
Nine eleven zero one
et seq.

Poetic Decodings

11th September 2001-2011
Werner May, Germany



Poems about 11.9. et seq. from a German armchair

Poems are not “information carriers” which one can absorb and understand with one quick glance. It is necessary to pause and to meditate. Poems need time for some lines to begin to speak.

And the historical event Nine Eleven Zero One?

The first versions of the poems came into being on the dates given, as attempts to place the experience of the day, my experience of the day, in the context of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. Only with the first poem was I too existentially affected for me to speak of it as being planned, an attempt which was followed up year after year, as it will be in the future.

How many years will it be possible for a person of average political

interest to continue this “remembering”?

The present revised version is intended to take up the original messages and forms of expression, and has improved these where I felt it was necessary.

Friends from the US have encouraged me to try the adventure to translate these poems from German into English. I say thank you to Cami Schermerhorn and Bill Buchanan for their creative and hard work of translation.

The collages were created by Harald Wirkner, Germany. Precisely at the time of the attack he was in the U.S. and was able to collect newspapers of the day. Some of the poems (in the German versions) have been presented calligraphically by Erika Mueller.

Decoding 1: Prologue

2002

In the battle of flames and prayers,
in the falling and splitting,
the cards are shuffled anew.
Not randomly,
more by hope or doubt,
it is decided in the heart
what should grow from rubble and ashes.

9/11/01

In this moment the World Trade Center has collapsed.
I go into the garden
and smell my roses.
Yes, the scent's still there.
In the grass
I pick the good apples off the ground,
the rotten I throw onto a heap.
That's all.
When a helicopter approaches,
I flinch.
I become insecure
Every time I begin to think.
Someone calls me.
I go into the house to eat,
although I'm not hungry at all.



9/12/01

Yesterday the World Trade Center collapsed

Nonstop the plane sped into the tower
Without a sound
Without a smell

When
Will the desire pass
To see
Those pictures?

The threat of revenge too early
The first clues too late

Bombs
Loaded with humans
After Auschwitz and Hiroshima
A new generation of weapons
Towers
Which no one can bring down

Do I need a cell phone too?

Star Tribune

Star Tribune

Das große Desaster an Wall Street bleibt aus

Stocks tumble despite Fed cut

Down falls record 634, but markets reopen without panic

11-9-2001

Letzte Woche ist das world trade center eingestürzt

Der Altbay hat sich wieder breit gemacht. Das Säbelraschel in den Nachrichten irritiert mich nicht,

dagegen der Punkt Lärm der Wallstreet, gleich an die Felle an uns

Die Aktienkurse verraten heute noch nicht, ob in einigen Jahren der Krebs neu zu behandeln sein wird

Ich spüre, die Karten werden im Hinterrzimmer gemischt, nur wer sie in der Hand hält, das ist die Frage

Eines der Flugzeuge ist ins Nichts gerast, weil Pilot zusammengebrochen, entdeckten dass sie lebendig zu sein

So etwas wird auch in Zukunft notwendig sein

Das Säbelraschel in den Nachrichten irritiert mich nicht, dagegen der Punkt Lärm der Wallstreet, gleich an die Felle an uns. Die Aktienkurse verraten heute noch nicht, ob in einigen Jahren der Krebs neu zu behandeln sein wird. Ich spüre, die Karten werden im Hinterrzimmer gemischt, nur wer sie in der Hand hält, das ist die Frage. Eines der Flugzeuge ist ins Nichts gerast, weil Pilot zusammengebrochen, entdeckten dass sie lebendig zu sein. So etwas wird auch in Zukunft notwendig sein.

Das Herz der Hundstalt pulsiert wieder

US-Airlines sind die trüben

Washington, D.C.

From Flight 77, calls home: We're going to die



9/17/01

Last week
the World Trade Center collapsed.
Everyday life sits comfortably by the television.
The clashing of swords in the newscasts doesn't bother
me.
Wall Street is noisy again,
just round the corner
beside the rubble heap,
an invisible dust.
The stock exchange rates seek to calm us.

One of the planes missed its target
because some passengers discovered
that the fear of death
does not have the last word.

Will black-and-white be enough in the future?

