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Beyond 9/11

Transdisciplinary Perspectives on Twenty-First Century U.S. American Culture

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Introduction

Those who followed media reports in the wake of the tenth anniversary of September 11, 2001, may have been struck by how insistently radio, television, and internet features kept reiterating a claim that has been challenged ever since it was first made. Calling September 11, 2001, 'the day that changed everything' was perhaps a comprehensible immediate reaction to a terrorist attack of that magnitude – an event that seemed unfathomable, and unfathomably mediagenic, for that matter. Echoing this misleading assumption ten years later and ignoring all evidence to the contrary, most media coverage seemed a case of unambitious journalism as well as an attempt to reaffirm a narrative that most of us remembered well and many would therefore digest easily, recalling a time when the present seemed disquietingly new and the future was still open, a time before the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and before the 2008 economic crisis.

However, commentators and scholars have critically interrogated this view for a long time and shown that the world post-9/11 is characterized as much by cohesion as by transformation. Thus even if the aftermath of September 11, 2001, initially fostered our sense of having witnessed a radical break with the past, this binary perspective has been proved deceptive. The neat division between a world before and after 9/11 tends to reproduce in an inverted manner the world view projected by the Bush administration – a view that allowed legitimizing sweeping changes in domestic policy, violations of international conventions, and the aforementioned wars by insisting on a rupture imposed by the terrorist bombings of September 11, 2001. This narrative relegates the continuity of pre- and post-9/11 culture to the periphery of our attention – be it continuities in the foreign policies of Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama, in the demonization of Islamic cultures in the early 1990s and after 9/11, or in the serial repercussions of aesthetic forms and effects in cultural practices such as fiction and film. William Dobson, in a 2006 issue of *Foreign Policy,* provocatively speaks of 9/11 as "the day nothing much changed" (see also Butter, Christ, and Keller). Why then have we shared the belief, as Caroline Kennedy-Pipe and Nicholas Rengger put it, "that there has been a great change in the architecture of world politics"? (540).

One reason why this belief proves so persistent is that it corresponds with conventional ways of making sense of historical events. Moreover, as American studies scholars, we shared this belief because 9/11 meant a boost to our field; after decades of intense debates of cultural theory and parameters of difference the discipline was ready for a different kind of repoliticization. Accordingly, to many scholars and critics twenty-first century U.S. American culture equals

post-9/11 culture, which makes parts of post-9/11 cultural critique appear like an exercise in forgetting and repression. The very emphasis on rupture not only reinforces the short-sighted view that after September 11, 2001, 'nothing was ever going to be the same' – for historian John Lewis Gaddis, even "the DNA in our minds" mutated (qtd. in Kennedy-Pipe and Rengger 540). Implicitly, this insistence, if not desire, for change also makes spiritual 'rebirth' – the belief that one can completely disentangle oneself from a, perhaps disreputable, past and become anew and pure – a politically valid agenda. We may all remember George W. Bush's claim that hearing of the attack on the World Trade Center towers had such transformative effect on him. Likewise, 9/11 was retrospectively cast as an event that forged new – personal as well as cultural – 'identities.' And oddly enough, these new identities are often deemed the result of the 'traumatic experiences' of 9/11. For E. Ann Kaplan, for instance, the catastrophes which have given rise to a "politics of terror and loss" and to "trauma cultures" forge new "subjectivities through the shocks, disruptions and confusions that accompany them" (20). This emergence of identity from trauma is curious because, as trauma theory holds, trauma can "neither be remembered nor forgotten," nor is it "compatible with the survival of the self"; it destabilizes rather than consolidates identity (Assmann 26). Thus we are not surprised that ten years after the event – and in the context of a U.S. American culture and politics perceived as 'deeply divided' – these new 'subjectivities' seem to have lost all contours.

