

# Women Writing After 9/11



Marjorie Agosin

A poet, writer, human rights activist, and Professor of Spanish at Wellesley College where she teaches in the interdisciplinary *Peace and Justice Studies* program, Marjorie Agosin is the descendent of European Jews who escaped the Holocaust and settled in Chile in 1939. In exile from Chile since Pinochet rose to power, her recent books include *A Cross and a Star: Memoirs of a Jewish Girl in Chile*; *Women, Gender and Human Rights: A Global Perspective*; and *The Alphabet in My Hands*. Founding editor of the journal *IA: intellectualaction* and past president of the Sisterhood is Global Institute, a coalition of women's rights organizations from 70 countries, she is the recipient of the United Nations Leadership Award for Human Rights and Gabriella Mistral Medal of Honor.

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## *September 11<sup>th</sup> arrived* Marjorie Agosin

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*Here  
where memories dwell with the past  
where geography configures the soul  
here in the south-the furthestmost south-  
September 11<sup>th</sup> arrived  
like a compassionless shadowless mirror  
September 11<sup>th</sup> arrived  
at the start of an unseasonal spring  
the scent of violets still in the air*

*Incredulous-  
September 11<sup>th</sup> arrived  
in a morning like any other  
the city awoke from its usual heat  
the mountains echoed the children's  
"good day"  
the lovers intertwined their legs once more  
like lethargic trees  
and secure in their love  
awoke*

*And suddenly the 11<sup>th</sup> arrived  
the heavens turned into hell  
the radio played hymns to a foreign land  
the sirens screamed in a savage wind*

*a wounded president said  
that a nation's people make justice  
and history  
that one day we would walk through  
flowering groves  
in springtime to come  
It was noon  
Henry Kissinger and Richard Nixon  
applauded happily  
the viperous men in snakeskin  
wagged their tongues*

*A palace went up in flames  
as if in our dreams  
and the young burned their notebooks of  
poems  
and the country once sweet as a rose  
was transformed in the smoke's gloom  
into the land of the absent*

*The 11<sup>th</sup> arrived here  
the days became nights  
and like New York  
the women wailed  
seeking their children*

*in the rubble  
their feet sinking ever deeper  
into the dry well of hate*

*The 11<sup>th</sup> arrived here  
but unlike New York  
everyone forgot  
Chile was a small country by the sea  
the dead were just Chilenos  
according to the press  
meanwhile we all whispered in secret  
and cried out loud.*

*I too had an 11<sup>th</sup>  
and although I knew who the enemy was  
I refused to try to understand  
a palace in flames  
Pablo Neruda  
dancing barefoot through the city.*

*I too had an 11<sup>th</sup>  
and today I remember with you  
a people in search of their star.*

Translated by Betty Jean Craige