseminating images of disaster from the symbolic center of technological, capitalist, and national power. (Redfield 3)

The date of the attacks also seems to carry its symbolic value. Redfield reminds his readers that in 1987 President Reagan had declared the date September 11 as “9-1-1 Emergency Telephone Number Day.”

The aim of this doctoral dissertation, however, is to analyze the responses in American poetry and media culture to the 9/11 attacks, and not to summarize the events of 9/11. The research examines the consequences of these attacks for broader U.S. culture through the language of politics and media, but especially for contemporary American poets. Paranoia and fear, too often encouraged through media and by the U.S. government, have always been constituent parts of American society and culture. David Altheide, who has been identifying and researching fear in American media with the help of content analysis, asserts: “Crime and threats to the public order—and therefore all good citizens—are part of the focus of fear, but the topics change over time” (Altheide 46). Altheide interrogates the “politics of fear,” since the USA has managed to find threats to the American nation throughout history. Altheide, however, mostly deals with fear of crime and drugs. In his article “Fear in the News: A Discourse of Control,” which he co-authored with R. Sam Michalowski, they additionally investigated the connection between fear in the news and topics like AIDS, cancer and even homelessness. Altheide’s study quickly brings to mind various types of paranoia in America, like the anti-communist paranoia in the 1950s or the AIDS paranoia in the 1980s during the

Reagan administration, when news reports were writing about AIDS as “the growing threat.”² The same happened after 9/11 when the media exploded with coverage on terrorism, which was at the time the most recent emergent peril to the United States, soon followed by the anthrax threat.

After the attacks on 9/11, the majority of Americans again felt insecure, worried and terrified. It was made worse for Americans since this was the first major attack that happened directly on American soil. Moreover, the leaders as well as the media additionally helped to magnify the event with the use of expansive rhetorical gestures that pushed the majority of American citizens deeper into feelings of despair. This effect has been well-documented in numerous studies. In his book *Terror Post 9/11 and the Media*, Altheide observes, “Numerous public opinion polls indicated that audiences were influenced by news-media reports about the attacks as well as the interpretations of the causes, culprits, and, ultimately, the support for various U.S. military actions” (Altheide 50). Media repeatedly emphasized the fear of terrorism, and Altheide recalls that former fear stories in the media were now converted into the “terror story”: “Sorrow, suffering, empathy, and pain were merged with fear and vengeance” (Altheide 53). In one of his earlier books from 2006, Altheide noted: “The collective identity of victim of terrorist attacks was promoted by news reports stressing communal suffering, as well as opportunities to participate in helping survivors and in defeating terrorism” (Altheide, *Terrorism* 119). The responses were indeed multifaceted. A Gallup Poll³ from December 21, 2001, *Religion in the Aftermath of September 11* shows that

² *Time* magazine, 12 August 1985.

³ On their webpage, Gallup writes about their methodology center: “We are committed to using scientifically proven and accepted methodologies for Gallup polling in more than 160 countries and areas worldwide. Gallup applies rigorous research standards to its Gallup Daily tracking, Gallup Poll Social Series, and Gallup World Poll surveys.” <http://www.gallup.com/178685/methodology-center.aspx>

there was an increased level of attendance at religious institutions for a short time in the aftermath, but levels quickly returned to those of pre 9/11 church attendance.⁴

Moreover, there was an upsurge in patriotism and nationalistic thinking after the attacks. In their book *In the Wake of 9/11: The Psychology of Terror*, Tom Pyszczynski, Sheldon Solomon and Jeff Greenberg, who developed Terror Management Theory (TMT), report the following:

Flags literally flew off the shelves and appeared everywhere, on cars, buildings, people's T-shirts, and even their skin in the form of tattoos. Banners, posters, T-shirts, and billboards proclaiming "United we stand," "Proud to be an American," and "God Bless America" seemed to appear everywhere. Corporate logos were quickly retooled in patriotic colors of red, white, and blue. (Pyszczynski, Solomon, and Greenberg 101)

Soon after the attacks, shopping and spending became two of the most important patriotic activities. Roger Lowenstein, an accomplished journalist for the *Wall Street Journal* illustrated his point thus: "Since the World Trade Center attack, it has been suggested that our patriotic duty now consists of investing in the stock market" (Lowenstein).

The fact that patriotism intensified in the months following the attacks was also confirmed by another Gallup Poll; i.e. *Have Americans Changed?* from September 11, 2002. The survey results are summarized on their webpage: "America experienced a burst of patriotism last fall that was reflected in near unanimous public support for President George W. Bush, in heightened approval of Congress and the two major parties, and in elevated levels of trust in government to handle international and domestic problems alike" (Gallup Poll). The poll admits that these severely patriotic reactions were rather short-term, and that the attacks did not have a lasting effect of change on Americans, as had first been anticipated.

⁴ [http://www.gallup.com/poll/5134/Religion-Aftermath-September.aspx?utm_source=september 2001 religion&utm_medium=search&utm_campaign=tiles](http://www.gallup.com/poll/5134/Religion-Aftermath-September.aspx?utm_source=september%2011religion&utm_medium=search&utm_campaign=tiles)

The same poll, however, not merely validated that American people were engaging in patriotic activities in the immediate aftermath, but also asserted the presence of a fear factor among Americans:

Prior to Sept. 11, in a Gallup Poll taken in April 2001, only 4% of Americans said they were “very worried” about the chances of becoming a victim of terrorism or of a family member becoming a victim; another 20% were “somewhat worried.” In the first two months after Sept. 11, those figures increased sharply. A mid-October poll found close to one-quarter of Americans “very worried” about terrorism striking their own lives, and another third were “somewhat worried,” for a total of 59% feeling worried. (Gallup Poll)⁵

Furthermore, a certain rhetoric was constantly tied to the events of 9/11 (“war on terror,” “attack,” “us against them,” “their war against us,” “good vs. evil,” the Patriot Act, rendition, “axis of evil,” patriotism, threat, horror, etc.) as the leaders, who also presented themselves as the potential saviors, instrumentalized paranoia to follow an alternate plan. The idea of spreading fear on the side of politics has been presented in a range of studies. Moreover, Altheide argues that “tying terrorism coverage to an expansive discourse of fear has contributed to the emergence of politics of fear, or decision makers’ promotion and use of audience beliefs and assumptions about danger, risk, and fear in order to achieve certain goals” (Altheide 44). Several scholars, including Phillip Wander, who coined the term ‘prophetic dualism’ in 1984, have called this type of divisive rhetoric for dividing the world into two parts, i.e. into *good* and *evil*, into *us* and *them* as President Bush did after the attacks. In her 2012 thesis “From Crisis to War: Prophetic Dualism in President Bush’s September 20, 2001 Address,” Rachel E. Potucek provides a clear definition of prophetic dualism by Jamie Warner, who has extensively studied the concept of prophetic dualism in the United States:

⁵ [http://www.gallup.com/poll/6790/Americans-Changed.aspx?utm_source=september 2001 religion&utm_medium=search&utm_campaign=tiles](http://www.gallup.com/poll/6790/Americans-Changed.aspx?utm_source=september%2001%20religion&utm_medium=search&utm_campaign=tiles)

“Prophetic dualism is a moralistic foreign policy narrative that divides the world into two stark opposing forces of “good” and “evil” and asserts America’s God-given superiority over the evil foe” (Warner 2008 in Potucek 15).

The research will briefly take a look at the rhetoric of dualism in the political arena after 9/11, but it will primarily attempt to prove that major American daily newspapers and weekly magazines followed this same rhetorical strategy, imitating political language. The first part of the thesis offers, therefore, a detailed analysis of the divisive rhetoric, “patriotic language,” as well as fear-mongering elements in editorials from a selection of American printed media (editorials in four daily newspapers—*USA Today*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Washington Times*— and two weekly magazines— *The New Yorker*, *The Weekly Standard*), which will be conducted with the help of quantitative content analysis.

Nevertheless, there have remained strong boundaries between public and private expression and reaction in post 9/11 American culture. Poetic responses, which are not always merely private but are nonetheless individual expressions, were generally at variance with the public responses of media and politics. As a response to 9/11, a great deal of poetry emerged that expresses the poetic and completely personal, intimate side of the crisis, and this is what the second and main part of the thesis focuses on. The thesis examines poems published in several anthologies,⁶ i.e. *Poetry after 9/11: An Anthology of New York Poets, September 11, 2001 American Writers Respond, An Eye for an Eye Makes the Whole World Blind, September 11: West Coast Writers Approach Ground Zero, 110 Stories*; individual poetry collections, and journals like *The New Yorker, Michigan Quarterly Review* and *Hudson*

⁶ Several other specialized anthologies embracing responses to 9/11 have been published since the attacks: *9/11: The Book of Help* (A collection of essays, poems, short fiction, and drawings created in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, by authors and illustrators of books for young adults.) (edited by Michael Cart, Chicago: Cricket Books, 2002); *Poets Against the War* (This anthology specifically addresses the war with Iraq, although some poems are connected to 9/11, as well. All poems published were initially published on a website, created by the editor of the book, Sam Hamill. New York : Thunder’s Mouth Press/Nation Books: 2003); *9.11... NYC...the Days After...: Poetry, Prose, Lyrics and Images From Those Who Were There...* (Dedicated to Our Fire Fighters, Police Officers, and Richard C. Rescorla). This anthology was published on the 10th anniversary of the attacks (edited by Loren Ellis, New York: Art for Healing NYC, 2011). None of these anthologies, however, fit the selection criteria of this research study and are not part of the analysis.

Review. It does not, however, cover poems published online, since most of these poetic responses to 9/11 were written by people who had never written poetry before the events of 9/11. The intent of this study is to examine the responses to 9/11 by American writers that had been accepted as poets.

Despite the multiple fictional/literary responses to 9/11, there have been few critical publications that would deliver a systematic and detailed analysis of the 9/11 texts. Most of critical examinations of 9/11 literature takes into account the 9/11 novel;⁷ scholarly work dealing with 9/11 poetry constitutes only a few articles and chapters in monographs. Engaging with the critical examinations of post-9/11 poetry that have been provided so far, this study will explore and analyze an entire spectrum of American poetry in the context of 9/11.

Furthermore, the present research considers post 9/11 poetry as individual responses; it includes analysis of the numerous 9/11 responses of contemporary American poets, a group who did not simply yield to the general panic, fear, and even paranoia. The responses of the poets were rarely as divisive and patriotic as those emerging from the side of politics, and the poets did not feel the absolute need for closure and certainty. As Ulrich Baer in the “Introduction” to the anthology *110 Stories* explains, literature after 9/11 “is called upon here as the unconscious history-writing of the world: as a form of expression that uncannily register subtle shifts in experience and changes in reality before they can be consciously grasped or fully taken place. In opposition to political explanations, literature resists the call for closure” (Baer 5). In his doctoral dissertation on American political poetry from Whitman to 9/11, Tommi Kotonen established that “during the crises established poets, the poetical

⁷ To name the most referential monographs that have embraced solely 9/11 fiction addressing the terrorist attacks: Kristiaan Versluys’ *Out of the Blue: September 11 and the Novel* (2009), Richard Gray’s *After the Fall: American Literature Since 9/11* (2011), Birgit Däwes’ *Ground Zero Fiction: History, Memory and Representation in the American 9/11 Novel* (2011), Martin Randall’s *9/11 and the Literature of Terror* (2011), Jo Lampert’s *Children’s Fiction about 9/11: Ethnic, Heroic and National Identities* (2010), and Ann Keniston and Jeanne Follansbee Quinn’s volume *Literature after 9/11* (2008).

elite or academic, seems to go towards a “slower reading” of events” (Kotonen 85). That could be why the poets responded differently than the mainstream media.

Like many Americans, poets felt helpless and vulnerable, but they could find solace in their craft, which helped them to express their vigorous, individual and independent views. Some argue that poetry can also help readers in time of a crisis. Don DeLillo introduces this idea in his novel on the trauma of 9/11, *Falling Man*, where a character states, “People read poems. People I know, they read poetry to ease the shock and pain, give them a kind of space, something beautiful in language [...] to bring comfort or composure” (DeLillo 42).

Immediately after the events of 9/11, poetry was present everywhere, and numerous readings all around America, but in particular in New York were held by poets—already established poets as well as younger voices. The amount of poetry after the attacks was plentiful; as the editors of the anthology of New York poets *Poetry after 9/11* summarized, “And on the brick walls of police stations and firehouses, behind the mountains of flowers and between photos of the dead, poetry dominated. Eventually, a fire chief actually issued a statement: Thank you for the food and the blankets and the flowers but please—no more poetry” (Johnson and Merians ix). As Richard Gray points out in his book *After the Fall*, “This was poetry as a spontaneous overflow of feeling, written in the belief that only poems could say what needed now to be said” (Gray 169). He suggests that poetry expresses “the bewilderment caused by the traumatic events” (Gray 170), but much of it (he thinks of numerous online publications) repeats “the clichés generated by the media” (Gray 170) and is often full of technical faults reflecting the stereotypical, the sentimental and “the necessity of writing as therapy” without “authenticity of expression” (Gray 170). Poems published in anthologies are different; the poets were undoubtedly confused and disillusioned but nevertheless excelled at their craft.

Moreover, one can find a range of features in American poetry after the attacks: some poems express emotional numbness, disorientation and homelessness; some, the feeling of

longing for a lost world; again, others seek expression beyond words and exhibit a need to speak the silence, employing the concept by John Cage, asking themselves how to write at all after the attacks; some poets find comfort in withdrawal from everything into domestic particularities; some retreat into history and use existing art to express the current situation, while referring back to poets like Walt Whitman, Allen Ginsberg, and others, but also to other art forms such as music; some poets offer testimony to the traumatic events of 9/11 almost as actual witnesses or in some cases as cinematic spectators, often commemorating the victims; many of them express themselves politically by claiming that the USA has all along been the guilty party, the abuser; whereas only a few poets respond in a manner similar to that of politics and the media.

The thesis focuses on showing how varied, yet similar these numerous poetic responses have been. To this end, it uses thematic criticism as a comparative approach for creating a collectivity of poems that differ in style, tropes and figures of speech. In addition, the method employed for analyzing individual poetic responses to 9/11 is the interpretive method of close reading. This approach enables an interpretation of a text by analyzing the formal elements of a piece of writing based exclusively on internal evidence, not paying attention to the context. By employing the comparative (thematic criticism) and interpretive (close reading) approaches to poetic responses, the thesis attempts to study the body of poetry from a formalist perspective, yet simultaneously embracing the context and attitude variations in selected poems. By combining the interpretive and comparative approaches, the thesis aims to establish that the majority of poetry refrained from the prevailing patriotic rhetoric of the then current U.S. media. The first part of the study, however, will confirm the first variable of the thesis, which is associated with the nature of rhetoric in the post-9/11 printed media; it will show that the media echoed the rhetoric of politicians. The method selected for such an investigation will be content analysis. This method allows objective textual data analysis of

several U.S. daily newspapers and weekly magazines. The responses in politics and printed media will be presented in the next two chapters. The second part of the study is entirely devoted to the examination of post-9/11 poetic responses.

2. Responses to 9/11 in Politics and Media

2.1 Public Response: Fear, Patriotism and Language Issues in Politics

After 9/11, patriotism in the USA escalated, an effect which was first visible in political language. It is not an easy task to pinpoint the definition of patriotism and/or nationalism; however, researchers seem to agree that they are both political concepts, since they have been closely related to the state throughout history. Some researchers like Charles Taylor⁸ and Maurizio Viroli⁹ see them as separate concepts, whereas Alasdair MacIntyre¹⁰ perceives them almost as synonymous. Rogers Brubaker also poses an intriguing question, “What does it mean to speak ‘in the name of the nation’?” (Brubaker 116). In comparing patriotism and nationalism, Brubaker concludes that they “are not things with fixed natures; they are highly flexible political languages, ways of framing political arguments by appealing to the *patria*, the fatherland, the country, the nation. These terms have somewhat different connotations and resonances, and the political languages of patriotism and nationalism are therefore not fully overlapping” (Brubaker 120-121). In his article “Patriotism and Human Rights: An Argument for Unpatriotic Patriotism,” Andrew Vincent addresses patriotism as a notion signifying “a specific loyalty consequent upon particular membership of a country, or, more usually, a state. In this sense patriotism is always marked out as a *particular* loyalty” (Vincent 2009). Vincent adds that “the loyalties demanded from the patriot are simply to whatever values are regarded as dominant within a state or community” (Vincent 352). He further distinguishes between strong and moderate patriotism, with strong patriotism demanding complete loyalty. Similarly, Leonie Huddy and Nadia Khatib propose a difference between “constructive and blind patriotism” (Huddy and Khatib 64). They describe blind

⁸ See Taylor, Charles. “Nationalism and Modernity.” The Morality of Nationalism. Ed. Robert McKim and Jeff McMahan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

⁹ See Viroli, Maurizio. For Love of Country. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.

¹⁰ See MacIntyre, Alasdair. Is Patriotism a Virtue? Kansas: University of Kansas Press: 1984.

patriotism as the reluctance to criticize and consider criticism of the homeland or nation. They equate blind patriots as “typically conservative,” since blind patriotism “is both ideologically divisive and closely aligned with nationalism and ethnocentrism, blurring the distinction between patriotism and nationalism” (Huddy and Khatib 64). Vincent’s concept of strong patriotism and Huddy’s and Khatib’s category of blind patriotism could be interpreted as nationalism or at least on the verge of nationalism, which is thus regarded as stronger than patriotism. On the one hand, patriotism is often merely love of homeland, allowing criticism and consideration. Yet, Vincent argues that even with patriotism, “love of country is not love of a language or ethnicity, but rather of political liberty” (Vincent 352), referring in his article to the U.S. and possibly the European Union. Nationalism, on the other hand, is always imperceptive of any self-reflection in the sense that it attempts to avoid admitting to any faults. Still, the boundaries between the two remain somewhat blurred and indistinct. In this thesis, the researcher will follow Brubaker and those who explain patriotism and nationalism as two separate concepts. Furthermore, we will see that the 9/11 responses in politics were definitely at least on the verge of nationalism, when the politicians and later the media presented America’s exceptionalism, democracy, freedom, prosperity and consumerism as the greatest American virtues, employing language that was ideologically divisive. So, in accordance with Vincent’s claim mentioned above, these are the values expected from American patriots. Moreover, Redfield confirms the presence of nationalism in U.S. culture: “The atavistic nationalism so prominent in U.S. political and mass-mediated culture has, in my view, much to do with the political, technical, and socioeconomic developments that led twentieth-century “mass culture” per se to be tagged as “American”” (Redfield 4).

In his nationally televised speech “We Have Seen the State of Our Union” given before the Congress on September 20, 2001, former U.S. President George H. W. Bush commended the American nation “for their resolve while pledging to use the country’s armed

forces in a ‘war on terror’” (Borrowman and White 18). In 2002, Sandra Silberstein published the book *War of Words: Language, Politics and 9/11*, where she assigned the motivational, but especially highly pedagogical style of Bush’s rhetoric to his speech, “which is high on realism and certainty,” with the aim “to demonstrate thoughtful deliberation” (Silberstein 8, 11). However, in her analysis she soon conceded that another characteristic of his speech was “strategic misrepresentation” with “other potential omissions” (Silberstein 14, 15); e.g. Bush avoided providing answers as to why war was the only way to conquer terrorism.

In the immediate aftermath, President Bush and his administration instantly declared a war against terrorism, later shortened to a ‘war on terror’, seeking revenge for the injustice suffered by the American nation: “Tonight we are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom. Our grief has turned to anger, and anger to resolution. Whether we bring our enemies to justice, or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done” (Bush 19). He stated that the “enemies of freedom [had] committed an act of war against our country,”¹¹ and in the continuation of his speech he disclosed that, after collecting evidence, they had identified the enemies as “a collection of loosely affiliated terrorist organizations known as al-Qaeda” (Bush 20). He also explained why the alleged enemies of freedom hated America, and the reason behind their animosity appeared rather simple: “They hate our freedoms—our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other” (Bush 21). Silberstein agrees when analyzing his speech that, “[t]his [the characterization] is, at best, a simplification” (Silberstein 14). This highly patriotic speech¹²

¹¹ Krista de Castella and Craig McGarty conducted an appraisal theory-based content analysis “to systematically examine emotional appeal in the political rhetoric of three former Western leaders” (De Castella and McGarty 92). They confirmed that Bush’s divisive rhetoric constitutes “bipolar representation of “us” and “them” and the portrayal of the “evil other” with language that is simplistic, dichotomous, and reductionistic” (De Castella and McGarty 87). The second and third theme that are characteristic for the “war narrative,” as they put it, are “the depiction of terrorists as motivated chiefly by a hatred of the (in this case, Western) values” and “information “security,” secrecy, and opacity” (De Castella and McGarty 88). All three themes coincide with Bush’s rhetorical strategy, as will be shown in this thesis.

¹² De Castella and McGarty also recognized “patriotic appeals to unity and strength” in Bush’s speeches (de Castella and McGarty 95).

does not involve even the slightest trace of self-reflection or self-criticism, or consideration of whether America had done wrong in the past, since the attacks are ascribed only to envy of American prosperity and privileges, such as freedom. Such responses are no longer merely patriotic, but already rather nationalistic. Slavoj Žižek thus proposes that it is vital to “deconstruct, doubt, distantiate oneself” from these exact ‘freedoms’ (Žižek 3). Žižek doubts this (Western) illusion of freedom with governments wishing to control all aspects of life, and states that “our ‘freedoms’ themselves serve to mask and sustain our deeper unfreedom” (Žižek 2).

Nevertheless, in such traumatic times, it is normal to feel shock, grief and even anger, and people need reassuring words. Yet in his speech, Bush attempted to console the American nation by further instilling fear among the American people and presenting himself and his government as the ones who would help save America from these enemies and protect Americans and their land. “Our nation—this generation—will lift a dark threat of violence from our people and our future [...] We will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail”¹³ (Bush 24). Altheide writes that the reassurance of keeping America safe was delivered in the manner of “near-hysterical calls” in the “propaganda of fear, hate, and control” (Altheide 1).

Additionally, Bush’s language appeared threatening, setting himself and the government far-reaching goals and making unrealistic promises: “The Taliban must act and act immediately. They will hand over the terrorists, or they will share in their fate [...] Our war on terror begins with al-Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated” (Bush 21). He continued to issue threats against the enemies: “We will starve terrorists of funding, turn them one against another, drive them from place to place, until there is no refuge or rest” (Bush 22). Bush also adopted the radical and divisive rhetoric of our side vs. their side, of good vs. evil,

¹³ De Castella and McGarty claim that fear has been offered “as tool of coercion that promises citizens increased protection only if they consent to the policy changes and measures advocated by their leaders” (De Castella and McGarty 90).

civilization vs. primitivism, leaving little room for options and thus creating a false dichotomy. For him, the matter seemed basic: “Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists” (Bush 22). Žižek poses several rhetorical questions on the choice between ‘democracy and fundamentalism,’ which are the two poles that Bush wanted to differentiate between: “Is it not that, within the terms of this choice, it is simply not possible to choose ‘fundamentalism’? What is problematic in the way the ruling ideology imposes this choice on us is not ‘fundamentalism’ but, rather, *democracy itself*: as if the only alternative to ‘fundamentalism’ is the political system of liberal parliamentary democracy” (Žižek 4). Such a political perspective is, of course, deceptive, and the solutions offered seem too simplistic, even blinding. Martha Stout claims that this standpoint of the American government provides “an extra boost to our [American] well-known sentiments of being the biggest and best, but it also abandons us [Americans] in a dangerous position of ignorance regarding the actual roots and possible futures of terrorism” (Stout 23). Even more, in *9/11: The Culture of Memorialization*, David Simpson offers what might seem a surprising twist in comprehending the Derridean concept of the “autoimmune system of the West,”¹⁴ promoted by the Bush administration and also proposed by Stout: “Every imagining of the other is an encounter with the self: *they are us*. The phantasm of international terror—everywhere and always, unseen and ready to strike—is the reflection of global capitalism ...” (Simpson 136).

Resorting to this kind of rhetoric on the part of the U.S. authorities, i.e. the rhetoric of fear and general panic, is not new in American society. After reading or listening to Bush’s speeches, one is reminded of the rhetoric in the style of John Wayne and the Wild West, ‘wanted dead or alive’. Public fear-mongering has been part of American culture since the USA was founded as a country, a hypothesis found in many critical works and also in Samuel

¹⁴ See Jacques Derrida, “Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides” in Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*.

Chase Coale's article "Conspiracy and Paranoia in Contemporary American Politics and Fiction: The Mouse and the Snake." Moreover, Coale perceives President Bush "as the product in many ways of the American apocalyptic, paranoid, fundamentalist right wing in politics" (Coale 83) claims, "Paranoia and conspiracy are ... as American as apple pie and violence" (Coale 87). Some instances of fear-mongering, paranoia and consequently conspiracy thinking from U.S. history have been briefly mentioned in the introduction; several others will be revealed subsequently.¹⁵

In her book *Paranoia Switch*, Martha Stout observes the matter of terror and fear in the American society from a neuropsychological point of view. She presents a brief overview of U.S. history in regard to its "limbic wars, destructive struggles with small cadres of people who have tried to enlarge their projects or their influence by using whatever our collective anxieties happened to be at the time" (Stout 94). Stout offers three examples from U.S. history: the rise of the Ku Klux Klan after the Civil War, the World War II internment of Japanese-Americans, and McCarthyism, and applies her theory to the time after 9/11, as well. To show the phenomenon of fear-mongering in the media, she selected several headlines that appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* between December 1941 and February 1942, with which she argues that "the psychological tenor of the American press was terrifying" (Stout 98). She conducted a comparable survey after 9/11 and found alarmingly similar results in headlines published in *The New York Times* between September 2001 and December 2002. She established that "fear once again became our leading story, along with the usual shades of fear-consolidated allegiance" (Stout 137). Apart from Stout's examples, one can think of

¹⁵ In the article "The Politics of Terrorism Fears," Richard Jackson enumerates several occasions of fear in the U.S. history of fear: "Historical responses to the fear of violent anarchists, communists, the dangers of illegal drugs, rogue states, and weapons of mass destruction, for example, provide a ready-made set of interpretive frames and strategic responses ..." (Jackson 268). Jackson calls American culture, a "culture of fear," and cannot cease to provide examples of "seemingly dangerous categories of people" that were at different times in U.S. history represented as threats to the American nation (of course, according to U.S. authorities): "the various 'red scares' of the frontier confrontations with Native Americans, the Palmer Raids, and McCarthyism in the 1950s; the 'brown scare' of German citizens during the two world wars; and the 'yellow scare' of Japanese Americans in World War II that led to the incarceration of thousands of innocent Japanese people in concentration camps (Campbell, 1998)" (Jackson 269).

another occurrence of the American dual worldview, i.e., of our side vs. theirs: Altheide mentions that the bipolar rhetoric was typical of the Cold War era, too, dividing the world into two powers, the USA and Soviet Union.

Stout describes six stages of every limbic war, stages which tend to overlap and can be easily applied to the period after 9/11. The first stage is usually a war or an attack, followed by *group trauma* or, as Stout puts it, “a traumatic event that installs a nonconscious paranoia switch in the minds of a nation’s citizens” (Stout 110). The second stage involves *fear broker(s)* who “use the public’s fear to pursue a private agenda” (Stout 110). These alternate plans are usually power and control, and as Stout points out, “Authoritarian fear brokers remind us, frequently and dramatically, of how much danger we are in, whether or not the remaining threat is significant or even real” (Stout 111). People are then *retraumatized*, and people feeling frightened tend to seek solace in someone who simultaneously announces danger and promulgates himself as the protector. According to Stout, this stage is vital, as on it depends it whether a limbic war can happen at all—i.e. whether the nation decides to follow the fear brokers. The third stage is called *scapegoatism*, in which the leader blames another group or race of people for the crisis and uses “hatred’s poison as a tool” (Stout 112). Often, during *scapegoatism* the allegedly guilty group of people “is only tangentially, or symbolically—or not at all—related to the disaster that traumatized the nation in the first stage” (Stout 112). After the scapegoats are determined, it is time for the fourth stage—*cultural regression*—which represents the peak of the process, demanding exacting vengeance and causing intolerance. Stout clarifies: “Typically, encouraging an us-versus-them atmosphere impels a tidal wave of patriotism across the traumatized nation” (Stout 113). The fifth stage—*recognition and backlash*—is the beginning of the end of a limbic war when “protests begin, small and uneasy at the beginning, growing larger and bolder as time goes on” (Stout 113). *Regret and forgetting* constitute the last stage of the process, when “fear

begins to ease, often years later” but questions remain “why we allowed ourselves to be so easily co-opted into an authoritarian agenda” (Stout 114).

If one returns merely to the speech delivered by Bush to the American nation after the attacks, let alone to the events of 9/11, one could apply all these stages of a limbic war to the process. The trauma of 9/11 as the first stage was amplified in the second by the nation’s leader: “Tonight we are a country awakened to danger [...] The terrorists’ directive commands them to kill Christians and Jews, to kill all Americans [...] including women and children. [...] There are thousands of these terrorists in more than sixty countries [...] They stand against us, because we stand in their way” (Bush 19-22). In the third stage, scapegoats were immediately found to help “heighten the population’s anxiety and paranoia” (Stout 111). President Bush was convinced that the attacks were committed by the “group [al-Qaeda] and its leader—a person named Osama bin Laden” (Bush 20). Later, the administration began blaming not only Afghanistan, as in the first speech, but also Iraq. As Stout correctly indicated, there was that “peculiar twist,” when the “offending out-group” is not related to the events. After some time it became clear that the events of 9/11 were not connected to Iraq, “against which nation we [the American nation] unleashed the overwhelming force of our fear and rage” (Stout 112). Even during the speech, Bush had begun to divide, which is typical of the fourth stage, not only the nation but the world into those who supported his authority and the plan of enhancing their political power behind it, and those who did not. He manipulated people by separating these two groups into good vs. evil, and by that stirred patriotic, even nationalistic emotions among American citizens.

Soon after 9/11, the civil liberties of American people began to be seriously curtailed, as the government began strengthening security and exerting control, even over online communication and financial information. Pyszczynski, Solomon and Greenberg describe this

intrusion into people's lives and reduction in their freedoms as some of the most tragic effects of the terrorist attacks:

Security at airports has been increased massively. Long lines, hand searches of luggage, x-ray inspection of packages, chemical screening of shoes, and bodily pat downs are now an accepted part of air travel. The U.S. Congress acted quickly to heighten the power of law enforcement authorities to conduct clandestine observations, including wiretaps, searches, and other potential invasions of our privacy. Random searches of cars, monitoring information on the Internet, and more careful scrutiny of foreign visitors are other examples of the steps being taken or proposed to increase our safety and avert the potential for future attacks. (Pyszczyński, Solomon, and Greenberg 99)

Within weeks after the attacks, the Bush administration prepared an Act of Congress, called the USA PATRIOT Act, which is an acronym for *Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism* Act. The Act passed the legislation immediately and fear ruled the nation for a while. Stout recalls that in the immediate aftermath “gun sales increased by as much as 50 percent in some states, and according to FBI reports, background checks for handguns also rose dramatically” (Stout 165). Because of the overwhelming calls for safety from the government, Americans again felt frightened and felt the urge to protect themselves.

Another public response that went hand in hand with the 9/11 events was the desperate need for protection, and thus for national heroes. The first proclaimed hero was the then current mayor of New York City, Rudy Giuliani. Silberstein declares: “As New York became America's City, Giuliani became a national leader,” who in her opinion, “led through his dual rhetorics of strength and compassion” (Silberstein 103, 104). Correspondingly, on 8 October 2001 in his *New Yorker* piece “Rudy's Rules,” Hendrik Hertzberg concurs: “In cheering

Rudy, we have also been cheering our city, and our firefighters and our cops and our rescue workers” (Hertzberg). Furthermore, when writing about heroes, Pyszczynski, Solomon and Greenberg delineate the behavior and attitude towards fire fighters and police workers at the time after the 9/11 crisis: “Police and fire personnel, both in the targeted cities and throughout the country, were hailed as heroes, finally getting some much deserved appreciation for their efforts [...] The outpouring of admiration for the heroic helpers can be thought of as exemplifying this tendency to identify with heroes in response to reminders of our own finitude” (Pyszczynski, Solomon, and Greenberg 109, 110). Another indication of how strongly people felt about their heroes at the time was the October 29, 2001 cover of the weekly magazine *The New Yorker*. It pictured several children at Halloween, dressed up exclusively as fire fighters and police officers and walking around New York City in their pursuit of trick-or-treat. Real heroes replaced super heroes in popular costumes.

As is clear from subsequent events, however, stages five and six of a ‘limbic war’ followed; people began doubting and later disagreeing with the invasion of Iraq and admitting to the mistakes committed. On November 25, 2001, Michael L. Rothschild published an article with the title “Terrorism and You—The Real Odds” in *The Washington Post*, where he assessed the probability of a person falling victim to a terrorist attack. He established that the odds for such events were minimal; at the same time, Rothschild warned against the paranoia that was spreading across the country and encourages people to stay realistic: “While we need to be made aware of potential dangers, we also need to understand the true probabilities of these risks” (Rothschild). Nevertheless, on the first anniversary of the attacks, David Remnick and Hendrik Hertzberg wrote a “A Year After” comment in the September 16, 2002 *New Yorker* magazine, labeling the situation of the previous year thus: “A blind and righteous pacifism was not an option after September 11th” (Remnick & Hertzberg 33). It is obvious that responses remained both various and conflicted.

An important question, posed by Stout as well, follows: why does the general public accept the fear brokers and yield to fear and paranoia? She claims that because people have already been frightened and traumatized, it is relatively easy for leaders to increase “the fear of an entire population of vulnerable people in the wake of a national trauma such as 9/11” (Stout 134). According to Stout, it is not difficult to control “injured human beings by means of their reflexive, trauma-instilled vulnerability to fear” (Stout 134). Consequently, shocked and petrified people tend to remain faithful to those promising to protect them, and to ignore the fact that “these self-avowed ‘protectors’ are also scaremongers” (Stout 135). Stout makes an analogy with a battered wife who experiences a mixture of emotional turmoil, “fear, paranoia, and submission” on the one side, and “the rise of authoritarian protector” on the other (Stout 145). She further applies this example of an individual to the nation.

Another question will be at the focal point in the following chapter: how much did the media help politicians to instigate fear and paranoia after 9/11? The next chapter will attempt to answer to what extent the media was influenced by politics and how much it echoed the politicians’ ideas. The chapter will show that the 9/11 trauma was hyper-magnified by the media, which consequently transformed the crisis into “virtual trauma,”¹⁶ a term coined by Marc Redfield.

¹⁶ Redfield understands the term “virtual” in this case as “the trembling of an event on the edge of becoming present: one that is not fully or not properly “actual” (Redfield 2). He continues to declare that the 9/11 trauma remained—at least for those who were not victims of the attacks—virtual; i.e. “something mediated, technically produced, not properly real” (Redfield 3). Redfield claims: “For those who had the protection of distance, the September 11 attacks were not “really” traumatic; they were a spectacle: a famously, infuriatingly cinematic spectacle” (Redfield 3). This physical, technological possibility of the *virtual* boomed just around 9/11, since the first years of the 21st century have seen rapid development of virtual reality. Also the movie “The Matrix” in 1999 had a considerable cultural impact.

2.2 Public Response: Terror, Fear and Patriotism in Printed Media

After 9/11, the world, but especially American citizens, was first bombarded with news about the events in great detail, and then continuously reminded by the media of the horror for and danger to the American nation. On 10 December 2001, Ken Auletta wrote in *The New Yorker*: “Like so much else, television news changed on the morning of September 11th. [...] Before September 11th, the evening news, to say nothing of the morning programs and the magazine shows, paid scant attention to foreign news. Instead, the networks filled the air with “weather events,” Viagra breakthroughs, reports on various ailments, the murder of Jon Benet Ramsey¹⁷ ...” (Auletta 60). The media, including television and print, repeatedly exaggerated in portraying the 9/11 trauma, fear as well as patriotism. Altheide asserts that, “the use of the word *fear* has increased in news reports and popular culture [and] the propaganda of fear has promoted terrorism as a world condition [which] has significantly altered social institutions and public life” (Altheide, “Constructing Psychological” 283). Undoubtedly, the media competed as to who was going to publish or report the most shocking breaking news. This was a matter of ratings and money. Altheide calls this kind of media “entertaining news or “infotainment”.” Another major response pushed forward by the media was national security, which will be subsequently analyzed. The measures of heightened national security were presented in the previous chapter, as this was initiated by the then politics, and just imitated by the media.

Moreover, the focus of this chapter has been to establish that media adopted and echoed the rhetoric of politicians, by spreading paranoid anxiety about the threat of terrorism among the people, through constant repetitions of the danger the American nation supposedly faced. This was one of Stout’s findings following her review of the headlines in U.S.

¹⁷ This was a six-year-old girl who was murdered in her home in 1996. The crime has never been solved, and has therefore been of great interest to the media.

newspapers in the post 9/11 period. Altheide holds the view that in the post 9/11 period, “patriotism was rampant, critical questions were rare” (Altheide, “Constructing Psychological” 290). On 14 September, 2001, *USA Today* published an editorial that reflected the immediate reactions to the attacks, and one of the main points reported was the fast-spreading patriotism:

It [patriotism] sprouted spontaneously within hours of the attacks, a symbol of determination rising from the debris. In the twisted remains of the World Trade Center, firefighters planted an American flag, and a cheer went up among the rescuers. For those who thought America could be cowed, it was a defiant declaration that they were wrong. And the spirit was catching. Flags flew off the shelves at Wal-Mart: 88,000 in one day alone. (*USA Today* 12)

Former newspaper writer, Lisa Finnegan, excoriates the media for their failure to raise the right questions about 9/11 in her book *No Questions Asked: News Coverage Since 9/11*. She points out that, “When the president declared a “war on terror,” the American media allowed him and his administration to frame the issue without asking for a definition of a war on terrorism” (Finnegan 15). In fact, the concept of war against terrorism itself was so imprecise and unclear that it would have naturally needed a comprehensive explanation.¹⁸

¹⁸ Many scholars have therefore attempted to provide a clear definition of terrorism in the context of 9/11. As seen by Altheide, the definition of terrorism firstly “promoted the view that terrorism was a condition of the world, a war without end that would require fundamental changes in civil liberties and governmental control” (Altheide, “Constructing Psychological” 291). Brigitte L. Nacos, a professor in political science at Columbia University, warns that definitions of terrorism are certainly not lacking, yet there is no definition that would be universal, and that definition of the term has varied over time. In addressing the definitional controversy, she compares terrorism with pornography in the sense, “you know it when you see it” (Nacos 25). However, she observes that in the 20th century, “terrorism came to mean mostly political violence perpetrated by non-state actors, such as autonomous or state-sponsored groups or individuals” (Vetter and Perlstein 1991; Hoffman 1998)” (Nacos 26). Owing to the vagueness of the terminology, “the administration was able to categorize a country or regime as part of the war [since] there were no specifications to qualify the decisions and therefore no way to determine whether the terrorist label was correct” (Finnegan 17).

