

In Search for the ‘Great 9/11 Novel’. Kristof Magnusson’s poetological rejection of crisis literature in *Das war ich nicht* (2010)

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Abstract

Kristof Magnusson’s German bestseller and new economy novel Das war ich nicht (2010), whose subtheme is the failure of a large announced 9/11 century novel, questions and satirizes the media dictation and its exaggerated expectations of an aesthetic and morally adequate artistic reception of 9/11, which consequently limits both the writer and writing itself. By means of an ironic ductus and by reference to Theodore Dreiser’s novel Sister Carrie (1900), a masterpiece of American naturalism, Magnusson distances himself from the discourse in order to establish an alternative poetic program: Unlike those German novels, which were written in the immediate aftermath of the attacks, Das war ich nicht does not repeat the impression of an aesthetic and poetic caesura. So Magnusson denies a medial postulated and inflationary served ‘crisis management narrative’, which is literature ought to accomplish. Instead, he pays homage to the epic storytelling by opposing with the example of Stock Market Crash a kind of ‘counter-crisis’. Replacing one crisis by another Magnusson’s treatment approaches a paradigm of terrorism and assassination research, according to which violent attacks do not affect the course of history in a long term. Nevertheless, it is not the novel’s intention to marginalize the events. Rather Magnusson’s example shows the historical genesis and variability of literary crisis management, which with increasing time has to devise alternative modes of coping with 9/11.

Keywords: Kristof Magnusson, (Post) 9/11 Literature, (Post) 9/11 Novel, Satire, New Economy Novel, Novels about fictitious writers, Crisis Literature, Crisis Narrative, Postmodern Literature, Contemporary German Literature, Fictitious Authors, Faction/Fiction, Postmodern Narratology

Introduction

The “world” and “media event” 9/11 (Dayan/Katz) has received great attention and multifaceted adaptation not only in the English-speaking world, but also in German literature.¹ At first glance, the new economy novel *Das war ich nicht*² (2010) of the German-Icelandic³ author Kristof Magnusson⁴ does not seem to take part in this struggling discourse: The story about the harmful effects of a young trader’s misfortune does not play in 2001, is entirely fictional and ignores any documentary claims. Even the author himself had no immediate experience of the attacks (with the exception of his media-conveyed attestation). So the event of 9/11 itself is not part of the novel’s diegetic world because a facile epic integration is not (and probably has never

been) possible, but it remains present in the global responses and following media discourses, the novel is dealing with. Though *not* telling a story about 9/11, as journalistic feuilleton and literary research unequivocally pointed out,⁵ the novel is worth a closer look because it reflects the public expectations of writing after September 11th in a meta-poetic narration. What was striking concerning the novel's reception, however, is that neither literary criticism nor research have yet consistently read the novel in the context of 9/11 literature, so I will attempt such a reading for the first time.

The main thesis of this article is that Kristof Magnusson's novel *Das war ich nicht* is less an artistic-critical reaction to the historical event of the September 11th attacks and its medial evocations than a meta-poetological reflection and comment on the efforts of contemporary literature and the literary market's desire to proclaim a 'great 9/11 novel'. This general assumption leads to the sub-thesis that Magnusson, by writing a novel about the post 9/11 era, establishes a distinct counter-narrative to a 'conventional' approach⁶ which focuses on the catastrophe itself. The central poetological concepts, in which the novel articulates its alternative draft, are those of epic realism and literary fiction – what also means that the terrorist attacks and their global political range are not impaired in their historical, nor their political or humanitarian meaning. Neither are the previous literary reactions and adaptations criticized, which often already have discussed the paradox of representing reality in fiction (as e. g. Frédéric Beigbeder in *Windows on the World*, 2003, or, for the German discourse, Norbert Gstrein, *Wem gehört eine Geschichte*, 2004).⁷ What Magnusson concentrates on is therefore not the factual event, but the later reactions and the presumption of a reality obsessed media society, which expects the same obsession from the field of literature and art. Though the demand for engaging literature that reprocesses the collective trauma particularly characterized the intellectual debates in the United States, it was also problematized in the German discourse – by authors and critics alike.⁸ Facing the growing literary reactions on and the fictionalizations of September 11 within the last few years,⁹ the issue seems to have lost nothing of its attraction within the past decade. The attitude of "aesthetic abstinence" among many contemporary authors is still exceptional: "September 11 remains irresistible" (Hartwig).

Thus the interrelation of 'Narrating crisis' and 'crisis of narration' implies at least two aspects: Firstly, Magnusson's denial of a conventional crisis narration, that generally is required of 9/11 literature. And secondly a writer's block on the storyline, which merges into another major crisis, the collapse of the global financial market. So Magnusson sets a 'counter-crisis', which motivates the action and steers their further progress: One crisis replaces the other or rather one changes the previous one. So the inherent criticism is mainly due to the concept of reality and thus necessarily to the modalities of the novel's narrative representation. According to this, *Das war ich nicht* also demonstrates poetologically, how an adequate writing about catastrophes does not look like. Therefore Magnusson reacts to the preformed high-wrought expectations by writing an explicit *Zeitroman*¹⁰, a novel, which tries to portray the present society and its particular current affairs. And by attempting to capture today's world as vividly as possible, Magnusson chooses an entertaining, diverting mode, as critics have sufficiently pointed out.¹¹

After a brief characterization of the novel in form and content the first section is devoted to the 'littérateur' Henry LaMarck and literature as a central subject of the story in order to expose its poetological conception. A key element of this concept is the rejection of a mimetic-

realistic representation in favor of referring to the literary tradition, in this case to the American novelist and chief representative of the naturalist school Theodore Dreiser (1871–1945). The multiple intertextual references to Dreiser’s ‘Great American Novel’ *Sister Carrie* (1900) will be discussed in the second section. That the novel despite its supposed establishment of a counter-narrative principle, though refers frequently to 9/11 and its discourse, is subject of the third chapter, while part four finally focuses on the novel’s emancipation from the dominant discourse by strategies of ironic narration.

Content and formal structure of Magnusson’s *Das war ich nicht* (2010)

The novel tells a short episode in the life of three characters, who at first glance seem to have little in common: The main character Jasper Lüdemann, a 31-year-old, high-flying trader of German descent now working for the Chicago-based bank Rutherford & Gold, gears his entire life to his career.¹² Meike Urbanski, a literary translator who is currently exchanging her left-alternative middle-class life for a self-chosen eremitism in the Lower Saxonian countryside. Finally, the American star-author Henry LaMarck. The major part of the story with its constantly alternating perspectives takes place in Chicago, precisely at the financial district around LaSalle Street, where the Chicago Stock Exchange is based.