Critical of such appropriations of September 11, 2001, for identity politics and weary of turning backward and 'remembering 9/11,' this collection of essays pursues a different agenda: we set out to reflect on how the events of September 11, 2001, have often shifted our focus and made us think differently about a whole series of historical, political, social and cultural processes and how "9/11" as an established – and widely accepted – reference to a supposed turning point has effected structural transformations, in economics and well as in cultural practice. What kinds of – political, economic, cultural, and mental – shifts have taken place since September 2001, and how sustainable are the changes they seem to have brought about, in Europe as well as in the U.S.? And how have these developments affected the field of North American Studies and the collaboration across disciplinary divides? After all, 9/11 made us newly aware that our inquiries into cultural phenomena and political processes can no longer be contained within one national framework (if they ever could). Many of our scholarly interests may be set in the context of U.S. American cultures, yet cannot be limited to a particular geopolitical space. Thus if our research questions turn out too big even for American boots, how does that shift the scope and methods of our scholarly work? Raising these questions, we acknowledge that the label '9/11' and the debates it references operate as a shortcut which bypass-

es (or brackets) many of the complex political and transcultural processes we have only begun to understand.

The essays in this collection originate from the transdisciplinary symposium "9/11 – Ten Years After, Looking Ahead," organized by the North American Studies Program at the University of Bonn on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the terrorist attacks. Both the symposium and this book continue our ongoing work on the aftermaths of 9/11 which began with a lecture series during the winter term of 2001-2002 to which nineteen scholars contributed. The essays evolving from these lectures were published as *Der 11. September 2001: Fragen, Folgen, Hintergründe* (ed. Sabine Sielke, 2002). This collection was one of the first books on the events that appeared in Germany and established Bonn's North American Studies Program as a major partner in the conversation on the legacy of 9/11. From this context many scholarly contributions, dissertations, and student theses have evolved. In addition, the research network of junior scholars "The Futures of (European) American Studies," sponsored by the German Research Council (DFG) and situated at the North American Studies Program in Bonn between 2005 to 2008, produced a considerable amount of analyses that were often framed by the issue of 9/11, including the "war on terror" and new debates on torture.

Yet even if, "ten years after" the attacks, it may be a 'natural' impulse to take a close look back, this volume seeks to take a different route and "look ahead." We try to resist, at least to a certain degree, the preoccupation with memory and the past which Andreas Huyssen, in 2000, considered to be "one of the most surprising cultural and political phenomena of recent years" and "in stark contrast to the privileging of the future so characteristic of earlier decades of twentieth-century modernity" (21). Thus the initial goal of our conference also sets the tone for this volume which aims at assessing and historicizing not so much the events in themselves, but parts of the discourse they triggered and monitored – the 9/11 archive. Admittedly far from original, the title of this volume – *Beyond 9/11* – signals that we are less interested in retrospection, but in raising the question how the discourses around 9/11 shape our present moment and cast their shadow – "the shadow of no towers," so to speak (Spiegelman) – toward the future. In other words: how do our interpretations of 9/11 mold what lies ahead? The answers to this question come from scholars working in the fields of American literary and cultural studies, political science, economics, history, and theology. We open up our perspective by including a conversation with artist Christoph Faulhaber and presenting his work that in many ways chronicles the post-9/11 world. Yet, Faulhaber also envisions a radically different future, whose contours depend on our capacity of producing intellectual and artistic innovations. As he puts it in our conversation, "almost out of nothing, by means of merely a little conceptual shift, the world starts coming apart." At the end of the book, a comprehensive bibliography, compiled by Björn Bosserhoff, offers a

glimpse of the scope of (transdisciplinary) research the debates on 9/11 fueled. Even now we still grapple with a decade that, in attempting to come to terms with what has been coined '9/11,' produced an impressive amount of scholarship – much of which has been looking ahead.

Beyond 9/11: The Trajectory of this Book

This essay collection is divided into four sections which we labeled "9/11 as 'Climate Change'?," "The Costs and Commodification of 9/11," "The Spirit of 9/11," and "Looking Beyond Ground Zero." We begin our debate with a challenge to the dominant view of 9/11 as a turning point in history and propose to understand the attacks and their aftermaths in the context of long-term trends – slowly emerging "climate changes" in foreign and security policy, international law, and gender relations. We conclude with a final glance "beyond Ground Zero" that may strike some commentators as an irritating inquiry: the question of whether the terrorist attacks have not only resulted in 'collateral damages' but also brought forth 'collateral benefits' in the fields of foreign policy, fiction, poetry, and the arts. In-between these two perspectives – one which strikes us as highly familiar, yet has lost much of its plausibility; the other perhaps politically incorrect, yet quite manifest in the context of the 'Arab Spring' – we move into the foreground two other battlegrounds of this century's first decade: the persistent prominence of identity politics, of memory cultures, and of a cultural industry related to 9/11 – at issue in the section on costs and commodification – suggests that '9/11 sells' even though its economic surplus, as an economist's perspective shows, comes at a high prize. Our primary concern in reflecting "the spirit of 9/11" is the increasing significance of religious affiliation as a parameter of cultural distinction and as a challenge to the U.S. American credo of multiculturalism and the nation's self-conception as an integrated immigrant society.