10/9/01

promise me carefree aging. Bin Laden's words today raise the question of good and evil and call for the true God and his allies. I avoid being alone. Four weeks ago today the World Trade Center tumbled down. With each bomb in Afghanistan, the horror has finally come over me. For a short moment I think that this time I, too, will not escape unscathed, until the Chapstick for my romantic lips, matching my three-day-beard, calms me, and the share prices promise me carefree aging. Bin Laden's words today raise the question of good and evil and call for the true God and his allies. I avoid being alone. Four weeks ago today the World Trade Center tumbled down. With each bomb in Afghanistan, the horror has finally come over me. For a short moment I think that this time I, too, will not escape unscathed, until the Chapstick for my romantic lips, matching my three-day-beard, calms me, and the share prices promise me carefree aging. Bin Laden's words today raise the question of good and evil and call for the true God and his allies. I avoid being alone. Four weeks ago today the World Trade Center tumbled down. With each bomb in Afghanistan, the horror has finally come over me. For a short moment I think that this time I, too, will not escape unscathed, until the Chapstick for my romantic lips, matching my three-day-beard, calms me, and the share prices promise me carefree aging. Bin

12/11/01

Today, quarter of a year ago,
The World Trade Center was brought down

The memories feel their way
Through the smoke
Of the last bombs on Afghanistan
Searching for the pictures from back then

The bridges in the heart
Remain raised
Would rather swim
If I have to

But I am still waiting for
The next coup
Even though I hardly flinch now
When aircraft approach our house

In Israel they've gone back
To blasting themselves up in the heaven

“Was that everything?”

3/11/02

Today, half a year ago

- I almost didn't recognize the date

why can't I get it into my head? –

the planes raced into the World Trade Center,

in Manhattan, New York

in the United States of America.

In the meantime

we have gone back to our own World Trade Centers.

My tower, a few days ago,

collapsed like a house of cards:

Living at the expense of others,

however you disguise it,

now lies in dust and ashes.

The German soldiers on duty just behind the front lines.

Different pieces of a puzzle confront me:

do they belong to the same picture?

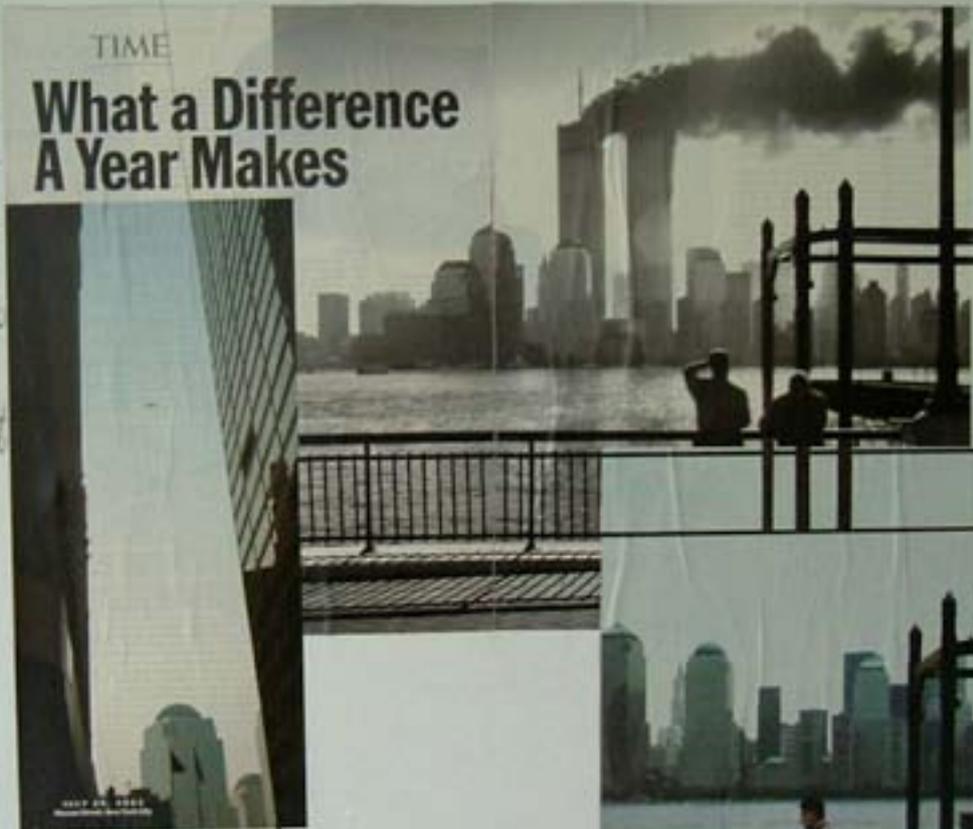
9/11/02

A year ago today
The terror attack
By plane
Hijacked
With passengers
Today
Nothing
No special review
On channel one
Peace
Peace
Before the storm
Or
Censorship
At least
A glance back
From over there
With German music
And commentary
For fear
Not of
Al Quaida,
Fear
Of the USA
Of the American Dream