Due to a personal crisis the ageing, homosexual writer and Pulitzer Prize winner Henry LaMarck has announced during a guest appearance on a BBC talk show that he is intensively engaged in writing a ‘novel of the century’ about the September 11th attacks. Yet, as he receives a letter from his German translator Meike Urbanski, listing implausibilities and logical mistakes in his work, he falls into an insurmountable writer’s block and from then on is unable to write even a single line. As a result, not only does Henry’s self-esteem suffer damage, but also the already deficient orientation in the life of his German translator. In an act of desperation Meike travels to Chicago in order to seek out the by then missing Henry, where first of all she meets Jasper. They end up in a variation of the classical *ménage à trois*, when Henry suddenly falls in love with a blemished photograph of Jasper in the *Chicago Tribune*, on which he appears as the iconographical emblem of the collapsing financial market. Retrieving his inspiration, Henry gets into contact with Jasper by authorizing him as personal investment adviser – a disastrous decision, which catalyzes the development of the plot: Jasper takes advantage of the situation for dissimulating his speculative long-straddle-operations he has initiated out of loyalty towards a trainee and which has totally run out of control. The storyline follows a pyramid scheme: Jasper’s charity act grants a fraudulent insolvency for Rutherford & Gold, which causes a global financial breakdown. The novel closes on an idyllic scene in a Hamburg street café with a credo for the relativity of all (historical) incidents. While, in a kind of stage monologue, each character claims to have played the most important role. The last word, however, is had by a minor character, Henry’s German publisher, who concluded succinctly with a brief look at the newspaper – and despite a loss of nearly six billion: “Steht nichts Weltbewegendes drin.” (283).

Generically the novel quotes very different traditions and narrative styles, including those of romances, literary satires or new economy novels, the reading that is favored here. The generic indeterminacy is accompanied by an extremely strict composition: The novel consists of 45 chapters, where exactly 15 chapters are assigned to the three characters from whose perspectives they are narrated. The story is therefore told in three alternating perspectives, continuously changing and escalating in order to drive the plot forward. Reading marks like

subtitles (named after the figures) help the reader to follow the pluriperspective narration. The novel alternates thus between two genres, the literary satire (or the literary market-Satire) and the financial narrative, the new economy novel – which both represent metonymically sectors, that were directly affected by the consequences of 9/11. With regard to the genre tradition the novel therefore has a discursive responsibility, since storytelling within this generic context has always been writing about literature itself.

The *littérateur* and literature as literary subject

As just stated *Das war ich nicht* does not only tell an invented story from the financial world, it is also a novel about literature and scholarship, a satire on the literary scene.¹³ In Magnusson the essential genus reference is that the key motive of the ‘undone masterpiece’¹⁴ is released out of its tradition and re-contextualized in the narrative frame of the new economy novel.

Therefore Literature and the stock character of a writer play a significant role in both the diegetic world of the novel and at different levels of the narrative representation. From a technical point of view, literature functions as the connexial motif which ties the three main figures together: Meike chases the missing Henry, who is obsessed with finding Jasper, the “Business-Boy” (70), whose photo in the newspaper has left such a deep impression on him. And finally Jasper exploits Henry in order to impress Meike.

Therein, the text gives its evidence as to what a literature of an eminent, literary-pretentious 9/11 novel and what kind of artist its creator should be. Henry’s prose significantly implements the requirements of postmodern American literature. His novels are, to a great extent, hermetic. They operate with a meaningful metaphoric structure, as well as utopian draughts of composition. The rules of the empiric world are thereby suspended – as the reader learns through the internal focalization of the philologically trained translator Meike. And even the scarce work and style sketches presented through Henry’s perspective confirm her judgment of their highly symbolic, enigmatic character. LaMarck’s novels sell very well on the American book market, as German publisher Thorsten Fricke lectures instructively: „Niemand in Deutschland liest Henry LaMarck. Dabei ist er im Rest der Welt ein Star. Der verkauft Millionen und ist seit Jahren für den Nobelpreis im Gespräch.“ (38). That commercial success and literary merit are no contradiction in terms is pointed out by Meike in a discussion with Fricke later on: “Henry LaMarcks Texte sind ein raffiniertes Spiel mit Hochsprache und Umgangssprache.” (39). The fact that it should be Meike, who hitherto translated pulp fiction, unambitious dime novels of the worst kind, succeeds in leveraging Henry LaMarck finally to his deserved fame (40), has an ironic connotation.

His literary reputation rests mainly on the novel *Unterm Ahorn (Under the Maple Tree)*, in which the main figure Graham Santos, while sitting in a palm house, tells the story of his parents walking past each other (161). As anti-bourgeois pamphlet and homage to an alternative life, the novel proves to be an ideal identificatory reading for Meike (38f.). Beyond this, the title owns highly ironic potential – in so far as it functions as a self-referential note on the novel itself: Magnusson’s *Das war ich nicht* draws its structural finesse and its tension precisely from the mode of splitting and permanently missing each other. This plot device perfectly works because the reader does always know more than one single figure due to the novel’s triple perspective mode of narration.

Though the question remains, who is this author? Henry LaMarck, whose “perfumed name” (Schulte) already exposes the figure’s artificiality, is an amalgamation of the ideal US-American *homme de lettre*: He possesses the physical attraction and fitness of a John Irving,¹⁵ with whom he also shares high popularity and commercial success, furthermore the whole palette of literary awards as John Updike¹⁶ and the bias towards Chicago as a literary setting, which is reminiscent of Saul Bellow. Finally, even as a homosexual artist he forms part of a famous lineage from Gore Vidal to Allen Ginsberg.¹⁷ His extravagant appearance is more reminiscent of the fin de siècle dandyism of an Oscar Wilde¹⁸ or a Herman Bang. His later escape from public leads him to the *Superior Hotel Estana*. It is then insofar logically consistent, as this appears to be a remake of the legendary Chicago *Palmer House*, where illustrious guests such as Wilde and Eleonora Duse used to reside.

However, this second nomination for the Pulitzer Prize as a lifetime achievement award should prick up the attentive reader’s ears. This is due to the fact astonishingly each prize committee consequently ignores novels about September 11, even those of well-respected writers¹⁹ – a result which differs from the mentality of European literary scenes.²⁰ This will turn even the most gentle reader suspicious and let him or her develop misgivings about the expected success of the ‘new Henry LaMarck’.

