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Raising the Flag Among the Ruins of the World Trade Center

The heroization of participant-responders and their rescue efforts appears to have become one of the standard antidotes to the demoralizing effect of catastrophes in the Western world. The focus of heroic counter-narratives to the desolation of catastrophic events is on the presence of individuated courage, and consequently, effective rescue efforts. This narrative is operative regardless of the problematic of the consequential: there is not necessarily a logical link between the courage of rescue team members and the positive outcome of their effort. Some efforts fail, for a variety of reasons – deferred deployment, impossible conditions, political problems, or the limited self-efficacy of affected groups or individuals, creating an ironic mode that folds the rescue effort back in on itself.

A new level to this problematic of heroic 'rescue irony' was introduced after the collapse of the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center, when three FDNY (Fire Department of the City of New York) firefighters raised a flag among the ruins, merging rescue effort and military histories of heroic captures and saves of flags. The echo of this performance resonated world-wide and sponsored a plethora of further enactments of this scenario in a variety of popular art forms. This paper will address several questions in this context: whether this was an announcement of an emergent new form of heroism, a merger of two originally disparate formats, or merely a symbolic act of defiance in view of the fact that there was next to nobody to save.

In order to address these questions, I would like to claim that there is a distinct category which I suggest should be called 'rescue heroism'. Its focus is not so much on the hero figure, but on the rescue aspect – the fact that in order to help others, people are ready to risk their lives. Rescue heroism is accessible to all, regardless of race, class, or gender (age might be a discriminating moment) – in fact, there is a strong argument to be made in favor of the claim that rescue heroism was one of the factors setting us apart from the other anthropoids around one million years ago (cf. Tomasello et al. 680). Despite its frequent occurrence, however, there seem to be but a handful of scholarly responses to this branch of heroic behavior (Hadamitzky/Korte; Peabody/Jenkins; Barclay). This paper is also an attempt at shedding more light on one of the most basic forms of heroic behavior.

There is tentative agreement that a marked shift occurs with the gradually waning reliance on God, and the rise of more secular crisis response programs in the wake of the Lisbon earthquake of 1755, the Enlightenment, and growing republicanism. Before the Lisbon earthquake, traditionally, in the public view and narrative, rescues of 'normal' people had been mostly effected either by acts of deity or by the dominant hero figure in the Western world: the classical, aristocratic, male *homme illustre* (Gaethgens 164). If there needed to be a rescue, these (usually warrior-)heroes either performed the rescue themselves, delegated the task to their minions, or performed a minor miracle. Their rescues went on the record, or the records attributed whatever heroic rescues there had been to them. Their super-humanity had, however, become increasingly questionable with the deterioration of the feudal system and the ascendancy of the modern, rational nation-state. Rousseau famously warned against the warrior-hero whose self-centered transgression of limits was increasingly seen as a danger to the bourgeois system of trade and commerce, industrialized production, and business as usual (Höhn 32). His hero was inherently a human being, but still imbued with a sense of grandeur:

> Somit wird der Heldenbegriff zwar in die moderne Gesellschaft integriert, der Humanität und insbesondere einem bürgerlichen Nützlichkeitsideal verpflichtet […] zugleich haftet ihm jedoch etwas Fremdes, Archaisch-Anachronistisches an (Höhn 32).[1]

Whereas the Napoleonic period saw a backlash effect and a massive resurgence of the military *heros* (ibid. 31), the one sub-field in which a *citizen heroic* prospered was that of the rescue

hero. As a result of the Lisbon earthquake on All Saints' Day 1755, the script for rescue heroism as a pro-social activity increasingly devolved on mere humans. A popular rendition of the disaster by Dutch engraver Reinier Vinkele still shows prominently the figure of a man in a rowing boat whose folded hands are lifted in prayer to a God whose help does not come (Lauer/Unger 13). Given his position of supplication, his footing in the boat is tenuous at best, while his boat-mate next to him is straining at the oars (although he appears to be sitting the wrong way around). In accordance with the uncertainties implicit in this pictorial *Aardbeving*, the disaster which had claimed an estimated 10.000 to 30.000 lives (Mullin 1) came under intense scrutiny, and a philosophical tug-of-war ensued between clerical circles to whom the earthquake was punishment for human sins, and the scepticism of a Voltaire, whose comments on the Lisbon events in *Candide* show how Leibnizian optimism had been quite literally shaken in its foundations (Mason 10).