9/11 as "Climate Change"?

Approaching matters from the perspectives of literary and cultural studies as well as political science, the first section of this book aims at accounting for the degree to which the events of September 11, 2001, have set into motion significant and sustainable processes of transformation while, at the same time, fostering continuities – of policies as much as cultural trends. In this assessment, our multidisciplinary perspective focuses on developments in foreign and domestic policy and international jurisdiction as well as in literary and cultural practice. At the same time, we take the title of this section literally and raise the question whether our alertness to terrorist threat scenarios and outdated geostrategic and

economic thought patterns has managed to obscure longer-term eco-political risks and dangers.

Bernd Greiner's essay "9/11 and Its Transatlantic Legacies" opens the discussion by analyzing the challenges democratic institutions and legal systems both in the United States and in Europe have been facing in the aftermath of the attacks and during the "war on terror." Greiner voices concern over suspensions of democratic processes during a "state of emergency" which were allegedly temporary, but meanwhile appear to have become permanent. Viewing the abuse of political office and power in a larger historical perspective, he argues that rather than limiting such practice to the Bush administration, we need to recognize it as a systemic condition the American Constitution originally addressed by institutionalizing a system of checks and balances. Greiner diagnoses an erosion of these institutions in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks. The resulting aspiration to an absolute, yet unattainable security is, as Greiner suggests, an alarming development that is by no means limited to the United States and informs politics and policies in Europe as well.

If Greiner analyzes a dangerous political and cultural disposition to increasingly tolerate human rights violations such as torture in the battle against international terrorism, Mandana Biegi draws our attention to an emerging counter-development: a strengthening of universal jurisdiction which attempts to hold even high-ranking Western officials accountable for human rights abuses. Biegi illustrates this tendency in her contribution "Universal Jurisdiction and Torture: The Case of George W. Bush": in February 2011 the former U.S. president had to cancel a visit to Switzerland because several criminal charges held him responsible for authorizing so-called enhanced interrogation techniques in the "war on terror" – techniques that legal experts worldwide classify as torture. Bush's withdrawal, Biegi argues, underlines a climate change in international relations and diplomacy. While this event is not without precedent – we may recall a similar case involving former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in 2002 – this recent incident may indicate a shift taking place since the International Criminal Court (ICC) implemented a new regime in international criminal law earlier in the same year. Even though a criminal prosecution of George W. Bush on the part of the ICC is unlikely, the last ten years have created a new climate in which civil society actors or legal authorities are more likely to press for international criminal proceedings against high-ranking officials accused of large scale human rights abuses.

In her essay "'Dwelling in Crisis': Terrorist and Environmental Risk Scenarios in the Post-9/11 Novel: Jonathan Raban's *Surveillance* and Carolyn See's *There Will Never Be Another You*," Sylvia Mayer draws attention to yet another effect of 9/11 which is closely related to the emergence of the security paradigm Greiner discusses: the heightened level of risk perception around the world which has strongly impacted on U.S. society and politics. Ulrich Beck's model

of a "world risk society" distinguishes three types of global risk which are highly important forces of political and cultural formation: environmental crises, global financial crises, and international terrorist threats. Each of these kinds of risk results from processes of modernization that, according to Beck, characterize our present era where values of freedom and security get played off against each other. Drawing on sociological and anthropological insights into the mechanisms and effects of risk scenarios, Mayer focuses on selected U.S. American post-9/11 novels that explore how global environmental risks and threats of terrorism conjoin to powerfully shape and deform politics and cultures.