This was, however, not the case. Finnegan further characterizes the media after 9/11 as patriotic, humble, fearful and obedient.¹⁹

Moreover, several other scholars have established that, “While the events of September 11, 2001 were indeed tragic, the construction of a moral panic by the media and politicians to support their interests is a greater social tragedy” (Rothe and Muzzati 327, in De Castella and McGarty 90). Richard Jackson also corroborated the profound effects of the media because of “saturation of the horrific images for many months afterward,” which prompted emotions and reactions like “fears, anxieties, and discourses about the dangers of terrorism, political violence, and insecurity” among Americans (Jackson 270). Jackson summarizes that, “the news media played a particularly important role in reminding Americans almost daily about the dangers and threats posed by terrorism in America and around the world in its countless stories and reports, editorials, documentaries, interviews, and books relating to terrorism (Altheide, 2002, 2006; Chermak, 2003; Kaufmann, 2004)” (Jackson 271). This will also be established in the analysis of the editorials in this thesis; these constantly questioned the security and exposed the supposed danger.

There was an instant link between news reports and political discourse after 9/11: “Audiences are told dramatic institutional narratives about fear and threats to their lives and social order. News narratives promote challenges to institutional forces that are dedicated to protecting us” (Altheide, “Constructing Psychological” 285). If one recalls the responses of the politicians as portrayed in the previous chapter, one can draw a parallel between the responses of politicians and of the media. To what extent the media parroted the authorities can be seen in numerous articles published in the aftermath. *The New York Times* opinion

¹⁹ Finnegan does acknowledge certain journalists “who remained independent and skeptical after the 9/11 attacks” (Finnegan 10). “These journalists were labeled dangerous and unpatriotic because they refused to obey and purportedly caused divisions that left the country vulnerable to another attack” (Finnegan 42). Moreover, journalists who voiced their skeptical attitude were still very much afraid “to appear unpatriotic, afraid to anger readers and viewers who they believed were in a nationalistic fervor, afraid to ask the wrong questions, and afraid to anger Bush and lose their access to officials on his staff” (Finnegan 19). With Bush dividing the world into two poles of good and evil, the majority of journalists absolutely did not want to be on the side of evil, on the side of the terrorists.

piece “The National Defense” from 12 September, 2001 even echoed the alleged reasons for the attacks given by the Bush administration; i.e. the animosity felt by the terrorists toward America and the West:

The end of the cold war has brought a resurgence of ethnic hatreds that were often stilled by the superpower conflicts between East and West. The United States must therefore be adroit as well as strong. It will not be easy to address religious fanaticism or the anger among those left behind by globalization. The distaste of Western civilization and cultural values that fuels terrorism is difficult to overcome. (*New York Times*)

The media took the matter even further, and according to Altheide, “fear expanded greatly and moved from being an emotion to a communication style [and] the language quickly shifted from crime to “war”” (Altheide, “Constructing Psychological” 288). How did the media manage to create this fear-infused atmosphere? Altheide explains that, “The major impact of the discourse of fear is to promote a sense of disorder and a belief that “things are out of control”” (Altheide 47). People usually trust the news media, since they understand it as “very important in carrying selective news sources’ messages” (Altheide 50). Moreover, Altheide believes that people “come to share an identity as competent “fear realists,” as family members, friends, neighbors, and colleagues socially construct their effective environments with fear” (Altheide 47). After surveying and conducting content analysis of news reports and advertisements in a range of media, Altheide found that “popular culture and mass media depictions of fear, patriotism, consumption, and victimization contributed to the emergence of a “national identity” (Altheide, “Constructing Psychological” 290). On 30 September 2001, Charles Rousseaux, an editor for the Commentary pages and an editorial writer for the conservative *Washington Times* wrote an opinion piece in which all the given features of fear and patriotism are visible:

Yet we may see many dark days before the cloud of terror is lifted. They may lash out again. Their black deeds may again eclipse the light of our freedoms. We may again lose our friends and our neighbors, our sons and our daughters. Some of them have already been called to battle, and we will support them with our pockets and our prayers; our hope and our love. But before the first shot was fired, we had already won. [...] We have lost our blood, our innocence. We have been scarred with a dreadful evil. But we have found our pride, our patriotism. We have regained our citizenship. And we will triumph, no matter how many dark days lie ahead. We are Americans. We now share a common wound. We are veterans of the war against terror. We now share the red badge of citizen. (Rousseaux 3)

Concurrently, the Bush administration certainly felt that it was correct not only to conceal some information but also to prescribe the terminology for reporting about 9/11 and the war on terror. After studying the numerous news reports, Finnegan observes: “The media assisted the administration further by allowing government officials to largely dictate the terminology it used in its reports” (Finnegan 46). Too often, the media becomes propagandist instead of free, factual and informative; it was not desirable to ask “too many difficult questions or [...] broadcast bin Laden’s messages” (Finnegan 42). According to Stout, the same was considered for television broadcasting after the events of 9/11: “Understanding the impact of such pictures, the Bush administration banned news coverage and the photography of dead soldiers’ homecomings, just before the Iraq war began” (Stout 119). Correspondingly, Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky have been observing the phenomenon of propaganda in the media since the 1980s.²⁰

²⁰ “Propaganda Mill” was the article published in *The Progressive* in June 1988, 52.6, 14-17.

In like manner, Frank Rich wrote the article “All the News That’s Fit to Bully,” where he notes that after the attacks “more than ever, after years of false reports of missions accomplished, the voters need to do what Congress has failed to do and hold those who mismanage America’s ever-expanding war accountable for their performance in real time” (Rich 263). Rich addresses the issue of information control and responds to the attacks on the *Times* by the Bush administration for publishing information that could supposedly endanger national security.

De Castella and McGarty wonder if there is an alternative to fear in rhetoric at times like 9/11 and come to the conclusion that there is:

A reflective discourse of proportional concerns and rational two-sided arguments for foreign policy would provide the greatest protection for true democracy and freedoms as the greatest dangers are posed not by the terrorists, but the consequences of overreaction, rash counterterrorism measures, and a discourse that promotes destruction and dehumanization. (De Castella and McGarty 103)

Nevertheless, such reactions were rare. On 19 September 2001, Helle Bering, editorial page editor of *The Washington Times* opposed to the idea that Americans would need to reflect and reconsider their own actions:

Victims sometimes do it to themselves, accepting that “I deserved this.” To me, it’s just awful that there are Americans who are willing to buy into this mindset in the wake of last week’s deadly attacks on the United States. [...] The fact is that in a very real sense we are all under attack. We are all in this together. The next wave of terrorists is not going to stop and ask for your views on American foreign policy anymore [sic] than the first one did. Nor will blaming ourselves stop them. (Bering 21)

As has been suggested, there were writers who remained realistic and capable of self-reflexivity. Susan Sontag's response in the 24 September 2001 *New Yorker* was critical and skeptical of the immediate response in proclaiming America's exceptionalism, and she called for more sensibility:

Where is the acknowledgment that this was not a "cowardly" attack on "civilization" or "liberty" or "humanity" or "the free world" but an attack on the world's self-proclaimed superpower, undertaken as a consequence of specific American alliances and actions? How many citizens are aware of the ongoing American bombing of Iraq? [...] A lot of thinking needs to be done, and perhaps is being done in Washington and elsewhere, about the ineptitude of American intelligence and counter-intelligence, about options available to American foreign policy, particularly in the Middle East, and about what constitutes a smart program of military defense. [...] Who doubts that America is strong? But that's not all America has to be. (Sontag)

Such responses like the one by Sontag, are common to several poets and not so much to the media after 9/11, as will be established subsequently.

The next chapter will provide a quantitative content analysis of the diction used in several opinion pieces from some of the most important U.S. newspapers and magazines. With the help of the objective approach, using content analysis, which will also be described, the researcher will show to what extent the media mimicked the rhetoric of the authorities. The research will additionally analyze the language the media used that helped to fuel fear among Americans, as well as the use of patriotic language in their writing.

3. Theoretical Approach to Post-9/11 Rhetoric in U.S. Printed Media

The theoretical framework for establishing a prevailing rhetoric in the immediate post 9/11 response of U.S. media is based on content analysis, which is to serve as an objective approach to textual data analysis. The methodology applied in this part of the research is quantitative content analysis. The chapter will introduce the method and discuss the outline of the research, and the data collection and filtering process; it will also offer a detailed content analysis of a selection of editorials. The research goal in this part of the thesis is verification and confirmation of the first variable; i.e. that the language used in major American newspapers endorsed the language of the politics of the time, being extensively patriotic, helping to spread fear and paranoia in the American society by constantly repeating similar terminology (“us against them”, “war on terror,” terrorism, attack, danger, horror, etc.). A comparative content analysis of four American daily newspapers and two weekly magazines will be conducted. Because the interest is in the immediate response of the media news, the research involves a specified period of 4 weeks after the attacks in the case of daily newspapers and 8 weeks after the attacks in the case of weekly magazines.

In order to accomplish a non-biased and balanced perspective, the research embraces both the liberal and the conservative angle, with the aim of achieving a centrist position. Tim Groseclose and Jeffrey Milyo published the results of a 10-year long survey at UCLA of media bias in the USA in *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* in November 2005.²¹ In their article “A Measure of Media Bias”, Groseclose and Milyo prove that overall their “results show a strong liberal bias” (Groseclose and Milyo 1192). For the purposes of this study, the researcher decided on two U.S. daily newspapers that are liberal, according to the survey: *The*

²¹ Since publication, the paper by Groseclose and Milyo has been subjected to critique by several other scholars (see John T. Gasper, “Shifting Ideologies? Re-examining Media Bias”) mainly because the parameters for determining media bias do not sustain over time; moreover, the parameters are closely dependent on the time period of research or observation. The researcher of this study agrees with the latter point; however, for the present study, the survey by Groseclose and Milyo remains relevant, since they included the period of 9/11, which is crucial for this thesis.

Washington Post and *The New York Times*. The same survey describes *USA Today* as “the most centrist newspaper in our sample” (Groseclose and Milyo 1222), and *The Washington Times* as “the most conservative outlet by our measure” (Groseclose and Milyo 1205). Their study was exclusively based on news content; they did not examine editorials or other opinion pieces. Groseclose and Milyo point out that, although objectivity should be the key norm in journalism, reporters tend to tilt in a political direction and promote their ideological disposition. In his book *Tilt?*, David Niven found that nine out of ten reporters are convinced their personal political opinion affects their reporting. Of course, there are other factors influencing ideological bias in printed media, such as advertisers and power bias. This study is not especially interested in media bias;²² it merely attempts to present a balanced position, so as not to offer only one side of the political debate. The study also aims to establish whether the selected parameters (fear, paranoia, patriotism) are more applicable to the conservative or liberal side, or if writing on each side appears in rather similar fashion.

When considering U.S. weekly journals, the book *Media Bias: Finding It, Fixing It* shows that *The New Yorker* leans liberal. On its homepage, *The Weekly Standard* describes its standpoint as conservative, offering “conservative intelligence.” The study will therefore compare the responses in *The New Yorker* and *The Weekly Standard* to determine similarities or differences between liberal and conservative responses in weekly magazines.

For the purpose of content analysis and because of the large amount of material, only editorials from these newspapers and magazines will be surveyed. As opinion content, editorials are usually designed to support a political stance, which is what this researcher is particularly interested in. To some extent, the chosen editorials encompass both perspectives, the private as well as the public, since editorials involve the writer’s personal perspective and

²² In his book *What Liberal Media?: The Truth about Bias and the News*, Eric Alterman expresses his concern about scientifically establishing bias in news media: “Content studies, therefore, are rarely “scientific” in the generally understood connotation of the term. Many are merely pseudoscience, ideology masquerading as objectivity” (Alterman 63). He argues against the constantly repeated notion that media have a liberal bias.

at the same time pursue the public interest of the newspaper or magazine. Since the center of attention in this thesis is the private, individual response to 9/11, mostly in poetry, the analysis of editorials helps showcase the public response but simultaneously offer individual insights of the editorial writers, since editorials are opinion pieces.

Moreover, since the main focus of the research is not on rhetorical analysis in the post 9/11 U.S. media but on a substantial selection of post 9/11 American poetry, the researcher has concluded that the integrity of the thesis will not suffer if only editorials are examined and coded. This section serves merely as a counterpart to the essential hypothesis of the study: that the majority of poets rejected the prevailing patriotic rhetoric of the time. It also needs to be emphasized that the quality of the given printed media's standard of reporting has not been of any significance to the research.

3.1 Content Analysis: The Approach

Content analysis has a long-established history in many branches of social sciences, such as economics and business, anthropology, sociology, psychology, political science and journalism, and its application has been increasing since the 1960s. Content analysis is a systematic method for studying not only texts, but also messages and symbols, ranging from transcripts, newspaper and advertising content, to television programs and films. In 1984, William J. Starosta claimed that: “Content analysis translates frequency of occurrence of certain symbols into summary judgments and comparisons of content of the discourse” (Starosta 185).

In the past, content analysis has been criticized extensively for its “simplistic approach to language by counting words and ignoring both the co-text of a word or phrase (i.e., the words or sentences coming before and after it) and the context of the text as a whole” (Jütersonke and Stucki in Rodriguez 35). Quantitative content analysis has been often labeled over-simplified as “word counts,” since it does not offer interpretation but merely conducts statistical analyses of countable elements, nowadays predominantly using computer software. In a numerical process, the researcher becomes a coder, gathering and examining units of data collection. In the light of such criticism, Andrew Wilson posits that: “Under some circumstances mere counting can lead to misleading conclusions” (Wilson 206).

Another aspect of content analysis is therefore the qualitative approach. Klaus H. Krippendorff explains that, when embracing qualitative content analysis, one acknowledges “the holistic qualities of texts,” and does not reject the context, with the help of interpretive methods enabled by approaches like cultural criticism, critical discourse analysis, etc. Krippendorff adds that scholars who employ interpretive methods, “feel justified in going back and revising earlier interpretations in light of later reading” (Krippendorff 88). He believes that interpretation should be the key feature of (qualitative) content analysis, as he perceives even

the initial stage of content analysis—reading—as a qualitative process, no matter if it results in numerical depictions. He states, “Qualitative approaches to content analysis have their roots in literary theory, the social sciences (symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology), and critical scholarship (Marxist approaches, British cultural studies, feminist theory). Sometimes they are given the label *interpretive*” (Krippendorff 23). Wilson shares his opinion, observing that “the need for the integration of content analysis with other approaches to text analysis in modern linguistics has been recognized for some time” (Wilson 1).

However, noting different opinions in the field, Janice Snow Rodriguez intimates, “Some in the field of content analysis [still] hold fast to the quantitative/qualitative dichotomy when describing the methodology” (Rodriguez 36). Kimberly Neuendorf, one of the leading contemporary researchers in the field of content analysis, would agree with entirely limiting content analysis to non-qualitative study. In her *The Content Analysis Guidebook*, she advocates a rather narrow definition of content analysis, and points out that “a number of so-called content analysis studies are actually qualitative studies, not what this book would define as content analysis at all” (Neuendorf 30). For the purposes of this study, quantitative content analysis as defined by Neuendorf suffices, as it “uses a broader brush and is typically more generalizable. As such, it is also typically less in-depth and less detailed” (Neuendorf 15). Yet, it is objective and “provides a replicable methodology to access deep individual or collective structures such as values, intentions, attitudes, and cognitions” (Duriiau et al 6), independently of the subject matter of the analysis.

Furthermore, with the development of content analysis computing tools, one can argue that coders now experience fewer restrictions than before. Rodriguez found that “Jütersonke and Stucki (2007) incorporated elements of McTavish and Pirro’s work in their “Context-Sensitive Content Analysis,” which uses the clause, rather than the word, as its analytic unit, and thereby consider the context deliberately” (Rodriguez 37). Context-Sensitive Content

Analysis functions as a linking content analysis, which works with clauses rather than just words and is able to observe relationships between them.

Moreover, Neuendorf refers to analytic clusters as messages and not words or phrases, and defines content analysis thus: “a summarizing, quantitative analysis of messages that relies on the scientific method (including attention to objectivity-intersubjectivity, a priori design, reliability, validity, generalizability, replicability, and hypothesis testing) and is not limited as to the types of variables that may be measured or the context in which the messages are created or presented” (Neuendorf 10). This type of analysis will be adopted by the current researcher.

Furthermore, computer-based content analysis allows coders to analyze great chunks of text rather quickly, revealing “a verbal passage in an attempt to explain patterns of language that could not be noticed by the average audience member or even by the author himself or herself” (Hart and Childers 185). Both of these features are undoubtedly advantageous to the coder. Hart and Childers see the strength of content analysis also as its greatest fault:

It lets a researcher examine great amounts of textual data almost instantly, essentially translating words into numbers so that complex patterns of iteration and interaction can be observed. In so doing, such programs radically remove lexical choices from their original context by treating them additively rather than as their own individual units of meaning. (Hart and Childers 184)

Krippendorf adds that “content analysts have found the symbiosis of the human ability to understand and interpret written documents and the computer’s ability to scan large volumes of text systematically and reliably increasingly attractive” (Krippendorf 21). Therefore, it seems that, ideally, content analysis is conducted through a combination of the coder’s reading and the computer’s analysis.

Neuendorf concurs that, when employing computer-based content analysis, it is illusory to assume it can be done in an entirely automated way: “The human contribution to content analysis is still paramount” (Neuendorf 40), as will be the case in the next chapter of the thesis. Machine coding helps the accuracy of a study, but the analyst is the one who can decode all the meanings of an analytic unit in the text. It is always advisable to start analyzing manually and then enhance the precision of the analysis with specialized computer software. By not exclusively relying on computer programs in analysis, an analyst can also decode the unwritten, the subtext and not just elements on the page. Neuendorf differentiates between latent and manifest content and cites scholars like Judy H. Gray and Iain L. Densten: “Much of the content analysis literature has concentrated on manifest content, the “elements that are physically present and countable” (Gray and Densten in Neuendorf 23). An alternative is to also consider the latent content, consisting of unobserved concepts that “cannot be measured directly but can be represented or measured by one or more... indicators” (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998, p. 581)” (Neuendorf 23). However, Krippendorff, who is mostly in favor of qualitative approaches to content analysis, is certain that, “[e]very content analysis requires a context within which the available texts are examined. The analyst must, in effect, construct a world in which the texts make sense and can answer the analyst’s research questions” (Krippendorff 30). This researcher, although conducting a quantitative content analysis, agrees that, “[f]or the content analyst, the systematic reading of a body of texts narrows the range of possible inferences concerning unobserved facts, intentions, mental states, effects, prejudices, planned actions, and antecedent or consequent conditions” (Krippendorff 30). Content analysis would seem pointless if the analyst is not allowed to read the texts as readers do.

3.2 The Process

The problem has been presented in the previous chapter; this section will pose the following research questions with regard to the problem of determining in detail what will be examined and why:

1. What issues concerning 9/11 do editorials²³ address?
2. What are the most common themes in editorials on 9/11?
3. Is there a prevailing rhetoric used in editorials?
4. Do they use patriotic language?
5. Do they use the rhetoric of fear and paranoia?
6. Is there a difference in rhetoric of the editorials between liberal and conservative printed media?
7. What latent messages are present in the selection?

The following hypotheses are to be tested according to the research questions:

1. editorials address issues such as terrorism, the war on terror and national security;
2. opinion pieces mimic the divisive rhetoric of the politicians;
3. editorials employ patriotic language;
4. editorials use the rhetoric that could contribute to fear and paranoia among readers.

Ideally, sampling should be random for content analysis to be as generalizable as possible, but because the current study involves periodicity in the frame, random sampling is not an option. Therefore, the researcher has chosen a census as the form for selecting content, where all units in the sampling frame are chosen, which is possible on account of the limited time period of the media content. The sampling used in this study is “purposive or judgment sampling,” where the analyst makes “a decision as to what units he or she deems appropriate

²³ The selection of editorials includes a period of 4 weeks after the attacks in the case of four daily newspapers and 8 weeks after the attacks in the case of two weekly magazines, since the research is focused on the immediate response. Additionally, the selection criteria were based on the attempt to embrace both the liberal and the conservative angle to present a non-biased and balanced perspective of opinion content.

to include in the sample” (Neuendorf 88). This researcher has selected editorials that involve the topic of 9/11 as the category of datasets. It is vital to define the meaning of an editorial,²⁴ in order to understand what this study understands under the term *editorial*, as this is the categorical variable in this study. In this case, the term *editorial* involves formally categorized editorials in newspapers and magazines which communicate opinions, perspectives and standpoints by a writer.

For the quantitative content analysis, data have been collected from electronic resources: *ProQuest Newsstand*, *Factiva*, *National Newspapers Premier* and *Infotrac Newsstand*. The subject of the analysis is a selection of four U.S. daily newspapers and two weekly U.S. magazines, chosen on the basis of non-biased media coverage. All editorials in the study were originally published in printed form. Neuendorf notes: “The sampling unit should be large enough to well represent the phenomenon under investigation” (Neuendorf 73). Thus, the study covers the first month consequent to 9/11 in daily newspapers and the first two months in weekly magazines. The editorials were first read by the researcher, and those editorials whose focus was not 9/11, but a different issue, were excluded from the sampling. The decision was to search for fear and patriotism in the segment ‘body’; headlines were not included in the survey. The researcher has found the scope of data sufficient to prove the presence of patriotic language as well as the rhetoric associated with fear and paranoia employed in the sample of 235 editorials.

²⁴ *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* online provides the following definition of the term ‘editorial’: “a newspaper or magazine article that gives the opinions of the editors or publishers; *also*: an expression of opinion that resembles such an article.” *Collins Cobuild English Dictionary* explains the term ‘editorial’ as “an article in a newspaper which gives the opinion of the editor or publisher on a topic or item of news” (*Collins Cobuild*). Moreover, newspaper editorials are self-declared and readily identifiable by their positioning and format within the publication.

Name of Publication (daily newspaper)	Number of Editorials between 12 September and 12 October 2001
The Washington Post	45
The New York Times	59
USA Today	21
The Washington Times	64
Name of Publication (weekly magazine)	Number of Editorials between 12 September and 12 November 2001
The New Yorker	36
The Weekly Standard	10

Figure 1. Materials (The Number of Editorials)

Additionally, a descriptive content analysis which embraces “a particular message pool in almost archival fashion” (Neuendorf 53) will be conducted: in other words, documenting the rhetoric used and conducting a comparative analysis of language in some of the major national printed media. “It needs to be understood that descriptive does not always mean univariate, that is, describing results one variable at a time. There might be—and often should be—a predicted relationship among variables measured in the content analysis” (Neuendorf 54). This is significant for the thesis because all selected variables are interrelated and connected to the topic of 9/11, and it is crucial to demonstrate all the features of the rhetoric linked to 9/11.

When deciding on variables, one would ideally have to determine an *a priori design*, according to Neuendorf, allowing the analysis to be as scientific as possible. However, when conducting media content analysis, this is sometimes impossible, and researchers argue they cannot recognize the messages before reading the content. Lincoln and Guba agree that “no a

priori theory could possibly encompass the multiple realities that are likely to be encountered” (Lincoln and Guba 41). An inductive approach, where variables can be added at a subsequent stage, is therefore in order. Even Neuendorf proposes that the analyst conducting media content analysis be allowed to “immerse himself or herself in the world of the message pool” (Neuendorf 103). It seems almost necessary to carry out preparatory reading of the content selected for the analysis. Neuendorf agrees to “a qualitative scrutiny of a representative subset of the content to be examined” (Neuendorf 102), which is the case in this study. Yet, she comments that the selection should again be adequate, and refers to Louis A. Gottschalk and Robert J. Bechtel, who declare 85 to 90 words as being sufficient for “diagnostic purposes.” In the current analysis, an adequate selection has been taken into consideration, yet with the combination of an *a priori design* and an inductive approach.

After the variables are set, measures should be described, which should match conceptualizations of the units of data collection; e.g., a by-utterance coding scheme. During this stage, it is necessary to create customized dictionaries for text analysis, describing all measures or better yet, explaining each term used: “Measurement theory (or classical test theory) assumes that there is a “true” value for each variable on each unit, the value that we are trying to discover” (Neuendorf 111). This shall be included later on, together with the results.

For conducting quantitative content analysis, Rourke, Anderson, Garrison and Archer describe four crucial stages:

Once researchers have a construct they wish to examine, the first step is to identify representative samples of the communication they wish to study [...] analysis begins with the compilation of selections [...] The second step involves creating a protocol for identifying and categorizing the target variable(s), and training coders to use this protocol. After a [text] has been

coded, the coders' decisions are compared for reliability, and their data is analyzed wither to describe the target variable(s), or to identify relationships between variables. (Rourke et al. 11)

This researcher has decided on a computer-based content analysis; therefore, the stage of training coders does not apply to this study. A software application was chosen on the basis that it would best serve this study to code, classify and present results. Another criterion was ease of access. After a detailed inquiry, the program Tropes was selected. Tropes, *High Performance Text Analysis for Professional Users*, is presented on its webpage as a program that can “immediately detect contexts, isolate themes and identify principal actors, through the application of three levels of semantic classifications. You can quickly determine who says what to whom; who does what, where and when; and with what purpose.” In her online guidebook to content analysis, Neuendorf describes the program thus: “Designed for Semantic Classification, Keyword Extraction, Linguistic and Qualitative Analysis, Tropes software is a perfect tool for Information Science, Market Research, Sociological Analysis, Scientific and Medical studies, and more” (Neuendorf).

Once the media material was selected after the reading stage, it was converted to a text document and afterwards analyzed qualitatively using Word 7 and Tropes V8.4, as well as quantitatively with an Excel spreadsheet. The results will therefore be demonstrated both enumeratively and qualitatively in following sections.

The researcher examined how fear and patriotism were featured in editorials, since these express individual responses to 9/11 presented in a public place such as a newspaper or magazine. In the period after 9/11, fear and patriotism were both staples in the majority of editorials, with the exception of *The New Yorker*.

3.3 Content Analysis Results

After providing the context of the 9/11 events in the previous chapter and posing the research questions, the editorials were read and selected by the researcher according to criteria that involve opinion pieces containing responses to 9/11. The research design required a comparison of editorials from 4 selected daily newspapers (*USA Today*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Washington Times*) and 2 weekly magazines (*The New Yorker*, *The Weekly Standard*), and their coverage of the 9/11 events over a specific 1-month time period in daily newspapers and a specific 2-month time period in weekly magazines. A range of terms related to fear and patriotism were connected with editorials about 9/11 to construct a broader picture of the media responses to 9/11.

3.3.1 General Responses of the Media

The first two research questions (what issues were addressed in post 9/11 editorials, and what the most common themes were) introduce a rather general idea of coverage in the editorials. The hypothesis that was tested in connection to these two research questions was the following:

Hypothesis 1: editorials address issues such as terrorism, the war on terror and national security.

In order to prove that all editorials reflected and addressed primarily the 9/11 events, the REFERENCE FIELDS 1 function of the Tropes software was used, which allows “the general context of the text” to be revealed while, “the main themes are sorted by frequency.” In other words, it answers the question: “What does the text depend on?” As indicated in the figure below, the most frequent reference fields in the selected post 9/11 editorials involve topics such as “fight,” “law,” “security,” “politics” and “transport,” a finding which demonstrates that the editorials did cover the notions expressed in the first hypothesis; the editorials were full of references to terrorism, war, security and politics.

Here are explanations of the most frequent reference fields as defined by the Tropes software:

- “fight” includes terms such as war, attack, military, bombers, fighting, Pentagon, enemy, troops and aggression. Basically, these terms are related to war and fighting.
- “law” includes terms such as terrorists, hijackers, attorney, police and suspects; in other words, terms that are related to legislation and law violation;
- “security” includes terms such as risk, security, danger, protection, guard, defense and threat; the terms apply to protection from threat and harm.
- “politics” includes all terms related to this field: administration, political leaders, campaign, president, secretary of state, etc.; the terms are associated with government affairs and governance.

USA Today	Weekly Standard	Washington Times	Washington Post	New Yorker	New York Times
fight 0261	fight 0222	fight 0820	fight 0479	time 0413	fight 0548
time 0220	politics	north america	time 0299	north america	north america
law 0176	0150	0675	north america	0256	0494
transport	time 0139	law 0521	0292	fight 0184	time 0442
0162	law 0131	time 0483	law 0262	law 0167	politics
north america	north america	politics	politics	transport	0328
0124	0119	0387	0233	0167	law 0259
security	social group	social group	transport	feeling	social group
0097	0097	0344	0176	0158	0258
politics	middle east	feeling	social group	social group	transport
0085	0096	0266	0147	0155	0226
social group	administration	money	middle east	health 0139	asia 0207
0074	0060	0246	0133	communication	man 0183
money	behavior	middle east	state 0113	0129	money
0064	0045	0238	asia 0107	media 0125	0182
business	money	communication	communication	business	state 0180
0056	0042	0224	0104	0121	communication
behavior	feeling	behavior	security	politics	0160
0054	0041	0206	0099	0113	city 0153
state 0053	state 0041	religion	location	behavior	business
middle east	asia 0036	0196	0093	0092	0139
0050	communication	man 0191	man 0093	city 0091	security
administration	0034	europa	behavior	language	0130
0049	security	0188	0091	0087	feeling
communication	0033	transport	money	money	0123
0041	organization	0165	0089	0084	behavior
feeling	0025	state 0157	feeling	middle east	0108
0038	education	education	0084	0083	location
organization	0023	0153	business	housing	0107
0037	language	security	0083	0073	administration
location	0023	0143	administration	location	0087
0035	world 0022	media 0142	0061	0068	organization
religion	health 0021	language	europa	way 0066	0075
0034		0135	0045		
characteristic					
0031					

Figure 2. Reference Fields

To further demonstrate that these editorials address the given issues, the REFERENCE function of the Tropes software was used, which shows “the references, grouped together by classes.” The program helps answer in greater detail the questions: “What does the text depend on? Did I say what I would like to?”

Tropes again concluded that the most frequent references are connected to the attacks of 9/11, as indicated in the figure below. The most frequent references in all editorials are *terrorism, George Bush, USA, attack, war, American, and security*, a finding which signals that all post-9/11 editorials primarily addressed the 9/11 events and its consequences.

USA Today	Weekly Standard	Washington Times	Washington Post	New Yorker	New York Times
terrorism 0079	terrorism 0083	terrorism 0249	u_s_a 0145	new york 0115	mister 0166
day 0074	war 0078	u_s_a 0227	terrorism 0143	people 0086	new york 0147
george bush 0071	american 0051	mister 0145	0143	0086	terrorism 0120
u_s_a 0054	george bush 0044	war 0144	mister 0086	day 0086	day 0114
attack 0052	president 0040	american 0141	government 0078	city 0064	american 0109
security 0051	alliance 0037	attack 0117	day 0077	year 0060	state 0108
war 0049	taliban 0034	day 0115	attack 0076	week 0051	george bush 0102
country 0034	week 0033	america 0074	country 0074	one 0046	attack 0102
airline 0033	u_s_a 0033	war 0070	war 0070	terrorism 0045	people 0096
week 0029	state 0029	people 0063	people 0063	tower 0044	city 0092
year 0028	government 0028	afghanistan 0059	afghanistan 0059	way 0043	country 0088
ridge 0028	people 0026	sept 0095	american 0057	world 0042	afghanistan 0088
agency 0028	arabia 0025	people 0092	state 0055	aircraft 0042	district of columbia 0084
aircraft 0026	department of state 0024	state 0089	week 0054	0042	pakistan 0078
sept 0026	politician 0023	government 0087	george bush 0051	time 0041	u_s_a 0071
airport 0026	world 0021	country 0085	0051	attack 0040	year 0068
risk 0025	day 0019	world 0084	bin laden 0044	september 0037	money 0064
bin laden 0025	iraq 0018	time 0083	year 0043	bag 0037	war 0064
government 0025	administration 0018	bin laden 0081	security 0043	war 0036	security 0061
state 0025		muslim 0077	alliance 0041	money 0036	week 0059
		money 0075	time 0040	american 0032	
		year 0066	israel 0038	building 0032	

Figure 3. References

Another intriguing and useful function of the Tropes software is the RELATIONS function, confirming relations that occur in the text and offering an answer to the question: “Which references are tightly connected?” Again, the most frequent relations are connected to

the 9/11 events, as visible in Figure 4. These include connections such as “war > terrorism,” “osama > bin_laden,” “week > attack,” “airport > security,” “american > people,” “attack > america,” “u_s_a > war,” “day > attack,” “attack > u_s_a,” “terrorism > u_s_a,” “conflict > terrorism,” “terrorism > u_s_a,” “attack > new_york”, as well as other similar relations that are related to the 9/11 events and its consequences. *The New Yorker* appears to be an exception, since the editorials expressed a broad-based response to tackling the issue of 9/11, or perhaps employed a different cadre of writers.

USA Today	Weekly Standard	Washington Times	Washington Post	New Yorker	New York Times
(airport > security) 0010	(war > terrorism) 0024	(osama > bin_laden)0044	(osama > bin_laden)0036	(osama > bin_laden)0008	(osama > bin_laden)0024
(osama > bin_laden)0008	(saddam > hussein) 0011	(war > terrorism) 0035	(war > terrorism) 0013	(new_york > school) 0007	(money > billion) 0019
(george_bush > day) 0007	(american > people) 0009	(money > billion) 0018	(u_s_a > alliance) 0010	(new_york > building) 0007	(week > attack) 0014
(day > attack) 0007	(osama > bin_laden)0008	(attack > america) 0015	(u_s_a > war) 0009	(israel > palestine) 0005	(war > terrorism) 0014
(airline > industry) 0007	(social_security > surplus) 0007	(arabia > muslim) 0012	(u_s_a > country) 0008	(acoustic_d > evic) > bag) 0005	(rudolph > giuliani) 0013
(air > marshal) 0007	(al > arian) 0006	(colin > powell) 0011	(conflict > terrorism) 0007	(street > new_york)0005	(civil_authority > rudolph)0013
(bin_laden > network) 0006	(northern > alliance) 0005	(terrorism > u_s_a) 0011	(week > attack) 0007	(ryan > bingham) 0005	(civil_authority > giuliani) 0011
(attack > u_s_a) 0005	(administration > official) 0005	(tax > cut) 0011	(george_bush > day) 0007	(day > new_york)0004	(airport > security) 0010
(week > attack) 0005	(government > taliban) 0005	(george_bush > u_s_a) 0010	(u_s_a > osama) 0007		(attack > new_york)0010
(agency > security) 0005	(house > politician) 0005	(man > woman) 0010	(u_s_a > aircraft) 0007		(george_bush > state) 0009
(u_s_a > attack) 0005	(zacaria > moussaoui) 0005	(sponsor > terrorism) 0010	(terrorism > u_s_a) 0006		(american > people) 0009
(security > airport) 0005	(muslim > american) 0004	(saddam > hussein) 0010	(taliban > regime) 0006		(intelligence > information) 0009
(george_bush > plan) 0005	(weapon > destruction) 0004	(u_s_a > government) 0009	(day > attack) 0006		(new_york > district_of_columbia) 0009
(air > security) 0005	(department_of_st > ate > alliance) 0004	(u_s_a > terrorism) 0009	(year > u_s_a) 0006		(george > pataki) 0007
(war > terrorism) 0005	(george_bush > tax) 0004	(new_york > district_of_columbia) 0008	(state > terrorism) 0006		(day > attack) 0007
(enclosure > entrance) 0005	(taliban > government) 0004	(immigration > policy) 0008	(saddam > hussein) 0006		(country > security) 0007
(money > billion) 0004	(colin > powell) 0004	(u_s_a > economy) 0008	(arabia > american) 0005		(afghanistan > taliban) 0006
(federal > air_travel) 0004	(afghanistan > taliban) 0004	(panic > network) 0007	(russia > chechen) 0005		(country > terrorism) 0006
(u_s_a > violence) 0004	(pakistan > taliban) 0004	(u_s_a > embassy) 0007	(u_s_a > bin_laden)0005		(afghanistan > people) 0006
(air_travel > administration) 0004	(alliance > afghanistan) 0004	(u_s_a > tate > colin) 0007	(israel > peace) 0005		(pervez > musharraf)0006
(muslim > world) 0004	(president > war) 0004	(attack > new_york)0006	(terrorism > country) 0005		(george_bush > war) 0006
(george_bush > government) 0004	(terrorism > state) 0004	(support > terrorism) 0006	(fight > terrorism) 0005		(attack > sept) 0006
(american > flag) 0004			(airport > security) 0005		(george_bush > congress) 0006
(donald >			(day > terrorism) 0005		(bin_laden >
			(bush_administr		

rumsfeld) 0004 (george_bush > airport) 0004 (george_bush > state) 0004 (box > cutting_implement) 0004 (country > security) 0004 (u_s_a > war) 0004 (george_bush > war) 0004	(victory > taliban) 0004 (war > regime) 0004 (difference > regime) 0004 (event > september) 0004 (paul > wolfowitz)0004 (pursuit > alliance) 0004	(president > u_s_a) 0006 (terrorism > aircraft) 0006 (attack > u_s_a) 0006 (u_s_a > bin_laden)0006 (u_s_a > kenya) 0006 (embassy > kenya) 0006 (day > mister) 0006 (u_s_a > policy) 0006 (yasser > arafat) 0006 (george_bush > day) 0006 (day > attack) 0006 (event > sept) 0006 (u_s_a > war) 0005 (nah > entrance) 0005 (syria > libya) 0005 (act > war) 0005 (american > muslim) 0005 (iran > libya) 0005 (department_of_s tate > powell) 0005 (tribunal > justice) 0005 (thousand > american) 0005 (terrorism > state) 0005 (terrorism > america) 0005 (money > trillion) 0005 (george_bush > state) 0005 (bombing > embassy) 0005 (muslim > country) 0005 (george_bush > speech) 0005 (tax > rate) 0005 (george_bush > war) 0005 (american > government) 0005 (u_s_a > military) 0005 (terrorism > attack) 0005 (world_trade_cen ter > bombing) 0005 (girl > dowd) 0005 (george_bush > week) 0005 (day > night)	ation > terrorism) 0005 (u_s_a > election) 0005 (security > airport) 0005 (country > terrorism) 0004 (language > day) 0004 (arabia > muslim) 0004 (u_s_a > policy) 0004 (country > world) 0004 (arafat > israel) 0004 (u_s_a > interest) 0004 (u_s_a > arabia) 0004 (qaeda > osama) 0004 (network > osama) 0004 (bombing > u_s_a) 0004 (world_trade_ce nter > defense_dept) 0004 (enemy > u_s_a) 0004 (attack > u_s_a) 0004 (afghanistan > government > people) 0004 (district > child) 0004 (afghanistan > taliban) 0004 (u_s_a > violence) 0004 (government > afghanistan) 0004 (district > street) 0004 (ariel > sharon) 0004 (u_s_a > regime) 0004 (u_s_a > action) 0004 (u_s_a > government) 0004 (election > terrorism) 0004 (u_s_a > terrorism) 0004	network) 0006 (alliance > state) 0005 (money > million) 0005 (language_unit > limit) 0005 (american > pakistan) 0005 (people > world) 0005 (muslim > state) 0005 (american > war) 0005 (district_of_colu mbia > american) 0005 (government > afghanistan) 0005 (terrorism > attack) 0005 (passenger > aircraft) 0005 (world_trade_ce nter > defense_dept) 0005 (attack > world_trade_center) 0005 (congress > security) 0005 (pakistan > india) 0005 (al > qaeda) 0005 (year > state) 0005 (george_bush > afghanistan) 0005 (man > woman) 0005 (new_york > civil_authority) 0005 (new_york > city) 0005 (giuliani > new_york)0005 (new_york day) 0005
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		0005 (united_kingdom > head_of_government) 0005 (airport > security) 0005 (distinctness > terrorism) 0005 (state > terrorism) 0005 (u_s_a > security) 0005 (seaport > terrorism) 0005 (time > war) 0005 (bombing > u_s_a) 0005 (country > terrorism) 0005 (u_s_a > citizen) 0005 (national > security) 0005 (u_s_a > europe) 0005 (george_bush > congress) 0005 (uss > cabbage) 0005 (syria > iran) 0005 (world > terrorism) 0005			
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Figure 4. Relations

The last function that was used in order to verify that the editorials address issues like terrorism, war on terror, security, etc., is the SCENARIO function, which determines “every pertinent group of your scenario.” For this verification, the already predefined scenario of the Tropes software entitled Concepts US V8 was adopted, since it coincided with the research in this thesis.²⁵ This scenario distributes the areas of relevance into the following categories: “politics & society,” “countries & locations,” “properties & characteristics,” “crisis & conflicts,” “numbers, time & dates,” “people & persons,” “behaviors & feelings,” “health, life & casualties,” “business & industry,” “communication & medias,” “arts & culture,” “agriculture & environment,” “education & work,” “things & substances,” “sciences & technology,” and “nature & wildlife.” As illustrated in Figure 5, the most frequent scenarios

²⁵ The software allows the creation of one’s own scenarios, as well. This appeared useful to the researcher, and was used to test other hypotheses in the thesis, which will be subsequently explained; i.e., when testing the hypothesis on patriotic language and fear.

in almost all editorials are “politics & society,” “countries & locations” and “crisis & conflicts,” referring to the 9/11 events.