There are only few instances of a 'normal' citizen rescue heroism visible in the documented responses to the Lisbon earthquake, though numerous eyewitness accounts published in the aftermath of the disaster reported the valiant if often ineffective efforts of ordinary citizens attempting to save others from the rubble in the face of the advancing fires (Molesky 154-156). A lot of the initial emergency response was organized by the clergy as a matter of course, though monasteries and churches had suffered particularly badly in terms of fatalities since the earthquake struck at mass time (Dynes 9, 13). Higher-level crisis management and rescue operations were directed by the king's secretary of state, Sebastião José Carvalho e Melo. They stand as a first on this scale in the early modern period (Bressan; Dynes 11) and received praise, but also resulted in an authoritarian regime (Boxer 730) – in fact, one of the first measures was to punish alleged looters (mostly 'foreigners') by public hanging (Dynes 12). This kind of political tokenism (re-)established a semblance of order, but not of confidence. Certainly, it did not result in the kind of inspiration that derives from well-managed rescue operations.

In Lisbon in 1755, a special force of firefighters did not exist, and the amount and degree of destruction and disorder prevented coherent efforts at firefighting. Citizens quite literally helped themselves as best they could, or rather, as they were bound to by civil ordinance. In the late mediaeval and early modern city, fighting conflagrations for the rank-and-file burgher was not an opportunity for heroic freelancing, but a civic duty laid down in municipal regulations:

> Inhabitants of early modern European cities were constantly reminded of their duties regarding the fire hazard by specific fire orders. Often listing up to fifty different points on thirty or more pages, these documents were regularly read aloud in public places. Citizen were expected to adhere to these rules […] (Bankoff/Lübken/Sand 13)

Resulting from the catastrophe in Lisbon, the 18th century saw the shift from this coercive format of fire orders that required participation in salvage and rescue efforts (often in that order) to the republican principle of self-determination. Accordingly, the reliability of the personal courage of individuals increasingly originated from feelings of social and societal responsibility. As Barbara Korte and Christiane Hadamitzky have shown, subsequent cases of rescue heroism as an extraordinary, yet 'normal' citizen behavior came to the attention of media in the 18th and 19th centuries (Korte/Hadamitzky; Barclay). One of its bases in society was the principle of *fame-worthiness*: whether this "desire of honorable people for 'fame'" (Hart/Smith 133) was original, or derived from the chivalric code of mediaeval knighthood (Cooper 155) which the Republican *citoyen* adapted, its practice operated on the idea of an idealist, yet unspectacular form of heroism (Hart/Smith 138).

Marking a case in point, Gottfried August Bürger's ballad "Das Lied vom braven Manne", written in the year of the American Declaration of Independence, 1776, narrates a rescue operation near the German-Swiss border ("Wiesental") in which an ordinary peasant saves a custom officer and his family from being swept away by the tumultuous river that is gradually destroying the bridge on which the custom-house is located. The local count, on horseback, offers a sizable reward to whoever is daring enough to attempt the rescue, but not one of the onlookers is ready to risk their lives:

> Hoch hielt der Graf den Preis empor.
> Ein jeder hört's, doch jeder zagt,
> Aus Tausenden tritt keiner vor.
> Vergebens durchheulte, mit Weib und Kind,
> Der Zöllner nach Rettung den Strom und Wind. -
>
> Sieh, schlecht und recht, ein Bauersmann
> Am Wanderstabe schritt daher,
> Mit grobem Kittel angetan,
> An Wuchs und Antlitz hoch und hehr.
> Er hörte den Grafen; vernahm sein Wort;
> Und schaute das nahe Verderben dort.

Und kühn in Gottes Namen, sprang
Er in den nächsten Fischerkahn;
Trotz Wirbel, Sturm, und Wogendrang,
Kam der Erretter glücklich an:
Doch wehe! der Nachen war all zu klein,
Der Retter von allen zugleich zu sein.