In her contribution on "The U.S. Public after 9/11: Polarized Views on Foreign Policy?," Henrike Viehrig scrutinizes the American public's response to the Bush (and Obama) administrations' foreign policy. Weighing the common proposition that major events like 9/11 or the Iraq War have a unifying effect against the frequent perception of the post-9/11 United States as a deeply polarized nation Viehrig's empirical study assesses the degree to which the American public appeared unified or polarized on particular foreign policy issues. Focusing on the opinions of the electorate and political decision makers, Viehrig is able to show that Americans were indeed split along partisan lines over the Iraq War as the most salient foreign policy issue and that this polarization resulted from a growing dissent among the political elite.

Approaching post-9/11 politics from a gender studies perspective, Greta Olson's essay "Recovering from the Men We Loved to Hate: Barack Obama as a Representative of Post-Post-September 11 White House Masculinity" makes the argument that during the first decade of this century American politicians preferably cast themselves as hyper-masculine. Interpreting these virile poses as efforts that compensate for a sense of vulnerability elicited by the attacks, Olson discusses memorable (media) moments such as George W. Bush mimicking Tom Cruise as a Top Gun fighter pilot in 2003 or Donald Rumsfeld's view that terrorist suspects may be kept in 'stress positions' during interrogation since he, too, stood working for at least eight hours a day. Against this backdrop of staged manliness, Barack Obama's performance of another type of masculinity – articulate, considerate, appreciative of women's strengths, and all without the cowboy swagger – Olson suggests, can be read as an instance of recovery from the hyper-masculinity of the Bush era.

The Costs and Commodification of 9/11

The essays in part two of this book evaluate the economic costs and consequences of the attacks and raise the following questions: what are the economic costs *and* benefits of the fear of terrorism and the new risks of globalization? What (economic) interests have channeled the ways in which the events of September 11, 2001, and their aftermaths have been inscribed into cultural memory?

Which particular aspects of 9/11 and its consequences have been remembered in what ways – and by and for whom? And what has been forgotten or denied? Can we understand the processes of political decision-making as well as the dominant debates in the social sciences and the humanities as forms of commemoration, commodification, or even codification? Do the numerous novels and films meanwhile traded as "9/11 fiction" and "9/11 film" really constitute genres or do such labels first and foremost serve as marketing strategies?

Tim Krieger's essay "Calculating the Costs of 9/11" explores the economic impact of September 11 and argues that the collective memory of 9/11 reinforces the population's fear of terrorist attacks. According to Krieger, although terrorist attacks are rare events and the probability of an identical attack, i.e., the steering of airplanes into skyscrapers, is almost negligible, the powerfully effective images of 9/11 have made many people systematically overrate the chance of being harmed by terrorist actions. This psychological effect, Krieger argues, generates real economic costs. In order to reduce feelings of insecurity, for instance, risk-averse individuals are willing to sacrifice parts of their income as well as their civil liberties, which are deemed a prerequisite for a prosperous economic development in capitalist market economies such as the United States. Despite the benefit of certain sectors of the economy, such as insurance companies or defense contractors, the majority of citizens pay a "risk premium" which reduces welfare at the aggregate level. In cases where the consequences of such sacrifice are irreversible, the economic costs persist even as memories of 9/11 slowly fade.

The costs of 9/11 can be approached from yet another direction, as Klaas Staal shows in his contribution "Was Osama bin Laden Successful? An Economic Perspective on 9/11 and Beyond." One of Osama bin Laden's explicit aims in attacking the United States was, as Staal notes, to cause the nation's bankrupcy by provoking increased security and military expenditures and thereby an overstretching of its federal budget. Staal measures the military and civil expenses in response to the attacks, assessing in how far bin Laden's objectives were achieved. As he demonstrates, if one considers the direct economic costs of 9/11 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq – such as the value of lives lost, property damage, and military spending, as well as indirect costs resulting from the loss of productivity and additional safety measures – the outcome is that bin Laden clearly missed his goal.

One may also wonder about the economic impact of 9/11 on literary and cultural production and the proximity of the events' commemoration and their commodification. 9/11 has been recalled in an array of novels, films, TV shows, memorabilia, and other consumer goods, some of which were marketed only days after the events had occurred. While some of these products were greeted with praise, others were charged with turning a national tragedy into a commodity. Calling into question the binarism between commercialized commemo-

ration and allegedly more acceptable forms of memory, Simone Knewitz's essay "9/11 and the Literature Industry" examines some of the cultural work achieved by the "9/11 novel." Knewitz raises the question why some 9/11 products (e.g., films, kitsch) are assumed to exploit the events commercially while others, like novels, remain free of such charges, even though all of them circulate in the same market economy. Whose interests do reproaches of commodification serve and, in turn, which commercial interests are met by establishing 9/11 fiction as a literary genre?