As a reason for his enduring silence, Henry initially feigns wounded vanity, caused by an imprudent letter of his German translator. Yet, this is but a blind motif. The true source of his blockade is the genuine incommensurability of 9/11, both as a global and an individual attack of previously unknown dimensions – at least for an author like Henry LaMarck. In fact, this refusal forms a striking contrast to the considerable absorbability of literature, for contrary to the assumption of “aesthetic incubation” (Köhler 237)²¹ the historic event 9/11 quickly became a motif of storytelling, both in national and international contexts. Correspondingly the public attention for his project could not be greater: “Henry LaMarck hatte sich eines großen Themas angenommen, des Terroranschlags auf das World Trade Center. Allen war klar: Er schrieb den ersten Jahrhundertroman des 21. Jahrhunderts. [...] So ein Star war Henry LaMarck” (40f.). From the inner perspective of Henry, however, the situation appears less optimistic:

Viele sagten, sie freuten sich auf mein neues Buch, meinen Roman über die Terroranschläge des 11. September. So hatte ich es nämlich angekündigt oder besser, so war es mir rausgerutscht, als ich vor ungefähr einem Jahr anlässlich des Erscheinens von *Windeseile* bei Stephen Fry in der BBC zu Gast gewesen war, zusammen mit Elton John, der fast so witzig und geistreich reden konnte wie Stephen Fry selbst, was dazu geführt hatte, dass ich mich immer kleiner und langweiliger fühlte. Dann hatte ich es irgendwann gesagt: “Roman. 11. September.” Ich fand das witzig in dem Moment, und Elton John beeindruckt wollte ich auch, sodass ich sogar noch einen draufsetzte und behauptete, es sei ein groß angelegtes Projekt, an dem ich praktisch seit dem 12. September 2001 heimlich arbeiten würde. Nun hatte ich den Salat, alle erwarteten keinen Roman von mir, sondern einen Jahrhundertroman. Geschrieben hatte ich seitdem keine Zeile, doch Parker Publishing hatte bereits ein Marketingkonzept und eine Absatzprognose, in der das Wort “Million” vorkam (26).

Henry’s announcement announcement that he would write a novel about 9/11 is an improvidently lapse due to the situation: On the one hand, the interview with the avowed homosexual show master Stephen Fry and star guest Elton John might have stimulated him, on

the other hand, he behaves perfectly in accordance with the rules of the program, very likely Fry's QI, pursuant to which every guest has to respond 'quite interesting' as the show's title promises. That Henry obviously succeeded shows the further course of the plot, which is reconstructed retrospectively:

Eigentlich hatte ich gleich nach meinem verpatzten Auftritt in der BBC-Talkshow vor einem Jahr anfangen wollen, meinen neuen Roman zu schreiben. Dann beschloss ich, mich vorher ein kleines bisschen zu informieren, ein paar Zeitungsartikel über den 11. September zu lesen. Doch je mehr ich las, desto mehr wollte ich wissen. Also besorgte ich mir Material, Material und noch mal Material, über Monate hinweg. Schließlich sollte es ja mein Jahrhundertroman werden, da konnte ich nicht einfach so drauflosschreiben – was dazu führte, dass ich überhaupt nichts schrieb.

Spätestens als ich anfang, die Grundrisse des World Trade Centers Stockwerk für Stockwerk durcharbeiten, hätte ich wissen müssen, dass ich mich heillos verfranst hatte. Verzettelt, wie ich nun dachte, als ich die Papierflut in meinem Arbeitszimmer betrachtete. Aber wirklich klar wurde mir das erst, nachdem der Brief von der Urbanski gekommen war. Fünf Seiten mit meinen Fehlern. Geantwortet hatte ich ihr natürlich nicht; ich hätte das gerne als Frechheit abgetan, doch sie hatte in fast allen Fällen recht. Und einen neuen Roman zu schreiben, hätte bedeutet, neue Fehler zu machen (159).

Henry's fear of failure as a novelist is caused by a specific poetic dilemma. The well-versed writer senses that in essence his large-scale project cannot be realized – at least not in accordance with his original plans. The sheer amount of documentary material Henry has amassed during his research bears an artistic risk, which strikes the basic questions of arts: Which role do veracity and authenticity play in literature? For an anti-realistic writer open to postmodern playfulness, as Henry has been portrayed above, a mimetic representation of the historical event 9/11 lies beyond his possibilities. An adaptation would only succeed as a form of fiction and by using genuine fictional strategies of narration, which Henry masters and which normally distinguish his artistry. However, since the captious attack of his German translator, who as an attentive editor had noticed his mistakes, he finds himself unable to approach any potential literary subject. Under the perspective of a historical discourse the author's individual perception, which is revealed in the selection of the sources, surprises. As many literary adepts before him, Henry completely reduces the attacks to the historical fact of the collapsing Twin Towers, which by its media recording and permanent repetition turned to icons of Western terrorism in general.

Hence, the novel takes advantage of this omnipresence and subjects the image of the collapsing towers to a trivial refraction:

Die Tür öffnete sich schwer, ich musste mit meinem ganzen Gewicht dagegendrücken, damit sie sich langsam auftat [...]. Ich betrat das Zimmer, arbeitete mich durch Massen von bedrucktem Kram hindurch [...]. Die wenigen Bilder hatte ich von der Wand genommen, um Zeitungsausschnitte aufzuhängen. Bilder von rauchenden Hochhäusern, staubbedeckten Geschäftsleuten, fliegenden Menschen, dem einstürzenden World Trade Center; Bücher über Kulturen, Kampf, Opfer, Flugzeuge. Ausdrucke von Internet-Material waren zu Haufen angewachsen, die aus den Ecken quellend den Raum in Besitz genommen hatten. Hier lag mein Roman. Ich hatte noch keine Zeile geschrieben, aber

immerhin recherchiert, viel recherchiert (156f.).

Wenige Tage nach dem Brief hatte ich beim Verlassen meines Arbeitszimmers die Tür aus Versehen etwas zu kräftig zugezogen. Ich hörte noch, wie drinnen ein Bücherstapel ins Rutschen kam und direkt vor die Tür fiel. Mein Roman hatte mich ausgesperrt (159).

It is his own fragmentary novel project which turns against Henry and locks himself out of his own office. Thereby he builds a negative contrast and counterexample to all those successful and critically acclaimed authors like Durs Grünbein or Thomas Lehr, although the genesis of the Lehr's *September. Fata Morgana* (2010) bares remarkable analogies.²²

Finally and significantly, it is not the material nor the thousands of gathered and archived medial documents about 9/11 which lead to inspiration, but one single photograph published in the business section of the *Chicago Tribune*. The narrator gives a very detailed description, an ekphrasis, of the image through the eyes of Henry:

[D]ann war da dieses Foto, das ich bewegungslos, fassungslos anstarrte. Es zeige einen erschöpften jungen Mann in weißem Hemd, der mit müden Augen in die Ferne blickte, bis in meine Juniorsuite, auf das Sofa, auf dem ich saß; er schien mich so direkt anzusehen, dass ich mir durch die Haare fuhr und den Kragen meines Bademantels richtete. Hinter ihm zeichnete sich unscharf etwas ab: die nach unten weisende Kurve eines Aktienkurses (60).