Und dreimal zwang er seinen Kahn,
Trotz Wirbel, Sturm, und Wogendrang;
Und dreimal kam er glücklich an,
Bis ihm die Rettung ganz gelang.
(Bürger ll. 74-94)[2]

Like in the *Aardbeving* engraving, there is a boat and people in it, but the wringing of hands is already left to the family that cannot help themselves. To make absolutely sure that the audience understands what is going on here, Bürger continues by asking what happened to the money: The stalwart farmer asks for the – quite sizable – reward to be given to the customs officer's family who lost everything but their lives, and walks away. The rescue hero here is at the same time ordinary in his coarse attire ("mit grobem Kittel angetan"), and extraordinary in his para-aristocratic physical appearance ("An Wuchs und Antlitz hoch und hehr") and of course by his action, fulfilling Höhn's requirements (see above). While the heroic rescue operation still appears miraculous enough, the influence of a deity is reduced to the invocation of God's name as the unnamed rescue hero jumps into a boat lying nearby. Calling attention to its nature as a "Fischerkahn", a fisherman's skiff, Bürger stresses the fact that the peasant's training is not connected to his rescue operation. Its success, especially considering that there are three journeys out and back, seems to be based entirely on willpower and courage. Not only does Bürger reintroduce optimism on a pragmatic scale, his Rousseauean hero also bridges the gap between the *homme illustre* and the *citoyen* on whom the human duty to attempt a rescue operation has devolved.

There is no evidence that Duke Maximilian Julius Leopold von Braunschweig knew Bürger's ballad, but the connection was certainly drawn already by contemporaries (Klein 10) when the Duke perished in a similar rescue operation on the Oder in 1785. The interpretation, however, that it was no longer sufficient to set out a reward from the lofty position of the high horse, but that aristocrats were expected to man the oars as well, did not sustain. The Duke remained a singular case, even though notable citizens of his duchy not only collected funds across the whole of Germany to erect a monument in his memory, but to support the children of a school the Duke had founded. The authors of the commemorative booklet also pointed out that the Duke's self-sacrifice likely resulted in more good being done due to the reception of his heroic action among his peers, and the citizenry at large, than if he had lived (ibid. 9).

Bürger's fameworthy peasant, however, was 'special' enough to prevail as the new model, judging from the variety and frequency by which similar events were fashioned into ballads, and the organisation of societies like the *Royal Humane Society* in Britain that encouraged and rewarded rescue heroism (Barclay). To the extent to which the super-human hero is relegated to the sidelines, the *citoyen* as the rescuer of those unable to help themselves became the new standard currency of the heroic in the late 18th century. Gradually, class barriers were lowered further, and women and even children get into the picture. Consequently, throughout the 19th and into the early 20th century, rescue hero stories and poems increase and abound in family magazines and boys' books. A classic of the genre that took up the theme is Theodor Fontanes' "John Maynard". His immediate source was likely one of several previously published variants of the story, either the one by Horatio Alger ("John Maynard" 1868) or one printed in *The British Workman* (Barry 157; cf. Hadamitzky/Korte 64): the helmsman steering a course straight for the shore to save passengers and crew, even though the smoke (in Alger's version: the fire) is going to kill him. Fontane's ballad shows that rescue heroism was a transnational phenomenon. It also transcended class divisions: as the helmsman, Maynard is simultaneously in an elevated position in the ship's hierarchy, and the working man doing his duty. His rescue heroism arises from his insistence on fulfilling his role above and beyond the call of duty, not in the sense of a role extension but – to cite the formula used in awards of the Victoria Cross – with conspicuous gallantry. In this story, however, we also encounter the problematic of ironic rescue heroism: the historical source for "John Maynard: A Ballad of Lake Erie" was a somewhat apocryphal American story (Probst), which knew of a man who likely remained on his post, but there was no indication that this saved anybody in a fire on his ship that claimed at least 100 lives (Barry 153). Constitutive of the rescue hero narrative is that the often self-sacrificial action leads to the salvation of the potential, or intended, victims (cf. Franco/Blau/Zimbardo).

A problem of modern societies with their systematic provision of security is that wherever rescue heroism is institutionalised, like in the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (Kolbotn; Barclay 36), or with fire departments, self-sacrifice runs the danger of being treated as collateral damage. The de-individuation of a collective group leads, on the one hand, to a socialisation towards

heroism that comes with membership (Lois); on the other hand, the heroism thus acquired can survive the transition from volunteer structures to professionalisation (Hochbruck) by tapping into the same mythology and incorporating the same memes: firefighters save young girls in both British and American illustrations from the 19th century (Baigent 138). This convention led to the misconception that firefighting and rescue heroism are ultimately masculine performances (cf. Cooper 146; Weinestål/Bondestam/Berg 22; Baigent). By the end of the 19th century, however, the young girl had given way to the infant, and the resultant image became less masculine than christophoric (**fig. 1**).