Georgiana Banita's contribution "Writing Energy Security after 9/11: Oil, Narrative, and Globalization" investigates post-9/11 petrofiction. Since the early days of the oil boom in the United States in the 1860s American literature has explored the lure of the fossil frontier and the circulation of oil capital beyond the borders of the nation. Throughout the twentieth century, in particular, oil as an economic and political force has splintered national frames of reference, galvanizing the expansion of global industrialization and capitalism. Banita's readings of U.S. American petrofiction after 9/11 aim to show, however, that the terrorist attacks and the ensuing scramble for Middle Eastern oil marked a turning point on the way to more pressing debates around the exploration and marketing of petroleum. Discussing novels by Gary Shteyngart, Jonathan Franzen, and Teddy Wayne, Banita argues that these texts map this paradigm shift by charting a geopolitical genealogy of transnational oil discourses and devising counter-scenarios predicated on a conservationist agenda as key to the future security of nations.

The Spirit of 9/11

In calling our third section "The Spirit of 9/11," we playfully take up the title of Jean Baudrillard's important essay, "The Spirit of Terrorism," to explore the ethnic and religious controversies in the wake of the terrorist attacks. These conversations and conflicts between Christian, Jewish, and Muslim protagonists and belief systems have come to dominate a decade in which discourses on trauma have contemporaneously become more prominent than ever. Meanwhile, the trauma discourse disseminated "in the shadow of no towers" has tended to interweave the events of September 11, 2011 – in complex and highly controversial ways – with debates on the Holocaust (see Sielke, "Troping"). The "Spirit of 9/11" has therefore evolved into a contested realm, producing divergent degrees of unity, solidarity, appropriation, and exclusion. These ongoing discussions of matters of religious identities and interethnic relations post-9/11 run the risk of claiming the experience of pain and suffering as a parameter of absolute difference and consequently obstruct rather than enable dialogues between different cultural groups (as, for instance, in the conflict around "Park51," the Muslim community center in close proximity to Ground Zero).

Gerhard Sauter's essay "9/11 as a Spiritual Event" locates Christian responses to 9/11 in their theological and U.S. cultural contexts. Starting off with a quote by the *Wall Street Journal*'s columnist Peggy Noonan who understood 9/11 as spiritual proof of the birth of hope against expectation, Sauter explores what it means to confront and experience catastrophe spiritually: one may not be able to grasp the event, but "lives" the disaster rather than trying to deny or sublimate death. Sauter distinguishes this stance from civil religious and fundamentalist approaches to disaster in the U.S., which both tend to eliminate the strangeness of catastrophic events by placing them within a history of national salvation. Surveying the spectrum of American Christianity and the tradition of civil religion, Sauter claims that the latter must be revised in the light of the terrorist attacks. While Islam's union of religion, law, and politics needs to be properly understood as a challenge to secular Western societies, recognition and respect of Muslim ceremonies and religious festivities, Sauter maintains, are crucial for an ongoing interreligious and intercultural exchange.

For Muslims in the United States, the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and the policies subsequently adopted by the American government had great impact. In their essay "The New American Muslim Identity: Defining American Islam Over a Decade of Transformation," Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Nazir Harb discuss the ways in which American Arabs and Muslims were affected by Islamophobia after 9/11 while also describing how American Muslims began to redefine their identity and counteract racial prejudice. Governmental institutions have been actively involved in events promoting and celebrating Arab and Muslim culture and identity, but Haddad and Harb evaluate these projects as double-edged, as often normative in their attempt to distinguish between positive and negative forms of Muslim identity, thereby ultimately fostering racial profiling. Yet the last decade, as Haddad and Harb demonstrate, has also witnessed an increased presence and visibility of Muslims in the United States, especially in the media and in popular culture.