Fig. 1: German trader Dirk Müller at the Deutsche Börse in Frankfurt (<https://www.gettyimages.de/license/94571508>)

This one single photograph – a fictitious synthesis of various real prototypes (fig. 1)²³ – seems the emotional key to dissolve Henry's blockages: In Jasper he seems relieved to have found an inspiring model, who would ensure that he was able to write again. From this conviction, Henry stylizes the icon of the desperate trader as a perfect symbol of the attacked Western world of September 11, which gave him the perspective and knowledge to write his 'novel of the century' (see 70 and 72).²⁴ Though the picture undermines the 'reality' of the attested plot within the diegetic world of the story, it does so in a humorous way. The circumstance in which the photograph was taken is rendered by Jasper only a few pages later. He depicts a banal workday situation in his open-plan office, a joke among colleagues, which could hardly contrast more with

Henry La Marck's intimate, emotional reaction:

Es war ein ganz normaler Handelstag gewesen, ohne große Verluste. Ich war einfach müde gewesen. Deswegen hatte ich für einen Moment so dumm in die Gegend geglotzt, gleichgültig, als würde ich mir eine Fernsehwerbung ansehen. Doch mit dem abschmierenden Chart dahinter sah es so aus, als sei ich am Boden zerstört. Ich. Verzweifelt. Im Wirtschaftsteil der *Tribune* (80f.).

However, only a few days later the assumed inspiration is revealed as a delusion, which Henry has to admit to himself: After having seen Jasper's photograph in the *Tribune*, he is not inspired, but in love: „Ich war verliebt und hatte keine Chance“ (166). So the cause of his euphoria was not a brilliant flash of inspiration, but infatuation. This again corresponds with media theory, according to which pictures and in particular photographs are manipulative rather than valid representation of reality.

Above all, this point shows paradigmatically Magnusson's literary handling of reality. Despite its pretended 'narrative simplicity' and readability, it treats, reflects, and exploits poetologically the tense relationship between fiction and faction as a postmodern *metanovel* (Kämmerlings). So in the same way, Magnusson rejects a fact-based story about September 11, yet at the same time adapts productively the historically verifiable foundations of another crisis: the one of the French broker Jérôme Kerviel. Since the backgrounds came to public attention at the end of 2008, they could have influenced the production-aesthetic process by implication. The case of Kerviel, a kind of "Che Guevara of the finances" (Mühlauer)²⁵, blatantly resembles the one of Magnusson's protagonist: Just like Jasper Kerviel had carried out risky and illegal transactions in investment trading for the French major bank Société Générale, which eventually resulted in a loss of nearly five billion Euros.²⁶

Magnusson's dialogue with a 'Great American Novel': Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900)

The main model and intertextual source of *Das war ich nicht* is the literary debut of American author Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*,²⁷ a novel about the social advancement of a young woman from the province and the decline of her lover.

The references and connections between the two texts are already obvious from an external view: Initially, the author Magnusson himself seems to be distantly related to the great Naturalist, whose ancestors came from the Eifel area,²⁸ as evidenced by his dedicating the book to his recently deceased grandmother Maria Katharina Schwark, née Dreiser. He also prepends his novel with a Dreiser quote – „It was greatness in a way, small as it was.“ ([5, end paper])²⁹ – originally characterizing George Hurstwood, the temporary lover of female protagonist Carrie Meeber and the true tragic figure of the novel.

Beyond the work-specific single quotation, the reference on Dreiser includes a literature-political message: At the time of publication, *Sister Carrie* has received mainly depreciative criticism. This was due to the fact that the novel departed completely from the aesthetic and socio-educational standards, which were normally set for literature – at least by a liberal-conservative bourgeois press. Instead, the novel's success and its idiosyncrasy consist in

the fact that it does not conform to a social or literary dictation, but captures its present age. A brief look at the similarities makes this evident:

First of all, Chicago as flourishing trading center and vibrant metropolis, which Dreiser calls „a second New York“ (Dreiser 9)³⁰ is not the only, but a key setting of both novels, where the main encounters between the characters take place and the plot decisively progresses. Among the parallels on the content level, for example, Meike’s search for Henry recalls the initial action in Dreiser’s novel, the protagonist’s way out of the province into the city. Further, the inversion of the economic conditions of life characterizing the development of Magnusson’s couple can already be found in Dreiser, in the case of Carrie and George Hurstwood. While Carrie at the beginning of the novel is completely destitute (as Meike), Hurstwood as a successful entrepreneur has already reached a certain level of prosperity (as Jasper), but at the end the initial situation is completely reversed: Carrie has succeeded in establishing herself on Broadway, so that she has long been able to make a living on her own. George, financially ruined by his divorce, fails to build a new life in perpetuity and commits suicide. Although the final situation in Magnusson’s novel is not quite as radical, it is comparable – at least in economic terms.

Above all, it is the writing style and the specific treatment of the experienced present, which unites both novels. Following Balzac’s *La Comédie humaine* (1829–1850) Dreiser tried to capture the reality of a particular time and place, namely the turn of the century Chicago, in an adequate literary form and style. The broad descriptions of everyday life and its extensive consumer culture with its materialistic predominance of objects and brands³¹ are also part of an superior poetic as the precise topographical narration and the tendency to scenic narration. According to this, interpreters have later appreciated the novel as a cultural document of a social- and epoch-specific mentality structure (Müller, Giles) – an estimation that recurs in the reviews of Magnusson’s novel.

References to 9/11 and its literary discourse

There is a series of indirect 9/11-references permeating Magnusson’s novel on all narrative levels: First of all, the opening scene takes place in an airplane narrating Jaspers first flight from Europe to the United States. Not only do aircraft scenes after the Manhattan attacks evoke a vague sense of threat in the reader, the analogy to Michael Kumpfmüller’s novel *Nachricht an alle* (2008) lends additional meaning to the episode.³²

On the figure level Jasper bears an obvious resemblance to another well-known literary ‘lone warrior’ in post-9/11 New York City, who gained immense attention in the English speaking world. The young Dutch Hans van den Broek in Joseph O’Neill’s *Netherland* (2008)³³ works as equities-analyst at a commercial bank in Manhattan as well. The famous, though eerily mirthless and deserted Chelsea Hotel, that Hans transitionally lives in, is reminiscent of the uncomfortable, sterile apartment which Jasper only goes to sleep.³⁴

Apart from the fact, that the historical setting of the attacks is implicitly present. As broker Jasper interacts day-to-day with the New York Stock Exchange at Wall Street, which was substantially affected by the attacks.³⁵ Almost all the novel’s places seem to have a referential function: Especially Hamburg as a recurring setting links individual storylines. The largest of the

German Hanseatic cities, connected to the sea as New York City, functions as a negatively charged anti-place, that the female protagonist Meike turns her back on.³⁶ In the last chapter, Hamburg is the venue of the story's denouement and the reunification of all characters. Alas, the harmonic scene is deceiving. Beyond the topographical similarities, Hamburg is related to the attacks by the perpetrator Mohamed Atta, "the face of 9/11" (Zelter).³⁷