Heute
Vor einem Jahr

TIME
What a Difference

Heute
Vor einem Jahr
Der 11. September
Vor fünfzig
Jahren
Mit
Sicherheit
Heute
Punkt
Konkret
Punkt
Vor dem Sturm
Zumindest
Der Rückblick
Auf deutsche
das Konzept
fickte
Acht
Vor dem
Vor dem amerikanischen dream



11.9.2002

Der Rückblick
Auf deutsche
das Konzept
fickte
Acht
Vor dem
Vor dem amerikanischen dream



11.9

3/11/03
or Libeskind

1.5 years ago
Came into being
Involuntarily
The building site
For the tallest building
In the world
Always with sun in between
No shadow at the right time
On that day
Each year
On which once
Two shadows
Raced
Into towers
Which, also once, were the tallest
At that ill-fated moment
One-and-a-half years ago
The towers of the World Trade Centers
Today
Babylon is on the list
Its towers
When was it re-built?



9/11/03

Today, two years ago

Only video

I've been

I'll be

Bin Laden

Not being Saddam

Haven't always been

Go and sleep, like many

Not for ever

Being 9/11

But is Bin

Really Bin

And how many

Are really sleeping

Awake in our beds?

3/11/04

Three stations
In Madrid
Simultaneously
As it was then

Still
1000 km away
In a hotel armchair in Warsaw
Without an iron curtain
In front of the television
There rise up slowly
In my astonished heart
For the first time
Prayers for the families
Instead of useless words
A short cry even
blesses the perpetrators
They know not
What they do
Still
I remain seated

9/11/04,
three years ago, ...

Remembrance
fails
this year,
trodden underfoot
in Abu Ghraib.

One thing remains,
living bombs
are defused
only in Heaven,
by the one
who does not lie.

3/11/05, three and a half years ago today

Thought rhythms

Half-anniversaries don't exist,
except the first one three years ago.

History's heart beats in years,
but not the pulse of the families left behind,
which always gets out of step,
when a plane comes near.

Lufthansa takes over Swiss Air.
Feelings beat faster
Both stock prices dance
in a frenzy of forgetting.

9/11/05

only date

Now only a date

No bridging the gap

To the horror

No hint

Of ejected fishing nets

Living bombs

practice

every day

9/11/06

Approaching

The images aren't new
Even if they are sold as new
For the fifth anniversary
At the most, Bin Laden
Might need a new passport photo

The question marks are smaller
While the exclamation marks
Blush in shame
That truth
Is at stake

I began this day
Without fear
Flying back to Germany
And I'm not sure
What a robust mandate is

9/11/07

Forwards

Looking forwards
No longer only backwards
Is today's slogan
Amongst towering clouds of
Horror, dust and lies
Everyone shaking their heads
In all directions

Thirty years red terror cells
 Hamas, Iraq, Afghanistan
 Mafia, wherever one looks
 If not forwards
 Why in the world