This form was popular for firefighter monuments around 1900 (Grissom). Subsequently, the child-saving fireman became the most persistent stereotype and image. Since the extended analogy, however, would endow the saved child with Christ-like qualities, the narrative of this rescue hero type follows another biblical motif, that of the good shepherd searching for his missing sheep and bringing them back into the flock.

Fig. 1: Monument to six volunteer fire companies, New Albany Indiana. Sculptor: Charles Edwards. 1902. Source: Douglas M. Rife "Gravely Speaking." Blog, May 2016. 1 February 2017. Permission granted by <www.gravely-speaking.com>.

The narrative continues to be operative regardless of the problematic of the consequential, as there is not necessarily a logical link between the courage of the individual rescue team member and the positive outcome of their effort. It extends to *all* firefighters, even though fire rescue in the more limited sense is – at least in the U.S. system – predominantly the responsibility of the truck companies, while the increasing amount of technical rescue work results, since ca. 1915, in the formation of specially trained and equipped companies: Rescue 1 was formed in New York that year, and Rescue and Squad units that are trained for all sorts of operations (including water rescue) are standard with all bigger departments today.

Against the disillusionment of WWI, which affected the post-Napoleonic military heroism most directly, individual and institutional rescue heroes continued to provide a counter-narrative to the modern epic of destruction. Even though the number of line of duty deaths, especially in the U.S. fire services, inspired one chief in 2007 to speculate about the existence of a "duty to die syndrome" (Crawford 43), rescue heroes are not supposed to die – in fact, the more professional their role fulfillment, the more often they escape the danger situation together with their 'grab' (firefighter slang for 'rescued person'). Not having been able to save somebody is regularly depicted as the worst-case scenario for rescue personnel, even if the inability, or failure, is not attributable to any fault, misjudgment, or negligence on the part of the rescue team. A grievous moment in this respect was the Oklahoma City Murrah building bombing in 1985 which claimed 168 lives and injured almost 700. A photograph that became iconic showed a firefighter cradling the lifeless body of a one-year old, one of 19 children from a crèche on the first floor who were killed in the attack by an anti-government militant (Chuck).

The baby-saving firefighter survives today in plastic and zinc figurines, collector plate designs, and, of course, in reality, but the narrative has been altered to include a parallel stereotype of dejection. This has resulted in a new level to the problematic, a 'rescue irony', when it became apparent after the collapse of the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center on 9/11, that not only was there hardly anybody to save, but that the FDNY themselves had lost hundreds of their own (von Essen 13, 40). For days, fake news of survivors found among the ruins wrecked the nerves of those in charge, like Fire Commissioner Thomas von Essen (von Essen 206). With images of exhaustion and dejection threatening

to overshadow heroic auto- and heterostereotypes, three FDNY firefighters borrowed a flag from a boat on the waterfront and raised it on a flagpole sticking out of the ruins. The echo of this performance resonated world-wide, sponsoring a plethora of further enactments of this scenario in a variety of popular art forms, including a 'Heroes' stamp and a wax figurine replica for the 9/11 museum.

Given the history of rescue heroism, the gesture would theoretically have to be assessed as counterproductive. All the way from Bürger's peasant, the characterising comment by the rescue hero is one of understatement and, in view of the often dangerous experience, excessive modesty. At the same time, while flags have been part of the American ceremonial as a matter of course, the emergent combination of rescue effort and military histories of heroic captures and saves of flags was novel. It was probably not coincidental that the three men in the celebrated and ubiquitous Thomas Franklin photograph hailed from rescue units: George Johnson and Dan McWilliams from Ladder 157, and, to the left, Billy Eisengrein from Rescue 2, a unit that lost seven of its members that day.

What they did appears at first sight as a symbolic act of defiance. Ironically, their flag-raising also enhanced the image of the rescue hero through the value-added qualities it derived from Joe Rosenblatt's famous photograph of the raising of a flag on Mt. Suribashi on Iwo Jima by U.S. Marines in February 1945. This act was fitting in so far as the firefighter had taken over the central heroic position in the public mind from the military already in the late 1960s and early 1970s. At the time, especially the FDNY won what is often referred to as the inner-city 'War Years' – the period after the murder of Martin Luther King, fraught with a lot of absentee landlordism, arson, civil unrest, and a deep mistrust on the side of the neglected inhabitants of city ghettos like the Bronx against everybody they saw as representing governmental institutions, including firefighters (cf. Smith 1972).