Chicago itself refers both visually and historically to New York. Due to the conflagration caused by the *Great Chicago Fire* in 1871 the city was the scene of the worst national disaster in the 19th century, from which it emerged to new splendor. With the *Haymarket Riot* only a few years later, the city was furthermore hit by one of the earliest attacks in the American history: the bombing during mass demonstration in 1886. Apart from the Willis Tower, which dominates the Chicago skyline as the Twin Towers did New York's (fig. 2), the novel offers at least one other architectural reference: Henry does not flee from a random apartment in Chicago. The very building from which the personal, artistic dilemma took its course, appears optically as an exact facsimile of the WTC – especially photographed against a monochromatic blue background. The Marina City, once the world's tallest residential building (the dwelling in question is located in one of the two identical twin towers). It has not only become a Chicago landmark, but also a newly semanticized visual icon, which was adapted early on by pop culture, as demonstrated by the cover design of the album *Yankee Hotel Foxtrott* (2002) by the US band Wilco (Quay/Damico 244f., fig. 3). So as in *Windows of the World* (2003), Frédéric Beigbeder finds an urban topographical equivalent to New York City in the Tour Montparnasse, Magnusson actively tries and transplants the American setting in what he deems a topographical urban equivalent.



Fig. 2: Willis Tower (formerly Sears Tower), Chicago
(<http://www.willistower.com>)

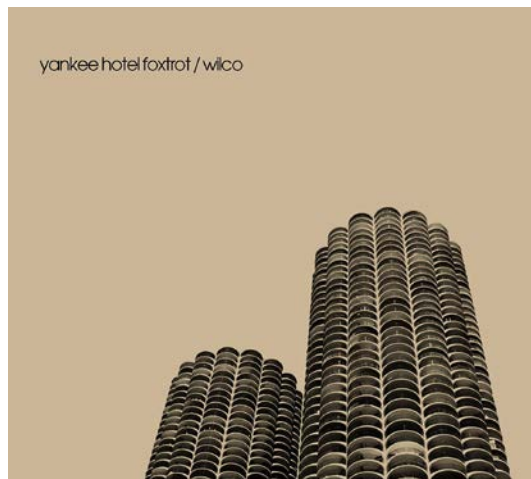


Fig. 3: Wilco: *Hotel Foxtrott*. Nonesuch Records 2002 (Cover).

Even more explicit in their significance are the general references to America which run through the text. For example, the fact that the logo of the bank Rutherford & Gold is held in the US-American icon colours (157), or the stylization of the shady banker Alex, as an embodiment of corrupt capitalism, in his gestural posture as "eine Art böser Zwillingbruder der Freiheitsstatue"

(186).

Beyond this, on the temporal level a flimsy but consistent net of ten-year-marks pervades the novel and applies to all figures: Beginning with the relationship between Meike and her former partner Arthur, over to the death of Jasper's father, ending with Henry's artistic apex of his life. Though the text does not expatiate upon this, in his case the traumatic date marks the line between youth and age. The short period about ten years ago, when he has been at the height of his fame and received the Pulitzer Prize for the first time. Henry furthermore appears to be a 'traumatized character' – at least in the sense that "trauma" is understood as an experience, „that constricts the linguistic expression“ (Rickli 104). Despite the circumstance that Henry's experience is not the testimony of the disaster, but rather the questioning of his writing skills by his reality obsessed German translator, his mental condition and behavior bears resemblance to the symptoms of a post-traumatic stress disorder. Finally, the novel inscribes itself into the German discourse of post 9/11 novels by its figural and constellative analogies: The precariousness of Meike's living and working conditions, for instance, seems to be modeled after the protagonist Christian in Ulrich Peltzer's widely acclaimed novel *Teil der Lösung* (2007). If and to what extent eventually imitations of catastrophic dictations such as metaphorical, mythological or reflective representations (e. g. in Durs Grünbein's *September Elegien*, 2002 or his Berlin records *Das erste Jahr*, 2001) are intended in Magnusson's novel, would require individual case studies.³⁸

Ironic narration as emancipation of discourse and program of crisis management

The proficiency Magnusson shows in dealing with the discourse is not limited to 9/11 itself, but also includes other spheres such as classical music, Greek mythology and popular culture. In particular, the striking acquisitions from the narrative, thematic, and motivic repertoire of German pop literature³⁹ points towards the novel's real intention: Against the background of an ubiquity of crises as an inherent part and intrinsic "perception and production pattern" of the cultural media society (Nünning 17), the novel might also be read – on a content, as well as on a meta-level – as ironic rejection of the inflationary proclaimed verdict of the 'crisis of storytelling' in postmodernism. Magnusson denies the media postulated 'crisis story': His novel offers no further narrative transformations of the factual event or its media representations. But it counters with an alternative narrative by elevating the crisis itself to the plot bearing subject – in accordance with Keith Bullivant and Bernhard Spies (2001): "To stage the crisis aesthetically means to accomplish it." (Bullivant/Spies 17). On the content level, the failure of Henry LaMarck – prototype of every post-modern author – becomes the highly productive basis for Magnusson's storytelling, does not lack at least irony.⁴⁰

Regarding the novel as a whole, the ironic writing, which in Magnusson's case is a transgeneric author style and was mostly rewarded by appreciation in the national press,⁴¹ operates at least on two levels: First, there is an ironic narrative stance, which is due to the (otherwise diffident) narrator, so critics argued that the plot's intricacies and coincidences associate an American film comedy of the forties (Kämmerlings 115). Secondly, the novel owns a netting of punctual rhetoric irony, which evolves from the contradiction of reader and character knowledge as well as from the antagonism of plot on the one hand and character's respectively narrator's speech on the other – a constellation, which promotes puns in particular. The order management system of Rutherford & Gold executes its transactions for example with a program

which is titled "Equinox,"⁴² the astrophysical term for the day of the year with equal lengths of day and night (vernal and autumnal point). Therefore, the very system whose name evokes astronomical balance and correspondingly the harmonious equation of the seasons turns into the catalyst of a global economic disaster. An analogous case is, when Meike while leaving her former partner and the common apartment in the Hamburg Schanzenviertel passes the "Bellealliancestraße" (18) respectively when global player and urban banker Jasper has his roots in a hicksville named „Sprockhövel“ (230). Or, when Henry's latest work is titled "Windeseile" (64, in the meaning of "wild fire" or "with lightning speed") and its author is constantly on the run. The contrast between the story's plot and individual statements (especially in the mode of character's speech) infiltrates whole narrative episodes and stirs up the reader's attention (and suspect). So already, the euphoric-optimistic initial mood of Jasper, who expects a career move soon („Now, everything would be better.“, 9), nourishes the suspicion of a contrary course of the coming events.