In his essay "On Hallowed Ground: The Sacred Space of Ground Zero and the Consecration of Global Business," Christian Kloeckner discusses the ways in which the rhetorical sanctification of Ground Zero is linked to the sublime effect of the collapsing towers and a result of intensive ritualization, conflicting interpretations, and the contested ownership of the site. Remains of the World Trade Center have become worshipped relics that grace diverse objects, such as a warship, and that were integrated into numerous memorials across the U.S. as well as into the architecture and exhibit of the National 9/11 Museum at Ground Zero. The controversy around the construction of "Park51," the nearby Muslim community center, which many pundits and politicians called a "desecration," may suggest that this "hallowed ground" is a decidedly Judeo-Christian one. Kloeckner argues, however, that the rhetoric of the reconstruction efforts, the planning of the memorial and the commercial parts of Ground Zero, and the

reverence for the materiality of the fallen towers and their rebirth in "One World Trade Center" points to an even more significant – and less obvious – consecration: that of global business.

Sabine Sielke's essay "Why "9/11 is [not] unique," or: Troping Trauma," reprinted from the journal *Amerikastudien/American Studies*, explores the proliferation of the complex and controversial term 'trauma' and its function in current cultural analysis and identity politics. Why conceptualize the events of September 11, 2001, and their aftermaths as both 'illegible,' which trauma studies agrees is constitutive for traumatic experiences, and constitutive of 'new identities'? Interrogating trauma studies, Sielke reads such troping as a fundamental force of interdependent practices of memory and forgetting. Locating as one of its central urges a desire to override the distinction between collective experience and personal trauma, the essay turns to cultural practices that were 'inspired' by the events of 9/11 and considered as ways of 'working through' their traumatic dimension. After revisiting Daniel Libeskind's early design for the reconstruction of Ground Zero, Sielke turns to Art Spiegelman's serial art. Rather than offering narratives of trauma, she argues, Spiegelman's *In the Shadow of No Towers* (2004) takes issue with the assumption that trauma can be appropriately narrated and resists the cultural matrix in which trauma works as a model of identity that is ultimately exclusionary and closed-off – a matrix in which post-9/11 politics could easily have its way.

As already mentioned above, the religious and ethnic conflicts aggravated by the terrorist attacks and reinforced by political revanchism were reflected in the widespread use of the Holocaust as a historical analogy. In his essay, Andrew Gross takes issue with this analogy that reinscribed ethnic and religious differences in terms of collective trauma, and let memory, rather than ethnicity, become the marker of group identity. In "What Chabon Remembers: Terrorism, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, and Nations without Borders," Gross focuses on Michael Chabon's counter-factual novel of 2007, which deals with contemporary events – the conflicts in the Middle East and terrorism – by imagining a Yiddish Alaska, where European Jews were able to find refuge from the Nazis. According to Gross, the thrust of the counter-factual trope is not revisionist history but counter-memory. Far from calling into question the Holocaust, the novel scrutinizes the notion of trauma implicit in the Holocaust analogy, proposing an alternate (and older) model of memory linked to imagination rather than suffering, and a model of religion detached from ethnicity.

Looking Beyond Ground Zero

Our volume's final part, "Looking Beyond Ground Zero," inquires what possible futures the events of September 11, 2001, have set in motion and how these processes can be accounted for. Other essays in this volume already identify

developments that, in retrospect, can be deemed beneficial by different groups: Biegi's essay suggests that human rights violations, wherever they occur and even if they are perpetrated by the world's most powerful state, may no longer go unpunished. Haddad and Harb's article points to the increasing degree of organization and solidarity in the Muslim American community that may result in better interfaith understanding. The contributions to the present section extend such perspectives and engage in a debate on the potential and limits of democracy and explore the specific rhetoric of a new beginning that evolved from the ruins of Ground Zero – a discourse that redirects our attention from a preoccupation with the past to a deeper concern with the present and future.

The first two contributions by political scientists Patrick Keller and Andreas Falke speculate on the unfolding international role of the United States, depicting two opposing, if equally plausible scenarios. Keller's essay, "The Surprising Staying-Power of U.S. Primacy," calls into question the assessment that we live in a "Post-American World," the conventional wisdom that the relative decline of the United States and the rise of other powers such as China, India, and Brazil is the defining global trend of the early twenty-first century. In this prevalent view, America's decline was brought about, or at least exacerbated, by the Bush administration's disastrous reaction to 9/11, in particular by the costly and ill-conceived wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as by short-sighted economic policies. What, however, Keller wonders, if this talk of decline is as overblown as was similarly alarmist rhetoric many times before? Keller argues that the fundamentals of U.S. power – in terms of military, economic, and cultural strength – remain without peer and that America will keep playing a dominant role in the international system.

