FICTIONALIZING TERRORISM

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Abstract:The article is set to analyse the relationship between literature and terrorism in order to illustrate the role of literature in the cultural response to terror in the works of two contemporaneous writers: Don DeLillo and Haruki Murakami, that belong to two different cultures, Western and non-Western, and are internationally recognised authors, as the field of interest is the fictionalization of terrorism novels that are embedded in their content with real life terrorists attacks will be of direct interest.

Keywords: fictionalizing terrorism, terrorist narratives, Don DeLillo, Haruki Murakami, 1Q84

The article is set to analyse the relationship between literature and terrorism in order to illustrate the role of literature in the cultural response to terror in the works of two contemporaneous writers: Don DeLillo and Haruki Murakami, that belong to two different cultures, West and non-Western, and are worldwide famous authors, as the field of interest is the fictionalization of terrorism, novels that are embedded in their content with real life terrorist attacks will be of direct interest. [1]

The article will focus on two types of "terrorist narratives": terrorism in literature and literary terrorism.[2] It puts forward the idea that in the context of the current research the two are interdependent. That is possible because one presents terrorism as a literary theme, fact that is valid for all the novels analysed in this article, and the other illustrates "literature as a phenomenon analogous to terrorism in its challenge to established orders" (Frank &Gruber 2010:9). If the event of the terrorist attack brings to life a literary work, it means that it compels that literary creation to challenge the established order because the impact of the event affects the life of people and their perception of reality, including authors and audience alike. And in this way the event is the source that "attempts to destabilize narrativity itself" (Kubiak 2004:295), creating a counter-narrative, as Don DeLillo names it, or a new narrative in Haruki Murakami's terms.

[1] Don DeLillo (born November 20, 1936) is an established American novelist, playwright and essayist. His books were sold in millions of copies worldwide and he has won numerous awards for his fictions, including: PEN/Faulkner Award for Mao II (1992), Jerusalem Prize (1999), PEN/Saul Bellow Award for Achievement in American Fiction (2010), Library of Congress Prize for American Fiction (2013), Norman Mailer Prize for Lifetime Achievement (2014), National Book Awards Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters (2015). Haruki Murakami is a Japanese novelist, essayist and translator, his books were translated in over 50 languages and sold millions of copies worldwide. He received several awards including: the World Fantasy Award (2006), the Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award (2006), the Franz Kafka Prize (2006) and the Jerusalem Prize (2009).

[2] Anthony Kubiak is the first to put forward the notion of "terrorist narratives" in his article "Spelling It Out: Narrative Typologies of Terror", Studies in the Novel, XXXVI/3 (Fall 2004), he enlists three types of "terrorist narratives": "the writing of terrorist groups themselves", "narratives about terrorism", and "those forms of writing that we might, in the spirit of critical excess, as narrative terrorism: attempts to destabilize narrativity itself- disrupting linearity, temporality, plot, character or whatever conventions may be regarded as essential to the production of stories, memories, dramas, or histories" (Kubiak, 295)
In the context of this research the term "terrorist narrative" will have the meaning and value as given by Michael C. Frank and Eva Gruber in their volume *Literature and Terrorism: A Critical Perspective*: "we would like to reserve the adjective "terrorist" for politically, religiously, or ideologically motivated acts of violence or disruption that cannot be reduced to the level of discourse- and that happen outside of the literary text, even if our own field of interest is as literary critics is the discursivization of terrorism in literature (as the fictionalization, simulation, or staging of such events). (…) we would also suggest to limit the word "narrative" to "literature". (Frank &Gruber 2010:10)

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Don DeLillo's Terrorist Narrative

The section is set to analyse the emergence and development of the terrorist narrative in three of Don DeLillo's novels: *Players* (1977), *Mao II* (1991), and *Falling Man* (2007). The objective of the research is to demonstrate that there is continuity in form in Don DeLillo's terrorist narratives, and that the event of the 9/11 terrorist attacks did not create a disruption 'in the perception of our daily lives' (and implicitly the author's) as the he himself states in his 'reaction to the 9/11 attacks' essay: "In the Ruins of the Future- Reflections on Terror and Loss in the Shadow of September". The research, also, touches upon the topic of Don DeLillo's counter-narrative creation, arguing that is achieved through introducing art and art related elements in his novels, and that he has been building upon it since his 1977 novel.