Though seemingly logical, the merger of the two originally disparate formats did not really prosper. While sponsoring a wave of pop-cultural reproductions, the flag-raising and subsequent operations could not prevent that the official 'rescue' operation on Ground Zero was called off – and much too late: for all to see, rescue had given way to recovery within days, and the stubborn insistence on working on 'the pile' resulted in infelicitous controversy between the city, police department, and fire department (Smith 2002, 341), and in increased illness and mortality rates in New York firefighters exposed to the toxic dust on the site.

There is yet another logic than the historical identification of the firefighter as a civilian Marine. From a Cultural Studies point of view, security is not only a factual phenomenon, but a speech act, a textual *fiat*, and a political statement. In the sense of the so-called Aberystwyth School of Critical Security Studies (Booth; Wyn Jones) and the French sociologist Jacques Rancière (Vaughan-Williams/Stevens 3), Johnson, McWilliams and Eisengrein disrupted the emergent tragic reading of the scene of conflict they were facing by reverting to a textual strategy they had been familiar with from childhood. More precisely, raising the flag on what had been the World Trade Center, though pictorially closely related to the Rosenblatt photo, shared even more in terms of appeal structures with the final lines from the first stanza of Francis Scott Keys' *Defense of Fort McHenry*: "Oh, say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave, o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?" It signaled not an emancipatory practice (Booth), but a regressive impulse, subsuming the individual under the emblematic 'flag' as ideological haven. The original rescue attempts on 9/11, which cost the lives of 343 firefighters, were closely allied to the rescue heroism in Bürger, Alger, and Fontane. The flag-raising, and the subsequent recovery activities on Ground Zero, though emotionally understandable, were (however unwittingly) part of a political security theater performance.

The question whether raising the flag was a harbinger of an emergent format was answered four years later. As if by way of an answer, many photographs taken in and around New Orleans and showing the devastation left by Hurricane Katrina also featured American flags. However, these flags are often ragged, on the ground, snagged in debris and even upside down.

No gesture of defiance here, and no rescue personnel in sight; neither sheep nor shepherds, so to speak. The standard narrative of complaint on the side of the flood victims, particularly Africamericans that were disproportionately affected by the disaster, was that no help was extended to them. Their story of neglect and disaffection was symbolically continued into a reverse image of the raising of the flag on the World Trade Center ruins.

To make things worse, the deployment of additional police forces and National Guard units to New Orleans and the Gulf Coast resulted in numerous images of armed security forces patrolling streets, allegedly to prevent looting – there were no gallows erected as in Lisbon 1755, but the impression of mistrust against the population was strong.

In light of the fact that there was considerable evidence of fameworthy rescue heroism, and stoic resilience, this was at best unfortunate. For instance, one picture that went into wider circulation showed a Bürger-like scene in Gulfport, MS (**fig. 2**): men, wading through hip-deep water, guide a boat full of women and children. There are two significant deviations from Bürger. The praise of the rescue hero comes with prominent photographic display, a face, a name, and a profession: Terrence Gray was a police officer (though readers wouldn't know since Gray is, sensibly enough, wearing a yellow raincoat). Also, he did not act alone – another photograph taken of the same beat-up boat shows him with three civilians keeping the craft on course past half-submerged cars and houses (cf. Vedernikov 26; who interprets the yellow jacket as an attempt at establishing visibility and authority).

A superficial similarity to Bürger's ballad lies in the fact that readers are told that Gray commandeered the boat – possibly from three young men shown in another picture of the same vessel taken on the same day by the same photographer. Bürger's peasant also simply takes the fisherman's boat, and, of course, a police officer can do certain things in emergency situations. Still, the impression left by this statement is ambivalent: on the one hand, the role of the rescue hero in American disaster movies comes with a sense of entitlement, inherited from the *homme illustre*, to transgress legal, social, and conventional borders. On the other hand, the looting myth in American disaster history has been levied predominantly against the Africamerican and Hispanic population. The borderlines between criminal looting and "appropriating behaviour […] for emergency purposes" (Barsky/Trainor/Torres 2) justifiable as part of rescue heroism, were quite permeable in New Orleans during the aftermath of Katrina, and interpretations more often than not favored the rescue service member as a matter of course, followed by officers of the law, prominent whites, other whites, and others (cf. Tierney/Bevc/Kuligowski 62, 75).