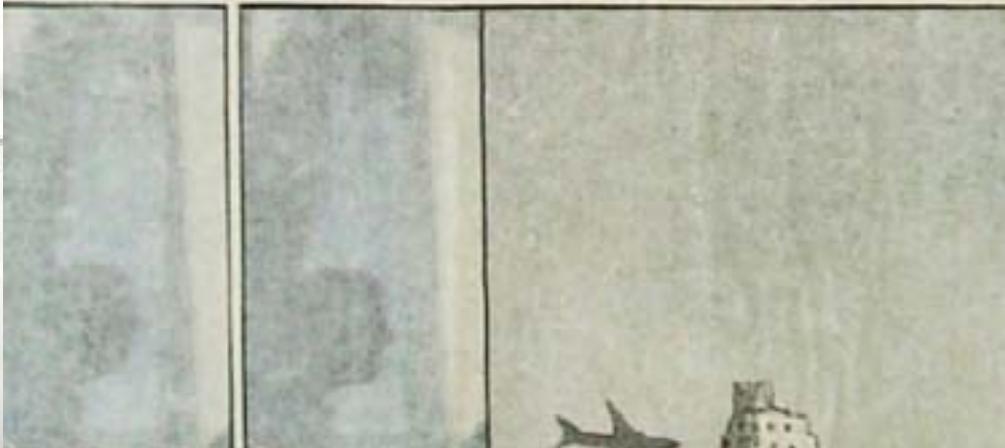


ber nicht, zucke ich zusammen und bleibe unsicher, was ich denken soll. Man rät mich, ich gehe zum Abendessen ins Haus, obwohl ich keinen Hunger habe. 11.2001 Gerade ist das World Trade Center eingestürzt. Ich gehe in den Garten und rieche an meinen Rosen, ob sie noch duften. In den Wiesen suche ich nach guten Äpfeln und sammle das tolle Obst auf einem Haufen. Mehr kann ich jetzt nicht tun. Als ein Herbststurm herüberzieht, zucke ich zusammen und bleibe unsicher, was ich denken soll. Man rät mich, ich gehe zum Abendessen ins Haus, obwohl ich keinen Hunger habe.

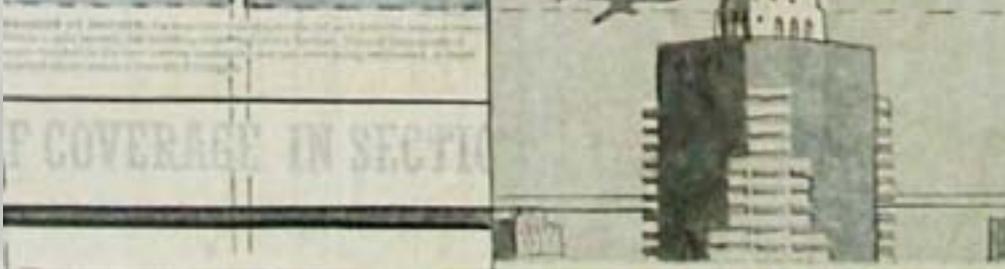


ber nicht, zucke ich zusammen und bleibe unsicher, was ich denken soll. Man rät mich, ich gehe zum Abendessen ins Haus, obwohl ich keinen Hunger habe. 11.2001 Gerade ist das World Trade Center eingestürzt. Ich gehe in den Garten und rieche an meinen Rosen, ob sie noch duften. In den Wiesen suche ich nach guten Äpfeln und sammle das tolle Obst auf einem Haufen. Mehr kann ich jetzt nicht tun. Als ein Herbststurm herüberzieht, zucke ich zusammen und bleibe unsicher, was ich denken soll. Man rät mich, ich gehe zum Abendessen ins Haus, obwohl ich keinen Hunger habe.

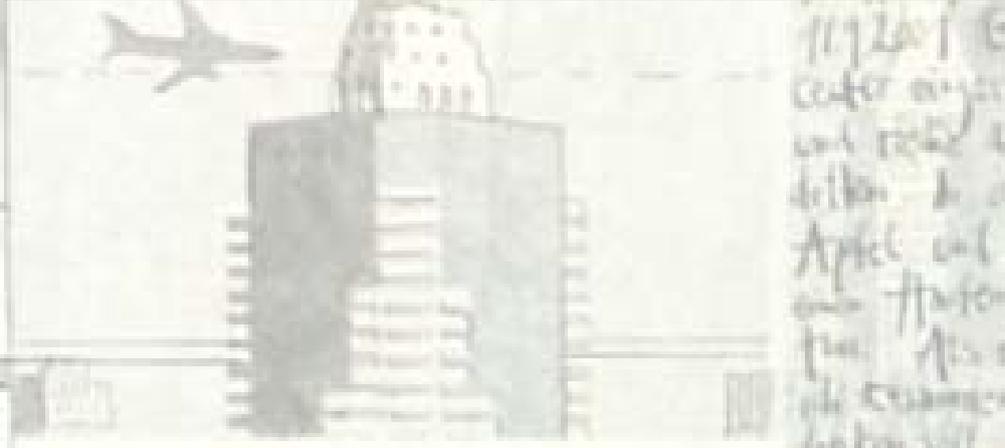
Bush promises to hunt down masterminds of terror



ber nicht, zucke ich zusammen und bleibe unsicher, was ich denken soll. Man rät mich, ich gehe zum Abendessen ins Haus, obwohl ich keinen Hunger habe. 11.2001 Gerade ist das World Trade Center eingestürzt. Ich gehe in den Garten und rieche an meinen Rosen, ob sie noch duften. In den Wiesen suche ich nach guten Äpfeln und sammle das tolle Obst auf einem Haufen. Mehr kann ich jetzt nicht tun. Als ein Herbststurm herüberzieht, zucke ich zusammen und bleibe unsicher, was ich denken soll. Man rät mich, ich gehe zum Abendessen ins Haus, obwohl ich keinen Hunger habe.