At last, poetologically the novel gives a categorical refusal to the postulate of literary authenticity by ironization. During the process of reconstruction, the past grows into an accumulation of facts, which is no longer manageable for the novelist. The decisive factor, however, is only the quantitative, not the moral and evaluative dimension of the traumatic past. Neither Henry despairs of the controversial subject matter, nor of his general suitability, his language and writing skills. Instead, he quite simply refuses to write at all. This is clearly more than a mere perturbation or interruption of the narration (as in the case of those novels that were initiated before 2001), but a total and absolute denial. While every attempt of appropriation fails, it even does not come to a so-called 'reflexive self-authorization' of the author above the narrative subject and thus about the events, which typically characterizes any writing about 9/11 (König 2001 825). The irony now is that the real author Magnusson succeeds in what his hero fails in: While in fiction the mimetic reproduction of reality falls through – and thereby the writing of a great 9/11 novel, Magnusson achieves precisely that in *Das war ich nicht*.

Conclusion

So one can argue against the introductory cited positions that Magnusson *has* written a 9/11 novel, insofar as the historical events are treated as a medial and discursive "world event". More than the disaster itself the handling of it provides insights into the social conditions of the post 9/11 era to which the title of the novel alludes: The meaning of *Das war ich nicht* is revealed only at the very end of the story, when Jasper tries to reconstruct the crash's causes and course: That the divested positions of Rutherford & Gold have fallen to an incredible extent, led to a general uncertainty of other investors. They followed immediately, which in turn led to further sales. What Magnusson describes in the retrospective of his protagonist is the classic example of a chain reaction which ran completely out of control. Therefore Jasper's key sentence „Die Angst war schuld, nicht ich!“ (249) which takes on the title's wording almost verbatim, also contains an implicit replica to human hysteria as a dominating attitude in society as a whole in relation to the handling of terrorist threats after 2001.

Thereby the novel takes a special position within the context of German literary reactions on 9/11: Neither it mirrors September 11th in a national counterpart such as the *Deutscher Herbst* (as Schlink 2008) or the attacks of the Munich Summer Olympic Games in 1972 (as Draesner 2004). Nor it construes it as a symbolic endpoint of a German post-war history (as

Ruge 2011, with the example of the decline of a SED family in the former GDR), or takes an Islamic perspective (as Lehr 2010 and the German-Kurdish writer Fatah 2008). As political consequences, such as the War on Terrorism or the highly controversial Afghanistan mission of the German armed forces, are of no concern in the novel, it is finally as well a long way from so-called *Betroffenheitsliteratur*⁴³ – an adaptation mode which characterizes the (early) American literary reaction much more than the European discourse that was distinctly determined by issues of aesthetic representation.⁴⁴

Instead of providing a (medial postulated and inflationary served) ‘crisis management narrative’, which literature ought to accomplish, Magnusson pays a homage to the epic storytelling by opposing with the example of Stock Market Crash a kind of ‘counter-crisis’. Replacing one crisis by another, his treatment approaches a paradigm of terrorism and assassination research, according to which violent attacks do not affect the course of history in the long term. Nevertheless, it is not the novel’s intention to marginalize the events. Rather, Magnusson’s example shows the historical genesis and variability of literary crisis management, which with increasing time has to devise alternative modes of coping with 9/11.

That Magnusson has chosen a deviant literary treatment of the formative world event of his own generation, doesn’t diminish the value of his interpretation. *Das war ich nicht* is rather part of a whole series of alternative adaptations in German-speaking literature⁴⁵ marking the so-called third phase of literary reactions (2010–2012)⁴⁶ significantly characterized by an attitude of distance (Hennigfeld/Packard): it does not mark the endpoint of the cultural coping with the attacks, but rather represents an attempt by reactivating the narrative potential of literary heritage in order to relieve from the mimetic dominance of 9/11 and to transfer it into a common memorial process.

¹ For the German 9/11 literature see the anthology of Poppe/Schüller/Seiler, the first section of Irsigler/Jürgensen, the theses of Reinhäkel and under the wider perspective of narratives of terror in general König 2015; for the European perspective see in addition Hennigfeld and Hennigfeld/Packard.

² Magnusson, Kristof. *Das war ich nicht*. Roman. Munich: Kunstmann, 2010. The novel’s title could be translated *mutatis mutandis* as ‘It was not my fault’ (literal: ‘It was not me’). Despite the story’s complaisance and several objections against its style, the novel gained wide attention, reached five editions during a period of several months, was ranked on the bestseller list of the weekly *Der Spiegel* and placed on the Longlist for the German Book Prize, the most important annual award to aspiring young authors. An audiobook read by well-known German actors (2010) and theatre adaptations staged in Basel (2011) and Cologne (2012) among others followed. At the time the present volume was passing for press an English translation of the novel was not available. Hence, all cited translations are my own.

³ Though having been engaged intensively in Scandinavian and in particular Icelandic culture through writing (Zuhause, 2005), translation (a. o. Þórbergur Þórðarson Auður Jónsdóttir or Einar Kárason) and popular mediation (Gebrauchsanweisung für Island, 2011), in *Das war ich nicht* Magnusson largely excludes his home country as a literary topic apart from an inconspicuous reminiscence of letting his protagonist Jasper overfly the island on his way from the US back to Germany. And not at least, the novel refers to the author’s heritage by its overall topic, the Global Financial Crisis which first hit Iceland in 2008, what Magnusson also discussed in an extraliterary context: Magnusson, “Einfallinsel”. On Iceland see: Rühle/[Magnusson].

⁴ For further information about see the entry in Internationales Biographisches Archiv and the author’s website:

<http://www.kristofmagnusson.de> [accessed 1 Dec. 2016].