Contrary to Keller's argument, Falke proposes that a very likely development in international relations may not be an ongoing pronounced engagement of the United States in world affairs, but a return to isolationism. If the terrorist attacks of 9/11 have led to a new height of U.S. international involvement, Falke suggests, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq soon laid bare the limits of this policy, partly due to severe strategic and conceptual failures. Given the need for domestic reconstruction after the financial crisis and a shrinking resource base, the intractable foreign policy environment the U.S. finds itself in ten years after 9/11 may actually lead to the forgotten default option for U.S. American foreign policy. Falke's essay "The Long-Term Foreign Policy Consequences of 9/11: An American Neo-Isolationism?" projects some of the shapes this option could possibly take.

Looking beyond Ground Zero from the perspective of literary studies can mean that we gauge literature's visionary power. In what sense can post-9/11 literature be conceptualized as productive of new beginnings? In her essay "Haunted Fiction: The Ghosts of Ground Zero," Birgit Däwes takes issue with a now dominant assessment in literary criticism which deplores the absence of

aesthetic innovation in 9/11 literature and an apparent failure to formulate political responses. Analyzing the pervasive imagery of ghosts and haunting in what she calls "Ground Zero Fiction," Däwes explores the ambivalent relationship between the historical events and their literary renegotiations as well as the textual, contextual, and intertextual strategies through which novels have challenged the idea that 'everything changed' on September 11. While many critics are dissatisfied with 9/11 literature's ostensible retreat into the private and the domestic, Däwes argues that through the trope of the ghost, the private becomes the microcosm of political conflict, in which literature takes a stand for an ethics of recognition and for the principles of multiplicity and border-crossing.

If Däwes cautions us not to underestimate the aesthetic and political power of the 9/11 novel, Sascha Pöhlmann draws our attention to the responses to 9/11 in poetry and poetics. Returning to Walt Whitman, Pöhlmann's essay "Future-Founding Poetry after 9/11" examines how poetry after 9/11 set out not merely to mourn, but to actively construct a future. In his 1876 preface to *Leaves of Grass* Whitman proffers a programmatic description of his poetics: "as I have lived in [...] a revolutionary age, future-founding, I have felt to identify the points of that age, these lands, in my recitatives, altogether in my own way." Whitman, Pöhlmann argues, thus was the first theorist and practitioner of "future-founding poetry," or poetry that aims to actively mark and perform a beginning that is relevant to both present and future. While future-founding strategies can be found throughout the history of American poetry since Whitman, they have become especially prevalent and significant after 9/11. Pöhlmann aims at conceptualizing different ways in which this future-founding impetus of new beginnings manifests itself as it oscillates between globalism and nationalism, peace and war, individual and society.

Completing this volume, German artist Christoph Faulhaber talks about his involvement in 9/11 memorial culture and his interventions in security discourses in an interview with Christian Kloeckner, "9/11 as 'Unbild': A Conversation." Faulhaber, who, along with Lukas Chrobok, received notable attention for his "Mister Security" performances staged in front of U.S. embassies and consulates throughout Europe, engages in his work the interconnections of public space, surveillance, the camera, and art. Critically investigating the political and cultural repercussions of 9/11, Faulhaber even landed on a terrorist watch list and was expelled from the U.S. in 2008. For Faulhaber, his artistic negotiation of our times means first of all to confront the ubiquity and increasing authority of images which he attempts by producing what he calls *Unbilder*, or "non-pictures" – images that defy and resist conventions of visual culture.

This is certainly an almost impossible task, yet Faulhaber is right to insist that one has to make such an attempt at resistance. After all that has been said and written about 9/11, our own critical endeavor to defy conventional thinking about the master narratives of 9/11 and its effects may seem similarly daunting.

Still, this volume is dedicated to contributing to a collective scholarly effort to move beyond that ignominious day in order to arrive at more complex and multi-faceted perspectives of twenty-first century U.S. politics and culture. Far from being a 'day that changed everything,' then, September 11, 2001, is a day that keeps challenging us in our comforts.

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