

## **Approaches to 9/11: Addressing the Unspeakable**

**Juan José Mosquera Ramallo**  
Erasmus Mundus Masters  
Crossways in Cultural Narratives

This work will analyse the impact of 9/11 in the creation of fiction, focusing mainly on the presence of the unspeakable as a shaping feature. Elaborating on Naomi Mandel's dual concept of the unspeakable and on the concept of the performativity of speech acts by Austin and Searle, the unspeakable will be explored as an impossible task and as a means to stop alternative discourses. A wider theoretical framework that includes cultural trauma theory by Jeffrey Alexander and the secular sacredness by Gordon Lynch will be used in this analysis. Three works of fiction on 9/11 written by non-American authors will be studied as examples of different approaches to the unspeakable: *Windows on the World*, written by the French author Frédéric Beigbeder in 2003 as a failed attempt to reach the rhetoric limits of language through the manipulation of language and fiction; *Burnt Shadows*, written by the British-Pakistani author Kamila Shamsie in 2009, which elaborates on the ideas of the lack of uniqueness of 9/11 and the use of the unspeakable as a means of avoiding responsibilities; and *Ventanas de Manhattan*, written by the Spanish author Antonio Muñoz Molina in 2004, a novel that reflects on the presence of the sacred around 9/11 and on the impossibility of language to address the unspeakable, thus calling for other forms of representation.