

Karolina Golimowska

"Navigating the Post-9/11 Metropolis: Reclaiming and Remapping Urban Space in Contemporary US-American Novels"

ABSTRACT

In the large body of American and British literary responses to the attacks of September 11, 2001 the metropolis as space and as a social, political and cultural construct is given a very prominent position. Most of the fiction featuring or alluding to the events of 9/11 is set in big cities, which often function as departure points to other places, transcultural experiences and memories. Being preeminently a city novel, the post-9/11 novel is hence organized, written and to be read through (the urban) space. It is not only inscribed in the city but it also creates new spaces within the urban context and reassigns meanings within the city cosmos. Novels featured in this presentation not only reflect the post-9/11 city, but they also create, produce, celebrate and *write* it. Through these fictional texts, a cultural knowledge and work is produced that serves at taming the city and making it more approachable. Each of the novels is an attempt at re-mapping the city and through this process at controlling the unpredictable body of the metropolis. Consequently, many of the characters in post-9/11 fiction experience the urge to extensively navigate the city in question in order to remap, understand, and reclaim it after it has been drastically altered. This attempt to regain familiarity with the urban space through movement is motivated by the desire and necessity to tame and control it. The desire to regain control over the metropolis is linked to the hope that it would bring back a lost structure to the characters' post-9/11 lives.

While I will provide a general overview of what I call the post-9/11 city novel, I will specifically focus on Teju Cole's *Open City*, Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland*.