- ⁵ See e. g. Deupmann 2011; Kämmerlings. Until now, there are only two detailed philological articles. While Gerhard Lüdeker focusses on the figure of the speculator and analyzes *Das war ich nicht* within the (fictional) media discourse of the financial crisis (Lüdeker), Stephanie Catani discusses the novel in the context of literary risk narratives (Catani, esp. 178–186).
- ⁶ The argumentation is based on the notion of an abstracted ideal literary processing, as it was demanded by German media in the first years. If not testimony to the events, as the general tenor was, then at least emotional authenticity in form of consternation and the attempt of verbalization and interpretation should characterize the literary approaches. See e. g. the programmatic feature of Spiegel-journalist Volker Hage, therefore German writers would have had to respond literarily to 9/11 – a position which is critically analyzed in its consequences by Volker Mergenthaler: Hage et. al., Mergenthaler.
- ⁷ Beigbeder, Frédéric. *Windows of the World*. Roman. Paris: Grasset, 2003; Norbert Gstrein, *Wem gehört eine Geschichte? Fakten, Fiktionen und ein Beweismittel gegen alle Wahrscheinlichkeit des wirklichen Lebens*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2004. The challenge of presenting in particular contemporary history in poetry discusses Christoph Deupmann comprehensively in his habilitation thesis: Deupmann 2013.
- ⁸ One of the main advocates of an engaged literature within the German-speaking debates was the Austrian writer Robert Menasse, particularly in the context of his Frankfurt poetics lecture: Robert Menasse, *Die Zerstörung der Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*. Frankfurter Poetikvorlesungen. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2006. However, a counter-position took Hamburg author and musician Thomas Meinecke, who generally questions the commitment of artists to respond to current events. Meinecke's interviewer, the journalist Ina Hartwig, later endorses this position: Hartwig/[Meinecke], Hartwig, "Ich-Krater" and "Literatur am Nullpunkt".
- ⁹ Sibylle Berg. *Ende gut*. Roman. Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2004; Thomas Hettche, *Woraus wir gemacht sind*. Roman. Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2006; Thomas Lehr, *September*. Fata Morgana. Roman. Munich: Hanser, 2010; Anja Reich/Alexander Osang. *Wo warst Du? Ein Septembertag in New York*. Munich a. o.: Piper, 2011; Ulrich Peltzer, Bryant Park. *Erzählung*. Zurich: Ammann, 2001; U. P. *Teil der Lösung*. Roman. Zurich: Ammann, 2007 (Meridiane 113); Schlink, Bernhard. *Das Wochenende*. Roman. Zurich: Diogenes, 2008.
- ¹⁰ For the generic term see the basic article of Dirk Gösche and the listed references for further reading: Gösche. The same generic ascription applies as well to Magnusson's third novel *Arztroman* (2014).
- ¹¹ See e. g. Kerstin Schneider who emphasizes the novel's "sophisticated dialogues" and its "slapstick scenes": Schneider.
- ¹² For the figure of the speculator in Contemporary German Literature and his cultural tradition see Polt-Heinzl.
- ¹³ Which is a genre of long tradition and great attraction in the German contemporary literature: See e.g. Thomas Glavinic. *Das bin doch ich*. Roman. Munich: Hanser, 2007; Bodo Kirchhoff. *Schundroman*. Frankfurt. a. M.: Frankfurter Verlags-Anstalt, 2002; Klaus Modick. *Bestseller*. Roman. Frankfurt a. M.: Eichborn, 2006; Martin Walser, *Tod eines Kritikers*. Roman. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2002.
- ¹⁴ Recent treatments of this motive are for example Michael Krüger. *Die Turiner Komödie*. Bericht eines Nachlaßverwalters. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2005, or Martin Suter. *Lila, Lila*. Roman. Zurich: Diogenes, 2004.
- ¹⁵ That fact that Henry is mistaken for Hollywood actor Alec Baldwin in one scene (100), does not undermine this interpretation and rather may include an ironic connotation insofar as it is symptomatic of the (not only optical) 'lower awareness level' of writers.

- ¹⁶ See 40: “Henry LaMarck hatte die National Medal of Arts bekommen, den National Book Award, den PEN/Faulkner Award, den PEN/Nabokov Award und den PEN/Saul Bellow Award. Und natürlich den Pulitzerpreis.”
- ¹⁷ Apart from that, Henry’s homosexuality is mainly narratively motivated and fulfills a central function as a dynamic plot element within the triangle story.
- ¹⁸ An idol with whom Henry – despite ironic distance– even identifies with. See 252, 267.
- ¹⁹ Against various medial expectations most of the early 9/11-novels like those by Paul Auster (*The Brooklyn Follies*, 2005), Jonathan Safran Foer (*Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, 2005) and even the later by Don DeLillo (*Falling Man*, 2007) were not honoured with literary awards – though they gained critical praise and high public interest. It was *Netherland* (2008) of the hitherto unknown Irish-Dutch-Turkish author Joseph O’Neill that marked a change and was awarded (among others the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction 2009). What is striking, however, is that the favorite for the Man Booker Prize, was less extolled for being the long awaited 9/11 novel than having found a new vital and realistic style. See e. g. Dwight Garner. “The Ashes”, *New York Times*, 18.5.2008.
- ²⁰ E. g. Frédéric Beigbeder’s novel *Windows on the World* (2003) not only received much public attention in France, but was also awarded the Prix Interallié in the same year; the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize for the English translation followed in 2005. In Germany, the situation is comparable: In 2006, the jury of the Deutscher Buchpreis elected Katharina Hackers novel *Die Habenichtse*. And Thomas Lehr’s *September. Fata Morgana*, perhaps until now the most ambitious approach in German literature, was shortlisted in 2010 and finally honored with the Marie-Luise-Kaschnitz-Preis (2012).
- ²¹ As the critic Andrea Köhler had suspected in the journal *Merkur*. Quotation follows Christoph Deupmann, who also points out the discrepancy or rather the ironic refraction in Magnusson’s novel: Deupmann 2009 109, note 307.
- ²² Lehr has started researching for *September. Fata Morgana* in 2004 and has further collected material for over three years before he began writing (with success). For Lehr see the recently published analyzes of Jennifer Clare and Silke Horstkotte: J. C. “Fata Morgana. Formen der Erfahrung und Wahrnehmung von 9/11 in deutschsprachigen literarischen Texten”. *Die Welt nach 9/11. Auswirkungen des Terrorismus auf Staatenwelt und Gesellschaft*. Ed. Thomas Jäger. Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2011 (*Zeitschrift für Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik. Sonderheft 2*). 843–858; S. H. “Transcending trauma. Thomas Lehr’s 9/11 novel *September. Fata Morgana*” *Image & Narrative* 14, 1 (2013), 35–46.
- ²³ As Magnusson explains in an interview with the German weekly *Die Zeit*: “Ja, immer verzweifelte Spekulanten vor fallenden Aktienkurven. Viele davon habe ich mir ausgeschnitten, ein paar hingen an meinem Kühlschrank. Sie helfen, Abstraktes zu visualisieren, mich haben sie inspiriert.” (Haeming/[Magnusson]).
- ²⁴ See Magnusson 70: “In diesem Gesicht lag alles, wonach ich seit einem Jahr gesucht hatte. Ein verzweifelter Banker – was für ein perfektes Symbol der Welt, die am 11. September attackiert worden war! So musste ich meinen Jahrhundertroman schreiben: aus der Innensicht des Systems.”
- ²⁵ This interpretation still influences the later self-description of the characters, such as when Jaspers calls traders the bank’s “rock stars” or when Meike speaks of “revoluzzers”.
- ²⁶ For the affair of Jérôme Kerviel see the former media reporting, for the German perspective e. g. Kröger or Schubert. The obvious parallels to the ‘case Kerviel’ were also mentioned by several critics, i. a. Löhner and Schulte.