ber nicht, zucke ich zusammen und bleibe unsicher, was ich denken soll. Man rät mich, ich gehe zum Abendessen ins Haus, obwohl ich keinen Hunger habe. 11.2001 Gerade ist das World Trade Center eingestürzt. Ich gehe in den Garten und rieche an meinen Rosen, ob sie noch duften. In den Wiesen suche ich nach guten Äpfeln und sammle das tolle Obst auf einem Haufen. Mehr kann ich jetzt nicht tun. Als ein Herbststurm herüberzieht, zucke ich zusammen und bleibe unsicher, was ich denken soll. Man rät mich, ich gehe zum Abendessen ins Haus, obwohl ich keinen Hunger habe.



ber nicht, zucke ich zusammen und bleibe unsicher, was ich denken soll. Man rät mich, ich gehe zum Abendessen ins Haus, obwohl ich keinen Hunger habe. 11.2001 Gerade ist das World Trade Center eingestürzt. Ich gehe in den Garten und rieche an meinen Rosen, ob sie noch duften. In den Wiesen suche ich nach guten Äpfeln und sammle das tolle Obst auf einem Haufen. Mehr kann ich jetzt nicht tun. Als ein Herbststurm herüberzieht, zucke ich zusammen und bleibe unsicher, was ich denken soll. Man rät mich, ich gehe zum Abendessen ins Haus, obwohl ich keinen Hunger habe.

9/11/08

Tinnitus

A black president, Obama

Sarah Palin, a woman VP

McCain says torture

Is called torture again today

Today they are silent

The weapons of the election campaign

Bowing before many dead

And four-fold dishonor via airplanes

Only Bin Laden has been silent

Too long now

Tabloids comment

The world was a better place

Before Nine Eleven

Than tinnitus in the ear

Every unattended suitcase

Lingering on the platform

Catches the eye

No more nail files

No bottles of shampoo in carry-on luggage

Every train journey

Half of a flight of death on rails

9/11/09

Unpretentious news

There's not much to report
Honor the names of the dead again
Copy Bin Laden's "wanted" photo again
Blow Gauntanamo open
Afghanistan is still Afghanistan

Many a plan proves to be a dream
They want Ground Zero to shine
Higher than the towers before
Yet only bells of hope ring
Between the prayers of my friends

9/11/10

Dad, don't play with kindling

In the days before nine eleven ten
The world was holding its breath
It was short of breath anyway
Afghanistan, Iran send an enigma

Yet nothing happened
None of the threatened fire
Fell on the Koran
Set fire to our world

Were these only utterances
Of an old, narrow-minded man
Was it an email from his daughter
Dad, don't play with kindling

Was it the earnest voices
The screamed protest of pious souls?
Was being in the spotlight enough?
It only takes one spark, that's what we fear

11.7.2007

Gestern ist das world trade center eingestürzt.

Ich überlege mir

11.7.2007

Gestern ist das world trade center eingestürzt.

Ich überlege mir,

ob es nicht gut sein könnte,

ein Handy zu kaufen.

Ich möchte die Bilder wieder sehen,

wie das Flugzeug in den Turm rast.

und erlicarte,

daß sie irgendwem mich erschrecken,

wie das Flugzeug in den Turm rast.

und erlicarte,

daß sie irgendwem mich erschrecken,

Finale May 2011
or
Enemy Killed In Action

Seals sank
a perforated wanted poster
into the depths of the sea

Hilary Clinton coughed
until Geronimo EKIA
fulfilled the promise

And Gauntanamo?
Perhaps exchange the Taliban
for peace ?

9/11 /11

?

9/11 /12

9/11 /13

9/11 /15

9/11 /20

9/11 /25

9/11 /30

9/11 /35

9/11 /40

?

Decoding 2: Epilogue

2002

Read the signs,
before the grass
recovers again,
the wound heals quickly,
the happiness blows away,
the kiss fades.

Hold the wind back
which is always driving you on,
before you decode
what and who
is writing your life.

Werner May, Germany

For about ten years he has been publishing poetry in books and magazines.

He works as a Christian psychologist, as president of the IGNIS-Institute for Christian psychology (www.ignis.de) and in international leadership, and is author of some books in the field of Christian counselling and education.