USA Today	Weekly Standard	Washington Times	Washington Post	New Yorker	New York Times
politics & society 0746 properties & characteristics 0415 crisis & conflicts 0380 other concepts 0376 countries & locations 0363 numbers, time & dates 0302 health, life & casualties 0287 business & industry 0214 behaviors & feelings 0178 people & persons 0121 communication & medias 0081 things & substances 0069 agriculture & environment 0062 education & work 0058 arts & culture 0037 sciences & technology 0021 nature & wildlife 0016	politics & society 0744 countries & locations 0376 properties & characteristics 0286 other concepts 0273 crisis & conflicts 0246 numbers, time & dates 0182 people & persons 0163 behaviors & feelings 0160 health, life & casualties 0121 business & industry 0078 communication & medias 0070 arts & culture 0046 agriculture & environment 0044 education & work 0036 things & substances 0035 sciences & technology 0022 nature & wildlife 0005	politics & society 2379 countries & locations 1744 properties & characteristics 1231 other concepts 1219 crisis & conflicts 1013 behaviors & feelings 0896 people & persons 0833 health, life & casualties 0779 numbers, time & dates 0748 business & industry 0618 communication & medias 0412 arts & culture 0290 agriculture & environment 0235 things & substances 0220 education & work 0218 sciences & technology 0089 nature & wildlife 0067	politics & society 1257 countries & locations 0914 other concepts 0705 crisis & conflicts 0611 properties & characteristics 0603 health, life & casualties 0420 numbers, time & dates 0402 people & persons 0348 behaviors & feelings 0340 business & industry 0246 communication & medias 0134 agriculture & environment 0087 education & work 0080 things & substances 0068 arts & culture 0055 sciences & technology 0027 nature & wildlife 0017	health, life & casualties 0778 countries & locations 0756 politics & society 0709 properties & characteristics 0651 numbers, time & dates 0599 other concepts 0534 behaviors & feelings 0437 people & persons 0346 crisis & conflicts 0328 business & industry 0264 communication & medias 0251 arts & culture 0233 things & substances 0196 agriculture & environment 0132 education & work 0098 sciences & technology 0085 nature & wildlife 0035	politics & society 1653 countries & locations 1417 properties & characteristics 0946 other concepts 0871 crisis & conflicts 0749 numbers, time & dates 0653 people & persons 0590 health, life & casualties 0586 business & industry 0478 behaviors & feelings 0430 communication & medias 0241 education & work 0151 agriculture & environment 0147 things & substances 0138 arts & culture 0126 sciences & technology 0076 nature & wildlife 0019

Figure 5. Scenario “Concepts US”

The Concepts US V8 scenario subdivides the “politics & society” and “crisis & conflicts” areas of reference in the following manner:

- “politics & society”: administrations, agreements, aid and assistance, control and regulation, domination, history and prehistory, law and justice, organizations, peace and pacifism, policy, politics and policy, poverty and richness, power, property and

rights, religions, sex and sexuality, slavery, smoke & tobacco, social insurance & welfare, social organizations, society, state, tradition;

- “countries & locations”: cities, countries, country, desert, ethnicity and immigration, foreign texts, locations, outdoors, states;
- “crisis & conflicts”: accidents, army & fights, catastrophes, crisis and disorganization, destruction & ruin, misfortune & mishap, problems, punishment and sanctions, security and defense, terror, weapons.

It is interesting to see, how patterns in terminology in all publications are immediately evident, but again *The New Yorker* remains an exception in the selection of journals. *The Washington Times*, however, seems to belong at the other end of the spectrum by being the most extreme in referring to terrorism and the war on terror.

3.3.2 Mimicking the Responses of Politics

The next hypothesis was tested in accordance to the third research question: whether there is a prevailing rhetoric used in editorials.

Hypothesis 2: opinion pieces mimic the divisive rhetoric of politics.

To validate that editorials echo the divisive rhetoric of politics, the analytical function of the Tropes software FREQUENT WORD CATEGORIES was used. This function determines the frequency of word categories in texts. As displayed in Figure 6, Tropes recognized a high use of the divisive “we/they” rhetoric, which is common in most of these editorials with the exception of the highly liberal *New Yorker*. It is clearly distinguishable in this diagram that the difference between “we/they” is the least noticeable in the weekly magazine *The New Yorker*, where the usage is relatively balanced. It is intriguing to observe that the conservative printed media (*The Weekly Standard*, *The Washington Times*) mostly emphasized “our side” with the pronouns “we,” “us,” “our,” whereas the liberal *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* and also the centrist *USA Today* mostly emphasized “the other side” with the pronouns “they,” “them,” and “their.”

The least balanced usage of the concept we vs. they is evident in daily newspaper *USA Today* and the weekly magazine *The Weekly Standard*. The results are presented below.

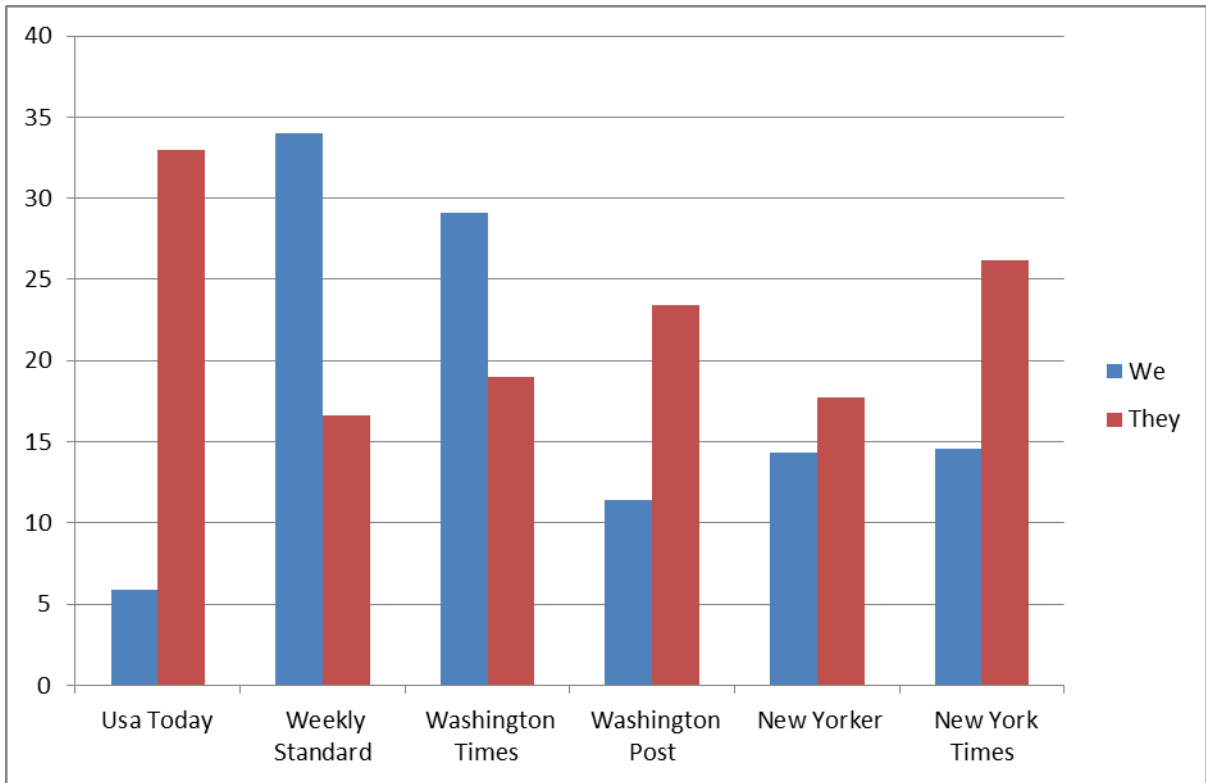


Figure 6. "We vs. They" Rhetoric

To indicate the differences in greater detail, the results established by the Tropes software are shown in exact percentages in the table below:

	USA Today	Weekly Standard	Washington Times	Washington Post	New Yorker	New York Times
WE	5.9%	34.0%	29.1%	11.4%	14.3%	14.6%
THEY	33.0%	16.6%	19.0%	23.4%	17.7%	26.2%

Figure 7. Percentage of Divisive Rhetoric

3.3.3 Media and Patriotism

The research question concerning whether the media used language that was full of patriotic terms urged the researcher to test the third hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: editorials employ patriotic language.

In addition to the already set scenarios in the program Tropes, the software also allows the creation of tailored scenarios, which are significant to a particular survey. The researcher created two of her own scenarios, which subdivided the areas of patriotism and fear. In order to establish that patriotism appeared in post 9/11 editorials, the researcher included a variety of patriotism-related units for the scenario (America, United States, brave, citizenship, confidence, democracy, determined, development, flag, freedom, great, homeland, independence, influence, land, language, nation, people, power, prosperous, right, sacrifice, spirit, strong, success, value, victory, western, etc.). The selection of words was above 100, and therefore sufficient for “diagnostic purposes,” as mentioned earlier in the thesis. The results have shown that all newspapers and magazines used a great many patriotic expressions in their editorials after the 9/11 events. The most patriotic editorials appear in this case in the conservative daily newspaper, *The Washington Times*, followed by *The New York Times*. *The Washington Times*, *The Weekly Standard* and, surprisingly also *The New York Times* contain a rather high percentage of patriotism-related words in editorials (1.99% *Washington Times*; 1.88% *New York Times* and 1.77% *Weekly Standard*). It is therefore impossible to claim that the conservative printed media used more patriotic-related messages than the liberal ones. However, once again the editorials in *The New Yorker* use the least patriotic terms. Figure 8 exhibits the percentage of patriotism-related units in editorials:

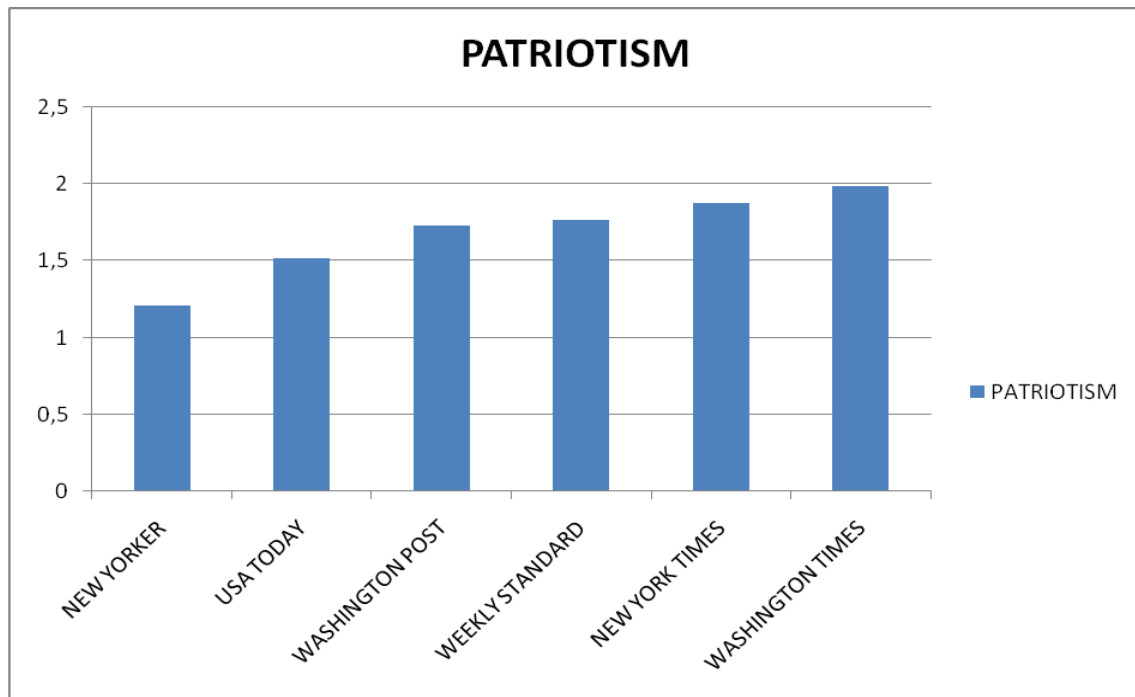


Figure 8. Patriotism in Printed Media in percentages

The most liberal of all editorials is *The New Yorker*, where the patriotism-related words are limited to 1.21%. Because the researcher read all the editorials and initially analyzed them manually to some extent, it could be determined that the percentage would be even lower if one took into account the perception of latent messages which the program unfortunately cannot detect. Susan Sontag wrote in her 24 September 2001 comment in *The New Yorker*: “Where is the acknowledgment that this was not a “cowardly” attack on “civilization” or “liberty” or “humanity” or “the free world” but an attack on the world’s self-proclaimed superpower, undertaken as a consequence of specific American alliances and actions?” (Sontag). Predictably, the program detected some of the words in her question as patriotic despite the ironic tone and distancing use of quotation marks. At this point it is clear that human coding is invaluable, as was established previously. Only a reader or a coder can determine that Sontag was repeating the rhetoric of the authorities and using patriotic terms but exclusively to critique the Bush administration and the concept of alleged American exceptionalism.

One of the research questions concerned what latent messages were present in the selection, which was answered with the example of Susan Sontag's *The New Yorker* contribution to the incidents. Such responses were rare. Yet, Sontag's article and other similar contributions make it obvious that computer-based content analysis is not completely reliable and that the human contribution is required for accurate content analysis.

3.3.4 Media and the Discourse of Fear

The research question dealing with whether the media used rhetoric calculated to induce fear and paranoia in their coverage of 9/11 events required the fourth hypothesis to be tested:

Hypothesis 4: editorials use rhetoric that could contribute to fear and paranoia.

The researcher created the second scenario, testing the amount of fear and paranoia in editorials. In doing so, the researcher included around 100 fear-related units (afraid, anger, apocalypse, attack, barbaric, bomb, carnage, conflict, danger, dark, death, defeat, defense, destroy, devastation, enemy, fanatical, fear, fight, force, grief, hatred, hijack, horror, justice, protect, radical, save, security, shock, slaughter, struggle, terrorism, threat, tragedy, trauma, tyranny, vicious, victim, violence, war, weapon, etc.) that helped show that the majority of newspapers adopted the concept of fear mongering after the 9/11 events. The percentages of the words associated with fear and paranoia in editorials are presented in Figure 9:

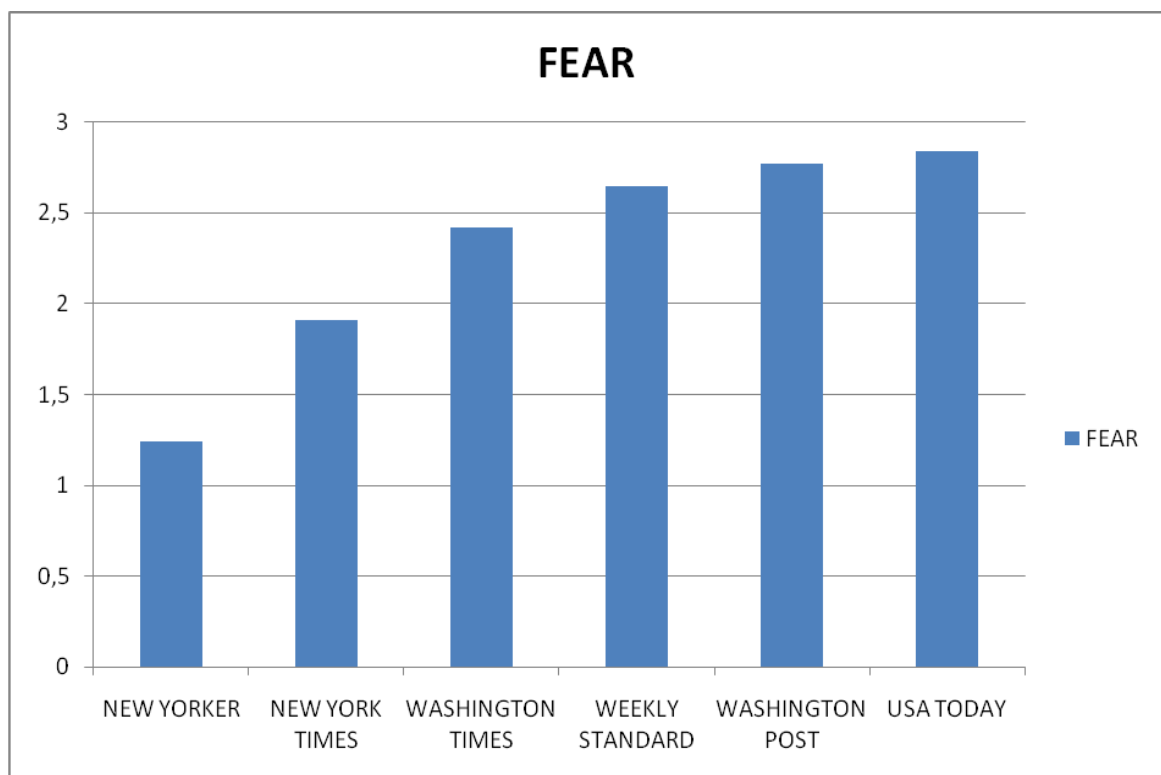


Figure 9. Fear-related Units in Editorials in percentages

As one can deduce from the figure, there is again no major difference between liberal or conservative newspapers and magazines. The highest percentage of fear-mongering is actually found in the centrist *USA Today*, followed closely by the liberal *Washington Post* and the conservative *Weekly Standard*. *The New Yorker* again stands last in the survey. As with patriotism, the percentage of fear-related words in *The New Yorker* editorials is extremely low, only 1.24%. *The New Yorker* appears to be a genuinely liberal magazine, capable of criticism and self-reflexivity.

Overall, it has been established that U.S. printed media strongly addressed the issues of 9/11 after the attacks, and that they adopted and repeated the rhetoric of the then current authorities. What is more, Altheide ascertains that politicians worked with news media to control the messages they wished to convey. As Finnegan argued, it was crucial for the majority of journalists to stay on the “right side.” Moreover, it can be concluded that the American press generally pursues the “discourse of fear,” as established by Altheide and Michalowski, who claim that, “[f]ear is more expansive and pervasive than crime, although the former can clearly include the latter. Fear is bigger news than mere crime or even violence. Fear has become a standard feature of news formats steeped in a problem frame oriented to entertainment” (Altheide and Michalowski 499). The spreading of fear was also shown in the findings of this study. After shocking events like the incidents of 9/11, American media tend to promote fear and paranoia, although fear itself is never a topic per se. In a similar fashion, the media employ the concept of patriotism. Patriotism is deep-rooted in American culture, and at difficult times such as 9/11, there truly is an upsurge in patriotic feelings, also in the media, which was to some extent shown in this survey. Altheide concurs, adding that after 9/11 the news media, “draped in flag colors, lapel flags, and [use] patriotic slogans reporting events primarily through the viewpoint of the United States (that is, “us” and “we”)” (Altheide 31-32). This survey has determined, however, that the latter was true

especially in the editorials of the conservative printed media, where the percentages of the “we” discourse are much higher than in other newspapers or magazines. Nevertheless, Altheide argues that the media promoted patriotism, since “patriotic responses to the attacks were joined with commercialism and pleas for donations, as well as support for an ill-defined and nebulous “war on terrorism” (Altheide 53). This researcher concurs with this finding, since such responses were common in editorials.

Now that the first variable of the thesis has been verified, i.e. that the responses in politics and media consistently promoted patriotism of different kinds as well as fear mongering, the continuation of the thesis will focus on the second variable. The crux of the argument in this thesis is that the poetic responses differed greatly from the responses of media and politics, and that the poets were capable of escaping the desperate necessity to find scapegoats and closure. Moreover, these poets mostly found the strength to show consideration for the crisis of 9/11 and criticism of the American government and American life-style. They attempted to mourn, commemorate, even celebrate; they attempted to find adequate words for an appropriate explanation.

4. Literary Responses to 9/11

4.1 Critical Examination of Literary Responses to 9/11

Most of the theoretical works on literary responses to 9/11 deal with the American 9/11 novel, and many fewer with plays, short stories²⁶ or poetry.²⁷ This fact is intriguing, since these genres were among the immediate and innumerable literary publications after the attacks, and there was a particularly immense overflow of poetic responses (primarily published online, spoken at numerous readings but also in print) which openly addressed the attacks. The Internet lent itself to the fast-spreading circulation of poetry,²⁸ and soon after the 9/11 events several poetry anthologies were published: *Poetry after 9/11: An Anthology of New York Poets* (2002), *September 11, 2001 American Writers Respond* (2002), *An Eye for an Eye Makes the Whole World Blind* (2002), *September 11: West Coast Writers Approach Ground Zero* (2002), and *110 Stories* (2002).

In addition to instantaneous poetic responses, several plays in reaction to 9/11 also appeared. On the one hand, there were plays whose events took place around the day of the attacks, such as Anne Nelson's *The Guys*, which was written and performed within the first month after the attacks, Israel Horovitz's *Three Weeks After Paradise*, Neil LaBute's *The Mercy Seat*, and Craig Wright's *Recent Tragic Events*. On the other hand, there were plays that appeared later and moved beyond the actual 9/11 events to the traumatic consequences of

²⁶ Short stories, such as Joyce Carol Oates' "The Mutants," John Updike's "Varieties of Religious Experience," Sherman Alexie's "Can I Get a Witness," and Judy Budnitz's "Preparedness."

²⁷ Other literary responses to 9/11 include picture books for children, comics, graphic novels, essays and non-fiction.

²⁸ There were many websites that published poetry written in connection to 9/11: Poems After the Attacks (<http://poetry.about.com/od/ourpoemcollections/a/poemsafterattac.htm>), People's Poetry Gathering – Poem Towers (https://web.archive.org/web/20120306144919/http://www.peoplespoetry.org/pg_spotlighttwr.html), September 11th Memorial Poetry Project (<http://www.brooklynartscouncil.org/documents/1537>), Words to Comfort: A Selection of Poems and Photographs (<http://www.jacketmagazine.com/15/hereisnyc.html>), Poets USA (https://web.archive.org/web/20110609064456/http://users.tellurian.net/wisewomensweb/PoetsUSA/poetsusa_contents.html), *9/11/01 Remembrance* with an archive of writings, images, and multimedia files (http://www1.cuny.edu/portal_ur/content/911site/web/index.html), and others.

the attacks, such as Yussef El Guindi's *Back of the Throat*, Sam Shepard's *The God of Hell*, and Christopher Shinn's *Where Do We Live*.

The 9/11 events were about sudden absence, an empty space, both literally and metaphorically, and it felt as if the writers, poets in particular, had attempted to fill the void. Gray regards much of the poetic responses as “a populist instrument – a vehicle for expressing the sentiments of people who, in many cases, had never written poems before [and which] was a measure of the failure of public discourse after the terrorist attacks” (Gray 169).

In his book *Out of the Blue: September 11 and the Novel*, Kristiaan Versluys similarly illustrates that, “[o]nly a few among the thousands of poems written on the occasion of September 11 attain that level of discursive precision and human expressiveness” (Versluys 10). Moreover, Versluys almost defends the 9/11 novel²⁹ as a genre of higher quality by insisting that, “[i]t is against this background of local efforts at discursivization that the novelists and prose writers launched their own more ambitious attempts to come to terms with 9/11” (Versluys 11). He does admit, though, that “there is also no shortage of novels that, just like a great deal of the poetry, express raw outrage and revanchist feelings” (Versluys 13). According to him, such novels often do “sell in large numbers but have little or no literary merit” (Versluys 13). He identifies two criteria for novels to escape “cheap sensationalism or fetishization”: “First of all, the best 9/11 novels are diffident linguistically [as] they shy away from the brute facts, the stark “donnée” of thousands of lives lost... Second, there is a marked tendency for the compensatory imagination to counteract the impact of September 11” (Versluys 14). In his critical work, Versluys concentrates on a selection of 9/11 novels, four American texts and one French: Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007), Art Spiegelman's graphic novel *In the Shadow of No Towers* (2004), Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005), John Updike's *Terrorist* (2006), and Frederic Beigbeder's *Windows*

²⁹ The first post-9/11 novels began appearing mostly in 2004 with Art Spiegelman's graphic novel *In the Shadows of No Towers*.

on the World (2003), but also mentions others. Versluys shows that these novels “provide a context for what seems to be without context” (Versluys 14), and succeed in tackling the issue of absence.

Moreover, visual artists were also successful at the time in representing the emptiness, and in his book *9/11 and the Visual Culture of Disaster*, Thomas Stubblefield ascertains that, “absence functions not as negativity but as a particular mode of presence which shapes experience and official histories in often dramatic fashion” (Stubblefield 7). One immediately thinks of the first *New Yorker* issue that covered the catastrophe of September 11,³⁰ with the dramatic cover depicting the Twin Towers as two black silhouettes in the dark and entitled “9/11/012,” created by Art Spiegelman,³¹ or Robert Longo’s³² *Untitled (The Haunting, Triptych)*. Longo’s black and white artwork shows and confirms various challenges regarding representation, and according to Dāwes, “it summons, at the same time, a stylized version of the Trade Center and its absence” (Dāwes 36).

Žižek suggests that 9/11 was a visual spectacle, “a nightmarish unreal spectre,” “fantasmatic screen apparition” (Žižek, 23, 19), which it undoubtedly was. After seeing what happened with the Twin Towers on television, the screenwriter Lawrence Wright supposedly responded by saying, “this looks like a movie—my movie” (Radstone 119). However, Marita Sturken presents the visuality of 9/11 in a different manner, discussing “aesthetics of absence” in her eponymous 2004 article, recalling that at the site even “[l]ooking was discouraged and photographs forbidden, and the presence of the curious was frowned on by the police who guarded the perimeters” (Sturken 316). Hence, there was almost a need for an absence of the gaze in order to pay respect—however, not when it came to the media coverage, as has been established in the previous chapters. Moreover, Sturken explains that even the 9/11 memorial in New York City was undoubtedly in the first place dedicated to the

³⁰ *The New Yorker*, 24 September 2001.

³¹ American cartoonist and editor.

³² American painter and sculptor.

victims of 9/11; nevertheless “its aesthetic of absence seems primarily to evoke the absence of the towers” (Sturken 322). She adds that, “emptiness [...] is a primary aesthetic of the memorial design” (Sturken 322).

The most striking visual image of the 9/11 events must be the image of the people jumping from the Twin Towers instead of burning to death inside the buildings, and consequently the haunting and, to some extent, controversial photograph “The Falling Man” by Associate Press photo-journalist Richard Drew, which was taken during the terrorist attacks. The falling of the anonymous person into the void marks in a way what Stubblefield calls “activation of absence.” He claims that, “9/11 and its wake not only confirmed a formative role of the invisible in spectacular relations, its mutually constitutive relation to the visible, and its openness to reconfiguration via violence, but also placed the reconstitution of this interrelation on display within the visual record itself” (Stubblefield 7). The paradox of the time is well summarized by Stubblefield, who frames the period as both “an absence of the visual and a pervasive visual absence” (Stubblefield 7). In her book *Falling After 9/11: Crisis in American Art and Literature*, Aimee Pozorski opines that “while we all have an ethical responsibility to look, to commemorate, we simultaneously—and paradoxically—must grapple with the impossibility of offering an adequate, and therefore ethical, response” (Pozorski 62). In these generalizations, however, it seems that paradox and oxymora dominate.

Furthermore, the same paradox is also present in the literature involving 9/11; how to look and how to respond. In his novel *Windows on the World*, Frederic Beigbeder’s narrator acknowledges this fact: “When one cannot answer the question ‘Why?,’ one must at least attempt to answer the question ‘How?’” (Beigbeder 236). One could argue that the absence, the emptiness, the void is the cause, whereas the reactions to it, such as disorientation, domesticity and displacement, could be considered as symptoms, but what is needed, even in

the case of fiction, is diagnosis. Richard Gray emphasizes that the problem with some 9/11 fictional works is often that they are just “symptom rather than diagnosis” (Gray 28), and provides the example of DeLillo’s novel *Falling Man*, i.e. “the novel is immured in the melancholic state, offering a verbal equivalent of immobility” (Gray 28). In his response to Gray’s article “Open Doors, Closed Minds: American Prose Writing at a Time of Crisis,” Michael Rothberg concurs with Gray about the need for “radical accentuation” in the 9/11 novel and that, “[t]he fiction of 9/11 demonstrates instead a failure of the imagination” (Rothberg 153). Both critics agree on the formal, as well as political failure of the 9/11 novel. Jeffrey Melnick agrees that a political point of view would be necessary: “If 9/11 will continue to matter in American popular and literary arts it will be because the memorial artists will move from the personal to the social and from reactive to the reflective” (Melnick 156). Nevertheless, Rothberg believes in the novel as the appropriate genre and “a necessary form for such a political and aesthetic project” (Rothberg 158).

Admittedly, there have been various perspectives regarding representation of 9/11 in literature. Jewish American writer Thane Rosenbaum, who claims to be “a post-Holocaust novelist,” contributed an article “Art and Atrocity in a Post-9/11 World” to the book entitled *Jewish American and Holocaust Literature*, where he announced that, after the attacks, “[s]ilence might be the loudest sound of all, because silence has a way of being its own language” (Rosenbaum 132). Yet, Rosenbaum appraises that “there was undeniably insufficient silence [because] everyone had something to say” (Rosenbaum 132). Rosenbaum’s wish for absence of words in the aftermath is similar to Theodor Adorno’s critique of words after the Holocaust: “To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric” (Adorno 34). Toni Morrison similarly expressed her bewilderment over expression after 9/11, and she writes in her poem “The Dead of September 11,” first published in *Vanity Fair*: “knowing all the time that I have nothing to say—no words” (Morrison 48). Gray summarizes the

paradoxical notion with writers, analogous to John Cage's³³ concept thus: ““Nothing to say” became a refrain, a recurrent theme with writers, as they struggled to cope with something that seemed to be, quite literally, beyond words” (Gray 15).

Moreover, Gray continues to explain that the writers “felt compelled, not just to search for new verbal austerity as some other, earlier generations had done, but to wonder if words were any use at all—and, to ask, quite simply, if literature could or should survive the end of *their* world” (Gray 16). He admits that, “[d]isorientation is certainly a feature of writing in America after the fall” (Gray 14). Disorientation as one of the symptoms as well as the image or the motif of the “falling man” is central in several 9/11 novels, such as Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*, Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, and Jess Walter's *The Zero*. Gray notices that the phenomenon was “for writers [not only a] traumatic moment [but] also an iconic one. The fall of the towers [...], the fall of people from the towers – has become a powerful and variable visual equivalent for other kinds of fall. In some texts, the towers, or the people, fall over and over again, as they did on instant replay on the television” (Gray 7).

Gray's study, which focuses mainly on 9/11 fiction, considers drama and poetry only briefly in the final chapter of the book, and “looks at the effects of 9/11 on the national literary tradition, [Gray's] study is incredibly broad and far-reaching” (Pozorski 7). Apart from Gray's *After the Fall*, there have been several other extensive studies about the 9/11 novel and only chapters on 9/11 poetry. Birgit Däwes published her monograph *Ground Zero Fiction: History, Memory and Representation in the American 9/11 Novel* in 2011; she concentrates on “Ground Zero Fiction” as she defines the 9/11 novel.³⁴ The term refers to

³³ “I have nothing to say, and I am saying it” in John Cage's “Lecture on Nothing” (first held at the Artist's Club in New York City in 1949).

³⁴ In addition, other studies on 9/11 novel have been published since the attacks. In 2012, Jessica Zeltner published her monograph *When the Centre Fell Apart: The Treatment of September 11 in Selected Anglophone Narratives*. Another study on 9/11 novel was published in 2014 by Arin Keeble with the title *The 9/11 Novel: Trauma, Politics and Identity*.

“Alfred Hornung, who was among the first to expand the semantics of Ground Zero by focusing on the importance of “groundedness” in post-9/11 art” (Däwes 16). However, Däwes adjusts the term by relocating “Ground Zero Literature in the immediate narrative context of the September 11 events while retaining Hornung’s playful attack on the *grand récit* of Ground Zero” (Däwes 16). Since her study cannot include 160 or more 9/11 novels, Däwes narrows her selection by distinguishing “six different categories of novels, according to their respective effects and emphases in unearthing the cultural imaginary of 9/11” (Däwes 19). Däwes differentiates between metonymic, salvational, diagnostic, appropriative, symbolic, and writerly approaches, and simultaneously focuses on “three major story-oriented criteria that qualify a novel for inclusion in the category of what [she] call[s] Ground Zero Fiction: (1) the (spatial and/or temporal) setting, (2) the thematic and/or symbolic relevance of the terrorist attack—whether they are implicitly or explicitly represented—for the plot, and (3) the character’s involvement with and/or perception of the event” (Däwes 81). Overall, Däwes found,

In the larger categorization of American 9/11 novels, the aspects of the relationship between fact and fiction, its position within cultural memory, the event and its transformative power, and the spatial and social hierarchies involved all play a major role. 9/11 was an event that everyone, on a global scale, witnessed; it involved identifiable, familiar elements and persons. At the same time, it also raised an urgent collective desire for alterna(rra)tives and imaginary turns—as well as a discourse that reflects or thematizes the problematic issue of representation itself. (Däwes 88)

Similarly, Gray agrees with the writers’ questioning how to voice and represent this difficult time and trauma: “The unique paradox of 9/11, and its consequences, is caught in this tension between the strange and the familiar. It was a demolition of the fantasy life of the

nation in that it punctured America's belief in its inviolability and challenged its presumption of its innocence, the manifest rightness of its cause" (Gray 11). Gray continues by describing the situation thus: "What was remarkable, and arguably unique, about the response of American writers to the crisis of 9/11 was that it reignited their interest in a paradox that lies [sic] at the heart of writing at least since the time of Romanticism: the speaking of silence, the search for verbal forms that reach beyond the condition of words, the telling of a tale that cannot yet must be told" (Gray 14), as already implied earlier.

In his study *Aesthetics and World Politics*, Roland Bleiker also attempts to interpret the role of art after 9/11 (literature, visual art, architecture and music) "in order to demonstrate the relevance of art to the process of coming to terms with 9/11" (Bleiker 49). There is a general idea, a focus on failure, "not only about representation, but also about the status of fiction—indeed, of all art forms—in the wake of a national crisis (Pozorski 6). Pozorski is convinced that,

too many books to count have appeared in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, few of them arrive at the difficult conclusion that American literature has reached a crisis point in representation—seeking, rather, solace in many of the images offered since 2001 [...] In fact, many books take a general approach, either through an edited collection of essays regarding representation [or the critics] offer a reflection on 9/11 novels generally. (Pozorski 7)

Pozorski's book *Falling After 9/11* takes a closer look at "the figure of the falling man in 9/11 literature in particular, and present[s] it within the theoretical framework of trauma" (Pozorski 7).

Similarly, Lucy Bond's book *Frames of Memory After 9/11: Culture, Criticism, Politics, and Law* demonstrates, in particular, trauma, cultural memory, and commemoration of 9/11 in culture (where she includes literary culture), criticism, politics and the law. Bond

loosely divides the 9/11 commemoration into five stages: (1) from the immediate aftermath of the attacks until the invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001, (2) from late 2001 to late 2004, (3) from 2005 to President Obama's inauguration in January 2009, (4) from Obama's election in November 2008 until the gradual withdrawal of troops from Iraq (completed in December 2011), and (5) from the tenth anniversary of the attacks until the end of 2011, where "there was undeniably a sense of "closure" evident in attitudes towards 9/11" (Bond 8-10).

In the first chapter "American Trauma Culture after 9/11," Bond explores "the challenges of representing catastrophic events," and clarifies that, "9/11 trauma fiction typically generates an artificial approach to the past that frames disaster within sentimental domestic settings, assimilating trauma into conventional narrative structures, and generating a standardized, almost homogenized, portrait of post-9/11 America" (Bond 23). In her book, Bond reflects briefly on several 9/11 novels, such as Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*, Shirley Abbott's *The Future of Love*, Helen Schulman's *A Day at the Beach*, Jay McInerney's *The Good Life*, Karen Kingsbury's *Remember*, Dina Friedman's *Playing Dad's Songs*, Ken Kalfus's *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country*, Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, Joyce Maynard's *The Usual Rules*, Catherine Stine's *Refugees*, and Patrick McGrath's story "Ground Zero" from the book *Ghost Town*. The author tries to explicate how trauma is manifested in these literary works, and reaches the conclusion that, "the effect [of these novels] is a peculiar pathologisation of the novel, which is reduced to little more than a register of the symptoms of trauma" (Bond 27). In this sense, Gray refers to Judith Herman and her trauma theory and contends that on some occasions, "[t]he writer, acting here as both victim and witness, with their text both symptom and diagnosis, can, in the words of another authority on trauma and recovery, "see more than a few fragments of the picture at one time, ... retain all the pieces and ... fit them together" (Herman 2) into a meaningful story" (Gray 24).