Fig. 2: Police Officer Terrence Gray, right, helps evacuate Lovie Mae Allen and group of children from their flooded homes after Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast. (AP Photo / John Bazemore).

Whereas the rescue operations in New York, with the overarching symbolism of the star-spangled banner yet waving, have been celebrated to the point of the myths of individual and collective heroism silencing critique,[3] self-help and rescue operations in the wake of Hurricane Katrina four years later have resulted in not nearly as many books, documentaries, or movies.[4] The overarching symbolism of Katrina is one of institutional failure which had to be supplemented by rag-tag crews of ill-trained spontaneous volunteers (Olejarski/Garnett). It is in view of these two disparate negotiations of rescue heroism that the post-9/11 emergence of what might have been a new format of auto- as well as hetero-celebration, combining military and rescue personnel symbolism, appears to have been at least deferred.

The myth especially of the New York firefighter as part urban cowboy, part civilian Marine, is still present and more ingrained after 9/11 and the flag-raising image than before. A large part of the population never subscribed to the idea that "we live […] in a post-heroic age: Heroes are for debunking and deconstructing" (Jones/Watkins 1) anyway. In fact, the fashionable demotion of the heroic by liberal academics over the past two decades, though mostly circumventing rescue personnel and their heroic potential, may well have contributed to the wave of aggressive popular reaction that got Donald Trump elected. There seems to be a necessity for the virtuous and the altruistic – in so far, the Katrina images still hold a potential that connects them to Bürger's Enlightenment era peasant, and at the same time might be able to overcome Stuart Hall's ill-considered lament that heroism was "so irrevocably a gendered and 'raced' concept as to be practically unusable in any of its old forms" (Hall 116). The *Rescue Heroes* of comic-book and TV-series are clearly not adequate configurations to counteract debunking tendencies. Nor was the raising of the flag on Ground Zero. However well-intentioned that move was, in reverting to military symbolism it pointed in a direction that holds no positive aspect for the future of rescue heroism.

Officer Gray so far resurfaces only in one of the stories collected by Allan Zullo in a 2015 volume for grades 5-8, called *10 True Tales: Heroes of Hurricane Katrina* (Zullo), but it is a start. Meanwhile, the search for a better comprehension of what it is that creates rescue heroes and what makes some people braver and more empathetic than others continues (Agarwala 64; Levine/Norenzayan/Philbrick).

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1 Thus the term 'hero' is integrated into modern society, bound humanity and especially to a bourgeois utilitarian ideal […] but at the same time it retains a stigma of being alien, archaic and anachronistic (trans. wh).

2 Aloft the count his purse doth wave;
And each one hears, and each one fears,
From thousands none steps forth to save.
In vain doth the tollman with wife and child,
For rescue howl through the stom-winds wild.

See, stout and strong, a peasant man,
With staff in hand, comes wandering by;
A kirtle of gray his limbs array;
In form and feature, stern and high.
He listened, the words of the count to hear,
And gazed on the danger that threatened near.

And boldly, in Heaven's name, into
The nearest fishing boat sprang he;
Through the whirlwind wide, and the dashing tide,
The preserver reaches them happily.
But, alas! the boat is too small, too small,
At once to receive and preserve them all!

And thrice he forced his little boat
Through the whirlwind, storm, and dashing wave;
And thrice came he full happily,
Till there was no one left so save.

(trans. anonymous, in Karl Knortz, ed. *Representative German Poems, Ballad and Lyrical. Original Texts with English Versions by Various Translators*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1885: 33-38). Thanks to Julia Ruff for support in the research for this article.

3 One aspect uncovered by Jim Dwyer and Kevin Flynn's "untold story" was how many firefighters could not really do much inside the Twin Towers (Dwyer/Flynn 177, 217). Like them, Richard Picciotto drew attention to the communication problems, errors, and lacking equipment that led to unnecessary casualties. Neither of these books made the inofficial canon of 9/11 texts.

4 Several important landmark texts are analysed by Vedernikov.

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