- ²⁷ Theodore Dreiser. *Sister Carrie*, (New York: Doubleday, 1900) [First Edition]. Quotations are taken from the last edition of Dreiser's works: Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*. Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1981.
- ²⁸ Magnusson explicated his relationship with Dreiser in an interview with Essen's *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* and responded to the question whether he was related to the American author or not, as follows: "Ich glaube jedenfalls gerne, dass er [Dreiser, J. I.] mein Ur-ur-ur-Onkel ist, in diesem Glauben bin ich aufgewachsen – und überprüfe das sicherheitshalber nicht. Tatsächlich stammt er aus der Eifel, so wie meine Großmutter. Die Familie Dreiser ist weit verzweigt, und beinahe jeder hat die Romane von Theodore Dreiser im Regal stehen. Auch die, die sonst kein Buch besitzen." Quote follows: Heidemann/[Magnusson].
- ²⁹ Dreiser, *Sister Carrie* 180: "He was evidently a light among them, reflecting in his personality the ambitions of those who greeted him. He was acknowledged, fawned upon, in a way lionized. Through it all one could see the standing of the man. It was greatness in a way, small as it was."
- ³⁰ For Chicago as literary setting in Dreiser's work see Schöpp, "Babylon".
- ³¹ The referentially treated linecard ranges from simple consumer durables to exclusive luxury goods and characterize both the novel's action time and its characters: from the IKEA dining table *Premmö*, over Jasper's Blackberry and Henry's iPhone to the *Comme des Garçons* handbag belonging to Henry's publishing agent Gracy Welsh.
- ³² Kumpfmüller's political novel, a portrayal of the western post 9/11 crisis society, opens with a death scene in absentia, in which the home secretary Selden received a text message from his daughter, who is passenger of a crashing airplane. See M. K. *Nachricht an alle*. Roman. Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2008.
- ³³ O'Neill, Joseph. *Netherland*. London: Fourth Estate, 2008. In contrast to its reception in the English speaking world, the German news coverage was ambivalent – as in the case of Magnusson's novel. While Georg Diez from the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and Andrea Köhler from the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* recommended *Netherland* enthusiastically, the reviews of the more conservative papers (Felicitas von Lovenberg in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Christoph Schröder in *Frankfurter Rundschau*) were at least cautious: G. D. "Zieh dich weiß an, um dich schwarz zu fühlen". *SZ*, 10.3.2009; A. K. "Die Jahre danach. Joseph O'Neills hochgelobter Roman über die Folgen von 9/11". *NZZ*, 6.9.2008; F. v. L. "Die letzten Bürger von Pompeji leben in New York", *FAZ*, 6.3.2009; C. S., "Niederland: Der schwere Hammer der Langeweile", *FR*, 6.5.2009.
- ³⁴ In general the hotel occupies a specific role as a transitory place within the novel. During the course of the story more or less all figures pass this status. Even Henry's escape from the public leads him into the anonymity of a huge Chicago hotel where he appears under a false identity.
- ³⁵ Above all else, there was the loss of employees. Yet, worldwide, the stock market reacted instantaneously to the attacks with a drastic decrease in prices. On the very day the DAX fell by almost 400 points, after the reopening of the U. S. market the Dow Jones followed with a loss of 685 points.
- ³⁶ See also the autobiographical dimension of the novel as both settings are linked with Magnusson's own vita. While Hamburg is the author's birthplace, it was New York City, where he worked with Holocaust survivors in his early 20s.
- ³⁷ Referring to Zelter, esp. 248–268, who analyzes the figure of Atta in the context of terrorist narratives. Atta, the alleged deathpilot and leader of the Hamburg terror cell has studied and lived for several years in the Hanseatic city. The group's role within planning and executing the attacks was intensively discussed in the German news coverage of 9/11.
- ³⁸ Durs Grünbein. „September-Elegien“. *D. G. Erklärte Nacht*. Gedichte. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2002. 50–52; D.

G. Das erste Jahr. Berliner Aufzeichnungen. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2003; Peltzer, Teil; To my knowledge, there are currently no intertextual or intermedial readings neither of Magnusson's novel nor of other texts of his work which could shed light on his productive reception of literary or medial models in general.

- ³⁹ Most notably are the diagnostic inventory of contemporary consumer culture and the exposure of brand names as signum of a thoroughly materialistic society. See e. g. the cameo of British singer and entertainer Elton John.
- ⁴⁰ The predominantly mythological, biblical and musical references (including references to Richard Wagner's Tannhäuser, Virgin Mary, the pagan god of desire and love Cupid or the quarrel between Demeter and Hades) are ironic. However, Magnusson is by no means the first one who treated 9/11 in a humorous or ironic way. The French writer Y. B. had already used strategies of literary pastiche in his migration novel Allah Superstar (2003). See also Lorenz.
- ⁴¹ For example, Michael Kluger calls the novel probably the "funniest and most revealing novel, which was previously written about the crisis" (Krüger). See as well Bazinger, Maidt-Zinke and Krause. Among the critical voices were Christoph Schröder and Ulrich Rüdener, who were bothered by the story's characters and its simple narration (Rüdener, Schröder).
- ⁴² In contrast to English readers, German readers wouldn't understand "Equinox" as homonym, but as a technical term, which deserves a separate translation (the German equivalent is "Tages- und Nachtgleiche"). In this case the ironic allusion requires a transfer reading.
- ⁴³ In contrast to other discourses in German newspaper feuilleton, the term is generally used pejoratively and refers to autobiographical life reports of social or ethnic minorities of inferior literary quality. For the wide scope of formal-aesthetic reactions in German literature see as well the thesis of Christian de Simoni.
- ⁴⁴ In the U.S. literature alternative and especially provocative responses seem to appear with a delay of one decade as e. g. in the case of Amy Waldman's *The Submission* or Madison Smartt Bell's *The Color of Night* (both 2011). While Waldman plays with the fiction of a 9/11 memorial of a Muslim architect, Bell links the attacks with the terrorism of counterculture movements of the 1960s. For the British-American perspective see: Gray, Duvall/Marzec, Keniston/Follansbee Quinn and Zeltner.
- ⁴⁵ Berg. Ende gut; Rudolph Delson. Maynard and Jennica London: Fourth Estate, 2007; Andre Dubus III. *The Garden of Last Day*. New York a. o.: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008. Goldt, Max Goldt. *Wenn man einen weißen Anzug anhat*. Ein Tagebuch-Buch. Reinbek: Rowohlt, 2004; Jay McInerney. *The Good Life*. London: Bloomsbury, 2006; Christoph Peters. *Ein Zimmer im Haus des Krieges*. Roman. Munich: btb, 2006.
- ⁴⁶ See König, Hennigfeld/Packard and Ricki, who has suggested a similar model for the 9/11 US literature.

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