However, John N. Duvall, who is also the editor of *The Cambridge Companion to American Fiction After 1945*, wrote a chapter “Fiction and 9/11” for this comprehensive guide to American fiction after WWII, where he states that, “we are still learning how to tell the story of the American fictional response to 9/11” (Duvall 191). Moreover, in another article by Duvall, which he coauthored with Robert P. Marzec, the authors warn against “dismissing 9/11 fiction for its failures to meet preconceived ideals,” since several novels “are unquestionably privileged” (Duvall and Marzec). After studying the critical materials on the 9/11 novel, the current researcher also found that novels like DeLillo’s *Falling Man* and Foer’s *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* have been selected for every critical examination. Duvall and Marzec suggest that some texts have become “hypercanonical in the discussion of 9/11 fiction,” and further imply that, “it is time to look at other fiction of 9/11 in the future” (Duvall and Marzec). The next subchapter will therefore focus on scholarly attention to 9/11 poetry, which is in comparison to critical investigation of 9/11 novel even more scarce.

4.2 Critical Examination of Poetic Responses to 9/11

It is difficult to determine why there was such a flow of poetic reactions after the events of 9/11, but in the weeks following the 9/11 events, poetry readings were as “frequent as the sound of police sirens” (Spiegelman 11). Versluys provides a possible answer offered by the American poet and writer Dana Gioia, who considers

this unprecedented use of poetry as a vehicle of public sentiment proof of the “media’s collective inadequacy to find words commensurate with the situation” (“All I Have Is a Voice,” 164). “The media may have provided information and commentary,” he writes, “but it was still left for poets to present language equal to the historical moment” (166). (Versluys 9)

According to Ann Keniston and Jeanne Follansbee Quinn,³⁵ “shorter forms appeared first—essays, brief personal reminiscences, and poetry [and these] early works often attempted directly to capture and convey the events of 9/11 and emotional responses to the events ...” (Keniston and Quinn 3). Apparently, poetry and other shorter forms served as the first commemorative vehicle after the attacks, perhaps because of their salient common characteristic—economy of language.

Despite the numerous and varied poetic responses, many poets dealt with the same pertinent question of how to write and what to say after 9/11. The recollection of poets falling silent after the Holocaust was still distinct after 9/11, and several poets (Toni Morrison, W.S. Merwin, Kimiko Hahn, and many others) automatically reacted in this manner. Kotonen established a similar thesis: “Reactions to the 2001 World Trade Center (hereafter WTC) terror act were very similar when compared to the reactions to Nazi terror, the holocaust occasionally served as a model for reactions ... Words were hard to find so reaction was a

³⁵ Their volume *Literature After 9/11*, focusing on fictional responses, includes chapters that involve 9/11 poetry: Michael Rothberg discusses some poetic responses to 9/11 (e.g. Anne-Marie Levine, Suheir Hammad, and Dennis Nurkse) in his contributing chapter “Seeing Terror, Feeling Art: Public and Private in Post-9/11 Literature.” Another chapter in the book in which poetry is at the center of the discussion is Jeffrey Gray’s “Precocious Testimony: Poetry and the Uncommemorable.”

silent gaze” (Kotonen 87). Pozorski, however, reveals that this kind of model, similar to Adorno’s critique of poetry after the Holocaust is not applicable to the 9/11 attacks, since “Adorno’s claim about poetry comes from a worry about participating in the culture that produced it, thus making the poet inadvertently complicit in that horror [and ...] such poetic witness undercuts its ideological force” (Pozorski 4). Pozorski conveys the difference of the 9/11 events in the apparent clash of cultures: the Islamic world against the developed Western world. However, she estimates that, “the 9/11 critics have taken it a step further, lamenting that any artistic attempt to bear witness to atrocity is overly aesthetic, and thus inadequate” (Pozorski 4). What is more, Adorno himself withdrew his statement that writing poetry after the Holocaust was “barbaric,” and wrote in 1969 that, “[s]uffering has as much right to be represented as a martyr has to cry out. So it may have been false to say that writing poetry after Auschwitz is impossible” (Adorno *Negative* 365).

No matter how manifold the overflow of poetry after 9/11, there has been much less critical examination of post 9/11 poetry than of the 9/11 novel. So far, there has not been a single monograph written about 9/11 poetry, only chapters and articles.³⁶ In the thesis “9/11 and the Socio-Politics of Poetry,” J.S. van den Eijnden agrees that there is a “lack of scholarly attention paid to 9/11 poetry” (van den Eijnden 4), since “[p]oetry’s significance as a commemorative medium is often overlooked, because what is thought of as being the “appropriate” content matter for poetry is very limiting” (van den Eijnden 5).

However, when discussing 9/11 poetry, critics have been asking themselves whether there has been a change in poetic expression since the attacks. On the one hand, Jeffrey Gray reminds his readers of Lawrence Ferlinghetti, who foretold in October 2001 that, “poetry from

³⁶ In the volume *Sense of Regard*, edited by Laura McCullough, one can read a chapter by Joanna Penn Cooper on Claudia Rankine’s post-9/11 Poetry, entitled “Refusal of the Mask in Claudia Rankine’s Post-9/11 Poetics,” and Phillip Metres’ analytical essay on Arab American Poetry after 9/11, entitled “Carrying Continents in Our Eyes.” In her 2014 monograph *Falling after 9/11*, Aimee Pozorski examines two American poets—Diane Seuss and Christopher Kennedy—in the chapter “Poetics of Falling: The Lyrical Laments of Kennedy and Seuss.” Pozorski is convinced that the poetry of these two poets “has not been met with the critical acclaim it merits” (Pozorski 102).

now on would be divided into two categories: B.S. and A.S., Before September 11 and After,” insisting that on 9/11, “poets got a Wake Up call, as America itself got one” (Jeffrey Gray 261).

On the other hand, on 11 September 2011, Michiko Kakutani presented her overview of the art in the decade after the attacks in a *New York Times* article “The 9/11 Decade; Outdone by Reality,” and found that “[t]en years later, it is even clearer that 9/11 has not provoked a seismic change in the arts” (Kakutani). She continues by claiming that “... 9/11 works feel like blips on the cultural landscape – they neither represent a new paradigm nor suggest that the attacks were a cultural watershed. Perhaps this is because 9/11 did not really change daily life for much of the country” (Kakutani). In her essay “Writing Poetry After 9/11,” Marjorie Perloff also laments that poetic expression after 9/11 shows “a failure in imagination” (Perloff). Kakutani adds that, “While writers struggled to find words to describe the unimaginable, photographers captured the devastation of 9/11 with visceral eloquence” (Kakutani).

However, Ann Keniston, who has been focusing on literature after 9/11 and co-edited the book *Literature After 9/11* together with Jeanne Follansbee Quinn, does not concur with Kakutani, since she proposes a different perspective on poetry in the decade following the 9/11 events. In her 2011 article ““Not Needed, Except as Meaning”: Belatedness in Post-9/11 American Poetry,” Keniston argues similarly as Ferlinghetti that, “political and public events beginning with the al Qaeda-sponsored attacks of September 11, 2001, have profoundly affected the poetry of the last decade” (Keniston 658). Keniston attempts to read the 9/11 poems through the thematic paradigm of trauma theory; in effect, she applies the psychoanalytic concept of belatedness to poems written after 9/11. The central poem of her analysis is Robert Pinsky’s “The Anniversary;” however, Keniston explores several other poems, such as Louise Glück’s “October,” Galway Kinnell’s “When the Towers Fell,” Robert

Hass's "I Am Your Waiter Tonight and My Name is Dmitri," Ben Lerner's "Didactic Elegy," and Frank Bidart's "Curse." Surely, there is the question whether this is a sufficient selection for erecting a claim of profound effect.

In his chapter on drama and poetry, Gray similarly positions just a few poems at the center of his discussion on poetry. Gray especially appreciates the following poems because they generate "a great deal of interest and controversy" (170): Frank Bidart's "Curse," Amiri Baraka's "Somebody Blew Up America," Lawrence Ferlinghetti's "History of the Airplane," Tom Clark's "The Pilots," Suheir Hammad's "first writing since," and Martin Espada's "Alabanza: In Praise of Local 100." He further provides a selection of other poems that he refers to only briefly.

Since Duvall and Marzec concluded that the 9/11 novel and some other fictional works have become "hypercanonical" in the examination of 9/11 fiction, one could argue the same within the discussion of 9/11 poetry, i.e. that some poems, like Bidart's "Curse," Baraka's "Somebody Blew Up America," Kinnell's "When the Towers Fell," and Hammad's "first writing since" have anchored themselves in post-9/11 poetic investigation, appearing in Keniston's, Richard Gray's and Jeffrey Gray's discussions, as well as in others.

This study therefore wishes to examine and analyze poetic response to 9/11 in detail, using a body of work that has not yet gained sufficient critical attention, and possibly to avoid the analysis of those most often discussed post-9/11 poems. In the following chapter, the researcher will conduct a thematic reading of several American poems written in the wake of 9/11, and will interpret these using the theoretical methodology of close reading.

5. Methodology: Critical Approaches to Post-9/11 Poetry

5.1 New Criticism

Since this study offers an examination of the general aspect of poetry after 9/11 as well as the more detailed analysis of single poems, two approaches are in order. First, thematic criticism will help sort the poems involving the theme of 9/11 into thematic clusters. Second, the method of reading which offers the interpretive investigation of poems will be the formalist approach of close reading. The literary theory which looks exclusively at the formal elements – language, structure and tone – of a poem and ignores any external influence, such as biographical, historical or ideological levels of a text, is called New Criticism.

New criticism was initiated by I.A. Richards in the 1920s with his first two books on literary theory, i.e. *The Principles of Literary Criticism* and *Practical Criticism*. The two other literary critics who contributed enormously to New Criticism were Cleanth Brooks³⁷ and Robert Penn Warren. The theory dominated American academic classrooms and was at the center of literary studies from the 1940s through the 1960s. New Criticism was subsequently a target of negative critique because of its disregard of other contexts for a text. Stanley Fish, who was influential on reader-response criticism, even warns that New Criticism ignored the act of reading, claiming that because formalist criticism “is spatial rather than temporal in its emphasis, [it] either ignored or suppressed what is really happening in the act of reading” (Fish 147). In his article “Against Close Reading,” Peter J. Rabinowitz also takes a stand against this formalist approach, claiming that, “close reading entails a questionable notion of the psychology of the creator: it tacitly assumes that authors can consciously or unconsciously maintain such control over the details of their text that all those details can fit together and have meaning and that consequently, as Brooks puts it, “every word in a good poem counts”” (Rabinowitz 231). What further concerns Rabinowitz is the ignorance of “the interference of

³⁷ Brooks’ most prominent work on the formalist approach is his collection of essays on literary theory *The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry*.

publication as an economic and cultural institution” and that close reading “effectively severs the relationship between literature and its specific and concrete relation to historical, cultural, and political reality” (Rabinowitz 231, 236).

Nevertheless, New Criticism still greatly influences the way scholars read and interpret poetry today. In her article “Close Reading, Closed Writing,” Heather Murray admits that, “[w]hile the close reading with its concomitant assumptions has come under fire from all quarters, it persists in our practices, and especially pedagogic ones” (Murray 195). Moreover, in *Critical Theory Today*, Lois Tyson acknowledges that close reading “has been a standard method of high-school and college instruction in literary studies for the past several decades” (Tyson 117).

The formalist approach stresses how the formal elements within a text achieve their effects and builds the interpretation of a piece based solely on internal evidence, often referred to as matters intrinsic to a text—tone, image, ambiguity, irony, paradox, tension, metaphor, symbol, rhyme, meter, point of view and setting. Formalist strategies are therefore especially useful for studying poetry, but can also be employed when analyzing drama and fiction. However, New Critics are not only indifferent to extrinsic matters, as already suggested above—biography, history, ideology, economics, psychology and politics—but also to authorial intention. Tyson expands: “Knowing an author’s intention, therefore, tells us nothing about the text itself, which is why the New Critics coined the term *intentional fallacy* to refer to the mistaken belief that the author’s intention is the same as the meaning of the text” (Tyson 119). William K. Wimsatt Jr. and Monroe C. Beardsley³⁸ identify the intention as “design or plan in the author’s mind. Intention has obvious affinities for the author’s attitude toward his work, the way he felt, what made him write” (Intentional Fallacy 1375). They continue to advocate this position by stating, “The poem is not the critic’s own and not

³⁸ William Kurtz Wimsatt Jr. and Monroe C. Beardsley wrote two papers (according to *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, “two of the most important position papers in the history of twentieth-century criticism” (1371) on “The Intentional Fallacy” and “The Affective Fallacy” in 1946 and 1949.

the author's (it is detached from the author at birth and goes about the world beyond his power to intend about it or control it). The poem belongs to the public. It is embodied in language, the peculiar possession of the public, and it is about the human being, an object of public knowledge" (Intentional Fallacy 1376). They fear that the inclusion of the author's intention in any analysis would quickly be mistaken for "author psychology," and there would be "the danger of confusing personal and poetic studies" (Intentional Fallacy 1381).

Since the author's intention cannot be considered as the meaning of the text, neither can one equate the reader's emotional reaction to the work and the effects of the text with the meaning. The New Critics addressed this as the *affective fallacy*. Tyson explains: "While the intentional fallacy confuses the text with its origins, the affective fallacy confuses the text with its affects, that is, with the emotions it produces [... and] neither one is the focus of analysis [in formalist reading of texts]" (Tyson 119). The central matter in New Critical reading is "the text itself"; the critic has to observe "its linguistic structure and its aesthetic unity as an autonomous object" (*The Norton Anthology* 1372).

Hence, in their second essay "The Affective Fallacy," Wimsatt Jr. and Beardsley propose that affective fallacy is "a confusion between the poem and its *results* (what it *is* and what it *does*)" (Affective Fallacy 1389). They predict that, "the outcome of either Fallacy, the Intentional or the Affective, is that the poem itself, as an object of specifically critical judgment, tends to disappear" (Affective Fallacy 1389). However, it is not forbidden to express the emotions aroused by the poems. Wimsatt Jr. and Beardsley do not deny the emotional impact of poetry: "The critic is not a contributor to statistically countable reports about the poem, but a teacher or explicator of meanings [...] The critic's report will speak of emotions which are not only complex and dependent upon a precise object but also [...] poetry is both individual and universal" (Affective Fallacy 1399). Nevertheless, the effects of the poem on readers are not crucial for the interpretive analysis, since this has to remain

objective. According to New Critics, a literary work is universal; i.e. ahistorical, atemporal and autonomous. The selection of poetry in this thesis, however, is distinctly bound to time and external event, which are the events of September 11, 2001 and the aftermath. The thesis will therefore follow Jeffrey Gray's attempt "to rescue the idea of an atemporal poetry from that New Critical context in order to observe that much of poetry's power resides precisely in its atemporal slippage and that, lacking this slippage, poetry can become predictable and indeed negligible" (Jeffrey Gray 265). The latter notion is also similar to that of Fish, who insists that even "reading is a temporal process" (The Turn 225).

Furthermore, Brooks wrote about "the heresy of paraphrase," noting that when critics analyze a poem by paraphrasing it, they "split the poem between its "form" and its "content"" (Brooks 1359). Moreover, Brooks reminds the formalist critic that "form is meaning" and that "literature is ultimately metaphorical and symbolic" (Brooks 1366). The main criterion by which the formalists study a literary work and its quality is therefore *organic unity*. Tyson frames the concept thus: "If a text has an organic unity, then all of its formal elements work together to establish its theme, or the meaning of the work as a whole. Through its organic unity, the text provides both the *complexity* that a literary work must have [...] and the *order* that human beings, by nature, seek" (Tyson 121). Therefore, the strategy of close reading is the best strategy according to New Critics to accomplish the interpretation of a text that most accurately determines its meaning and expresses its organic unity, meaning its interdependence of all elements. Tyson summarizes the concept as "the scrupulous examination of the complex relationship between a text's formal elements and its theme" (Tyson 124).

Even though there have been many attempts to replace New Criticism with other critical approaches to literature, such as post-structuralism or deconstructionism, it still remains useful for analyzing poetry and one can still note numerous examples of

contemporary scholarly work and handbooks employing New Critical practice, especially for examining poetry. According to Leroy Searle, who wrote on the approach for the *Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*, New Criticism has been “an epochal project to create the curricular and pedagogical institutions by which the study of literature moved from the genteel cultivation of taste to an emerging professional academic discipline” (Searle 691). Critic, Camille Paglia is convinced that close reading helps “focus the mind, sharpen perception, and refine emotion” (Paglia vii). In her book *Break, Blow, Burn*, where she exercises close reading on forty-three examples from world poetry, Paglia also states that close reading is especially helpful when analyzing poetry, where “the individual word has enormous power and mystery and where the senses are played upon by rhythm, mood, and dreamlike metaphors” (Paglia viii).

However, it is best to employ the formalist strategies in combination with other critical approaches. Since this study only partially leans on close reading, the main critical approach, which is comparative thematic criticism, will be presented in detail in the following chapter.

5.2 Thematic Criticism

When one wishes to exercise comparative criticism that allows the generation of clusters or groups of poems or other texts that share a common theme and can therefore be examined together, a researcher might employ the theoretical approach of thematic criticism, sometimes referred to as thematicism or thematics. In his cult book *Anatomy of Criticism*, written in the 1950s, Canadian literary critic and theorist Northrop Frye set out the Aristotelian aspect of “*dianoia*, the idea or poetic thought” (Frye 52), claiming that the best translation of the term is most likely “theme”. He calls literature in which idea or poetic thought is in the forefront “thematic”. He further explains that: “In thematic literature the poet may write as an individual, emphasizing the separateness of his personality and the distinctness of his vision ... Or the poet may devote himself to being a spokesman of his society ...” (Frye 54). Frye based a great deal of his literary criticism on the Jungian notion of archetypes and the Freudian notion of symbols. His theory and the development of his concept ‘garrison mentality’³⁹ were later followed by another crucial Canadian author: Margaret Atwood. Her 1972 book *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* was of immense importance for the development of thematic criticism. Atwood raised the question of thematic centrality to Canadian writing and established that the answer was survival in the hostile environment, on the one hand, and victimization, on the other. It was the use of the term ‘thematic’ in the title of her book that helped coin the term and consequently popularized the concept of thematic criticism.⁴⁰ Russell M. Brown concurs that, “it was undoubtedly the appearance of the word ‘thematic’ in the subtitle of *Survival* that was responsible for

³⁹ Russell M. Brown explains the concept as “an urge to preserve an inherited (that is, British) culture as defined in Northrop Frye’s conclusion to *The Literary History of Canada*” (“The Practice and Theory”). In her article “Thematics and its Aftermath: A Meditation on Atwood’s *Survival*,” Michelle Gadpaille further explains that “[a]s an aid to understanding 19th-century colonial culture, he [Frye] gave us the concepts of the “garrison mentality” and the “bush garden”, each of which elucidates an aspect of Canada’s conflicted colonial position” (Gadpaille 168). The ‘garrison mentality’ concept could be compared to the notion of the American frontier, i.e. expansion westward.

⁴⁰ Another influential work on thematic criticism was D.G. Jones’s *Butterfly on Rock: A Study of Themes and Images in Canadian Literature* (1970).

'thematic criticism' becoming in Canada the identifying tag for this group of critics" ("The Practice and Theory"). 1970s Canada thus experienced a flowering of thematic criticism.

Moreover, in their "Introduction" to *Thematics: New Approaches*, editors Claude Bremond, Joshua Landy, and Thomas Pavel claim that "the history of thematic criticism appears to fall into three distinct phases" (Bremond, Landy, and Pavel 1). They roughly outline the first two phases as the "free-flowing and relatively positivistic form [which was later] swept away by the various formalisms" (Bremond, Landy, and Pavel 1). The third phase occurred in the 1990s, when thematics was "making a cautious return to a position of importance" (Bremond, Landy, and Pavel 1).

However, thematicists like Farah Mendlesohn claim that thematic criticism "is not a theoretical approach to fiction in itself, but can be situated within theoretical approaches such as modernism, deconstruction, postmodernism and structuralism" (Mendlesohn 125). Mendlesohn further explains that, "thematic criticism can be understood as a deconstructionist route into a text's deeper meaning [and it is also] a mode of reader response criticism [when the reader] brings to the text his or her own prior reading and may slot the text into a pattern of thematic reading which the author did not envisage" (Mendlesohn 125-126). Mendlesohn agrees that thematic criticism serves well as a comparative approach, since "the very advantage of a thematic approach is that it can link a cluster of texts and allow each to be used as a foil or as a tool of criticism for the other" (Mendlesohn 126). In this thesis, a common theme in all the selected poems is 9/11 or a linkage to the events of 9/11. Even the anthologies that covered the 9/11 tragedy could lend themselves to thematic criticism. This thesis, however, will perceive the theme of 9/11 as a meta-theme, and this researcher will further identify several subthemes. The poems will be organized into clusters of these subthemes that were determined by the reader-researcher in her prior reading of the poems on 9/11.

Moreover, in the chapter “Theme and Interpretation” of *The Return of Thematic Criticism*, Menachem Brinker proposes that a theme “may be constructed or suggested by shorter segments of text” (Brinker 24), which will also be evident within the thematic reading of post-9/11 poems in this thesis. Occasionally, shorter excerpts of poems will determine the prevalent theme.

Furthermore, Allan Burns, who conducted a thematic reading of contemporary American poetry, suggests that, “no definitive list of the total number of possible themes exists, nor are there necessarily absolute boundaries between one theme and another. Any given theme simply functions as a conceptual tool that allows an interpreter to make connections between human experience and poetry and between one poem and others” (Burns x). A thematic interpretation of 9/11 poems becomes a filter through which the reader actively grasps the (potential) themes. For Mendlesohn, when thematic criticism is exploited “as a form of reader response [it can] demonstrate how a reader may be in charge of thematic interpretation” (Mendlesohn 129).

Undoubtedly, there has been a critique of thematic criticism. David Perkins explains that thematic criticism has long been neglected and that “what literary historians ought to mean by a “theme” is uncertain and disputed” (Perkins 109). He generalizes that themes are usually not used “as synthesizing concepts” and that “authors and/or works are grouped by their periods, genre, nation, region, gender, social class, ethnic group, literary tradition, school, *epistème*, discursive system, and so on, but not by theme” (Perkins 111). Of course, he questions the reason behind such abandonment of the theme and ascribes the reason to the following:

That literary historians generally prefer other categories to thematic ones is due, ultimately, to the need to explain the literary series. A literary history must attempt not only to represent (narrate, describe) the past but also to account for

it. The historian must show why texts acquired whatever characteristics they have and why the literary series took whatever direction it did. Virtually all explanation in literary history is contextual. (Perkins 112)

Brown argues that thematicism is “inevitably reductive in that it does not adequately take into account the ways in which the fictional reality is communicated” (“The Practice and Theory”). He claims that: “Aesthetically, the thematic perspective has proved increasingly unsatisfactory since it tends to focus on the historical or psychological genesis of the text, rather than on the text itself and its effects (“The Practice and Theory”).

Nevertheless, Perkins emphasizes that themes remain interesting “as an alternative basis for literary histories” (Perkins 113) and denounces opinions like Brown’s by stressing, “If thematic literary histories isolate works from their total context, a theme, because it inheres in the content of works, can also be described as especially the point or moment at which the literature interacts with extraliterary conditions” (Perkins 113). He further expresses his concern that literary histories had for a long time been focusing on “almost everything except literature,” exemplifying the centers of attention with “political and social history, brief biographies of authors, summaries of work, and stories of “influence”” (Perkins 116). Therefore, Perkins validates the treatment of the theme: “Precisely because themes link works rather than authors, scholars have attempted to use themes to construct a literary history that overcomes these common objections, to create a discourse that engages as directly with the work as does literary criticism and yet is literary history” (Perkins 116).

Similarly, Holger Klein believes that “thematic studies have survived prolonged attacks and continue as one of the main comparative activities” (Klein 146). Klein, however, believes that there is a general concern with terminology when it comes to thematic criticism. He refers to the French and German concepts of *motif* vs. *thème* and *Motiv* vs. *Stoff* and concludes that, “most common is the concept of *Motiv* as [...] “eine kleinere stoffliche Einheit

(a smaller thematic unit)'" (Klein 148). In his studies, he therefore considers the theme as "the main subject(s) created in a work, irrespective of genre [... and] motif as the smaller thematic unit" (Klein 151).

This researcher will follow Klein's understanding of theme as already indicated earlier by dissecting the theme of 9/11 into smaller thematic units. At the same time the researcher is well aware that a theme or 'aboutness' is only one part of a poem or literary work. In the "Introduction" to *The Return of Thematic Criticism*, the editor Werner Sollors considers theme as "merely a formula in metalanguage which has certain correspondences with the work" (Sollors xx). Sollors also acknowledges the "potential interest of intertextuality to thematic" and characterizes theme "as an occasion for comparing texts" (Sollors xxi). Since thematic criticism is a comparative approach, this thesis embraces an additional approach, which is the formalist approach of close reading in order to look at how authors make use of tropes and figures of speech.

Moreover, Sollors warns that, "there is no agreement on a shared terminology in thematics" (xxii), and relates to Perkins who claims that, "the rules for thematics are much freer than those for genres or literary periods" (Sollors xix). Sollors amusingly compares thematic criticism to "a minefield without adequate maps" (Sollors xxiii).⁴¹ Still, several thematic critics have attempted to establish what a theme is and how to pinpoint it in a text. Brinker encapsulates the idea of the theme thus: "The theme is understood as potentially uniting different texts. [It is] the principle (or locus) of a possible grouping of texts" (Brinker 21, 22). When searching for a theme, Brinker differentiates between aims: "generality vs. particularity" or "abstractness vs. concreteness." It is important not to be "overly detailed or too abstract" in the analysis. He therefore postulates that, "we constantly have these specific

⁴¹ Several thematic critics agree on this. Bremond, Landy and Pavel write that "thematics is a rather undisciplined discipline" (Bremond, Landy, and Pavel 1). Perkins opines that "with themes we are free. Individual creativity is much more active in writing literary history than most people suppose, and it riots in thematic literary history" (Perkins 120).

aims in mind, which is precisely why we're not interested in everything that the work may be about. What we're getting at, rather, are the things which it is significantly or importantly about" (Brinker 22). In the case of this study, the researcher will examine the theme of 9/11 and its variations, as well as the range of attitudes to the events in the selected poems. The study does not aim to locate unique thematic features of a specific poem, but rather to determine features that unite several poems into a thematic cluster. The thesis will divide the poems into eight thematic clusters that will be analyzed in detail in the following chapter. The boundaries between thematic clusters may, of course, appear pervious and dynamic; many of the poems would undoubtedly fit into more than one thematic group at once. However, the researcher will include in each cluster those poems which most clearly qualify for a certain thematic group; whether explicitly and/or implicitly represented. The reduction of poems to thematic paradigms will yield increased understanding of the poets' attitudes toward the problematic experience of 9/11.

6. Thematic Representations in Post-9/11 Poetry

The focus of this study is on portions of the post-9/11 poetry archive: groups of poems written exclusively by American poets with the same overall theme; i.e. the events of 9/11. As for the method of selection, several criteria have been set:

1. the poems are strongly connected to the events of 9/11
2. the selected poems lend themselves to a thematic reading
3. the poems on 9/11 were published in an anthology, a poetry collection or in a journal, and not online⁴²
4. the poems were written by U.S. authors⁴³
5. the poems about 9/11 are not the authors' first publication; the author has published at least one poetry collection or had poetry publications in literary journals.

Turning to 9/11 as a theme in poetry, the researcher observed various potential directions for the treatment of the theme. Additionally, the researcher will be interested in the poets' attitudes toward the events of 9/11 and will question to what other themes the main theme of the study might be connected. Holger Klein proposes two "basic thematic constellations" or "frames": 1. a monopolar frame where the main theme "is the only theme or [that] others are wholly subordinate to or integrated into it" (Klein 156); 2. a bipolar frame: besides the main theme, "or an aspect of it, there is another theme that is distinct and important for the entire poem" (Klein 156).

It is a challenging task to divide the poems into thematic clusters; it will often appear that one poem does not fit into one category alone, but into two or several. If a poem deals

⁴² The post-9/11 poetry archive online is simply too vast; the webpage poetry.com alone includes over fifty-five thousand 9/11 poems. More than the vastness of the archive, it is problematic that these poetic responses to 9/11 were mostly written by people who do not consider themselves poets, and many had never written poetry before the events of 9/11. The intent of this study is to examine the responses to 9/11 by American poets.

⁴³ This criterion is crucial to the thesis, since this study aims to investigate the reactions to the tragic events in the United States: to present the responses on the side of the media and politics, on the one hand; and to argue that the poetic responses in the American culture mostly abandoned the prevalent rhetoric of the media after 9/11. The criterion of US-ness was based on the fact that poets were either born in the United States or had lived there for numerous years and consider themselves American.

with a sense of despair and numbness, for instance, this does not necessarily mean that this poem excludes the notion of commemoration or other themes that are significant for the poem. Burns suggests that, “from a theoretical standpoint, it is useful to conceptualize the theme less as an intrinsic part of the poem and more as part of a reader’s interpretation of a poem” (Burns ix). The researcher will therefore focus on the prevailing thematic feature in the poems and will group and interpret the poems accordingly. For the sake of clarity, each poem will appear in only one thematic group. Burns also avers that, “[t]he validity of interpretation, however, will have to be supported by evidence and argument based on close reading—that is, careful consideration of all the poem’s details and overall design” (Burns ix). Burns’ layout of thematic reading will be followed in this thesis, since he not only commits to close reading but also takes into consideration a holistic “knowledge of the poet’s life, times, viewpoint, and other poems” (Burns ix). This researcher believes that all these aspects lead to the meaning of a poem, and will therefore not ignore similar features. The main focus, however, will remain on close reading. Moreover, reading of the poems helped determine the eight thematic clusters that will be presented in this chapter:

1. Loss: Disorientation, Despair, and Disability
2. Disillusionment and Displacement
 - a. Everything has Changed
 - b. Apocalyptic Damage / Creating a Fantasy World
3. Speaking Silence
4. Retreat to the Detail of Home
5. Flight into History
 - a. Allusions to the Holocaust, World War II, and Other Historical Events
 - b. Allusions to Historical Figures
6. Cinematic Spectators: Commemoration / Celebration

7. America, the Abuser

8. America Almighty / Time for Revenge

Each thematic cluster involves one of the prevailing responses and/or attitudes to the 9/11 events as expressed by poets. Additionally, individual poems in thematic clusters will be further discussed with the help of close reading. The analysis will intertwine close reading of individual poems and holistic interpretation of common themes.

It is likely that there are as many responses as there are poets, and there is surely multivocality at work; nevertheless, the researcher examined the common features that unite several poems into one thematic cluster. Every poet attempts to express his or her own singularity, individual truth, and this makes these responses the most valuable ones. Gray supports this notion and realizes that, “[p]oets have responded to the problem of how to write poems after 9/11 by reformulating that problem in the singular” (Gray 192). By contrast, occasions when poets simply imitate the responses of the mass media and politics of the time are rare in comparison to other poetic responses, a phenomenon which will be shown extensively in this part of the thesis.

Within weeks after the attacks, there was an astounding response among poets, and one of the initial responses was self-criticism and self-blame. Jeffrey Gray remarks that the first reaction by writers was aimed at “striking a balance with the high-volume outrage of some radio and television commentators” (Jeffrey Gray 265). The *what-have-we-done-to-deserve-this* response was present in poetry too, but it was overpowered by ““the-we-had-it-coming” case” (Jeffrey Gray 265). Poets like Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Robert Pinsky, Robert Creeley, Lucille Clifton, Lucille Lang Day, Jean Valentine, Kimiko Hahn, Galway Kinnell, Tess Gallagher, Joy Harjo, Ruth Stone, Stephen Dunn, Molly Peacock, and Alicia Ostriker, both known and unknown, reacted to the events by portraying a broad range of political and personal issues with much passion. Their intention was not to remain undecided and helpless

but to contribute their share. The research will offer a detailed analysis of the ways through which selected American poets managed the terror. Because of the overwhelming response of the poets, there is also a great deal of post-9/11 poetry that lacks poetic excellence and is often full of technical flaws mixed with “the clichéd, the stereotypical – that is often the result of the shock” (Gray 170). Jeffrey Gray agrees with this observation and therefore attempts to “suggest alternative examples” (Jeffrey Gray 268). He does not believe all of these alternative examples to be “aesthetically superior—on the contrary some are deeply flawed,” but he is convinced that these alternative examples “reveal a different energy and a different level of engagement, an attention to the problems of making, often a notably different diction, and in most cases an approach that entails a diachronic spread through time rather than a synchronic emphasis” (Jeffrey Gray 268).

In effect, the events of 9/11 confronted poets with a sense of loss, general trauma, and consequently immense emotional pain. Burns comments:

Much of the world’s finest poetry has been written in response to loss, out of desire to offer tribute to the departed, to protest against fate, or to produce some “immortal” thing as compensation for the disappearance of something mortal. The elegiac impulse is as strong in American poetry as in any national poetry. (Burns 83)

On the one hand, such mournful reflections of loss are often found in post-9/11 poetry. Gray demonstrates that, apart from the feeling of disorientation, which he believes to be one of the central consequences of the attacks, there are other similar emotional responses in the poetry after 9/11. He specifies these reactions as “a sense of loss and, occasionally, longing for a “dreamy, reposeful, inviting” pre-lapsarian world, a “Delectable Land” (to use Mark Twain’s phrase) now evidently gone with the wind” (Gray 14). Furthermore, some post-9/11 poetry was indeed intended as part of the process of healing and finding comfort, and Gray

concurr when he claims that to some extent “the role of poetry [was] testament and therapeutic practice” (Gray 18).

On the other hand, there were some immediate poetic responses to the attacks that absolutely lack self-reflexivity and call instead for final closure, for revenge and finding the culprits. Gray notes: “In a climate of confusion, with the trauma of terrorism fueling a widespread desire for revenge, some poets appear to feel challenged, not just by the problem of how to imagine disaster, but by the possibility that what they say might be ignored or even suppressed” (Gray 190). Gray continues that, “there is an undercurrent of paranoid feeling running through some post-9/11 poetry, the suspicion that “they” are out to suppress individual vision and voice” (Gray 190). However, poets that retain a critical stance remain the majority, and this will be observed in the thesis. There is only one thematic group of poets spreading their own paranoia, and mimicking the patriotic reactions of the then politics and media.

6.1 Loss: Disorientation, Despair, and Disability

After 9/11, *The New York Times* began to publish sketches of the lives lost during the attacks, glimpses into the victims' lives, entitled "Portraits of Grief."⁴⁴ These small tributes to the people who died in the attacks were different from usual obituaries; they were intended to be more like personal remembrances of the victims, celebrating yet mourning the loss of these lives. The feeling of loss, not only of lives but also of American values, the feeling of safety, etc. was present in post-9/11 poetry, as well. When poets express the loss, they often express an emotional pain or other powerful emotions that go hand in hand with the feeling of loss: hopelessness, despair, disorientation, even an inability to react. On 9/11, disorientation was strongly present because of the void that had suddenly emerged; people's lives were taken, and there was a spatial void in the city: the Towers were suddenly absent. Zeltner agrees that writers "share images and impressions of September 11 as well as feelings of insecurity and disorientation after this day" (Zeltner 91). The Towers were there for orientation in the city, and suddenly, as David Lehman wrote in his poem "9/14/01": "All you have to do is / look up and it's not there," and it is as if you have lost your way. Gray reflects that, "empty landscape left by the destruction of the Twin Towers becomes a visual equivalent of trauma, the moral and emotional vacuum that opens up after a moment of crisis" (Gray 182).

C. K. Williams,⁴⁵ in his poem "War," first published in *The New Yorker* on 5 November 2001, explores the absence, the vacuum or "nothingness" and the grief, which is one of the manifold reactions to loss.

Fall's first freshness, strange: the seasons' ceaseless wheel,
starlings starting south, the leaves annealing, ready to release,

⁴⁴ In 2002, a book *Portraits: 9/11/01: The Collected "Portraits of Grief" from The New York Times* was published by Times Books.

⁴⁵ C. K. Williams has published twenty poetry collections. He has won several awards for his work: the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry for *Repair* (1999), the 2003 National Book Award for *The Singing*, and the Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize in 2005. Other poetry collections include *A Day for Anne Frank* (1968), *The Lark. The Thrush. The Starling. Poems from Issa* (1983) and *Crossing State Lines* (2011).

yet still those columns of nothingness rise from their own ruins,

their twisted carcasses of steel and ash still fume, and still,

one by one, tacked up by hopeful lovers, husbands, wives, on walls,

in hospitals, the absent faces wait, already tattering, fading, going out.

The poem is divided into three numbered parts, each part consisting of four tristichs, and each line is a long free verse line. In the first and second part of the poem, the poet refers to the history of wartime for the Mayan and Greek civilizations, when “kingdoms / constantly struggling for supremacy—would be disgraced and tortured.” In the third and last part of the poem, however, the poet lingers over the events of 9/11 by re-creating the fall atmosphere of “starlings starting south, the leaves annealing, ready to release,” and instantly contemplating the sudden absence: “those columns of nothingness.” Nature’s elements are reduced to the basic form of birds migrating and trees shedding leaves. The 9/11 events did occur in the fall of 2001; nevertheless, fall is often a symbol of transition, even the end of a season or a particular period, which is relevant to the situation, since the poet feels the end of something and/or the loss of someone. Because of the imagery employed, readers can feel the poet’s expression of gloom, despair, sadness and grief, since the experience of absence, not only of the absent towers but also of “absent faces,” has caused a void in the “hopeful lovers, husbands, wives.” It is as if these people do not notice the season changing outside, since they are preoccupied only with their loss. The poet is aware of “the non-linearity not only of the seasons but of the catastrophe at the heart of the poem” (Jeffrey Gray 272), but somehow nature’s rhythm is of no importance because “still those columns of nothingness rise from their own ruins” (Williams 81). The poet often uses alliteration and a loose consonance to intensify the rhythm, and engage the reader: “Fall’s first freshness, strange: the seasons’ ceaseless wheel” or “their twisted carcasses of steel and ash still fume, and still” (Williams

81). Jeffrey Gray understands this structure as “the insistence on memory in the face of an ongoing rhythm” (Jeffrey Gray 272). The poet finishes the poem by implying in the last—italicized—line of the poem that what follows is a time for sorrow and desolation: “*These fearful burdens to be borne, complicity, contrition, grief.*”

Similarly to Williams, Vicki Hudspith⁴⁶ uses the symbol of the seasons (fall and winter in her case) in her 9/11 poem “Nodding Cranes” but creates a different twist: fall declines winter:

No one wants to look at my disaster

It has become a construction site ...

My disaster is receding

It encompasses less and less of every block

Fewer streets know it each day ...

My disaster is still a disaster

But autumn is faithful and refuses winter

Its place ...

The recurring word throughout the poem is “disaster,” moreover “my disaster.” Hudspith transforms the catastrophe of 9/11 into her personal traumatic event, and wants to be reminded of it daily in order not to feel disoriented. Therefore, “autumn is faithful and refuses winter / Its place.” She has no intention of erasing or diminishing her disaster, which is equal to the fall—in her case, probably because this was the time when the attacks took place. The speaker fears that she will not be able to measure her pain if “all the pieces are swept away” by winter. In the last line of the poem, the speaker concludes by stating: “I have to rebuild my

⁴⁶ Vicki Hudspith has published three poetry collections: *White & Nervous* (1982), *Limousine Dreams* (1986), and *Urban Voodoo* (2002).

disaster” in order to know “what I know,” to be able to find direction. The reader is reminded of Stephen Dunn’s⁴⁷ poem “Grudges”, where the poet asks a rhetorical question: “Ground zero, is it possible to get lower?” (Dunn 3). Gray believes that, ““In “Grudges,” Stephen Dunn tries to measure the loss” (Gray 181), in a manner similar to Hudspith, in order to find orientation.

Hudspith’s poem consists of nine stanzas, each with three irregular lines, and the poet intertwines real descriptions of city blocks and streets with the unseen, like her disaster, horror but also the void. Nevertheless, the speaker is not passive and numb. She feels that her despair/disaster is crucial for her survival; she wishes to rebuild *it*—not the towers, but her loss. As Gray remarks, “an appropriate measure of loss is empty space, a visual vacancy” (Gray 182).

Nevertheless, in post-9/11 poetry, despair often resembles a sense of numbness, impotence and nothingness, with the only adequate reaction being sorrow. In her rather short poem “In the Burning Air,” Jean Valentine⁴⁸ reveals sadness as the centrality of the poem, but also of the 9/11 events:

In the burning air
nothing.

But on the ground
Let the sadness be
a woman and her spoon,
a wooden spoon,

⁴⁷ Stephen Dunn has published fifteen poetry collections. Dunn won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry for his 2001 *Different Hours* and has received an Academy Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Other books are *Looking for Holes in the Ceiling: Poems* (1974), *Between Angels: Poems* (1989), and *Lines of Defense* (2014).

⁴⁸ Jean Valentine has published thirteen poetry collections. Her poetry collection, *Door in the Mountain: New and Collected Poems, 1965–2003* won the 2004 National Book Award for Poetry. Other books: *Pilgrims* (1969), *The Messenger* (1979), and *Shirt in Heaven* (2015).

and her chest, the broken
bowl.

The line “*Let the sadness be*” is italicized, indented, and therefore isolated on the page in order to emphasize that this is now the only entity that remains. The poet uses an open form and the language is compacted. The only interruption is the one indented line to show the disconnection, and the repetition of the word *spoon*, where the reader is forced by the combination of the line ending and the apposition to pause. The speaker equates sadness with a woman, her wooden spoon and broken bowl. As if the poet almost cannot find adequate language to express the nothingness, the comparison implies that a woman can provide some sort of nourishment with the wooden spoon, even though her bowl is broken. There is also a double meaning of the word *chest*; on the one side, her chest (the part of her body, where people feel physical pain due to the stress-induced sensation) can be the broken bowl; whereas on the other hand, the chest can be meant as a large wooden box where people store their belongings.

Moreover, sadness can provide comfort in the burning air, where there is nothing left. Gray notices that, “Valentine admits that she can see “nothing” anywhere “In the Burning Air” that surrounds her” (Gray 183). A sense of numbness is present in the poem, where the poet is more static than active.

In another poem “She Would Long” by Valentine, the reader also senses the immense feeling of sadness and longing because of the loss of a beloved person. The difference, however, is that sadness appears to be collective in the previous poem, whereas in “She Would Long” the despair is individual, personal. Gray points out: “Whatever the focus, however, there are common feelings of loss and longing” (Gray 181). Valentine portrays an individual story of a mother who lost her daughter on 9/11, and offers similar imagery as in “In the Burning Air” to some extent: a female, her chest and the ashes that remain after

everything burns. In the previous poem, the reader can picture the ashes staying on the ground after the towers burned down, whereas in this poem, there are only the ashes of the girl.

Again, there is a discrepancy between collective and individual. By explicitly mentioning the girl's nose and mouth, Valentine creates a personal experience and brings her readers closer to this mother's grieving; readers become personally involved.:

She would long
to dig herself into the graveyard, her only
daughter's ashes
in her nose in her mouth her only daughter's
makeshift ashes
nothing
lying
in the hole in her chest ...

The feeling of nothingness prevails in the end, which is benumbing the mother. The only sense she can experience is the longing to be close to her daughter again, buried in the graveyard. The idea of being buried alive evokes a claustrophobic sensation, since "Her eye would still see / up into the graveyard above her" (Valentine 30), which is a disturbing idea. The absence of the daughter is also portrayed by the absence of full punctuation and stanza breaks. The line breaks are at times abrupt, and several lines include just one word, creating the feeling of separateness—separateness of words on the page, but also separation of the mother from her daughter. The mother therefore feels empty inside, and only the grave can now provide direction and orientation.

Another poem where the speaker feels lost and disoriented is “Religious Art” by Charlie Smith.⁴⁹ It is as if the speaker has to remind himself of his home and place; he presses hard against the ground to feel something familiar:

I press hard with my feet
against the earth and
call this fighting back. All yesterday
I walked around counting birds.
Trees, a spray of pebbles in the forecourt,
a dip the wind took about six

maintain the posts assigned, repel boarders.

The peculiar emptiness
in the mown hayfield this afternoon
we stood staring into—as a precaution— ...

However, the only safety they (the persona and the people around him) can experience is the staring into nothingness, “the peculiar emptiness.” If they do not move and keep fixating their gaze at “the grass shining and then going dull against / the fading light,” they will be protected, not only from the emptiness, but also from the loneliness, which is “like a family art.” The poet seeks comfort in nature by feeling the soil, counting birds, observing trees and the wind, and takes the reader along to the hayfield, where one can see the mown grass, possibly the last of the year. “The peculiar emptiness” of the mown grass might remind the reader of the demolished towers that fell just like these grass plants in the field, and there is nothing but absence.

⁴⁹ Charlie Smith is the author of seven books of poetry. His poetry collections include *Red Roads* (1987), which won the Great Lakes New Poets Award. Other books of poetry: *Indistinguishable from the Darkness* (1990), *Heroin* (2000), and *Word Comix* (2009).

Similarly to Williams, the poet offers in his poem an array of nature images, from visual (the general setting, the fading light, etc.), auditory (birds, wind), olfactory (the smell of peppers drying on the porch, then of hay) to tactile (touching the ground with his feet). All these images help readers to follow the slow pace of the poem. Moreover, the poem has an open form with irregular stanzas (of seven, six, one, and six lines), which makes the reader pause, possibly to reflect at certain points, especially at the isolated line, where the speaker introduces the notion of the “boarders.” Similarly to the comparison of the mown grass and the fallen towers, there is the possibility of a subtle analogy between the “boarders” and the people who lost their lives in the towers.

Not just the form, but also the use of punctuation—the use of hyphens—creates opportunities for the reader to pause. The speaker seeks wariness in stopping and observing the surroundings, and perhaps believes this might offer the same to the reader.

Finding comfort and not forgetting one’s place in such difficult times are crucial for many poets. This is something Nancy Mercado⁵⁰ also wishes to depict in her three-stanza 9/11 poem “Going to Work.” The stanzas have the structure of seven-ten-seven lines. The poem ignores punctuation entirely and the line is short, which helps the poet to stress absence and to mark a faster pace than the previous poem. The poet attempts to show that after the attacks the pace in the city is still fast; even after the attacks, commuters rush to work and are “frantic.” In doing daily habits like going to work or taking train rides, the persona is afraid that she might forget the vanished WTC towers, which she calls “twin ghosts” and addresses them in the second person singular to personify them, emphasizing the loss:

On their daily trips

Commuters shed tears now

Use American flags

⁵⁰ Nancy Mercado has published one book of poems: *It Concerns the Madness* (2000).

Like veiled women
To hide their sorrows
Rush to buy throwaway cameras
To capture your twin ghosts

Frantically I too
Purchase your memory
On post cards & coffee mugs
In New York City souvenir shops
Afraid I'll forget your façade
Forget my hallowed Sundays ...

The persona wishes to buy her memory in a souvenir shop, not to ever forget the catastrophe, and again there is the vacancy, the “twin ghosts” to which she can always return. Moreover, the speaker is also afraid of losing her sense of religion, her “hallowed Sundays,” when she probably attended religious services, thus subtly implying that it is difficult to believe in a higher force in times like the aftermath. The hallowed Sundays, however, could also refer to the time the speaker took for herself. The poet also mentions other people reminding themselves they are American, and therefore wrap themselves in American flags to confirm their belonging to “our world,” even patriotism.

After such traumatic events, horror and then hopelessness are common occurrences. In her poem “Her Very Eyes,” Kimiko Hahn⁵¹ writes a poem of a hopeless mother who listens to her daughter explaining why her friend’s sister “cannot close her eyes”:

she sees bodies falling from the sky,
she sees bodies breaking through the glass atrium
or smashing on the pavement ...
And she hears them land in front of her
but cannot turn away when she closes her eyes.
And she doesn’t know what to do.

The irruption of 9/11 and witnessing the horrific plunges of people throwing themselves from the burning buildings are what causes torture to the girl, and she cannot look away.

Occupying just one stanza of fifteen lines, the poem reveals the inability to react of all involved. The girl in the poem “doesn’t know what to do.” Moreover, both the daughter and the mother are helpless about the girl’s trauma. Immediately on hearing that the girl “cannot close her eyes,” the mother offers a familiar explanation: “it must be asbestos irritation.”

When her daughter adds the unfamiliar information about “bodies falling from the sky,” the mother remains silent. She has no solution for the girl to stop seeing the horrific images. As Laura Frost acknowledges in her article “Still Life, 9/11’s Falling Bodies”: “Psychological studies after 9/11 singled out witnessing falling people—live or on TV—as a major predictor of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD): this, of the many upsetting images from the day, had a lasting traumatic effect on some viewers” (Frost 180). This is what happened to the girl: she

⁵¹ Kimiko Hahn is the author of ten poetry collections. Her work has received numerous awards: the Theodore Roethke Memorial Poetry Prize, an Association of Asian American Studies Literature Award, the 2008 PEN/Voelcker Award for Poetry and the American Book Award for *Unbearable Heart* (1996). Some poetry books include: *Air Pocket* (1989), *Earshot* (1992), *The Artist’s Daughter: Poems* (2002), and *Brain Fever* (2014).

Hahn wrote several other poems on 9/11 published in two anthologies: “Mortal Remains” and “Boerum Hill Tanka” in *Poetry after 9/11, An Anthology of New York Poets*; “In the Armory—,” “After Seeing Our First-Graders Off,” and “After Forty-eight Hours” in *September 11, 2001: American Writers Respond*. She included some of her reactions to 9/11 in her poetry collection *The Narrow Road to the Interior: Poems* (2006).

was traumatized and could hardly cope. Moreover, Zeltner proposes that a trauma like 9/11 can evoke symptoms like “bewilderment and numbness that lead to speechlessness” (Zeltner 139), which happened to the mother and her daughter in the poem. The poem finishes with the lines, “This is what my daughter reports / upon coming home from school / last Tuesday,” leaving the poem itself as a simple report and the reader as well as the mother in the poem unable to communicate because of the horrid images.

6.2 Disillusionment and Displacement

6.2.1 Everything has Changed

When the USA was faced with the attacks on the morning of September 11, 2001, it was a double shock. The initial shock was because of the atrocious terror act on American ground and the destruction of an iconic symbol of capitalist America—the Twin Towers, and of a representative symbol of military power—the Pentagon. Then, Americans felt shocked because of the “demolition of the fantasy life of the nation in that it punctured America’s belief in its inviolability and challenged its presumption of its innocence” (Gray 11). The reaction of many people after the attacks was overwhelming disillusionment, because “[i]nnocence [was] shattered, paradise [was] lost, thanks to a bewildering moment, a descent into darkness, the impact of crisis” (Gray 3). Zeltner expands on the people’s perception of sudden change:

In the wake of 9/11, people have faced a situation of insecurity and the disruption of their daily routine. Thus, 9/11 can be seen as an event that gave rise to a major change, a deterioration from normality to fear, insecurity as well as national and international crises. The collapse of the towers left a world in decline. Daily life degraded into chaos; routine and order were suspended.

(Zeltner 157)

Several writers have elucidated the notion of complete change after the attacks in their poems, e.g. Joy Harjo⁵² wrote her post-9/11 poem with the telling title “When the World As We Knew It Ended.”⁵³ In the poem the speaker expects the disaster: “It was coming. / We had

⁵² Joy Harjo has published several poetry collections, including *The Last Song* (1975), *She Had Some Horses* (1983, 2008), *Fishing* (1991), and *Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings* (2015). She has received many awards for her work (the Wallace Stevens Award from the Academy of American Poets, the William Carlos Williams Award from the Poetry Society of America and others).

⁵³ Carey Harrison contributed his poem “America everything has changed” for the anthology *110 Stories*. Stanley Plumly published his piece “The Day America Changed” in *September 11, 2001: American Writers Respond*, etc. In his poem “When the Skyline Crumbles,” Eliot Katz writes: “The world has changed, bro.”

been watching since the eve of the missionaries in their / long and / solemn clothes, to see what would happen” (Harjo 168).

Analogously, in her poem “October,” Louise Glück⁵⁴ records what has or has not changed after the attacks. The rather long poem consists of six enumerated sections of random lengths; however, the poet’s attitude towards the change is different compared to Harjo. In part 1, the speaker is disillusioned because of the sudden change and therefore poses several questions, beginning in the first line: “Is it winter again, is it cold again” (Glück 5). However, there is only one question mark and that comes after the final question in the last lines of part 1: “didn’t we plant seeds / weren’t we necessary to the earth, / the vines, were they harvested?” (Glück 6). The poet does not insert a single terminal punctuation mark, except for the question mark at the end of the first part. This helps to show that the speaker is perplexed and at this point unable to offer answers. The speaker remembers what happened before the change when everything was still in order: “I remember how the earth felt, red and dense,” but she is not aware of when she was “silenced” (Glück 5).

In part 2, it seems that the situation is becoming clearer for the persona, who observes: “I know what I see.” Moreover, the speaker now knows what caused the change: “violence has changed me” (Glück 7). In this part, the punctuation reverts to standard, which supports the idea of possessing some certainty. Repetition is a central literary device of part 2 in order to emphasize her point that she now knows more, however is still hurt: “It [summer] does me no good; violence has changed me.” Keniston concedes to such reading and claims that the persona implements a “sense of repetition and temporal disruption with the literal condition of coming after” (Keniston 665). In part 2, the speaker repeats the same word on several occasions (summer, violence, good, shine, sun, voice, day, night, etc.), as well as the sentence “violence has changed me”:

⁵⁴ Louise Glück (1943-) has written twelve books of poems and received the Pulitzer Prize for *The Wild Iris* (1992). Other titles include: *Firstborn* (1968), *The House on Marshland* (1975), *The Seven Ages* (2001), and *Faithful and Virtuous Night* (2014).

Summer after summer has ended,
balm after violence:
it does me no good
to be good to me now;
violence has changed me.

The speaker's experience of violence and change is still personal, individual; the speaker portrays what altered her. Despite having some answers, the speaker remains distrustful. The second part closes with these lines: "Tell me I'm living, / I won't believe you."

Finally in part 4, the speaker lists all the external changes:

The light has changed;
middle C is tuned darker now.
And the songs of morning sound over-rehearsed ...
The songs have changed; the unspeakable
has entered them ...
So much has changed ...
The songs have changed, but really they are still quite beautiful ...
And yet the notes recur. They hover oddly
in anticipation of silence.
The ear gets used to them.
The eye gets used to disappearances.

The entire poem is rather flat and somber in tone; Keniston summarizes: "October" in this way enacts a poetic endgame both tonally, through extreme flatness, and structurally, through an inability to progress" (Keniston 667). The poem gains a more optimistic tone in part 5, where the speaker appears to be comforted by her craft: "you are not alone, / the poem said, / in the dark tunnel" (Glück 14). Keniston adds: "By continuing to write, the poet affirms her

entrapment in just the kind of hope she has abjured” (Keniston 667). Markedly, a more hopeful tone appears in the closing lines of the poem when the speaker is able to see beauty again; i.e. the beautiful moon that the speaker personifies and ascribes female gender: “my friend the moon rises: she is beautiful tonight, but when is she not beautiful?” (Glück 15).

Uniquely, Andrea Carter Brown⁵⁵ treated the theme of change in her commemorative poem “The Old Neighborhood”:

Where is the man who sold the best jelly donuts and coffee
you sipped raising a pastel blue Acropolis to your lips? Two

brothers who arrived in time for lunch with hot and cold
heroes where Liberty dead ends at the Hudson? ...

The cinnamon-skinned woman for whose roti people lined up
halfway down Church, the falafel cousins who remembered ...

I know none of their names, but I can see their faces clear

as I still see everything from that day as I ride away from
the place we once shared. Where are they now? And how?

The speaker is distressed because her neighborhood has changed after the attacks, and wishes to pay “tribute to the vanished vendors of the World Trade Center in precise ethnic detail” (Gray 181). Because the speaker offers these particularities of all the faces the speaker used to meet regularly on the streets, the reader can easily envision them as well. The details are mostly associated with various ethnic cuisines; relying on this imagery, the reader is also

⁵⁵ Andrea Carter Brown has published a chapbook *Brook & Rainbow* (2001) and *The Disheveled Bed* (2006). Another post-9/11 poem by Carter Brown is “Ash Wednesday, 2002.”

exposed to scents (coffee, cinnamon and other food) and tastes (jelly donuts, roti and falafel) to make the street people's stories even more personal, although the speaker does not know their names. The poet combines the imagery in such a way that the reader can respond to one image in different ways: one can visually imagine the "cinnamon-skinned woman," but at the same time smell and taste the cinnamon. Moreover, the poet employs several phrases that have special resonance and double meaning: "a pastel blue Acropolis," "where Liberty dead ends at the Hudson," "halfway down Church." Both, Liberty and Church refer to the streets in Lower Manhattan; Acropolis is the area on a natural high point in Manhattan. However, all the words can be also explained with their literal meanings. Politics and religion meet at Liberty and Church; and 'liberty' is one of the political rallying cries of the young U.S. When liberty is said to "dead end" at the Hudson, the speaker does not refer only to a matter of the city street grid but to the fact that freedoms are restricted.

The form of the poem is a variation of a ghazal and contains fourteen couplets without rhyme and a strict rhythmic pattern, which in this poem is quite prosaic. The poetic form of the ghazal originates in Arabic poetry and often expresses a painful experience because of loss or separation. Surely, the poet is separated from all these people with whom she once shared the area, and therefore the ghazal serves as an appropriate form. Moreover, it might be that the poet chose a poetic form from another ethnic environment in order to pay even greater homage to their memory, since they were all also members of other ethnic groups.

Moreover, although still full of questions, Shelley Stenhouse⁵⁶ offers a proviso to the situation in her post-9/11 poem "Circling":

And where have the backyard birds gone?
The *yo babay mo-fo boom chicka* Jersey cars
don't blast around my block trying to park.

⁵⁶ Shelley Stenhouse has published two poetry collections: a chapbook *PANTS* (1999) and *Impunity* (2011).

We'll never go back. It's so strange to be caught
in history, to be making history after just making loads
of unused imaginary money, men in blue jackets shouted,
traded, and it's gone and it's okay but I don't want to die.
I hope God is circling up there with those planes.
Patti was a good person and she died.

The speaker specifies the change in a more general manner (the missing birds, the silent cars, the generality of a historic moment, and portrayal of the change through the first person plural: "We'll never go back"), as well as in a personal way (the first person speaker; Patti—someone the speaker obviously knew—having passed away). Hence, as with Carter Brown's poem "The Old Neighborhood," referring more to the community, Stenhouse's poem becomes a personal elegy. Gray illuminates the latter by conveying that in such circumstances the poets often "find it difficult or even impossible to "tell you about" the events (Gray 181). Therefore, "many poets feel that what they can do—and it is a great deal—is to honor the dead" (Gray 181). The elegiac part is brief in the poem, though; the speaker almost numbly states that Patti has died, but it is difficult for the speaker to clarify why Patti has died and where; it is difficult to depict the reality of the events. Moreover, the speaker seems disenchanted and fears for her own life, expressing the fear thus, "Lately I'm afraid of all sounds and the lack of sounds" and "I don't want to die" in "this big beautiful park," which is the closing line of the poem. The poem creates a rather anxious tone, but also a tone of melancholy and disillusionment because of the change (the birds are gone, "God is probably passed out somewhere warm and dark"). The poem is written in a continuous form of just one block and no stanza breaks, which creates a rather narrative flow, revealing a certain progression in the speaker's story.

By the same token, Sharon Olinka's⁵⁷ poem "It Must Not Happen," also written in a continuous form yet in two blocks, expresses disappointment of the persona even in the title of the poem. Although the speaker is well aware that "[e]verything has burnt away," and that "the bad dream / has entered us," the speaker still prohibits "the mass burials" from happening. The persona is speaking in the first person, employing a conversational style ("wherever you [readers] are") and casual, everyday diction (the persona is clipping her toenails, walking to the vegetable market, dreaming "of car keys, music, lipstick, movies, laughter"), which makes the tone intimate, as readers get a glimpse of the speaker's life. The tone changes in the poem and becomes at times ambiguous, since the persona resorts to the use of figurative language (comparing herself to water), yet still interchanging it with the simple diction and a somber tone:

I have become water.
Everything has burned away.
And even if I still believe
I'll wake up
tomorrow in my own bed,
in Los Angeles,
as I might, as you
still might, wherever
you are, know only this:
the bad dream
has entered us.

⁵⁷ Sharon Olinka has published three books of poetry: *A Face Not My Own* (1995), *The Good City* (2006), and *Old Ballerina Club* (2016).

In the closing lines, she calls for “[n]o more mass burials / by a harbor,” referring to the harbor of New York City. The mention of water, however, creates an optimistic tone, since water replenishes new life after the destruction.

Also referring to the main site of destruction, Robert Creeley⁵⁸ begins his post-9/11 poem “Ground Zero” with these opening lines:

What’s after or before
seems a dull locus now
as if there ever could be more

or less of what there is,
a life lived just because
it is a life if nothing more.

Creeley responds to the change caused by the attacks, which he equates with “a dull locus,” in his typical voice, using a short line, maintaining a certain tightness of the stanzas. Stephen Burt evaluates Creeley’s style: “We recognize Creeley’s poems first by what they omit: he uses few long or rare words, no regular meters, and almost no metaphors” (Burt 256). Other features of his style evident in this poem are “parsimonious diction, strong enjambment, two-to four-line stanzas, and occasional rhyme” (Burt 256). Moreover, Gray states that Creeley’s language in the poem “Ground Zero” is “terse and anonymous” and that the poet values loss as “empty space, a visual vacancy” (Gray 182). The poet introduces the visual emptiness that occurred in the title, remaining rather abstract in the rest of the poem. The change is presented through “after or before,” and it seems that this change feels organic and natural to the speaker, since all things are transient, even the speaker himself, and no matter what happens, there is a continuation:

⁵⁸ Robert Creeley is the author of more than sixty books, and was awarded the Robert Frost Memorial Medal in 1987. He won the Bollingen Prize in 1999 and was the recipient of the American Book Award in 2000 for *The Collected Poems of Robert Creeley 1975-2000*.

The street goes by the door
just like it did before.
Years after I am dead,

there will be someone here instead
perhaps to open it,
look out to see what's there –

even if nothing is,
or ever was,
or somehow all got lost.

Moreover, the speaker believes in the perpetuity of dreams: “Dreams may be all we have / whatever one believes / of worlds wherever they are” (Creeley 150). In this poem, dreams are treated differently than in the previous poem by Olinka. In Creeley’s poem, dreams are what one can hold on to “when all the strife is over / all the sad battles lost or won, / all turned to dust” (Creeley 150). One could argue that there is a sense of displacement at work, a defense mechanism, when the persona shifts the mind to a new aim—to dreams in this case, wanting to replace the terror with an illusion. The speaker feels encouraged because of the dreams “we” are left with and cries: “Persist, go on, believe” (Creeley 150).

Displacement in the psychological sense, but also literal displacement are evident in many post-9/11 poems. The next subchapter will show that some poets found comfort in creating fantasy worlds, similar to Creeley’s dreams, in order to escape the trauma of the 9/11 events.

6.2.2 Apocalyptic Damage / Creating a Fantasy World

The term “apocalypse” comes from the Greek word “apokalypsis” which, when translated literally, means a disclosure of knowledge, lifting of the veil or revelation. Zeltner demonstrates that, “[i]n a more general, non-religious sense, apocalypse can be used to refer to an “Event involving great destruction” (Soanes, Hawker, Elliot, “Apocalypse 30)” (Zeltner 128). The events of 9/11 carry this connotation since “it is seen as a day when the unthinkable happened, which confronted humankind with the consequences of declining moral values and shattered basic human assumptions” (Zeltner 129). Poetry after 9/11 often makes claim of the unrepresentable about the attacks, since it was difficult for the world to grasp what happened on account of the asymmetry of representation. Such a sense of apocalypse was up to that point to great extent representable only in movies: “The violence that had always been only an image on TV screens, witnessed from a safe distance, had on that day become reality” (cf. Žižek, “Desert” 135 in Zeltner 46). The ideal beautiful morning is suddenly interrupted by the terrorists, and those witnessing the events find such an apocalyptic atmosphere difficult to grasp.

According to Zeltner, “After the towers had collapsed, the area of Lower Manhattan resembled a scenario that called to mind images of the apocalypse: Fire, ruins, ash and dust, destruction, debris scattered all over Ground Zero” (Zeltner 128). In responding to 9/11, poets have often captured such images in their poems, reminding the reader of “apocalyptic writings” (Zeltner 128). Gray concurs that in many post-9/11 poems, “the sense of apocalypse [is] openly acknowledged”⁵⁹ (Gray 183).

⁵⁹ In contrast, in Robert Creeley’s “Ground Zero” “the sense of apocalypse [is] hovering just below the surface” (Gray 183).

In like manner, Daniel Berrigan⁶⁰ wrote a post-9/11 poem entitled “After,” which embraces the consequences of 9/11. The speaker acknowledges the initial shock and confusion: “When the towers fell / a conundrum” (Berrigan 78). As a priest and long-time activist, Berrigan critiques the Western worship of wealth, and applies a dysphemism, not only for New York, but for the capitalist West, by quoting from the New Testament, to be exact from the Book of Revelation. The speaker draws an analogy between the Twin Towers and the myth of the falling tower of Babel, between New York City and Babylon, depicting both as places of pilgrimages in a metaphorical way, where there was “[c]onfusion of tongues.” In a way, the metaphor stands for the fallen evil, i.e. the capitalist world. Throughout the poem the uses images of hell and the devil (Lucifer) as well as Mammon, who symbolizes greed and/or material wealth; Mammon is presented as a deity of hell in the poem:

The towers fell,
money amortised in pockets
emptied, once for all.

Why did they fall, what law
violated? Did Mammon
mortise the money
that raised them high, Mammon...
“Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great...
they see the smoke
arise as she burns ...”

Berrigan employs apocalyptic imagery throughout the poem: smoke, burning and hell. Gray clarifies what a “post-apocalyptic landscape” looks like: “Ashes, dust, and death are

⁶⁰ Daniel Berrigan has published numerous poetry collections; his *Time Without Number* (1957) won the Lamont Poetry Award. Other titles include *Encounters* (1960), *Prison Poems* (1973), and *And the Risen Bread* (1998).

ubiquitous” (Gray 37). The closing lines of the poem reads: “a last day; Babylon / remembered” (Berrigan 79). The speaker believes that the only place where the new age “Babylon” can survive is in the memory.

A similar poem which engages with the post-apocalyptic imagery is “One Day Last Week” by CB Follett,⁶¹ consisting of sixteen stanzas, each of three short lines. The second and third lines of each stanza are progressively indented:

The end of the world
rained from the sky
down the breaking floors.

The world turned black and silent.
In the thick advancing cloud,
muted screams of the trapped.

First, the speaker perceives the events of 9/11 as the end of the world, but in the third stanza, the speaker begins to realize that the end of the world will be caused by a different kind of danger, such as “advancing ice, or some wild / cadmium ganglia of explosion” (Follett 152). Then, the speaker compares the people falling from the tower to Icarus, who according to the myth, flew too close to the sun, consequently melting his wings of wax and feathers: “like Icarus, fell out of the sky, silently / spinning down the chutes of glass” (Follett 152). The simile is entirely appropriate, since Icarus wanted to escape the island, and the people in the burning towers attempted to avoid the terrible death of suffocation; therefore, they decided to jump from the buildings. Like Icarus, they fell into death. The poem ends with a more personal matter, turning attention to a neighbor’s son and his brother, both of whom were part of the tragedy.

⁶¹ CB Follett has published a number of poetry collections and various chapbooks. She won the 2001 National Poetry Book Award for her collection of poems *At the Turning of the Light*. The latest poetry collections are *Houses* (2011) and *Quatrefoil* (2015).

In his poem “Late Blooming Roses,” using the same form as Follett but only eleven stanzas, David Baker⁶² reveals the setting as the post-apocalyptic week; the poem is dated on September 18, 2001:

The sun cracks through
the bracken sky—
week of
black clouds, rain, spit-
mist of fog,
the streets
gripped with terror
and mud against
the curbs.

In the first three stanzas, the poet creates the surroundings of a post-apocalyptic wasteland, where civilization has collapsed; there is only fog, mud and terror left. The sky in the poem is “the bracken sky”; bracken is a species of fern, and fern is known as a resilient plant that can grow even in the most difficult conditions, in a desolated place as described in the poem. In this poem, the sun streams through the bracken sky, possibly symbolizing endurance and confidence in a (brighter) future. In the end of the poem, the speaker compares the desolation of the traumatic event with a movie: “that thrum—as in / a movie of / the war / that everybody / watched, though no / one won” (Baker 34). The enjambment of the lines is strong; to achieve short lines, the poet divides the word if necessary, placing the caesura in the middle of the line, indicating rhythmic pauses. The line breaks are well mastered and often create ambiguity

⁶² David Baker’s collections of poetry include the following: *Laws of the Land* (1981), *Changeable Thunder* (2001), *Midwest Eclogue* (2007), *Never-Ending Birds* (2009), *Scavenger Loop* (2015), etc. He has also published several chapbooks.

since you can read the line separately, but also backwards and forwards (“Now the dog down / the street’s racked with / barking”).

Furthermore, the comparison with the movie is valid for two reasons: first, since the events of 9/11 were globally broadcasted by the media and repeatedly shown on television, the attacks represented a visual phenomenon, comparable to a movie. Second, when people saw the footage on TV, they were skeptical that this was a real event at all, and the first impression of many people was that it was a movie or a documentary. In her piece “September Eleventh from Abroad,” writer Jennifer Lauck restated her reaction when she first heard about the attacks: “I thought of that stupid movie *Independence Day* where aliens blow up the White House and figured: “It’s a hoax” (Lauck 300).

In contrast to the poets, who merely sketched the post-apocalyptic portraits of the consequences of the attacks, there were others who fled from these real-time events into fantasy worlds, possibly as a defense mechanism. This often occurs when poets are betrayed by and cannot cope with the pain and horror and therefore escape into an imaginary environment, into illusion. These fantasy worlds help the poets re-create beauty and hope. One can argue that this is an example of the Freudian concept of displacement, or in the case of the poets, a desire for displacement, a desire for security.

One such example in post-9/11 poetry is Molly Peacock’s⁶³ poem “The Land of the Shi,” written in a continuous form of two verse stanzas, where the speaker seeks shelter and protection from the dangerous and traumatic situation. The poet inserted a short commentary on the poem, explaining that, “*The Land of the Shi is another name for the world underneath the Celtic faery mounds—a parallel, alternate world where one can take refuge after a catastrophe*” (Peacock 49). The poet describes this fantasy world in the poem thus:

The Land of the Shi

⁶³ Molly Peacock is the author of several collections of poetry, including *Raw Heaven* (1984), *Take Heart* (1989), *Cornucopia: New & Selected Poems* (2002), and *The Second Blush* (2008).

is the same land we inhabit only
the heart beats more insistently ...
It is the beautiful place we yearned for as boys and girls,
the land of Faery one needs only mental transport for.

The notion of fleeing into fantasy worlds is naïve and romantic, but it offers comfort to the speaker, possibly also to the readers of the poem. Moreover, the poet implements an extended metaphor in the poem, since she draws a comparison between The Land of the Shi and New York City, between the figurative and the real. The extended metaphor provides the poet the possibility of a larger comparison and evokes it intensely in the reader's mind:

Even the rain which rains on Avenue A
in the Land of the Shi rains silkier
and you, parched in New York City,
become more deeply quenched ...
and a New York City kiss
in the Land of the Shi is palpable as sculpted flesh.

For the speaker, everything seems more sensory in the imaginary world, and it helps the persona in dealing with reality, with the experience of 9/11 and its aftermath. The poet concludes that “a lost thought appears for a moment / as a tender face on a penny” (Peacock 49). The United States one-cent coin features the profile of President Abraham Lincoln, a martyred figure common in American contemporary poetry since Walt Whitman wrote the elegiac poem for Lincoln “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d.” The speaker finds the face on the penny “tender,” which offers some ease, at least “for a moment.”

Correspondingly, Philip Fried⁶⁴ creates a similar parallel world—“a miniature of the city”—in his post-9/11 poem “Early, Late.” Fried divided his poem into eight stanzas, each consisting of four lines of approximately equal length:

Somewhere in that city, but where
I could never be sure, is a miniature
of the city, reproducing every
bridge, canal house, and canal.

It has a life of its own, it lives
brief days and nights, twilights, dawns,
quicker than normal, nanoseconds
for seconds, and so it is older, older.

However, if displacement with Peacock was a flight into a fantasy world, Fried’s displacement appears as a representation of a distinct but ‘real’ place. Hence, the setting of the designated locus is Amsterdam with its canals, bridges, and “Regulierstraat;” in the poem, the imaginary world is represented by the minute replica of the Dutch capital. In her review, Anna Kirk agrees with the latter and further establishes that, although originating and living in New York, the poet “can walk to places much farther afield with the reader - in the mind, in memory and imagination” (Kirk). The poet’s fascination with traveling to other destinations, even if only in his mind, enables him to find “upright comfort, sin swept away” (Fried 58). Moreover, Kirk claims that “Fried’s phrases run like water along canals, with a freedom of movement” (Kirk); offering movement that was to some extent restricted after 9/11, since the attacks paralyzed parts of the city.

⁶⁴ Philip Fried has published six books of poetry, including, *Mutual Trespasses* (1988), *Quantum Genesis* (1997), and *Interrogating Water* (2014).

In some post-9/11 poetry, there was a certain feeling of entrapment present: not only physical in terms of not being able to move freely around the city, because of the stricter security measurements, but also entrapment within oneself which was evident in the inability to speak, which will be shown in the next section.

6.3 Speaking Silence

After the attacks, there was a sudden pressure to respond, triggered mostly by the media. “What was especially distressing in this moment, and in some cases offensive,” writes Rosenbaum, “was the way in which the media chose to treat the tragedy as if it presented not so much moral challenges as aesthetic opportunities” (Rosenbaum 133). It seemed that every person must have expressed an opinion and produced a response; and the responses were rapid, emotional and massive. Rosenbaum remembers that *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, as well as other newspapers, magazines and TV shows instantly invited writers to respond in order to clarify the events and “illuminate the loss” (Rosenbaum 133). To some extent such immediate responses even trivialized the events. Rosenbaum ascribes this way of responding to the characteristic of the American nation; i.e. that, “Americans aren’t particularly well-suited to be mourners,” since Americans tend to “generate noise, the acute, reflexive American phenomenon of trash-talking, immoderate speech, and speaking out of turn, all for the purpose of sometimes avoiding the more painful experience of having to think, and feel first, before saying a word” (Rosenbaum 132). Rosenbaum is convinced that responses were too numerous even on the side of the writers and artists, claiming that after 9/11 “everyone had an aesthetic opinion, as if aesthetics had anything to do with the sacrificial slaughter of innocents” (Rosenbaum 133). One must simply recall all the poetry web pages that were inundated with poetic responses, mostly by people who had never written poetry before. In contrast to Rosenbaum, Roland Bleiker argues the opposite in his book *Aesthetics and World Politics*, stating that “aesthetics offers the opportunity to reach a broader understanding of the emergence, meaning and significance of key political challenges, such as global terrorism” (Bleiker 65). Aesthetic responses can undoubtedly provide a different, often clearer insight into demanding situations such as 9/11; however, Rosenbaum’s idea to let some time pass by before responding allows one to reflect in a calmer, more sober manner.

Nevertheless, because of the urgency by the media and politics with constant reporting and spreading of paranoia, Gray believes that there was a “a failure of mourning: a failure that leaves an open wound” (Gray 9), and that “the period of commemoration has been hijacked by a series of events tied to it in rhetoric if not necessarily in reality: the “war on terror,” the Patriot Act, extraordinary rendition, the invasion of Afghanistan and then Iraq” (Gray 8).

Therefore, Rosenbaum traces the importance of silence in the aftermath by arguing that, instead of these repetitive immediate responses, “[t]he horror of what happened on September 11 should have resonated in a giant expression of collective numbness, a nation awestruck by the awfulness of it all, rendered totally mute” (Rosenbaum 132). Such views are certainly not new; after the Holocaust, the responses of many were similar to Rosenbaum’s and Adorno’s. Critic Lionel Trilling restated this notion thus: “There is no possible way of responding to Belsen and Buchenwald” (Trilling 256). After 9/11, many writers did approach the issue from a similar angle. In her chapter “A Failure of Imagination? Problems in ‘Post-9/11’ Fiction,” Rachel Sykes observes that in the aftermath “many [writers] spoke of the insufficiency of words” (Sykes 251). Likewise, Gray records “a measure of verbal impotence – or rather, of the widespread sense that words failed in the face of both the crisis and its aftermath” (Gray 2).

However, Jeffrey Gray is concerned that “the alternative of silence—of supposing that the event is beyond representation—runs the risk of privileging and idealizing the unspeakable” (Jeffrey Gray 263). Moreover, Rosenbaum is convinced that, “when words must be used because memory requires it, those words should be delicately and judiciously chosen, they should be accurate without being too ornate, and sufficient time must pass so that the artist can gain from wisdom of humility and the perspective of hindsight” (Rosenbaum 133). Simpson agrees that time is a crucial factor, when it comes to reflecting on such traumatic moments in history, both for writers and scholars: “Scholarly time looks its best when there

are no critical events going on around it: then it can reflect and project and even hope to appear prescient” (Simpson 11). Later, even Adorno conceded in his *Commitment* that after some time it is “virtually in art alone that suffering can still find its voice, consolation, without immediately being betrayed by it” (“Commitment,” Adorno 312).

In her paper “The Poetry of September 11: The Testimonial Imperative,” Karen Alkalay-Gut proclaims silence as inappropriate in the aftermath, “[b]ecause this is a communal experience and the poem seems to serve the purpose of alleviating some fears and anxieties and assuaging others, the language and form are of necessity communicative—clear, direct, and immediately accessible (Alkalay-Gut 269).

This subchapter considers a range of responses by the poets who struggled with the issue to find an adequate language and attempted often to express the silence and/or terror. Gray says that the persisting question of how to write and whether to write at all after 9/11 is evident.

Nikki Moustaki⁶⁵ contributed her poem “How to Write a Poem after September 11th,” to the *Anthology of New York Poets*, where she advances one answer to this question. Moustaki writes her poem in a recipe-like manner and is precise about which words are appropriate to use and what words should not be chosen. According to Lin Knutson, Moustaki “depicts a universal inadequacy to contain the truth of the event in words” (Knutson 189). She does not, however, focus on individual words; she even suggests what to say. Nevertheless, she implies that writing in the aftermath is somewhat impermanent, since the writers write with ashes, and ashes can easily be blown away:

First: Don’t use the word *souls*. Don’t use the word *fire*.

You can use the word *tragic* if you end it with a k.

⁶⁵ Nikki Moustaki has not published a collection of poetry, but is the recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts grant in poetry, along with three Pushcart Press nominations. Her poetry has appeared in various literary magazines, anthologies, and college textbooks, including *The American Literary Review* and *America Now*. Because she has no published poetry collections, her poetry will not be examined in detail. The poem, however, is highly relevant to the present subchapter and was therefore included.

The rules have changed ...

Press hard. Remember, you're writing with ashes ...

Say: the phone didn't work. Say ...

Another poet who articulates the problems of poetic craft after 9/11 is Grace Schulman,⁶⁶ in her poem "Kol Nidrei: September 2001," which dissects language to words and syllables.

All sentences cut short,

main clauses powerless

to govern their dependents

or lead the voice in prayer.

All syllables annulled.

Verbs lag. All images ...

The poet captures the reader's attention in the intriguing title of the poem *Kol Nidrei*,⁶⁷ which refers to a musical piece for cello and orchestra composed by Max Bruch. Apart from the musical reference, there are allusions to Jewish religion. Moreover, the title of the composition originates in the Jewish prayer *Kol Nidre*, recited during the evening service on the Day of Atonement. Both the prayer but more importantly Schulman's poem function as forms of atonement, since the prayer says, "we hold it lawful to pray with the transgressors." So Schulman in a way absolves and forgives the perpetrators.

⁶⁶ Grace Schulman is the author of several poetry collections, including *Burn down the Icons* (1976), *The Paintings of Our Lives* (2001), *The Broken String* (2007), and *Without a Claim* (2013). Schulman has received many awards for her work, and four Pushcart Prizes for poetry. She contributed another post-9/11 poem entitled "In the Foreground" to the anthology *110 Stories*.

⁶⁷ The composition was completed in 1880 and premiered in Berlin one year later.

What is more, Laurence Goldstein explains that Schulman⁶⁸ “adopts the form of Jewish lamentation to testify against language as a carrier of meaning in a meaningless Sabbath: “No ark with scrolls, no benches, // no prayer-shawls, holy books / or ram’s horn.”” (Goldstein). Schulman takes the allusion to a prayer, and transfers it into a complaint about language, since this does not suffice in a time like 9/11 and its aftermath. The poet chose the reference to prayer, because it transforms the poem into a chant, not only because of the reference, but also because the poet creates a strong rhythm, which is regular. Almost all lines contain six syllables, some seven; the poem is written in variant iambic trimeter, and the poet occasionally adds an additional weak syllable. However, there is no rhyme. Because of the regular meter, the poem is easily read as a chant. The resulting lines contain strong end-stops, and the syntactic structures are often short and simple. The poem is divided into eight stanzas, each containing four lines. The rhythm, as well as the tone, which is serious and somber, help contribute to the poem’s meaning, because words alone “cannot reveal” the horror that the speaker witnessed. There is a feeling that the formal rules of grammar and syntax are the only solid things left, but even these are failing to adequately convey meaning. The speaker thus proposes an alternative:

Only trees
stand witness in this silence
and autumn’s humid air

blurs a bark’s crevices.

As this cloud turns to vapor,
all forms circle in smoke,
all promises unravel,

⁶⁸ Schulman is a Jewish American poet.

all pages torn to shreds
and blown to drift in wind
whose words cannot reveal
the truth of what I've seen.

The speaker remains silent, since only “trees / stand witness in this silence” and “all [her] words [are] undone” (Schulman 633). The speaker has difficulty finding a voice to portray “the truth.” Gray explains that often is the issue not “just about the tools of the trade, the potentially “helpless” nature of words—their use or otherwise in saying the unsayable—but about voice and audience” (Gray 190).

Similarly to Schulman, W. S. Merwin⁶⁹ wrote an ode-like poem “To the Words” soon after the attacks, where the author “dismisses the instruments of his trade as poet” (Gray 182). The speaker’s attention is captured by words and he begins the poem by apostrophizing them, personifying them: “When it happens you are not there” (Merwin 65). Like Schulman, Merwin cannot rely on words to say the “unsayable;” words remain useless entities: ancient, precious and helpless:

you that were cried out
you that were spoken
to begin with
to say what could not be said

ancient precious
and helpless ones

⁶⁹ W.S. Merwin is a prolific American poet, who has published many poetry collections, including *A Mask for Janus* (1952), *The Drunk in the Furnace* (1960), *The Lice* (1967), *The Carrier of Ladders* (1970), which won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry, *The Vixen* (1996), and *The Shadow of Sirius* (2008), which again won the Pulitzer. Merwin has won almost all awards available to American poets.

say it

In the closing line, the speaker concludes with an imperative, commanding words to begin fulfilling their purpose, “to say what could not be said” (Merwin 65). Since there is no punctuation at the end of this line, the ending remains open and ambiguous. There is a gap to be filled by the reader, whether the words will “say it” or not, whether the language will measure up to its task. The entire poem takes an irregular form, with no punctuation, and is structurally similar to a strophic poem, since it contains seven irregular stanzas of 1-8-2-3-6-2-1 lines. The diction is starkly simple, and it feels as if the speaker is talking to someone he knows, reproaching words for their inability: “charged with knowledge / knowing nothing” (Merwin 65).

Elizabeth Spires⁷⁰ condemns language for impotence in a similar manner as Merwin in her post-9/11 poem “The Beautiful Day.”

We stood there, watching weightless white spools
of milkweed lift in the wind.

Uncountable numbers drifted upward and away,
each shining in the sun.

Like words. But what are words now?

Words are so small. Words have no weight.

And nothing will ever be the same.

⁷⁰ Elizabeth Spires’s books of poetry include, among others, *Globe* (1981), *Swan’s Island* (1985, 1997), *Wordling* (1995), which won the Whiting Award in 1996, and *Now the Green Blade Rises* (2002).

For the speaker, words are weightless; they cannot help her in time of distress to even sketch the horror. As Gray explains, “perhaps the horrors of 9/11 and after can only be imagined on the borders of language, a verbal absence inscribing a human one” (Gray 182).

Besides, the title of the poem is confusing at first, since it does not offer instant direction to the reader. Later in the poem, the reader learns that a day when she was in a botanical garden with her daughter—a month after the attacks—reminded the poet of September 11: “The sky was intensely blue, just like the day / it happened” (Spires 357). The poet observes milkweed and its parachute seeds flying in the air, which triggers the comparison to weightless words. The poem even questions what the function of words is in the time like post-9/11. However, presumably the speaker also references the people who were jumping from the towers and who were not weightless in air.

The question and the sudden condemnation of language, however, strike the reader as puzzling to some extent. In the first half of the poem, the poet finds the language to illustrate the horrific act and even gives an account of the change that occurred consequently: “We cannot live in Eden anymore. / The wall is broken. The violence done... / No enemy. Just smoke and rubble. / A vacancy terrible to behold” (Spires 356). After the use of literal language, the poet even employs elements of figurative speech, using metaphor and simile: “There is a force, the mauve dragon... / that wants to kill, cold as a serpent” (Spires 356). The symbolic value of the dragon is that it is often presented as a destroyer, and also in this poem as a malevolent creature who attempts to kill—possibly the terrorists. Thus, the poet possesses some instruments to say something but somehow still feels disappointed by language at the end of the poem.

All these poets, Schulman, Merwin and Spires aspire to say something; however, the words are insufficient.

In contrast to other poets, Timothy Liu⁷¹ treated the idea of silence and the inadequacy of language differently. Liu published several post-9/11 poems in his poetry collection *For Dust Thou Art*. His poem “A Prayer” concerns the theme of silence only subtly and “gives the poem over to questions (left on a cell phone) in a ritualized paratactic structure meant to enact the loss of communication between a fated “you” trapped in the wreckage and a surviving “we” (Goldstein).

Is the line still busy?

Are you able to get through?

Are you still trying to get through?

And what could you possibly say that hasn't been said already?

The silence in the poem is actual and real, because of the inability to reach the other person on the phone. The speaker is alone, trying to get hold of someone but cannot; even his “batteries are running low” (Liu 27). To depict the state of aloneness, the poet isolates each line of the poem as a separate sentence or question. Moreover, the form helps the reader grasp those moments of waiting on the phone, waiting to “get through,” since the reading of the poem demands a slow pace. The ambiguity of the phrase “get through” works well with its physical and electronic impossibility.

Because of the silence, the speaker feels paralyzed: “We must do something” (Liu 27), but is/are unable to. Therefore, he poses all these questions rhetorically; he does not receive a reply. Then, the speaker makes a sudden shift in his perception: “And what could you possibly say that hasn't been said already?” So even if the persona could speak to the other person, even if there were a possibility to share communication and possess the words, the persona admits that there is nothing to say, because everything has been said. This extends to critics like John Barth and theories of exhaustion of forms and other possibilities.

⁷¹ Timothy Liu's poetry collections include *Vox Angelica* (1992), *Of Thee I Sing* (2004), and *Bending the Mind Around the Dream's Blown Fuse* (2009). He has received numerous awards for poetry.

This notion is similar to one from the poet Toni Morrison, who restated Cage's concept and the oxymoron of having *nothing to say*, yet while saying it, and "nothing to give either—except this gesture", which is in her case the poem "The Dead of September 11" (Morrison 48). Rosenbaum believes that, in the aftermath, it is of immense importance to embrace the silence and therefore invites us "to learn to sit with the sadness, and listen to the silence" (Rosenbaum 136).

6.4 Retreat to the Detail of Home

In the aftermath, the traumatic shock was considerable, since such violence had always been kept distant from the American nation. When the attacks took place, America had been “at least, according to the national sense of things—invaded” (Gray 5), and “Americans woke up to the fact that their borders were not impregnable” (Gray 11). Moreover, people felt that, “[t]he homeland was no longer secure and, to that extent, no longer home” (Gray 5). In her book *Trauma Culture*, E. Ann Kaplan recalls the atmosphere in New York City in the aftermath: “Everyone was in shock... voices were muted. People’s expressions were somber... On the subway too, we looked at each other as if understanding what we all were facing... Nowhere was safe...” (Kaplan 9). People experienced a collective trauma, and they appreciated that they were not alone in their suffering. Many gathered in bars to watch the news, as it helped them to know they were bound in this horror together.

Others, however, concentrated on the safety of their homes, and this was no different with several poets. The process of healing and finding comfort, even turning away from grieving towards their personal spheres was for several poets the only way of coping with the trauma. The therapeutic solution for many poets was to escape into the security of their private environments, and the idea of having a stable home was suddenly not taken for granted. Some critics would argue that such a process is like building “a kind of perception protection” (Zeltner 49). Moreover, Zeltner explains that one of the trauma symptoms is that, “the individual refuses to believe either that the traumatic event happened or that he or she was in any way harmed by it or that he or she suffers from a trauma” (Zeltner 48). So, escaping to the detail of the domestic environment might be considered as a form of refusal to believe that the events happened at all.

As in DeLillo’s novel *Falling Man*, where the main character Keith Neudecker is completely dissociated from everyday life, attempting to escape and find comfort in pointless

poker games, so are some poets able to seek consolation only in the safety of their homes. In her poem “Even Now,” Leza Lowitz⁷² writes about her domestic environment, and about what she would like to cook on “the day after.”

It's the day after
and all I want to do is cook,
invite my friends for a feast,
celebrating life...
What if the simple meal on the table—
a quiche made with homegrown onions,
chicken simmering in cardamom curry
lasagna smothered in cheese and garlic...
making of this meal a universe,
even now,
called “home.”

The speaker is preparing meals from all over the world (quiche, lasagna, curry, sukiyaki, stew), which she would like to share with her friends in her kitchen to mark “the end of this season” (Lowitz 227). By expressing the inter-cultural, the speaker invokes links between the local and the transnational; moreover, the speaker presents the notion of unity through diverse cuisine at a time like this, traveling “the world from my kitchen” (Lowitz 226). After the attacks, which are never explicitly mentioned in the poem, the speaker asks herself, “What if the everyday is even more sacred now?” She refuses to take her precious everyday for granted from now on. Therefore, the persona wishes to celebrate life, as this helps her feel safe and provides comfort. The values of a safe environment, which can also encourage the process of healing, have been altered; the speaker’s perception of life is now different, and she questions

⁷² Leza Lowitz is a poet and translator of many Japanese authors into English. Her books of poetry include *Yoga Poems* (2001) and *100 Aspects of the Moon* (2005).

“what if the oven is not just heat / for the common cook’s convenience / but the healing...?” (Lowitz 226). The speaker can turn to her ancestral legacy, remembering her grandmother who believed: “*If I can’t heal the world, at least I’ll cook / a good brisket...*” (Lowitz 226), which expresses Jewish humor very well.

Moreover, the title of the poem implies that “even now,” i.e. in the wake of 9/11, there is a possibility of celebrating life, and having a place one can call home.

In addition to the reference to her grandmother, the poet employs other obvious allusions, mostly to religions: “a Zen *koan*,” which is an old parable or a saying used as meditation in Zen practice, and a “parchment of a prayer / slipped between stones at the Wailing Wall,” an ancient wall in Jerusalem, the holiest place for Jews to pray. These religious allusions additionally support the speaker’s worldview of celebrating life, also because both religions are closely related to the poet. On the one hand, Lowitz has Jewish roots; on the other hand, she is a yoga instructor in Japan, a country of Zen. Her identity is therefore linked with both religion’s world views.

What also captures the reader’s attention, especially when reading the poem aloud, is the auditory fabric which contributes to the tone of the poem. Alliteration (“Boil and bubble, toil and trouble”) produces a melodic effect, whereas additional use of sounds, especially in describing the dishes, creates a sensuous tone, tempting the reader (“lasagna smothered in cheese and garlic / beef braised in soy sauce, sending its salty bloom”). Cooking in a cauldron and the obvious allusion to the “Song of the Witches” from Macbeth appoint the speaker as a witch, or at least someone who possesses certain powers.

Another such poetry example where a persona uses something personal, and therefore soothing to alleviate pain, occurs in “New York Cover” by Susie Bright.⁷³ In this case, the speaker takes comfort in her daughter’s blanket:

My daughter called it blankie when she was a baby ...
You’ll feel warmer
You’ll feel babyish ...
We’ll both feel safer, in a blanket ...

A similar response can be found in Rachel Hadas’⁷⁴ poem “Sunday Afternoon,” where the speaker attempts to lessen the painful loss by turning to familiar items in her household, all replete with shared memories:

pumice stones from France, Greek worry beads
coming unstrung, ceramic fish whose tail
long ago broke off, dead tennis balls—
each item from a different layer of past ...
a mildewed quilt, a tattered T-shirt
with a familiar smell.

Gray explains that, for the speaker, her memory is “enshrined in the relics left behind by those who have vanished” (Gray 181). Not only her personal environment, but also her memory is a place where everything is “stowed away as safely / as anything can be / that is locked up in memory” (Hadas 93). The poet plays with sound to create a soothing feeling, for herself and for the reader: “These thoughts / soft and porous as the puffy clouds / sailing across a stippled sky” (Hadas 94). The repetition of sounds such as *s*, *p* and *o* creates a soft,

⁷³ Susie Bright has not published a poetry collection, but is the author of many books on sexual politics and erotica. However, her poem “New York Cover” appeared appropriate for this subchapter, and is therefore included.

⁷⁴ Rachel Hadas is an accomplished author of many books of poetry. Her poetry collections include *Halfway Down the Hall: New and Selected Poems* (1998), *The Ache of Appetite* (2010), and *The Golden Road* (2012). She contributed another post-9/11 poem “Tangerine Orchids” for the *Anthology of New York Poets*.

serene yet gloomy, even melancholic tone to the poem. Hadas' poem employs a free verse without poetic constraints.

A slightly different way of expressing withdrawal into the detail of home, one portraying an unsettling form to present the broader picture of the events, can be found in Miranda Beeson's⁷⁵ poem "Flight." The poet uses the image of a finch, i.e. a small bird, which happens to enter the speaker's home after the attacks in order to depict the terrible scene of 9/11, the man jumping from the towers:

An iridescent exhausted finch
found its way to your home
in the aftermath.
Trapped between screen and pane
you palmed him, brought him in ...
The survival of this slight speck
of feathered perfection seemed
more important than anything else
we could think of those first weeks:
more important than the planes,
the slow motion tumble,
the man in his business suit
who fell through the air without
the benefit of wings.

The idea of entrapment is well portrayed with the use of the squinting modifier in the line "trapped between screen and pane." Of course, the finch is trapped, but grammatically, it is the second person singular that is the immediately subsequent agent, which could refer to the

⁷⁵ Miranda Beeson has published two chapbooks of poetry: *Privet* (2010) and *Ode to the Unexpected* (2014).

speaker herself feeling entrapment in her home because of the events. However, it could also depict people trapped in the towers, which is the underlying metaphor in the poem, as will be elaborated below.

The poet adopts varied images, e.g. visual (iridescent finch, speck of feathered perfection), but the most striking image in the poem is the tactile image of the speaker “palming” the colorful finch. The reader can feel the vulnerability of the bird, in the word choice (to palm) because it is a noun verbalized, retaining the intimate bodily feel of the original noun. Another potential meaning of the verb ‘to palm’ is to conceal, to hide showing that the speaker wishes to hide the finch in the safety of her home.

Looking after the bird becomes the most prominent occupation of the speaker in their home in the aftermath. In the New York area, these birds are not migratory species, but resident. The speaker wishes for it to survive, possibly even stay, and therefore takes good care of it, providing him shelter and food: “A hidden perch for the nights. / An aviary filled with light and seed / for the days” (Beeson 6). The speaker is afraid for its life and compares the finch to the man “who fell through the air” from one of the towers, but could not fly like the finch. Because of the horror, the speaker strives to find solace in the bird, which “found its way” to the speaker’s home, and according to Gray “consolation is sought and found for a moment” (Gray 181). Gray further observes that poems like Beeson’s “offer “cover” of a kind, perhaps, in wishful thinking or wonder at a small miracle of survival” (Gray 182).

As evident in the previous poems, Aaron Smith⁷⁶ retreats to his home in the poem “Silent Room.” What is distinct from previous poems in this subchapter, however, is his motivation, which is not to seek comfort, but fear. After the attacks, the speaker is concerned about personal safety, claiming that nothing can persuade him that “everything I am isn’t

⁷⁶ Aaron Smith has published two poetry collections: *Blue on Blue Ground* (2005) and *Appetite* (2012).

burning” (Smith 5). The speaker allows his readers to access his personal sphere by explaining that he is unable to do housework in the aftermath:

I haven't done the dishes in a week,
laundry in a month,
or eaten anything
but McDonald's for lunch ...

I am wearing dirty underwear.

I am wearing dirty socks.

I am wearing a dirty T-shirt ...

The events of 9/11 have made the speaker paranoid, and Rothberg explains that in many post-9/11 poems “violence is a visual spectacle with the power to penetrate intimate space and affects” (Rothberg 138). Because violence entered the speaker personal space, he is generally afraid. According to Moberley Luger, “[t]he attacks caused people to fear their own daily routines” (Luger 187). The speaker has developed symptoms similar to those of paranoid personality disorder, since he stares “at the lock on the door, / push it over, / hold it hard, harder, / push it, 8 counts” (Smith 4). Even the form of the poem helps to indicate his deviant paranoid behavior, since the poet uses six irregular stanzas with indented lines. The poet skillfully chooses simple everyday language to develop the atmosphere of his daily life, of the small chores he would have to carry out. By repeating certain parallel phrases, such as “I am wearing” and “I am dying,” the poet follows the rhythm of a natural speech. Anaphora helps to ensure the reader that the speaker is distressed, and consequently the reader grasps the seriousness of his traumatic situation better.

While these poets attempted to withdraw or escape into the particularities of their domestic environments, other poets fled into history to avoid the present and consequently the

painful experience of 9/11; these poems of historical context will be presented in the next part of this chapter.

6.5 Flight into History

In the immediate aftermath, the circulation and celebration of W.H. Auden's "September 1, 1939," which was written just before the outbreak of the Second World War, was extraordinary. Not only did poets recite Auden's poem on different occasions commemorating the victims of 9/11 in the months after, but many American newspapers, such as *The New York Post* and *The Boston Globe* also published the poem. People were circulating it through e-mail, and it was even read on National Public Radio.⁷⁷ The attacks immediately reminded the American nation of this poem; according to the poet Eric McHenry, this was based on "how precisely it matches much of what happened last Tuesday" (McHenry). Apparently, the poem had the ability to provide some sort of comfort. McHenry describes Auden's poem as "emotional nourishment."

Auden begins his poem with a reference to the First World War, and further evokes Hitler's invasion of Poland, anticipating the horrors of the Second World War. After 9/11, Auden's poem appeared appropriate, as it mirrored a similar brutality and lent the first instrument to voice the violence of 9/11. Many began tracing analogues between the events of 9/11 and the Holocaust. In her chapter "Analogical Holocaust Memory after 9/11," Bond observes a "widespread recourse to the Holocaust as a point of reference for September 11" (Bond 87).

Many other critics have been concerned with the issue of whether such a comparison is in order. In 2006, Joyce Carol Oates provocatively noted that, "September 11 has become a kind of Holocaust subject, hallowed ground to be approached with awe, trepidation, and utmost caution" (Oates). Gray, however, supposes that, "[t]here are, without doubt, significant differences between the Holocaust and 9/11: differences in scale, intensity and the sheer momentousness of the historical events and the human suffering involved ... Nevertheless, as

⁷⁷ Peter Steinfels wrote a report in *The New York Times* on 1 December, 2001 about the circulation of Auden's poem after 9/11.

far as this, the challenge of representation, is concerned, there is a structural connection” (Gray 53).

Moreover, Rosenbaum affirms, leaving no room for doubt that, “what we are living through now is not a, or the, Holocaust. What we are facing now is not genocide—for Jews or anyone else” (Rosenbaum128). Language-wise, he draws a parallel when it comes to the use of metaphors, and claims that, “in a world of madness and atrocity, the only language worth speaking is the metaphorical tongue,” continuing that “in the post-Holocaust world, some words can never be used again without conjuring an overriding metaphor for something else” (Rosenbaum 131). He exemplifies the Holocaust imagery as “train tracks, numbered arms, gas, ovens, and cattle cars,” and then “skyscrapers, terrorism, box cutters, firemen, hijacking, and antibiotics” as the images of the post-9/11, which “transcend their usual meanings” (Rosenbaum131). Evidence of such use of imagery associated with 9/11 will be shown below.

Both parts of this subchapter on allusions, to either historical events or historical figures, will show that poets retreated to history because of “the feeling of impotence, even exhaustion” (Gray 187) arising from not knowing how to express themselves about the ‘present’ terror. On the other hand, they exploited history as an instrument to imply that, “all this has happened before,” and historical events/figures could help echo the acute presence. Notably, these poets did not compare the events of 9/11 only to the Second World War and the Holocaust; they also examined similarities to the war in Vietnam, the First World War, and even the wars of old civilizations (a matter already briefly mentioned in C. K. Williams’ poem “War,” which incorporates allusions to Mayan and Greek wars).

6.5.1 Allusions to the Holocaust, World War II, and Other Historical Events

Probably one of the most famous post-9/11 poems that documents a close comparison between the events of 9/11 and the Holocaust, and has consequently been analyzed by almost every critic dealing with post-9/11 poetry, is “When the Towers Fell” written by Galway Kinnell.⁷⁸ Kinnell published this rather long poem in *The New Yorker* of 16 September 2002. However, Keniston explains that the comparison between Kinnell’s poem and the Holocaust is not a classic one, since “the logical “corollary” follows what has come before, while “lineage” insists on chronology, implying that the present can be explained by the past” (Keniston 668). The clear and simple title of the poem itself refers to the vertical collapse of the towers.

The poem is dense with allusions to historical and literary phenomena, containing passages from “City of Ships” and “When Lilacs last in the Door-yard Bloom’d” by Walt Whitman, “For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen” by Hart Crane, “The Testament” by Francois Villon, a Holocaust poem “Death Fugue” by Paul Celan, and “Songs of a Wanderer” by Aleksander Wat. The poet presents the concept of intertextuality in the poem by deliberately incorporating, not only allusions, but quotations (e.g. “City of the World!,” “I saw the debris and debris of all the dead soldiers of the war,” “*Schwarze Milch der Frühe wir trinken sie abends*” and “*Sages et folz, prestres et laiz*”), and translations of sections in foreign languages (“Black milk of daybreak we drink it at nightfall” and “Wise and foolish, priests and laymen”). There is even a brief reference to Psalm 137; the speaker sat down by the waters of the Hudson, whereas in the psalm they sat by the rivers of Babylon. The poem functions almost as the “Waste Land” of the 21st century. When introducing the link to the Holocaust, the poet writes:

This is not a comparison but a corollary,

⁷⁸ Galway Kinnell published over twenty books of poetry. He won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry and the National Book Award for his 1982 *Selected Poems*. Among his other publications are *Body Rags* (1968), *The Book of Nightmares* (1973), *Blackberry Eating* (1980), and *Strong Is Your Hold* (2006).

not a likeness but a lineage
in the twentieth-century history of violent death – ...
train upon train headed eastward made up of boxcars shoved full to the
corners with Jews and Gypsies to be enslaved or gassed ...
Seeing the towers vomit these black omens, that the last century dumped into
this one, for us to dispose of, we know
they are our futures, that is our own black milk crossing the sky ...

And I sat down by the waters of the Hudson,
by the North Cove Yacht Harbor, and thought
how those on the high floors must have suffered: knowing
they would burn alive, and then, burning alive.
And I wondered, Is there a mechanism of death
that so mutilates existence no one
gets over it not even the dead?

The poet chronologically positions the attacks of 9/11 after the violent events of the twentieth century, which enables both him and the readers to better comprehend the complexity of the events. Kotonen observes that in the lines, “This is not a comparison but a corollary, / not a likeness but a lineage / in the twentieth century history of violent death,” “Kinnell’s poem, using now his own words, sets 9/11 into a long lineage of violence and terror (Kotonen 88). Moreover, Kinnell’s poem is a good example of the fact that, “[n]o matter how much we insist that poetry answer socio-historical purposes, it often slips free of temporal limits, at the very least in the sense that it applies to more than one time, as well as to times as yet unimagined” (Jeffrey Gray 278).

In addition, Kinnell's poem exemplifies Rosenbaum's claim that the poet employs imagery in a certain way. When the poet describes the Holocaust, he employs images such as "train upon train", "box cars," "to be gassed," "firebombings," "death marches," "starvations," and "mass graves." In a similar manner, he typifies 9/11 by images such as "towers vomit these black omens," "our own black milk," "steel fume," "mashed concrete." In attempting to emphasize the gruesomeness of 9/11, the poet repeats some of the phrases: "Some died while calling home... / Some died after ... / Some died so abruptly ..."

Kinnell masterfully portrays the horrific history by combining events from different times in history and through the use of the imagery that conveys a bitter mood and hence, creates a serious tone. Several poems after 9/11 employ the technique of merging "multiple times and locales within a few poetic lines" (Jeffrey Gray 278).

Another of these poets was Emily Bernstein,⁷⁹ who was faced with "flashbacks" after 9/11. Bernstein was known for her Holocaust poems before 2001. Four parts of her "Twelve Meditations for September 11, 2001" appeared in the anthology *American Writers Respond*, where the speaker compares 9/11 with the war in Vietnam.⁸⁰ In part 6, the poet writes:

The crater still hisses and spits
like a snake.
Fire erupts from the pit of the
snake's belly ...
There are flashbacks.
A return to Viet Nam.

⁷⁹ Emily Bernstein has published two poetry collection *Cancer Queen* (1979), *Night of the Broken Glass* (1981), and three poetry chapbooks.

The entire piece of the "Twelve Meditations" can be found on Bernstein's webpage: <http://avkcija.zurnal24.si/911.html>. In other meditations, the reader can also spot allusions to the Holocaust. In part 7, the poet writes: "Loved ones incinerated trigger / images in Jewish consciousness: / Auschwitz-Birkenau, Dachau, Sobibor" (Bernstein). Later, she makes further references to the Jewish religion, such as the mention of a hymn in a Jewish prayer, kaddish.

⁸⁰ In the poem "The Equation," Steve Kowitz also recollects several locations of American military interventions throughout history (Hanoi, Pyongyang, Beirut, Managua, etc.).

The stench of dead bodies.

Smell of festering wounds.

The poet includes the original name of the country, written separately as in “Viet Nam,” which was once commonly used, and is still used today by the Vietnamese government.

The poet adopts a style of short lines and sentences throughout the poem, which contains twelve numbered stanzaic parts of different lengths.

Bernstein uses symbolic and figurative language which helps to evoke a sense of anxiety and terror in the speaker. The apocalyptic images (auditory “The crater hisses,” olfactory “The stench of dead bodies”) and the use of figurative language (the simile “like a snake”) in the poem lead to the symbolic meaning. The conventional symbol of a snake represents evil, and fire from the crater causes destruction, hence fire symbolizing chaos and war. These dark images suggest an association with death, fear and desolation. The suggestive nature of the symbol expands the experience of the speaker, recalling the dreadful war in Vietnam, where “dead bodies” stank. The “apocalyptic scene” of 9/11 takes the speaker back into history, to Vietnam.

Similarly to Bernstein, a basis for comparison between some horrific historic events and 9/11 is provided by David Trinidad⁸¹ in his poem with an unusual title “Adam and Eve on the Hollywood Treadmill.”⁸² However, Trinidad also makes references to the Hollywood version of popular culture⁸³:

Think Faye Dunaway’s “rag-doll dance of death”
as gun blasts keep her body in motion)

⁸¹ David Trinidad has published more than a dozen books. His poetry collections include *Plasticville* (2000), *The Late Show* (2007), *Dear Prudence: New and Selected Poems* (2011), and *Notes on a Past Life* (2016).

⁸² Trinidad’s poem is an excerpt from a mock-epic *Phoebe 2002*, which Trinidad co-authored with Jeffery Conway and Lynn Crosbie, and is based on the 1950 movie *All About Eve*.

⁸³ Other poets have employed allusions to Hollywood; in her poem “Mortal Remains,” Kimiko Hahn makes references to John Travolta.

“What a Heav’nly day,” says Eve, envisioning a dark victory

Addison likens the out-of-town opening to D-Day

The Allied invasion (known as Operation Overload)

of the European continent through Normandy in WWII

Casualties: 637,000 soldiers were killed, wounded

or captured during the campaign, June 6-Aug 29, 1944

a war reference that would have seemed outdated

a mere month ago, pre-WTC

The poet takes the reader through some moments in Hollywood history (e.g. the 1967 movie *Bonnie and Clyde* with Faye Dunaway and Warren Beatty, especially the final scene with the violent shooting, the 1997 movie *Titanic* with Kate Winslet and Leonardo DiCaprio, etc.), stopping and drawing a parallel with the Second World War, particularly the Normandy landings in 1944, an allusion that the speaker finds crucial now, after the attacks. The poet provides the reference to D-Day in the form of a brief, dry report, “Casualties: 637,000 soldiers were killed...” (Trinidad 37), putting into perspective the 9/11 casualty count.

Because this poem is an excerpt from a mock-epic, it attempts ridicule, and the tone is often humorous and sarcastic (“up to her waist in freezing water / apparently immune to hypothermia”). Moreover, it also mocks Adam and Eve, since Trinidad presents them both in a contemporary world in a movie set in New Haven, Connecticut. Trinidad’s poem is a satire to show how popular culture generally trivializes critical events like 9/11, and writes that after

9/11 there is a “[n]ote sign behind Addison and Eve: U.S. ARMY RECRUITING SERVICE” (Trinidad 37).⁸⁴

As some poets used allusions to historical events, others sought comfort “in the arms” of important historical figures, like Walt Whitman and Abraham Lincoln. Analysis of these poems returning to historical figures in post-9/11 poetry will be presented in the next section.

⁸⁴ Another famous post-9/11 poem that involves historic allusions is “History of the Airplane” by Lawrence Ferlinghetti, where the poet tells the story of the airplane and the Wright brothers, traveling with the poem through a history that began with “dreams turning into nightmares” (Gray 174).

The Second World War is a “potential mirror of the contemporary crisis” (Gray 188) in poems, such as “The Way of It” by Ruth Stone and “Fairy Tale” by Ai.

In his poem “House of Xerxes,” Paul Violi refers to the ancient wars of the Persians, Assyrians, Bactrians, Scythians and Ethiopians.

6.5.2 Allusions to Historical Figures

In a previous subchapter, the impotence of expression was examined in detail, showing that many poets experienced a verbal void and the inability to find adequate language; for some the only option was silence. This subchapter, however, reveals that poets who needed an instrument to portray the tragedy of 9/11, often escaped into history to borrow a voice and/or comfort from a historical figure they appreciated. In a way, these poets managed to turn their inability into an ability to fathom the situation with the help of existing art (writers like Whitman, Kerouac and Ginsberg; a musician like John Coltrane), or strong voices like those of politicians (Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, etc.). Moreover, Gray explains that, “a sense of impotence shifts into an implicit belief in the power of the poet as truth-teller” (Gray 188). Gray also recalls Derrida, suggesting that writers often “fell back on repetition, incantation, bare facts and figures, names and dates, the irreducible reality of what had happened, the blank stare of the actual” (Gray 2).

An example of a post-9/11 poem in which the poet turns to Walt Whitman is “In the Hairy Arms of Whitman” by Bill Kushner,⁸⁵ where the speaker at times compares himself with the father of modern American poetry, Whitman:

I am Whitman on death's bed sobbing for Lincoln for
Kennedy for King I am
Whitman scattering lilacs sobbing I am at once myself & Whitman ...
I am walking beside you Whitman we stop for a moment
On the corner of 14th where we wait for a light light to hit us & change
& stroking your white beard as you look at me ...
Whitman digging at the site of the World Trade Center

⁸⁵ Bill Kushner is the author of several books of poetry, including *Night Fishing* (1980), *Head* (1986), *Love Uncut* (1990), *Walking After Midnight* (2011). Kushner contributed two other post-9/11 poems to the *Anthology of New York Poets*: “Friends” and “Civilization.”

O as all the buildings do explode around us ...
Whitman screaming freedom Whitman long-haired hippie
crying Love
Love love I say to you I am all in a moment
I am gorgeous Whitman in drag I am Whitman the solemn President
In the White House calling all the armies Come back
Come back! calling all the hatemongers Stand back Stand back
O hear me! hear me! we are all leaves of grass

The figure of Whitman permeates the poem; his name is the recurrent word of the poem. The speaker celebrates Whitman, once even apostrophizing him. The tone becomes gradually more and more exuberant, even ecstatic toward the end of the poem, where the poet inserts many exclamations. The poet uses a whitmanesque long line and free verse, and a style also when reminiscent of Whitman's outlook. In the "Introduction" to *Whitman's Wild Children*, Neeli Cherkovski states that Whitman was "opening the doors for a supple and truly democratic vision of America and Americans" (Cherkovski xv). Through Whitman, the speaker is able to take a democratic political stance against the prevailing politics of the time; against scapegoating, spreading hatred and fear ("calling all the hatemongers Stand back Stand back"), since Whitman was known for his democratic political views.

Moreover, Gray presents the presence of Whitman in the poem thus: "Even if Whitman is not called on for poetic assistance, the sense of his presence is still there in the plainspeaking, pedagogical thrust" (Gray 189). On the one hand, Whitman serves as a medium for the persona's expression; on the other hand, the speaker becomes Whitman, which is particularly evident in the first part of the poem, and finds comfort in this transformation. The metaphor creates the feeling that the transformation into Whitman might offer salvation to the speaker. Whitman is represented as figure of strength and thus elevated

by the poet. The poem functions almost like a chant because of all the repetition, exclamations, and consequently the strong rhythm. The poet includes other allusions in the poem (Presidents Lincoln and Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Matthew Shepard, Mahatma Gandhi, and Joan of Arc); all of these people were executed and Kushner wishes to pay tribute to them.

A similar poem is “The Meeting of the Poet and the President” by Coleman Barks,⁸⁶ where the poet informs his readers about the daily encounter of Whitman and Lincoln.

... I don't deny
there's goodness in this country, along with a fierce and
foolish pride, and some innocently cold determination, like
those horses in Whitman's journal stamping as they're being
unsaddled ...

In Barks' case, the poet relies heavily on existing art to express his own. Not only does the poet undertake the whitmanesque long line, he also includes two long passages from Whitman's journal entries, *Specimen Days*. The poet provides whole excerpts from Whitman's prose work that describe the encounter of Whitman and Lincoln driving to work (“I saw him this morning about eight-thirty. He always has a / company of twenty-five or so cavalry ...”). Barks himself writes a prose poem, where he attempts to establish whether America is truthfully good or if this ‘goodness’ is merely on the surface, whereas at its core America is rotten.

Furthermore, in his poem “On Reports of Threats Against Arab-Americans,” Neeli Cherkovski⁸⁷ also wishes to determine what America is about. As the title suggests, after 9/11 Arab American people often received threats merely on the basis of their being of Arab

⁸⁶ Coleman Barks has published many books of poetry, including *Gourd Seed* (1993), *Tentmaking* (2001), and *Club: Granddaughter Poems* (2001). He is known for his translations of the Persian poet Rumi.

⁸⁷ Neeli Cherkovski is an author of many poetry collections, including *Clear Wind* (1984), *Animal* (1996), *Leaning Against Time* (2005), and *The Crow and I* (2015).

descent. The poem is divided into three numbered parts and involves many allusions to crucial figures in American culture. In part three, the speaker is an Arab, whose “feet are burning” and whose “hopes / are here in America / rooted to the streets... / of what we face tomorrow” (Cherkovski 191).

The allusions, however, are especially visible in the second part of the poem, where the speaker begins chronicling American history with the Lewis and Clark Expedition, which took place after the 1803 Louisiana Purchase, when Thomas Jefferson was President:

Lewis and Clark move backwards
They hope to discover Washington D. C.
the Cherokee nation comes home
to the diamond-headed Exchange
John Brown rises from dust
at the foot of the Pentagon
Abraham Lincoln crosses the prairies
on a moonflooded night
Walt Whitman is confused by fire
tumbling out of American eyes
Chief Seattle dreams of Indians
dressed like clowns in a Wild West Act
Miles Davis is Dark Magus in daylight
performing for the bankers

Through all these voices from American history (ranging from political figures and Indian chiefs, to poets and musicians), the speaker attempts to show that the situation has changed, as the stanza shows that everything in the history now appears reversed. The allusions enable the poet and the reader to share the cultural experience, since the poet includes cultural references

as well. *Dark Magus*, for example, is a live album by Miles Davis, recorded in 1974 at Carnegie Hall in New York. The concert became famous because of the ethnically and age-diverse audience, which did not contain just rich “bankers.” Even the metaphor that Davis *is* *Dark Magus* is intriguing, as this attributes special powers to Davis, who indeed was a magician on his instrument. The word dark could indicate the genre of the music, which is definitely not light, since the recording features improvisational/experimental fusion of jazz and rock.

The second and the third part of the poem eschew punctuation entirely, which gives a natural touch to the poem. The pace is fast because nothing stops the reader. This might additionally imply that the situation has diverged into an unknown direction; the only things the speaker can hold onto are “subway dreams / and islands in my head” (Cherkovski 191).

When alluding to either historical or cultural events and figures, many poets⁸⁸ used “simple speech and expansive rhythms to address their fellow citizens and teach them about the current crisis” (Gray 189). In so doing, the poets sought support, at times even refuge in various moments in history, which was shown in this subchapter and corroborated by solid examples.

⁸⁸ In her poem “The Skeptic,” Colette Inez refers to Voltaire, Karl Marx and Robert Ingersoll to find possible answers to the events of 9/11, but still the speaker “doubt[s] any interpretation of god” (Inez 36). In the poem “Six Months After,” David Ray makes references to Tolstoy, Napoleon and Walter Benjamin.

6.6 Cinematic Spectators: Commemoration / Celebration

The importance of witnessing the events of 9/11 is broadly evident in post-9/11 poetry. In his poem “When the Towers Fell,” analyzed earlier, Kinnell first plays the role of a spectator witnessing and attempting to repeat what he had seen, heard and experienced in an objective (almost indifferent) manner:

The plane screamed low down lower Fifth Avenue,
lifted at the arch, someone said, shaking the dog walkers
in Washington Square Park, drove for the north tower,
struck with a heavy thud, releasing a huge bright gush
of blackened fire, and vanished, leaving a hole ...
Some with torn clothing, some bloodied,
some limping at top speed like children ...
each dusted to a ghostly whiteness

These images are similar to those the viewers were able to see on television over and over again; yet, some poets felt the necessity to express them again. Jeffrey Gray clarifies that, “Testimony is precocious because the event is always the missed event; traumatic experience itself ... is necessarily a missed experience” (Jeffrey Gray 264), and continues to address the urge towards testimony in art and literature: “A precocious mode of witnessing will be not so much representational as performative, proceeding diachronically and, at times, by blessings, imprecations, rhythms, and curses; it is an art that does not compromise what happens by pretending to know what happened” (Jeffrey Gray 264).

Moreover, Gray opines that “there is mourning: the use of ceremony, ritual, acting out of some kind to enable a working out of and getting through the traumatic event” (Gray 8). Even the repetition of the footage of the towers collapsing appeared as part of a ritual, a chant that needed to be repeated in order to better comprehend what had happened. Zeltner,

however, claims that apart from the importance of understanding, there is often also a sense of relief present in the viewer: “For those who witnessed the attacks, the feelings of shock and pain are intermingled with a feeling of relief that one has survived or was not in danger” (Zeltner 124). In his poem “September 28, 2001,” Michael Atkinson illuminates his relief: “and yet in our house, in our bed, / we are blessed from calamity... / For the life of me, I cannot figure / why it is I have been so fucking lucky” (Atkinson 30).

Initially, it was not just the falling towers that appeared repeatedly on television, but also the images of falling people, which were even more difficult to grasp for the viewers. According to Gray, “the fall of people from the towers—has become a powerful and variable visual equivalent for other kinds of fall. In some texts, the towers, or the people, fall over and over again, as they did on instant replay on the television” (Gray 7).

However, the live images of falling people “were [soon] taken out of circulation and continued to be carefully edited from retrospective coverage of 9/11 in America” (Frost 186). Even the photograph of a falling man by Richard Drew was “at once characterized as voyeuristic and inappropriate” (Pozorski 61). Frost further implies a certain degree of hypocrisy on the part of the American journalism and the nation, since these images were “driven from mainstream American news sources into more obscure channels such as Internet sites” (Frost 186). The images of falling people seemed suddenly improper to be shown on television channels, and Pozorski also asks herself, “[w]hy did Americans react so strongly even to the truth-telling mission of photography and journalism to capture 9/11 and its aftermath?” (Pozorski 61). Journalism should not have been preoccupied with the “questions of taste and aesthetics” but with the need to “capture history” (Pozorski 62). In his article “On the Falling Man,” Tom Junod elaborates on the hypocritical tendencies of the nation: “In a nation of voyeurs, the desire to face the most disturbing aspects of our most disturbing days was somehow ascribed to voyeurism, as though the jumpers’ experience, instead of being

central to the horror, was tangential to it, a sideshow best forgotten” (Junod 180).

Nevertheless, these images of the jumpers remained imprinted on the memory of most people, whereas different artists and writers even applied the horrific images to their art, so the pretence of the media attempting to avoid showing the footages was in vain.

Additionally, Pozorski sustains the idea that “mural artists, poets, and novelists ... are burdened with how to refer to falling, of how to document it for a mourning public” (Pozorski 62). Nevertheless, Frost observes that, “[d]isturbing as they are, images of 9/11’s falling bodies have emerged as a significant concern in art and literature, fiction and nonfiction, from poetry to prose and from documentary film to sculpture” (Frost 182).⁸⁹ Testimony about the events became one the most valuable features in post-9/11 poetry. As “Richard Drew’s and similar photographs allow the spectator to witness the same moment endlessly” (Frost 191), so do post-9/11 poems depict not only falling bodies, but also the entire event, indefinite reports both documenting and commemorating, the lost lives.⁹⁰ Alkalay-Gut claims that, “[t]his tragic vision was one that many witnessed, either live or replayed, on television and therefore can be identified universally (Alkalay-Gut 267).

One such poem is “The Diver” by Christine Hartzler,⁹¹ published in *Michigan Quarterly Review*, where the poet offers testimony in order to commemorate. As Alkalay-Gut infers, “the idea of testimony as tribute is present” in numerous poems (Alkalay-Gut 268). In “The Diver,” the poet pays tribute to the anonymous jumper:

⁸⁹ For example, a bronze sculpture, entitled *Tumbling Woman* by Eric Fischl; the documentary *The Falling Man* directed by Henry Singer; the illustration *Soaring Spirit* on *The New Yorker* cover by John Mavroudis and Owen Smith on 11 September 2006; the window project *Falling* at the Jamaica Center for Arts by Sharon Paz in 2002.

⁹⁰ Alkalay-Gut emphasizes the significance of testimony and mentions the project “Testimony Continues: Museum of the City of New York 5th Avenue and 103rd Street,” which is an ongoing project that, “allows the contribution of poetry and images that commemorate 9/11 in the spirit of the shrines which appeared in Union Square in the aftermath” (Museum of the City of New York 2004)” (Alkalay-Gut 269).

⁹¹ Christine Hartzler has not published a book of poetry, but her poetry has appeared in American literary journals, such as *Michigan Quarterly Review* and *Painted Bride Review*. However, her poem “The Diver” is relevant to the present subchapter.

An anonymous diver, abandoning his
day job. Maybe you've seen the
photograph? A single body falling, white
oxford full and fluttering, like a peony,
blowsy, on that singular day.

Hartzler's poem is divided into two stanzas of six and eight lines. In the first part of the poem Hartzler describes an event in St. Louis in 1984 where a diver (Greg Louganis) jumped into water and of course, "rose up in a shimmering swath / of bubbles"—creating a joyous spectacle for the viewers who were witnessing the event, since the swimmer came up from the water again. The idea of rising to life, might presumably symbolize rebirth.

In the second stanza the speaker skips seventeen years in time, referring to one single moment during the tragic events of 9/11: the moment when the first man jumped from the burning tower. Specifically, the poem refers to the photograph "The Falling Man" taken by Richard Drew. This diver obviously committed suicide but reminded the poet of a 'fluttering peony' during his act. The simile (the body like a peony) carries a commemorative undertone. People often pay respect to the deceased with flowers at funerals; here the jumper is his own flower. On the one hand, the comparison with the flower ensures a "ceremonialization of the event" (Alkalay-Gut 275). On the other hand, the analogue with the peony transforms the moment from horrible to beautiful. Pozorski estimates the photograph by Richard Drew as "a picture striking in its beauty and elegance" (Pozorski 61).

Moreover, by paralleling the diver also to the Olympic gold medalist swimmer, the speaker presents the jump by the "anonymous diver" as something fascinating. Knutson reads the comparison in a manner that the speaker "ennobles the 9/11 jumper by paralleling his actions with Olympian victors" replacing feelings of terror with "emotions evoking courage and fearlessness" (Knutson 189).

The speaker emphasizes the fact that the falling man was “anonymous.” Frost expands on the oxymoron of the public death of an anonymous person by stating that, “the falling people are individuals and also...an anonymous group: “the jumpers” (Frost 191). Consequently, they “produce the awful intimacy of witnessing a public death that is also anonymous” (Frost 191).

The visual image of people falling from the towers seems to be universal in poetry after 9/11, as these incidents were the most striking ones for the witnesses. As Richard Gray claims: “The trope of falling is, unsurprisingly, a common one: falling towers and falling men and women” (Gray 184).

In her fourteen stanza poem “Strangers,” however, Lucille Lang Day⁹² commemorates not only ‘the falling man’ but also other victims, dying in both the WTC towers and the airplane. She is compassionate towards the victims, honoring them in her poem, although she had not known them:

I didn't know the man in black pants
who plunged headfirst
from the top of the north tower

or the young mother trapped
behind a locked door
on the eighty-seventh floor.

In the first eight stanzas, the speaker offers brief individual sketches of some people who have died. The speaker appears as a witness, and can now testify about the woman “behind a locked door” and “the couple crushed in their final embrace.” However, in the ninth stanza, the speaker changes perspective, stating that although she had not been acquainted with any of

⁹² Lucille Lang Day is the author of several poetry collections, including *Self-Portrait with Hand Microscope* (1982), which received the Joseph Henry Jackson Award, *Fire in the Garden* (1997), *Wild One* (2000), *Infinities* (2002), and *The Curvature of Blue* (2009).

them or “shared coffee” with them, “[y]et I have felt sun on their lips / and tasted wine on their lips. / I have run using the long muscles // of their legs...” (Day 224). It is as if they and the speaker shared some common experience. Gray conveys that “he [the falling man] and those who suffered similarly seem her inmates” (Gray 185) “in the long corridors of my brain” (Day 225). All these shared moments in the poem are depicted with the help of imagery, arousing the reader’s senses by offering a blend of tastes, fragrances and other sensations (wine on their lips, the taste of cereal in the morning, feeling the sun on the skin, etc.). In so doing, the poet brings all these lost lives closer and makes them “precious, still there” (Day 225). In the first part, however, the imagery resembles the usual imagery of post-9/11 poetry: “the fire chief quickly buried / under tons of concrete, / steel, glass, and ash” (Day 225). This brand of imagery has already been dealt with in the subchapter on apocalyptic damage.

Similarly to Day and Hartzler, in her poem “I Saw You Walking,” Deborah Garrison⁹³ includes a commemorative paradigm through witnessing a disoriented man who has managed to escape the tragedy but is visibly shaken. Like Hartzler and Day, the poet emphasizes the importance of the singularity of life. Garrison even celebrates life at a time of crisis and loss, since the man in the poem is alive, and the speaker would like to thank God for it; however, she does not believe in God:

I saw you walking through Newark Penn Station
in your shoes of white ash ...
Your face itself seemed to be walking,
leading your body north, through the age
of the face, blank and ashen ...
forty-seven?

⁹³ Deborah Garrison is the author of *A Working Girl Can't Win: And Other Poems* (1999) and *The Second Child: Poems* (2008). Her poem “I Saw You Walking” appeared first in *The New Yorker* and later also in the anthology *110 Stories*.

forty-eight? the age of someone's father –
and I trembled for your luck, for your broad,
dusted back, half shirted, walking away;
I should have dropped to my knees to thank God
you were alive, o my God, in whom I don't believe.

Garrison's "reportage-cum poem" (Weidenbaum), places "an emphasis on the reported evaluation of one of the iconic events" (Alkalay-Gut 267), which is in Garrison's case the walk north through Manhattan of one of the survivors.

As in many poems after 9/11, ashes and dust play an important role as crucial images. As in Valentine's poem, Garrison employs these images as well. Zeltner observes that the "motif of ash ... strengthens the ghostly impression of the scene" (Zeltner 114). The man in the poem appears almost as an apparition ("the face, blank and ashen, passing forth / and away from me" (Garrison 56). The man reminds the reader of the main character in DeLillo's *Falling Man*—Keith Neudecker—who also escapes the attacks, and suddenly appears from the smoke and ashes of the burning buildings; he then heads north to see his son and wife. Their disorientation appears to be similar. Moreover, Zeltner adds that, "[t]he ashes of 9/11 do not only stand for the residue of the burning debris, but also for the remains of the people who died in the towers" (Zeltner 114). So, the man in the poem is covered also in the ashes of other people, carrying nothing else, "but your life" (Garrison 56).

If some poets, like Garrison, Day and Hartzler commemorated the singularity of life, there are others poets like Willis Barnstone,⁹⁴ who "pays tribute to those "thousands gone" both before, during and after 9/11" (Gray 179). The following excerpt is from his post-9/11 poem "Our New York Rooms in the 1930s Remembered in September 2001":

This evening I stood out on

⁹⁴ Willis Barnstone's books of poetry include *From this White Island* (1959), *A Snow Salmon Reached the Andes Lake* (1980), *Funny Ways of Staying Alive* (1993), *The Secret Reader: 501 Sonnets* (1996), and *Algebra of Night: New and Selected Poems, 1948-1998* (1998). Barnstone is also a translator.

the street for Mom and her skyline that
had no Twin Towers then, nor now. Some prayed
(a lily tolls a day and night comes through).
My candle lingered for the thousands gone,
the child in the swan, burning where she sat.

The speaker remembers his mother when he was still a child and how she used to light candles “whispering for her dead” (Barnstone 38). As a child the speaker could not understand her ritual, and he always “broke her spell / with blabber” (Barnstone 38). Now, after the tragedy of 9/11, he continues his mother’s tradition and goes out with a candle to pray for all who have died in the attacks, but also for his mother as “the child in the swan” (Barnstone 38). This image of “the child in the swan” may refer to the swan boats that used to be a popular feature on Central Park’s Pond. When he was a child, they used to observe swans rise “from the small lake” over Manhattan, and even now he feels the hurt of a child because he has lost his mother. The use of the swan might symbolize love for and loyalty to his mother. The pain and commemoration in the poem are both personal and collective, so the poem stands as a memorial to both the mother and the victims of 9/11.

Furthermore, in his poem “Elegy for the Victims and Survivors, World Trade Towers, N.Y., 2001,” Mark Irwin⁹⁵ employs somewhat similar imagery to that in Barnstone’s poem:

around the smoke with candles
lighting their way into the other unseeable
way we are

Stadium of sorrow,
the spectators, living, who are lost

⁹⁵ Mark Irwin is the author of several poetry collections, including *White City* (2000), *The Halo of Desire* (2002), and *American Urn: New & Selected Poems, 1987-2011* (2015).

and found over and over
by looking.

Not only the imagery of lighting candles , but also the idea of collective commemoration is common to both poems. Gray expresses the poet's collectiveness of commemoration thus: "Mark Irwin honors both those who were killed and those left behind, uniting them in one community, a "Stadium of sorrow"" (Gray 179). Irwin uses the image of a stadium and its spectators, indicating a connection between the events of 9/11, which were a visual spectacle and an event at the stadium. He plays with the notion that even when one is simply "looking," one is lost and found, meaning one is a witness and a victim at the same time. Alkalay-Gut investigated the same phenomenon in post-9/11 poetry and reached the conclusion that,

[i]f everyone was transformed as witness and political individual, everyone was also transformed as victim. The universal reaction of personal loss, of, at the very least, having one's life and one's world inalterably changed, suggests in turn that everyone and anyone is equally "privileged" to express emotion (Alkalay-Gut 265).

Thus, the speaker expresses his emotion and is disillusioned ("what child / could piece together / these mangled / towers' / puzzle?"). Moreover, the speaker feels that the gaze of the community, not only his, is fixated and they cannot stop looking. There is a continuation of the gaze, which was at the time additionally provoked by the media with the constant repetition of the harrowing footage. The continuation is partly carried by the repetitions the poet employs. Throughout the poem, he repeats the phrase "stadium of sorrow," which changes the poem into a hymn or a prayer, much needed because of the loss and sadness in such difficult times. In the "Notes after observing the floodlit arena of disaster through the distance of media, night after night," Irwin establishes that, "[s]tadium, [is] an incantatory

word, especially when repeated, due to the fixed hum in the third syllable, akin to that of the Sanskrit *om*, intoned as part of a mantra, or as a mystical utterance of assent during meditation” (Irwin 210).

Commemoration in post-9/11 poetry is often exhibited with the help of given testimony either illusory or real, and the personas often appear as eyewitnesses to the events. However, giving respect to the victims and celebrating life can also be expressed differently as is apparent in poems by Barnstone and Irwin, who did not wish to watch and testify, but rather to remember.

6.7 America, the Abuser

After the events of 9/11, it was expected that the American nation would support its government in their decisions and reactions. President Bush's rhetoric made this additionally clear ("us against them").⁹⁶ Those who stood against such an ideology of dividing the world to two sides, and also considered America as a party carrying its share of guilt were definitely rarer, but were heard, even in poetry. Pyszczynski, Solomon and Greenberg recall that there were people who did not support "the various ways in which the government responded to the terrorist attacks" (Pyszczynski, Solomon, and Greenberg 102), continuing to explain that, "those who have spoken out against government policies, or even criticized them in minor ways, have become targets of considerable hostility" (Pyszczynski, Solomon, and Greenberg 103).

However, a great number of poets managed to find the strength to question both the morality and guilt of America after the attacks. Alkalay-Gut claims that, "[t]he metonymic shifting of blame from the attackers to the attacked society was not unusual" (Alkalay-Gut 264). Moreover, apart from the given symptoms of trauma—powerlessness, dissociation, and reactions like fear, grief and anger—traumatized victims often experience feelings of guilt. Zeltner confirms that "irrational feeling of guilt can be a result of the wish not to accept one's own helplessness" (Zeltner 49). After 9/11, many poets addressed American issues like consumerism, fear-mongering, and scapegoating of people of Arab descent, and expressed much self-reflection and blame on behalf of the country, as citizens of the United States.

After 9/11, there was a tendency to determine the scapegoats, to find the enemy and, although President Bush ensured in one of his speeches that, "We will not judge the fellow Americans by appearance, ethnic background or religious faith," (November 8, 2001) there was a fear that Americans would scapegoat everyone of Middle Eastern descent. Pyszczynski,

⁹⁶ The rhetoric of the then current politics and media has been analyzed in detail in the first part of the thesis.

Solomon and Greenberg highlight that in the aftermath, “many Muslims throughout the country lived in fear of their fellow Americans who might be seeking vengeance and federal authorities who might believe them to be linked in some way to the people responsible for the attacks” (Pyszczynski, Solomon, and Greenberg 6). Furthermore, an op-ed columnist for *The New York Times*, Charles M. Blow, admitted in his piece “A Lesson from 9/11”: “It is true that we seem to be experiencing a new sense of paranoia about these extremists [he was discussing terrorists] and the threats they pose” (Blow).

In a similar vein, Michael McLaughlin⁹⁷ wrote a poem with the title “I don’t know” from the perspective of an Arab working in the USA. McLaughlin was apparently responding to an article in *The New Yorker* on 15 October 2001, written by Mark Singer, entitled “Home is Here.” In the article, Singer investigates the second biggest concentration of Arabs, other than Paris, namely Dearborn, Michigan, where two hundred and fifty thousand Arabs now reside. Singer reports an interview he held with Ahmed Mohamed Esa, who has been partly living in Dearborn since 1976 but still has a wife and six sons in Yemen. On 12 September 2001, Esa shared his experience with Singer,⁹⁸ which later served as the basis for the article, and consequently McLaughlin’s poem; the sentences in the article and the poem are almost identical. The poem, based on a true story, is about an 48-year old man from Yemen, called Jalal, a feature altered by the poet, who is also the speaker in the poem. Jalal lives and works in the United States, and is immediately after the attacks treated in a discriminatory manner by his employer. The poem’s intent is to accentuate the possibility that many Americans will

⁹⁷ Michael McLaughlin is the author of two poetry collections: *Ped Xing* (1977) and *The Upholstery of Heaven* (1997).

⁹⁸ Later, Singer found that a lawyer had filed a discrimination suit against Esa’s employer. There were many similar stories in America after 9/11. In his article, Singer also mentions Maha Mahajneh, the chief financial officer of an organization called ACCESS in Dearborn, who received provocative emails two days after the attack. After she replied to the email, the provocateur wrote back: “Your remark makes it clear you support the vermin that murdered thousands of innocent Americans in New York...” (Singer 63). Singer elaborated: “Now that the United States actually has been assaulted from the outside, the license to feel suspicious of certain of one’s neighbors has been sanctioned as an unfortunate price that the country, at war with an indiscernible foreign enemy, is willing to pay” (Singer 64).

consider all Arabs, as well as Arab Americans as a monolithic category, as the enemy (the employer says to Jalal: what *your people* have done). The employer in the poem further stereotypes the speaker (“Go pray in your mosque”), which the poem attempts to criticize. The poem begins with the speaker explaining his daily routine at work, which on that day is interrupted by his employer after “20 minutes / a half hour” of work:

Don't work. Go home

I tell him why I go home?

He say

You are Arabic

You are Muslim

You don't see what happened in New York

Washington?

You don't see how many people

your people killed?

I tell him I not do nothing. I work here.

The speaker is confused, since he has been in the States for 15 years and feels he has not done anything wrong. By the end of the poem, he gives in, leaves and does not even collect his pay check the following day—he is too afraid of what his employer could do (“I'm too scared”).

The story in the poem is told not only from Jalal's perspective, but also in his own words. The speaker's language is extremely simple and full of grammatical deviations, which implies that the speaker's is an economic migrant whose English skills are poor (e.g., the speaker employs the incorrect subject-verb relationship by putting a verb in the third person singular for the other grammatical persons: “he say;” the speaker also omits modal verbs: “why I go home?;” there is no inversion of subject and auxiliary verb in questions: “You

don't see...?;" etc.). The poet obviously decided to choose such a stage in language acquisition—'interlanguage'—consciously in order to clarify Jalal's experience but also his half-commitment to the US. The poem is indeed elementary in form and language, but it well conveys the message of the fear of racism against Arabs in the United States.⁹⁹

Another poem, even more straightforward in its criticism of America, written from the perspective of minority groups is "In the Land of Honey and Danger" by Nellie Wong,¹⁰⁰ where the speaker expresses concern about America's racism, on the one hand, and about its excessive consumerism, on the other:

Danger can be a knock on the door
With your friendly FBI just asking
A few questions, especially
If you're Arab or Muslim or Sikh
Or look it, danger can mean
Being locked up like Wen Ho Lee
'cause he's Chinese, accused
of being a spy ...
Just keep shopping, America,
Even if thousands of workers
Have lost their jobs)

The sarcastic title is itself indicative of the metonymic expression for the country of the United States, which is according to the speaker not 'a land of milk and honey.' This is a common idiomatic phrase of biblical origin, denoting an ideal place, and the poet also uses it

⁹⁹ For many Arab American poets, such as Naomi Shihab Nye, Suheir Hammad, Mohja Kahf, Khaled Mattawa and Lawrence Joseph, "9/11 became a moment in which [they] "outed" themselves—that is, claimed solidarity with fellow Arab Americans and with those struggling against oppression and injustice throughout the Arab world" (Metres 124).

¹⁰⁰ Nellie Wong is a poet and socialist feminist activist. Her books of poetry include: *Dreams in Harrison Railroad Park: Poems* (1977) and *The Death of Long Steam Lady* (1986).

in the first stanza, continuing the sarcasm though (in this land / Of milk and honey / Or was that supposed to be gold?”), thus implying that America is overwhelmingly about spending money.

Wong takes advantage of 9/11 to address some of the topical national issues in the U.S. On the one hand, the poet condemns the overriding American need to exercise safety methods in order to eliminate danger as these can “lurk” anywhere. The speaker is being sarcastic, as she exaggerates that danger lies at every step of the way. On the other hand, Wong discloses the problem of racial discrimination that is still present in American society, providing the example of Wen Ho Lee, the scientist who was sentenced to prison in 1999 for supposedly stealing secrets; yet, there has always been an implication that he was persecuted for being of Chinese descent. Furthermore, she broaches on another problematic matter of American society: intense consumerism. Wong is critical towards the U.S. government regarding all these issues, and sarcasm remains one of the crucial and effective literary and rhetorical devices in the poem (for example, “Want Ali to speak out, that the U.S. war / Against terrorism is not about / War against Islam. Heaven forbid.” or “And Laura Bush is the big feminist / Now, speaking out about the women / of Afghanistan, as if women / Here in the U.S. are truly free / ‘Cause Britney can sway / on Michael Jackson’s 30th Anniversary show...”). She also ends the poem with “God bless!,” a phrase that is used to such an extent in American society that it resembles an overused cliché that lost its true meaning long time ago. The use of many sarcastic remarks creates a bitter, critical, and angry tone in the poem; the speaker is disappointed in America and because America tends to sweep the national problems under the rug, the speaker poses a rhetorical question: “Why should the U.S. be immune, huh?” (Wong 98), which carries a metaphor of contagion.

As seen, the poet employs many cultural references in the poem in order to demonstrate the burning national issues more vividly. Additionally, she uses informal language, so that the poem conveys an oral effect.

Similarly, though with the intention to mock the exaggerated spread of paranoia in the U.S., Ross Martin¹⁰¹ wrote his post-9/11 poem “This Message Will Self-Destruct in Sixty Seconds”:

There’s a microchip in you somewhere
but we don’t know where it is
there’s something evil in you but
we don’t know where there’s something
benignly homosexual in you but we don’t
know where...
man listen to me I’m telling it to you
like it is it’s your only chance they are
coming man they’re right behind you
they are right on your freakin’ tail.
Go.

Gray describes Martin’s poem as “his small hymn to paranoia” (Gray 190). The speaker is trying to unravel who “they” are. It seems that the poet employs the rhetorical device of irony to mock the prevailing tendency to incite paranoia within American society after 9/11. The poet wishes to imitate the rhetorical strategies of the President Bush Administration, the “rhetoric of ‘shock and awe’” (Randall 14).

The strong enjambment tricks the reader who faces conflicting ideas, since the linguistic units finish mid-line without punctuation, which makes the semantic content flow

¹⁰¹ Ross Martin has published a book of poetry, entitled *The Cop Who Rides Alone: And Other Poems* (2001).

from one line to the next and possibly back (“like it is it’s your only chance they are / coming man they’re right behind you”). This device enables both ambiguity and a strong rhythm without the limitations of pausing. The strong rhythm empowers the paranoid feelings of the speaker; hence, the reader can feel the paranoia of someone “right behind you.”

Moreover, many intellectuals and poets have responded by expressing a measure of self-blame, perceiving America as the abuser. In her poem, “the window, at the moment of flame,” Alicia Ostriker¹⁰² self-critically portrays America as arrogant and as a consumerist society. In so doing, the poet adopts guilt and discomfort, even a sense of betrayal in the sense that the American ‘real’ has been revealed as illusory:

and all this while I have been playing with toys
a toy superhighway a toy automobile a house of blocks...

and all this while I have been shopping, I have

been let us say free
and do they hate me for it

do they hate *me*

The poet presumably decided to write a simple poem as she seems to be tired of the exaggerated rhetoric and life-style of the Western world. At the end of the poem she simply wishes to express the feeling of helplessness by asking a rhetorical question: “do they hate *me*” (Ostriker 294). The question appears on the page without the question mark, which changes the question into an affirmative statement. Ostriker is “contrasting her wealth with

¹⁰² Alicia Ostriker is a poet, critic, and activist. Her numerous books of poetry include *Songs* (1969), *The Little Space: Poems Selected and New* (1998), *No Heaven* (2005), and *The Book of Seventy* (2009), which received the Jewish National Book Award. She has received other awards as well. Her poem “the window, at the moment of flame” also appeared in *September 11, 2001: American Writers Respond*.

the misery of people elsewhere in the world” (Jeffrey Gray 266), ascribing a certain degree of freedom to her society, which is why others hate America, according to the persona. The poet uses a synecdoche: “me” stands for the nation. For Alkalay-Gut, Ostriker “connects even the unaware, unaffected individual with the significance of the event” (Alkalay-Gut 267). There is the feeling of guilt, since the persona has been exploiting the benefits of a consumerist society, “while far off in other lands / thousands and thousands, millions and millions // you know—you see the pictures” (Ostriker 86). The speaker recognizes herself as American, so infused with guilt that she cannot even pronounce the terror of either side of the world. The speaker has a moment of reflection “at the moment of flame,” which makes the incidents of 9/11 rather abstract. Alkalay-Gut details the notion thus: “The sense here is that September 11 is not a nameless, generalized expression of the anger of a few people but a personal attack on everything connected with the identity of the speaker. Whether cognizant of politics or not, the individual is held culpable by the terrorists” (Alkalay-Gut 268).

Nevertheless, the speaker is not free (“I have / been let us say free”); it is merely an illusion. When thinking about American freedom, critic Stanley Hauerwas sarcastically asks: What can freedom mean, if the prime instance of the exercise of such freedom is to shop?” (Hauerwas 430). Moreover, Wendell Berry feels awakened by the attacks and writes in his book *In the Presence of Fear* that America should now “promote a decentralized world economy which would have the aim of assuring to every nation and region a local self-sufficiency in life-supporting goods” (Berry 4).

Another post-9/11 poem that strongly excoriates America, its violent history and governmental agendas is devorah major’s¹⁰³ “America on Terrorism.” The poem ignores Standard English, a strategy that is employed by many contemporary African American poets; the poem is written in lower case letters without punctuation. These intentional deviations

¹⁰³ devorah major is a poet and a novelist. Her books of poetry include *Street Smarts* (1996), *with more than tongue* (2002), *where river meets ocean* (2003), and *and then we became* (2016).

(such as lack of standard syntax) are in this instance form part of a dialect or Black Vernacular speech that includes many structures that are considered errors in Standard English. In the poem, major provides a brief overview of history of terrorism associated with America, occasionally even domesticating terrorism, for instance with the reference to lynching of black men in the American South::

i was a child
when i first saw the pictures
black men's bodies
hanging from trees

castrated
burnt ...
i've been against terrorism
for a long time

The tone of the poem is angry and critical, and the speaker expresses all the horror vividly and directly. Gray states that there are some post-9/11 poems, which do not leave “any room for subtlety or indirection; words are being used as weapons” (Gray 191). Such is the case in major’s poem, where the speaker tells America what America does not wish to hear. In the poem, the speaker constantly repeats this formulation “let me state it clearly again and again / i’ve been against terrorism / for a long time” (major 131), implying that she does not attempt to get involved in any of America’s terror acts. The speaker presents her conviction of being against terrorism as in “up against,” which gives the speaker a rather active role.

In her poem, which is divided into four numbered parts, the poet implies that U.S. terrorism has existed since Europeans migrated to America and that America has inflicted much suffering around the world and at home. The word *terrorism* is repeated throughout the

poem, and there occurs a powerful rhythm that is clinched in repetition. At the end of the poem the rhythm becomes more insistent because of the repetition and the non-standard syntax (“been / against terrorism / against all terrorism // against terrorism / against all terrorism // against terrorism / against all terrorism for forever”), and one is reminded of hip hop lyrics, on the level of form and theme.¹⁰⁴ Similarly to Wong’s poem, this poem implies that America should not be in shock because of the attacks on 9/11, since America had underwritten or ignored much terrorism around the world and had gained enemies.

In the second and third part, the poet makes use of historical allusions and takes us through the times of Vietnam and Iraq, stopping briefly at the Holocaust but quickly doubling back in history to the fate of Nat Turner, who led a slave rebellion in Virginia in the 19th century and was hanged afterwards. In the fourth and last part of the poem, the poet arrives at the main point of the poem. On the one hand, she presents America as the world’s greatest force; on the other hand, she reflects on the way America sets the values by providing weapons and distributing its army all over the world:

america i hear you sing that
liberty is your mother
is it daddy then who rapes
because America
it is you who feeds
this monster its largest meals
you who stokes in hottest fires
no
you are not alone

¹⁰⁴ Hip hop and rap lyrics often employ repetition and black Vernacular, and were for a long time politically engaged (expressing criticism towards America and fighting for the rights of African Americans). In addition, such texts also carry much of the African American idiom, rooted in the African American culture of blues and jazz. One thinks of the American rapper Nas and his lyrics “American Way”: “Yeah I think about this everyday, that’s the American Way, shit / Yeah I think about this everyday, that’s the American Way, shit...” (Nas).

and no
you were not the first
but now america you
set the standard
look at the people you have killed
start anywhere in your history...

The poet is leading a dialogue with a personified, even allegorized America, apostrophizing the country and the nation with the intent of disputing its 'pretended' innocence. Georgiana Banita describes such a phenomenon as "the dynamics of projection and blame triggered by the attacks" (Banita 114).

Many poets have expressed anger towards America and presented the country as being abusive to others, and as following its own agenda. Alkalay-Gut adds that, "[s]ome poems reinforced previous political criticisms" (Alkalay-Gut 264). However, the attempt of such poetry was to portray America's weaknesses, and such poems served as critical historical memories.¹⁰⁵ These poets were following the truth, no matter how difficult and traumatic the times after 9/11. They resisted the general spread of fear and the division of the world into binary poles; they were capable of self-reflection, and not simply of yielding, which is the opposite of the responses examined in the subsequent sub-chapter. Those will show responses that echo the responses of the-then media and politics.

¹⁰⁵ Such responses were manifold in post-9/11 poetry: in the poem "The Twin Towers Arcane," Jack Hirschman writes a critique of America and realizes that after 9/11, "nothing's changed, / it's only standing more revealed" (Hirschman 32).

In her poem "Notes Toward a Poem of Revolution," Diane di Prima presents America as an accomplice in violence and feels nobody should be in shock because of the traumatic events, since it was just a matter of time. Moreover she considers America as arrogant and hypocritical because of such mourning after 9/11: "While we mourn & rant for years / over our 3000 how many / starve / thanks to our greed / our unappeasable / hunger" (di Prima 40).

6.8. America Almighty / Time for Revenge

If the poetry in the previous sub-chapter was close to refusing the prevalent rhetoric of the media, and even to subverting the dominant political language, the poetry in this chapter does not “question or resist the consensual, conventional response,” such as the one by the media.¹⁰⁶ In addition, Gray writes that such post-9/11 poems “tend, at worst, to repeat the clichés generated by the media” (Gray 170).

Such responses were not reflective or critical, but were often similar to a “cry of rage,” which involves “a dream of revenge” (Gray 171). In poetry, this is evident in the manifestation of bitter anger, scapegoating, patriotism, and unsubtle, rarely ardent, desire for revenge. Jeffrey Gray sees difficulties in such poetry, clarifying that, “[t]he problem with the poems then is not that they are “engaged” but that we are offered a world *tout connu*. Nothing is defamiliarized. Moreover, the subjects speaking in such poems are [often] completely stable: they *know*” (Jeffrey Gray 267). Nevertheless, the poetic responses were never radical or nationalistic, but always milder in comparison to the media responses.

Moreover, anthologies of post-9/11 poetry attempted to avoid selecting the most extreme responses analogous to what has been described above. Online, there is a brief commentary within the product description about the anthology *An Eye for an Eye Makes the Whole World Blind*, which sums up the content: “Creates an alternative poetic response to the din of collective anger and hysteria that has characterized our national dialogue since 9/11/2001.” All the anthologies of post-9/11 poetry include only a few responses that echo the reactions by the media and the Bush administration. Gray believes that after 9/11, poets felt the need “to speak out, or even to rant, in order to stand a chance of being heard, because austere time necessitate a new verbal austerity” (Gray 189). The poets often attempted to drown out the overly loud media and politics fueling fear and paranoia.

¹⁰⁶ The responses of the media and politics after 9/11 were thoroughly examined and analyzed in the first part of the study.

One of the few poems that took a position similar to the political one of that time is entitled “Unimaginable,” written by Richard Kostelanetz.¹⁰⁷ This poem appeared in the anthology *110 Stories*. The title of the poem expresses the initial shock of the speaker that the attacks had happened at all, followed by the feeling of anger and perplexity in the speaker, which can be traced throughout the poem. In the poem, the speaker expresses his opinion about America and the hijackers, and in his point of view the American way is the only right way: “Deposited mostly / In attractive Florida beach towns... / In favor of honest jobs / And comfortable lives” (Kostelanetz 170). The terrorists are presented as those who were not willing to accept the comforts and freedom of the American life (a home and a job in Florida), which is also a parallel to President Bush’s point of view, dividing people into freedom loving people (the Western world) and people who can’t stand it (the fundamentalists).

Moreover, in describing the American life-style, the adjectives are affirmative, whereas all the words to present the “kamikazes” are pejorative. The speaker describes the hijackers as “provocateurs,” “mass murderers,” “psychopathic,” “crazy,” as “fools.” The speaker does not allow any kind of critical thinking about America, warning, “Do not a critique of America make” (Kostelanetz 171), and wishes to see Americans as blameless victims who need to find the perpetrators; the Islamic fundamentalists. Kostelanetz writes:

Fools,
Most of us would agree,
They Certainly Were.
Not twenty-year-olds,
Like most suicide bombers,
These were older gents,
Some of them educated;

¹⁰⁷ Richard Kostelanetz is a poet, writer, and musician. His books of poems include *Constructs Two* (1978), *Fields, Turfs, Pitches, Arenas: Poems* (1982), *Wordworks: Poems Selected and New* (1993), and *Recircuits* (2009).

A few reportedly had families
How it is possible
That so many
So superficially fortunate
Could be so psychopathic?

The speaker also adopts the divisive rhetoric of 9/11— the worldview that separates people into *us* and *them*. He positions himself into the collective notion of *us, the good*, who believe that *they* are the fools.

As with Kostelanetz, Antler¹⁰⁸ describes the events of 9/11 as “hell” and hijackers as “deranged fanatics / deliberately crashing / into those skyscrapers / murdering thousands / because they think / God wants them to” (Antler 164), in his long poem “Skyscraper Apocalypse.” The speaker also stereotypes the hijackers by portraying them as “believing they were instantly transported / to an endless orgasm / in a paradise of beautiful girls” (Antler 163). Furthermore, the speaker cites several reactions by anonymous Americans, which appear vengeful:

One American said
he wouldn't be satisfied
till he saw children in Afghanistan
running down the street on fire screaming.

Another said he wouldn't feel right
till he could be in Afghanistan
and throw a grenade
into a schoolbus full of children.

¹⁰⁸ Antler is a poet and conservationist. His books of poetry include *Factory* (1980), *Last Words* (1986), and *Antler: The Selected Poems* (2000).

The latter opinions, however, are not the speaker's. Later in the poem, the poet steers the poem in a new direction and evokes environmentalism, which is a common feature of his work, wishing: "If only the terrorists had been more into / watching butterflies emerge from their chrysalises / or dragonflies emerge from their nymphs" (Antler 166).

What the speaker additionally offers are detailed, direct images of what happened to the people in the towers: "How does it feel to be exploded into human flesh confetti? / ...to be decapitated, dismembered, disemboweled? Some were burned beyond recognition" (Antler 165). The speaker poses these rhetorical questions, knowing the images are so horrific that the only answer he can receive from the reader is silence. Therefore, he switches to affirmative sentences; there is no use in asking these questions. Then, he incorporates the phenomenon, often referred to as *Caesar's last breath*: "Sooner or later all of us will inhale / invisible remains of the incinerated victims, / their atoms and molecules spinning in space... / the vanished corpses that will never be found / but that found us and became / buried within us" (Antler 167). The somewhat disturbing thought of this universal connection, where people share atoms and molecules of dead bodies, can in such traumatic times bring a type of comfort, especially to those who have lost their loved ones in the attacks.

What is more, the closing lines of the poem end on a positive note, expressing hope by describing the famous Giovanni Bellini painting *The Ecstasy of St. Francis* and the moment when St. Francis comes out from his cave "looking up with arms outstretched in awe / to fields and woods and mountains / as the sunrise engulfs the world / in the light of another day" (Antler 168). No matter how traumatic the experience, the speaker is expectant of a brighter future. The reference to St. Francis is significant as it coincides with the poet's idea of environmentalism; St. Francis is known as a patron to animals and the natural environment.

In contrast to such optimistic thoughts, Norman Stock¹⁰⁹ expresses a desire for revenge in the poem “What I Said”:

it's impossible to understand it's impossible
to do anything after this and what will any of us do now and how will we live
and how can we expect to go on after this
I said and I said this is too much to take no one can take a thing like this
after the terror yes and then I said let's kill them

In a short poem, consisting of one stanza only, comprising a few rather long lines, the speaker calls for retaliation: “let's kill them” (Stock 34). This is ensured already in the title. The speaker introduces the word *terror* twice: in the first and last line, which ensures that the reader begins and ends with the idea of terror. The speaker cannot grasp the enormity nor the horror of events; he keeps asking *how* and *why*. Also the phrase “after this” is repeated in the poem. When he documents the period after the attacks for the last time, he again does it in temporal terms, but saying “after the terror.” The repetition of the question words, as well as the word *terror* and *after*, helps the reader understand the speaker's state of bewilderment, thus creating an uncertain tone. The speaker does not stop himself in his rattling mental confusion, and the lack of punctuation contributes to this breathless sensation. However, this changes in the last half of the last line, when the speaker finds certainty; certainty lies in revenge¹¹⁰. Gray explains the poet's reaction and a strong statement in the end thus: “In a climate of confusion, with the trauma of terrorism fueling a wide-spread desire for revenge,

¹⁰⁹ Norman Stock is the author of two poetry collections: *Buying Breakfast for My Kamikaze Pilot* (1994) and *Pickled Dreams Naked* (2010).

¹¹⁰ In her poem “World Trade Center,” Julia Vinograd similarly articulates her longing for vengeance, which is quite radical: “but I want to kill my enemy's children / more than I want my own children back” (Vinograd 82). In his poem “The Equation,” Steve Kowitz admits that the need for any kind of revenge was ubiquitous in the American locus after 9/11: “The eagle sharpens her claws. / In the air a lust to spill somebody's blood. / Whose, at this point, doesn't much matter. / No doubt Baghdad will pay; the Afghans are toast. / They'll be blown away by the tens of thousands. / Guilty or not, it's gonna be open season.” (Kowitz 90). The poet adopts sarcasm as the leading tone in the poem, repeating the bellicose political statements of the Bush administration. He brings it to the point where he compares this pursuit with “open season,” which is the season legal for hunting and killing certain species (animals, birds).

some poets appear to feel challenged, not just by the problem of how to imagine disaster, but by the possibility that what they say might be ignored or even suppressed” (Gray 190).

Another poet who features a sense of danger in a poem is Eliot Katz.¹¹¹ His poem “The Weather Seems Different,” indicates a sudden change caused by the danger. The change is implied in the title:

The danger is real, one can feel it in the air
even if unsure from which directions it is borne
We are all getting older, we have realized this year it’s time
to get serious about ducking death’s temporary wings
Time to get our 10-dimensional affairs in order

It is as if the poet endeavors to confirm the presence of danger, even though there are still some uncertainties (such as where the danger comes from). He further compares the danger to a vulture: “there is a fire-breathing vulture” which “has eaten us alive and regurgitated us back into this world” (Katz 28). The vulture is often a symbol of death and rebirth, representing purification, which would be one potential reading, since the speaker closes the poem saying, “time will tell whether we are healthier than before” (Katz 28). The speaker attempts to portray the terror of 9/11 as a vulture that has devoured them but has simultaneously brought them back to life, offering the possibility to learn, to become pure, healthy or at least healthier than before. The speaker wishes to emphasize that even such a traumatic occurrence can contribute to a new beginning, to getting one’s “affairs in order.” This line also contains a reference to T. S. Eliot and his “Waste Land,” where the speaker asks: “Shall I at least set my lands in order?” (Eliot 69).

Another burning issue was at the center of attention after the attacks: intense patriotic, sometimes even nationalistic response. Pyszczynski, Solomon and Greenberg suggest that,

¹¹¹ Eliot Katz is the author of seven poetry collections, including *Space and Other Poems for Love, Laughs, and Social Transformation* (1990), *Unlocking the Exits* (1999), and *Love, War, Fire, Wind: Looking Out from North America’s Skull* (2009).

“Americans quickly strove to re-establish their damaged sense of security by reaffirming their faith in the American way of life” (Pyszczynski, Solomon, and Greenberg 101). Believing in the American way and flag-waving were to some extent also evident in post-9/11 poetry.

Apart from the patriotic response in Kostelanetz’s poem, Tony Towle¹¹² signified the importance of flag-waving after 9/11 in his poem entitled “Prospects,” where the speaker buys an American flag for the first time.

and before that I had never purchased an American flag –
since I always knew where I *was* ...
but in October I bought two; from immigrants making a tenuous living,
appropriately, from Africa and Asia, respectively
and on Wall Street, no less.

The poem comprises one stanza employing long prose-like lines. However, in the first part of the poem, the speaker writes about the 50 State Quarters Program, which was a numismatic program with a series of commemorative coins featuring each U.S. state and its special design. Kentucky’s turn fell in the fall of 2001, when “the imps of haphazard historicity / subjected the skyline to the whims of religious psychopaths” (Towle 46). Like Kostelanetz and Antler, Towle expresses anger against the terrorists, referring to them in a derogatory way. He even employs an underlying metaphor comparing the terrorists to “imps,” mischievous devils, causing evil.

After the events of 9/11, the speaker felt the patriotic impulse to acquire, not one, but two American flags,¹¹³ since he experienced disorientation; suddenly he lost certainty about where he was. He needed the flags to remind him of where he belonged. It is of immense

¹¹² Tony Towle is the author of several chapbooks and books of poetry, including *North* (1971), *“Autobiography” and Other Poems* (1977), and *The History of Invitation: New and Selected Poems: 1963-2000* (2001).

¹¹³ In “Liberty Street,” Adrian C. Louis first observes, “Flags were shuddering / on every street corner,” and afterwards admits, “That night / I bought a flag and / blended in with / the other sheep” (Louis 251).

importance, though, that he bought them from immigrants, which indicates he still believes in the unification of the American melting pot. The irony is, however, that he purchased the flags on Wall Street, where the immigrants were selling the flags. Wall Street is a potent symbol of American culture, to be exact of American economic power, which stands in opposition to the economic state of the immigrants struggling for their daily bread.

As has been noted, these responses in post-9/11 poetry that involved issues like patriotism, paranoia or fear, a desperate need for closure, identifying the culprits and seeking revenge at any cost were by and large, rare and almost never extreme. Some poets expressed rage and patriotic inclinations, and even fear, but mostly confusion. The majority of poets produced responses that were individual and often critical, no matter how emotional and/or sentimental. According to Gray, the best the poet can do in difficult times such as after 9/11 is to provide “an ‘American voice’ in the singular,” no matter if poems are “satirical or lyrical, declamatory or surreal, elegiac or apocalyptic” (Gray 191). Surely, it is a challenge of its own to respond to such a shock, cope with the trauma, and then to find appropriate verbal equivalents. On the whole, the poets managed to ensure a manifold palette of responses within American poetry “by acknowledging the human presence at the heart of the historical experience and announcing that presence in a single, separate voice” (Gray 192).

7. Conclusion

The thesis has focused on investigating the immediate written responses to the events of 9/11, moving from the analysis of responses in several American printed media to the thematic reading of poetic works by contemporary American poets. After presenting the problem in the introduction, the second chapter outlines the responses to 9/11, both on the part of the then current politics and those generated by the media, portraying to what extent fear, patriotism and rhetoric in general in politics and the media contributed to the discourse of 9/11. The third chapter embarks on showing that the media followed the rhetorical strategy of politicians; moreover, the prevailing rhetoric in the immediate post-9/11 response of U.S. media was analyzed with the help of called content analysis. The fourth chapter highlights the preceding critical examinations of literary responses to 9/11 and the problems with representation of 9/11 in American culture. The selected methodology (Thematic Criticism and New Criticism) for studying post-9/11 American poetry was delineated in the fifth chapter, whereas the sixth chapter scrutinizes the thematic representations in post-9/11 American poetry.

This doctoral dissertation is basically divided into two main parts. With the aim of illustrating the rhetoric of politics after the events of 9/11, the first part of the study looked at a speech delivered by the former U.S. President Bush on September 20, 2001. This speech, as well as other political speeches of the time, showed traits of patriotism, even nationalism proclaiming America's exceptionalism, expressing the wish to find the perpetrators as soon as possible, and emphasizing the danger the American nation was supposedly encountering. Since the events of 9/11 were a mass global event, repeatedly witnessed by all Americans, it was not too difficult to spread fear among the already frightened nation. The study also presented several polls that were conducted in the aftermath to document how the American nation reacted.

Furthermore, this part of the study focused on analyzing the prevalent rhetoric of the media after 9/11, to establish that it echoed the political responses. Several critics have dealt with the issue of fear in the American media, among whom Altheide observed that, after the attacks “the discourse of fear has been constructed through news and popular culture accounts” (Altheide 45). With the help of the Content Analysis methodology selected for conducting the analysis of a portion of printed U.S. media, the researcher examined editorials in four American daily newspapers (*USA Today*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Washington Times*) and two weekly magazines (*The New Yorker* and *The Weekly Standard*). The theoretical approach—quantitative content analysis—helped conduct a rhetoric examination in selected editorials over a specified period of 4 weeks after the attacks in daily newspapers and 8 weeks after the attacks in weekly magazines. The study posed several research questions and set four hypotheses that needed to be tested to ratify the first essential presupposition: that the language used in major American newspapers and magazines promoted the rhetoric of the government administration after 9/11 by being extensively patriotic, helping to spread fear and paranoia in the American society with constant repetition of similar terminology (“us against them,” “war on terror,” terrorism, attack, danger, horror, etc.). The four hypotheses verified that (1) editorials addressed issues such as terrorism, the war on terror and national security; (2) opinion pieces mimicked the divisive rhetoric of the politicians; (3) editorials employed patriotic language; and that (4) editorials used the rhetoric that could contribute to fear and paranoia among readers.

After the comparative content analysis was conducted and the first variable of the thesis substantiated, the study shifted to its central focus; i.e. that the American poets resisted fear, paranoia and patriotism to great extent, and that they mostly rejected the prevalent rhetoric of the media and politics in the wake of 9/11. Jeffrey Gray summarized that after 9/11 “a poet has a chance of offering not merely a version of events but a performance of the

timeless real” (Jeffrey Gray 279), which was evident in numerous examples of post-9/11 poetry.

The second part of the study thus explored, interpreted and analyzed through a thematic paradigm and, with the help of close reading, an entire spectrum of contemporary American poetry in the context of 9/11. The study included poetic responses to the crisis of 9/11 which were published in several anthologies (*Poetry after 9/11: An Anthology of New York Poets*, *September 11, 2001 American Writers Respond*, *An Eye for an Eye Makes the Whole World Blind*, *September 11: West Coast Writers Approach Ground Zero*, *110 Stories*); American journals (such as *The New Yorker* and *Michigan Quarterly Review*), and individual poetry collections (such as Timothy Liu’s *For Dust Thou Art* and Louise Glück’s *Averno*). The study refrained from the online publications, since those poetic responses to 9/11 were contributed mostly by non-poets. The focal point of this study was to present an extensive research of the responses to 9/11 by those American writers who have obtained recognition as U. S. poets.

As seen in Chapter 6, thematic reading allowed the manifold poetic responses to be organized into eight thematic clusters: (1) Loss: Disorientation, Despair, and Disability embraced poems that expressed emotional numbness, a lack of orientation and a sense of homelessness; (2) Disillusionment and Displacement, which was divided into two subclusters: the first one included poems that addressed the issue of a changed world, whereas the poems in the other subcluster described the sense of desolation after the apocalyptic damage, on the one hand, and asserted the need to flee into imaginary worlds, on the other; (3) Speaking Silence involved poems that voiced concern about the value of verbal expression and even exhibited the urge to speak the silence; (4) Retreat to the Detail of Home communicated options which enabled the poets to withdraw in their craft into the comfort of their domestic environments; (5) Flight into History comprised two subclusters showing the overriding need

to escape from the present crisis into history: one group of poets sought explanation in parallels to historical events, such as the Holocaust and the Vietnam War, whereas others attempted to find comfort in significant historical figures (such as Abraham Lincoln and Walt Whitman) in a congruent manner; (6) *Cinematic Spectators: Commemoration / Celebration* offered a selection of poems where the poets functioned as witnesses offering testimony to the horrific events, simultaneously commemorating the victims, but often also celebrating life; (7) *America, the Abuser* represented the poets who conveyed their critical position towards America and its governmental decisions, stressing that America shared its part of terror in history and in the world; (8) *America Almighty / Time for Revenge* documents the rare views of poets who responded similarly to the responses of politics and the media.

The study succeeded in determining that most of the American poetry that emerged as a reaction to 9/11 abstained from the rhetoric that was ubiquitous in the immediate aftermath within American culture. It again needs to be emphasized that the selection criteria in this thesis did not include numerous poetic responses published on various web pages, in a context and medium which often foster both patriotism and nationalism. However, responses of that kind were infrequent on the part of established poets, but were mostly delivered by non-poets who were venting their opinions in poetic form.

American poets who responded to 9/11 were bewildered and hurt at being confronted with a traumatic crisis that was difficult to manage, let alone to express in words. With their craft, they attempted to provide instruments to resolve the unknown terror. Pozorski claims that, “[a]lthough not always reparative or redemptive, there is nonetheless something magical inherent in literary language, which is the ability to make the familiar unfamiliar and, conversely, the unfamiliar familiar again” (Pozorski 122). Despite the fact that a number of poets questioned the power of poetry in the wake of 9/11, many critics and poets corroborated that poetry can offer some sort of comfort, adding another dimension to the trauma after such

a challenging moment in history; poetry can definitely achieve more than the reports of the media and political speeches. As Jeffrey Gray puts it,

Poetry answers most to the needs induced by loss when it least imitates the reportorial illusion of access to prior realities. Poetry's performative and magical elements, its roots in divination, incantation, and prophecy are evident even or specifically at its most unsubjective, even when it is least personal and most linguistically determined—here I refer to any writing practice that inhibits reflex, that frustrates the usual resources from which a writer is prompted to draw, and that takes the writer instead into areas where little or nothing is known. (Jeffrey Gray 265)

As with other Americans, poets were thrown into the unknown but attempted to do their best at expressing the individual, the singular truth, while transforming the unfamiliar into the familiar with the help of poetry.

In conducting this study, the researcher did not encounter any serious limitations, as had initially been thought possible. The predicted limitations involved potential problems with accessing the study materials, media publications and other pre-existing scholarly work in the field of 9/11. This researcher, however, spent the summer of 2015 in New York City, where she was able to obtain all the necessary materials for the current study in the New York Public Library and at Columbia University Libraries. Moreover, it might be assumed that there was a limited sample of editorials selected for the content analysis. Nevertheless, since this part of the study served as a tool to confirm the first hypothesis of the prevalence of certain types of rhetoric before proceeding to the crux of the argument, the given sample of editorials prove sufficient to achieve the effect of broad representation.

This thesis offers an original contribution to the field of 9/11 studies, as well as to the study of contemporary American poetry in general. It does so for two reasons: first, because

no such in-depth research into 9/11 poetry has been accomplished so far, and second, because the study conducted an analysis of post-9/11 poetry by implementing thematic criticism in combination with close reading. When considering this particular field of study—post-9/11 poetry—there are still numerous challenges that lie ahead, offering many possibilities for future research work. Other poems in the selected anthologies need to be analyzed, but there are also further aspects of poetic response that call for critics’ attention. This researcher’s interest, however, lies in further study within the field, and in carrying out research into specialized responses in poetry, written by groups of poets such as Native American poets, African American poets or Arab American poets to search for analogies, but also differences in their response to 9/11. At the conclusion of this study, nevertheless, it suffices to have confirmed that contemporary American poets translated the 9/11 trauma into individual and personal explanations of the crisis, and chose their own paths to manage the terror, dissimilarly to those of the then current politics and media, relying on the “magical elements” of poetry.

Daljši povzetek

Namen doktorske disertacije z naslovom »Amerika po 11. septembru: odzivi v poeziji in kulturi« je analiza in sistematična razčlenitev odzivov v Ameriki na teroristične napade, ki so se zgodili 11. septembra 2001. Raziskava ne bo povzemala samih dogodkov, temveč bo osredotočena na posledice, ki so jih teroristični napadi imeli na širšo ameriško javnost, predvsem pa na sodobne ameriške pesnike. Uničenje ameriških simbolov 11. septembra 2001 je še dodatno spodkopalo občutek varnosti v ZDA. Napadi na stolpa WTC v New Yorku in Pentagon v Washingtonu, D.C. so predstavljali napade na ameriško blaginjo kot tudi na finančno in vojaško moč Amerike. Po tragičnih dogodkih septembra 2001 je bila prva reakcija šok, nakar je večina Američanov doživljala občutke travme in splošne zaskrbljenosti ter strahu. Kasnejše reakcije so vsebovale veliko več treznosti in samorefleksije. Krizi, ki je bila dejansko svetovni množični dogodek, je bil priča ves svet in posnetki, ki so jih ameriški mediji nenehno ponavljali, so resnično vsebovali značilnosti filmske uspešnice. Številni ameriški državljani so težko verjeli, da so se napadi dejansko zgodili. Mediji so nenehno ponavljali posnetke padca stolpov, in pogled mnogih je bil takoj po terorističnih napadih osredotočen le na televizijske ekrane. Zaradi nenehnega predvajanja posnetkov napadov na stolpa Američani oziroma svet v veliki meri povezujejo napade 11. septembra z napadi na stolpa WTC. Simbolno vrednost nosi tudi sam datum napadov, saj je bivši ameriški predsednik Ronald Reagan leta 1987 razglasil 11. september za dan telefonske številke za nujne primere, 911.

Namen doktorske disertacije je le analiza odzivov sodobnih ameriških pesnikov, kot tudi ameriških tiskanih medijev na te dogodke, in ne sama razčlenitev dogodkov. Raziskava odkriva posledice, ki so jih imeli napadi na širšo ameriško javnost skozi retoriko, ki so jo takrat vključevali ameriški mediji in politika. Seveda pa se študija v prvi vrsti osredotoča na odzive pesnikov. Prvini paranoje in strahu, ki ju ameriški mediji in vladna administracija

pre pogosto spodbujajo, sta bili sestavni del ameriške družbe in kulture skozi vso zgodovino. Številni teoretiki so raziskovali ta vidik širjenja strahu s strani ameriške politike in posledično medijev in navajali številne primere iz zgodovine, kot npr. protikomunistično paranojo v petdesetih letih prejšnjega stoletja. Kasneje v osemdesetih letih v času Reaganove administracije ji je sledila vsesplošna paranoja zaradi aidsa. Podobno pa se je zgodilo tudi po 11. septembru, ko so ameriški politiki, še zlasti takratni ameriški predsednik George W. Bush, uporabljali pretirano retoriko širjenja strahu, klica po nujnem določanju morebitnih krivcev ter poudarjanja ogroženosti ameriških državljanov in zmanjšane državne varnosti. Istočasno so mediji navalili s predvajanjem posnetkov napadov. Po 11. septembru so se ameriški državljanji tako počutili še dodatno ogrožene, zaskrbljene in prestrašene. Najhuje je bilo, da so bili napadi 11. septembra prvi večji napadi, ki so se zgodili neposredno na ameriških tleh. Še dodatno pa so ameriški voditelji in mediji s pomočjo pretirane in prepričljive retorike še napihovali dogajanje, kar je potisnilo večino ameriških prebivalcev še globlje v obup. Učinki takšne retorike so bili središče številnih študij in, kot trdi David Altheide, so bili prav mediji tisti, ki so pomagali ustvariti zgodbo terorja nad ameriško nacijo. Odzivi ameriških državljanov pa so bili vsekakor večplastni. Številne raziskave kot tudi ankete kažejo, da se je v obdobju neposredno po napadih povečala udeležba ljudi na verskih srečanjih. Že tako patriotsko naravnani Američani so v tem obdobju še dodatno čutili potrebo po patriotskem, občasno tudi nacionalističnem mišljenju, ki je povečevalo ameriško izjemnost. Ameriške zastave so plapolale na vsakem koraku in ljudje so opremili majice, stavbe, plakate in drugo z različnimi domoljubnimi gesli. Takoj po napadih je veljalo, da sta nakupovanje in zapravljanje denarja tako ali drugače dve najpomembnejši domoljubni dejavnosti. Ankete pa so pokazale tudi, da so Američani doživljali občutke vsesplošnega strahu in nadaljnje ogroženosti. Povečala se je tudi prodaja orožja. Doktorska disertacija oriše kar nekaj anket (*Gallup Polls*), ki so bile opravljene v prvih mesecih po napadih kot tudi kasneje.

Prvi del doktorske disertacije se osredotoča na predstavitev retorike v politiki na primeru govora, ki ga je imel predsednik Bush pred Kongresom 20. septembra 2001. Že ta prvi politični govor predsednika ZDA po terorističnih napadih je vseboval številne značilnosti pretiranega domoljubja, celo nacionalizma, s poudarjanjem ameriške izjemnosti, izražanjem želje po čimprejšnji identifikaciji krivcev in ponavljanjem, kako ogroženi so ameriški državljani. Z dogodki 11. septembra je bila vseskozi povezana značilna retorika (“vojna proti terorizmu”, napadi, “mi proti njim”, “njihova vojna proti nam”, dobro in zlo, “Patriot Act”, “axis of evil”, izdaja, domoljubnost, grožnja, groza itd.) voditeljev, ki so se hkrati predstavljali kot potencialni rešitelji in podpirali paranojo zavoljo lastnih interesov. Širjenje strahu med državljani je bilo središčna točka številnih raziskav. Pričujoča raziskava oriše retoriko dualizma v politični areni po 11. septembru na primeru govora takratnega predsednika Busha. V nadaljevanju prvega dela doktorske disertacije pa je še podrobneje razčlenjena retorika v pomembnejših ameriških časopisih in revijah, ki so sledili politični strategiji izražanja. Prvi del študije je tako namenjen podrobni analizi retorike dualizma, patriotskega jezika kot tudi elementov ustrahovanja v uredniških uvodnikih v izbranih ameriških tiskanih medijih (uvodniki v štirih dnevnikih: *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Washington Times*, ter dveh tednikih: *The New Yorker* in *The Weekly Standard*). Ker se doktorska disertacija osredotoča na takojšnje odzive na napade, zajema raziskava izbranih uredniških uvodnikov obdobje štirih tednov v dnevnem časopisju in osmih tednov v tednikih. Metodologija za dokazovanje, da je bila uporabljena retorika domoljubna, da je pomagala širiti strah in paranojo v ameriški družbi ter da je bila nadvse podobna politični retoriki tistega časa, je kvantitativna analiza vsebine (*content analysis*), ki je v nalogi tudi podrobno opisana. Ta pristop omogoča analizo besedilnih podatkov v izbranih uredniških uvodnikih s pomočjo računalniške programske opreme za potrditev štirih določenih hipotez: (1) da se uvodniki dotikajo tem, kot so terorizem, vojna proti terorizmu in

državna varnost; (2) da uvodniki sledijo retorike tedanje politične administracije; (3) da uvodniki uporabljajo retorične elemente, povezane z domoljubjem in (4) da uvodniki uporabljajo prvine strahu in paranoje.

Ko je bila dokazana prva spremenljivka doktorske disertacije glede prevladujoče retorike, se doktorska naloga usmeri proti glavnemu argumentu. V ameriškem prostoru je bilo moč opaziti, da so se zarisale močne ločnice med javnimi in osebnimi odzivi in izrazi v ameriški kulturi po 11. septembru. Po teh dogodkih je vzniknilo veliko poezije, ki izraža poetično ter popolnoma osebno stran krize in ki v veliki meri odstopa od javnih odzivov medijev in politikov, kar predstavlja tudi jedro te študije. Tako smo priča številnim antologijam s poezijo o dogodkih, povezanih z 11. septembrom, ki so se pojavile v prvih letih po napadih leta 2001. Teza obravnava poezijo po 11. septembru, ki je bila objavljena v teh antologijah (*Poetry after 9/11: An Anthology of New York Poets, September 11, 2001*, *American Writers Respond, An Eye for an Eye Makes the Whole World Blind, September 11: West Coast Writers Approach Ground Zero, 110 Stories*), posameznih pesniških zbirkah in prestižnih revijah, kot sta npr. *The New Yorker* in *Michigan Quarterly Review*. Študija ne vsebuje poetičnih odzivov, objavljenih na številnih spletnih straneh, saj so bili tisti odzivi v veliki meri napisani izpod peresa ne-pesnikov, ki so se odločili le uporabiti pesniško obliko za izraz svojih mnenj. Ta doktorska disertacija se osredotoča izključno na raziskovanje odzivov med že uveljavljenimi sodobnimi ameriškimi pesniki.

Ne glede na to, da so bili literarni odzivi na teroristične napade 11. septembra tako številčni in tudi raznoliki, obstaja le malo analitičnih študij, ki bi te odzive sistematično in podrobno obravnavalo. Največ študij na to temo obravnava romane, ki so nastali kot odzivi na napade. Študije, ki se ukvarjajo s poezijo po 11. septembru, so ne le redke, ampak zajemajo le nekaj poglavij v monografijah, posameznih člankih in doktorskih disertacijah. Ker niti v slovenskem niti v svetovnem prostoru še ni bilo nobene obširnejše študije o odzivih na 11.

september v sodobni ameriški poeziji, se ta doktorska disertacija opira na obstoječe študije o odzivih v ameriški družbi in kulturi ter na literarnoteoretične študije. Ta študija zajame in predstavi tako cel spekter ameriške poezije, ki je nastala kot odziv na travmatične dogodke 11. septembra, ki jih nadalje tudi podrobno analizira.

Še več, odzive ameriških pesnikov zajame kot individualne odzive in pokaže, da se ameriški pesniki, ki so se odzvali na dogajanje, niso predali splošni paniki, strahu ali celo paranoji. Raziskava pokaže, kako raznoliki so bili ti številni pesniški odzivi. Kot mnogi Američani so se tudi pesniki počutili do neke mere nemočne in ranljive, vendar so imeli to prednost, da so lahko uteho našli v svojem pisanju, kar jim je hkrati pomagalo izraziti svoje individualne in neodvisne vidike. V ameriški poeziji po terorističnih napadih lahko najdemo različne značilnosti v izrazu: nekateri pesniki izražajo čustveno otopelost, dezorientacijo ter občutek brezdomstva; drugi hrepenijo po izgubljenem svetu, v nekaterih primerih celo raj; spet drugi skušajo iskati verbalne oblike onstran besed in opisujejo silno potrebo po izrekanju tišine; nekateri pesniki iščejo uteho v umiku od vsega zunanjega v domače in družinske podrobnosti; nekateri se umikajo nazaj v zgodovino in uporabljajo že obstoječo umetnost, da bi lahko izrazili problematiko trenutne situacije; določeni pesniki nudijo pričevanje o travmatičnih dogodkih 11. septembra; mnogi izmed njih se izrekajo politično, pri čemer določajo ZDA kot krivo stran ali kot glavnega kršitelja; le redki odzivi v poeziji pa so podobni odzivom politike in medijev tistega časa. Uveljavljeni in manj uveljavljeni ameriški pesniki so se odzvali na dogodke in orisali široko paleto problemov, tako politično kot osebno z veliko mero strasti. Njihov namen ni bil ostati neodločen in nemočen, temveč prispevati svoj del. Raziskava tako podrobno oriše in razčleni, kako so se ameriški pesniki spopadli s terorjem v nasprotju s tedanjo ameriško družbo.

Jedro doktorske disertacije predstavlja sistematična razčlenitev in obravnava sodobne ameriške poezije po septembru 2001 ter njenih odzivov na teroristične napade 11. septembra

v New Yorku. Posebna pozornost je namenjena proučevanju in dokazovanju odklona sodobnih ameriških pesnikov od vsesplošnega odziva ameriške javnosti, ki je zajemal pretežno prvine strahu, paranoje in nezaupanja - odziva, ki je bil v veliki meri sprožen s strani tedanje ameriške politike in posledično medijev. Tako opredeljeni cilj raziskave izhaja iz teoretskih in praktičnih rezultatov primerjalne analize uredniških uvodnikov v prvi vrsti ter nato kontrastivne in primerjalne analize ameriške poezije po 11. septembru, napisane kot odziv na napade. Odzivi v tej poeziji kažejo na eni strani izredno podobnost v pesniških prvinah, kot so izrazje, oblikoslovje, skladnja, retorične figure, metaforika in drugo, ter na drugi strani izredno različnost v odzivih glede na tematiko. Na ta način bomo dokazali, da so se pesniki, ne glede na raznolikost odzivov, avtomatsko oblikovali kot neka subkultura znotraj ameriške kulture, saj v večini niso podlegli prevladujočemu vzgibu spodbujanja paranoje v javnosti. Vzporedno z analizo ameriške poezije bo raziskava tekla v smeri kontrastivne analize z namenom širšega vpogleda v ameriško javnost takoj po 11. septembru za lažjo vzpostavitev razlik v odzivih pesnikov in ameriške družbe nasploh. S pomočjo tematske kritike doktorska disertacija pokaže, kako raznoliki, a hkrati podobni so bili odzivi ameriških pesnikov. Tematska kritika omogoča razdelitev pesmi v tematske sklope, ki se razlikujejo v slogu, retoričnih figurah in metaforiki. Še dodatno pa se doktorska disertacija opira na formalistični pristop natančnega branja. Ta novokritiška teorija omogoča interpretativno obravnavo posameznih pesmi in njihovih formalnih elementov, ki gradijo zgolj na zunanjih dokazih posamezne pesmi in ne upoštevajo ostalih kontekstov. S kombinacijo komparativnega (tematska kritika) in interpretativnega (nova kritika in natančno branje) pristopa doktorska disertacija analizira poezijo s formalističnega vidika, hkrati pa zaobjame tudi širši (zgodovinski) kontekst in variacije v odnosih v izbranih pesmih. Teza potrdi pričakovani rezultat, da so se sodobni ameriški pesniki v največji meri odmaknili od prevladujočega mnenja javnosti tedanjega časa o terorističnih napadih 11. septembra 2001.

Poleg tega odzivi na 11. september v ameriški poeziji kot tudi odklon teh pesnikov od tedanje politike in njene propagande do sedaj še niso bili sistematično raziskani in obdelani, zato je tako zastavljeno delo inovativen prispevek k literarni vedi na področju ameriške književnosti in primerjalne književnosti. Sleherne značilnosti odzivov v ameriški poeziji, ki se nedvomno razlikujejo od odzivov celotne ameriške družbe, so opisane in pojasnjene v luči sodobne teorije.

V uvodu teze je nakazana splošna problematika glede odzivov na 11. september v ameriški družbi. Drugo poglavje raziskuje prvine strahu, patriotizma in jezikovnih vprašanj v politiki in medijih po 11. septembru. Tretje poglavje natančno določi prevladujočo retoriko v takojšnjih odzivih medijev s pomočjo teoretskega okvira analize vsebine, ki omogoča podroben pregled uredniških uvodnikov in načina izražanja. Obstoječe literarne in akademske študije o odzivih na 11. september kot tudi problematiko predstavitve 11. septembra v okviru ameriške kulture najdemo v četrtem poglavju, medtem ko peto poglavje oriše izbrano metodologijo (tematska kritika in ameriška nova kritika) za uspešno analizo poezije po 11. septembru. Šesto poglavje podrobno proučuje odzive na 11. september v ameriški poeziji skozi tematsko paradigmo in pesmi tako razčleni na osem tematskih sklopov. Vsaka posamezna pesem je še dodatno analizirana s pomočjo natančnega branja.

Ključne besede: 11. september 2001, sodobna ameriška poezija, odzivi, mediji, politika, kultura, kriza, travma, analiza vsebine, nova kritika, natančno branje, tematska kritika

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Življenjepis

Kristina Kočan je rojena 10. 12. 1981 v Slovenj Gradcu. Je pesnica, prevajalka in preučevalka ameriške književnosti. Po končani III. gimnaziji v Mariboru je nadaljevala s študijem na Filozofski fakulteti v Mariboru, kjer je leta 2007 diplomirala iz angleškega in nemškega jezika s književnostjo. Po uspešno opravljeni diplomi je nadaljevala z doktorskim študijem na področju angleške in ameriške književnosti.

Kočanova je izdala dve pesniški zbirki, in sicer *Šaro* (Litera, 2008) in *Kolesa in murve* (Zavod Itadakimasu, 2014). Njen prvenec *Šara* je bil leta 2008 na slovenskem knjižnem sejmu nominiran za najboljši pesniški prvenec leta.

Svojemu opusu dodaja še nekaj prevodnih knjig, med njimi: *Govoreči boben*, antologija afriško ameriške poezije po letu 1950 (Separatio) iz leta 2006 ter prevod izbranih pesmi ameriške pesnice Audre Lorde z naslovom *Postaje (ŠKUC)*.

Lastno poezijo, prevode in članke objavlja v osrednjih slovenskih literarnih revijah kot tudi v tujih literarnih publikacijah. Kristina Kočan se je pojavila tudi v več antologijah in izborih sodobne slovenske poezije tako doma kot na tujem. Njena poezija je prevedena v bosanski, srbski in angleški jezik.

Na podlagi izpolnitve pogoja izjemnosti ji je leta 2015 Ministrstvo za kulturo dodelilo polni status samozaposlene v kulturi za opravljanje specializiranega poklica pesnice in prevajalke. Strokovna komisija je bila mnenja, da njeno pesniško delovanje izkazuje izjemen kulturni prispevek k slovenski kulturi.

Poleg pesnjenja in prevajanja Kočanova redno predstavlja svoje akademsko delo s področja književnosti in prevodoslovja na konferencah doma in na tujem. Objavila je že več izvirnih znanstvenih člankov (Translating culture: contemporary African American poetry. *ELOPE*, 2015; (A)historične perspektive afriško ameriške književnosti. *Primerjalna književnost*, 2015; Problems in translating musical elements in African American poetry after

1950. *ELOPE*, 2009), poglavij v monografskih publikacijah (Decoding desire in contemporary erotic poetry : from love to pornography. *PanEroticism*. Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2015; Translating silence: absence in African American poetry. *Reverberations of silence : silenced texts, sub-texts and authors in literature, language and translation*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013; Sadness, supersition and sexuality in blues poetry. *Words and music*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013) in drugo.

Že tretje leto zapored sodeluje na mednarodni konferenci *The Erotic* v sodelovanju z angleško akademsko organizacijo *Interdisciplinary.Net*, kjer vodi pesniške delavnice (»The erotic in poetry : from love to pornography.« V: 8th Global Conference The erotic, 2013, Mansfield College, Oxford; »“All things can tempt me”: the imagination and the erotic in poetry.« V: 9th Global Conference The erotic, 2014, Prague, Czech Republic; »Erotic Dimensions in Poetry: Body as the Space of Desire” V: 10th Global Conference The erotic, 2016, Prague, Czech Republic).

Kočanova je bila leta 2014 na Filozofski fakulteti v Mariboru izvoljena v naziv lektorice za predmetno področje »prevajalstvo in tolmačenje«.