In December 2001 Harper's Magazine published Don DeLillo's essay "In the Ruins of the Future- Reflections on Terror and Loss in the Shadow of September", the material presents the novelist's reaction to 9/11:

> All this changed on September 11. Today, again, the world narrative belongs to terrorists. But the primary target of the men who attacked the Pentagon and the World Trade Center was not global economy. It is America that drew their fury. It is the high gloss of our modernity. It is the thrust of our technology. It is our perceived godlessness. It is the blunt force of our foreign policy. It is the power of the American culture to penetrate every wall, home, life, and mind.
>
> Terror's response is a narrative that has been developing over years, only now becoming inescapable. It is our lives and minds that are occupied now. This catastrophic event changed the way we think and act, moment to moment, week to week and months to come, and steely years. Our world, parts of our world, have crumbled into theirs, which means we are leaving in a place of danger and rage. (DeLillo, 2001:33)

Making use of the history of international terrorism perspective the research is meant to eliminate the historical forgetting element that the discontinuity topos relies on to a certain degree. In order to offer a comprehensive study regarding the topic of continuity or discontinuity in Don DeLillo's terrorist novels, literary and cultural studies research frameworks will be used.

David Holloway in his study 9/11 and the War on Terror, offers anti-discontinuity arguments saying that the event 'was long in the making': "9/11 was long in the making, and the pre-9/11 and post-9/11 worlds were broadly continuous not discontinuous" (Holloway, 2008:4). It is important to note that to advocate for the event's singularity-its singularity being also the excuse for the appearance of discontinuity, implicitly legitimizes the call for an unprecedented counterterrorist attack. On this topic Holloway notes: "the idea that the 9/11 was a moment when 'everything changed' …played directly to partisan political agendas in Washington", and a proclaimed "historical rupture on 9/11 was precisely the case [the Bush administration] argued in defence of the 'Bush doctrine' of pre-emptive war, unilateral policy-making and 'regime change' in 'rogue states'" (Holloway, 2008:4).
By making use of the literary studies analysis the research is meant to present the three novels: *Players* (1977), *Mao ll* (1991), and *Falling Man* (2007) in terms of the chronological development of the 'terrorist narrative': the 1970s, the 1990s and after 9/11, and exemplify the continuous or discontinuous nature of his pre- and post-9/11 terrorist narratives. In order to achieve its goals matters regarding cultural studies will be dealt with seeking to shed light over the impact of 9/11 on Don DeLillo's treatment of the theme of terrorism in his novels.

As for the relevance of the theme of terrorism in literature topic, it is worth mentioning that "the novel makes terrorism into a phenomenon in the possible worlds its represents", and that there is cultural work "the novel thereby performs in regard to terrorism" (Appelbaum and Paknadel, 2008:389). Peter Boxall in his *Twenty-First-Century- A Critical Approach* suggests the existence of a new vision of constructing the contemporary novel, "a new way of weaving time and history and embodiment together, then it is the relationship between fiction and contemporary terrorism, that the

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political context for such an effort is at its sharpest, and most urgent" and in this way he notes 'the challenges' fiction and terrorism faces when discussed together (Boxall, 2015:123). On the other hand, Kristiaan Versluys notes: "The novelistic practice of viewing a situation a situation in its full complexity entails the denial of the reductive logic of terrorism, the black-and-white ideological view that legitimates indiscriminate violence" (Versluys, 2009:16). And moreover "one of literature's specific potential no doubt lies in its capacity to narrativize terrorism as fiction" (Frank and Gruber, 2012:15).

Don DeLillo is not the only American writer to have novels dealing with the theme of terrorism in his work, what is unique about his novels is that his terrorist narrative dates back to the 1970s and that in his 1977 novel *Players* he presents an act of domestic terrorism on the World Trade Center, building that is to be the target of a real terrorist attack in 1993 and in 2001. It is true that terrorism is just a sub-theme in *Players*, and it is framed in a time of peace, but it was written during the decade that represents the beginning of international terrorism. Things that cannot be said about his other two novels: *Mao II*, written just after the end of Cold War, event that marked the entry of the narrative into a new stage, and *Falling Man*, written after the United States of America experienced the greatest act of terrorism on its own soil, event that again was claimed by many to have altered the life of novel writing. They are both "end of an era" novels and pose as a statement regarding authorship.

Just as he does in *Falling Man*, but not from an overt perspective, Don DeLillo is securely anchoring his fiction in historical reality in his novel *Mao II*. Numerous events mentioned in the novel are 'real life events' of that time: Hillsborough football disaster in the UK (April 15,1989), the death and funeral of Ayatollah Khomeini in Tehran (June 1989), the massacre from Tiananmen Square (June 1989), the situation between East and West Beirut in the second half of the 1989, Andy Warhol's exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1989. The time frame of the novel being the threshold between the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, it is obvious that the writing of the novel is done 'under the influence' of other events of that period too, such as: the fall of the Berlin wall on (November, 1989), the fatwa issued against Salman Rushdie and Samuel Beckett's death (December, 1989). Moreover, the novel is built around staging a battle between the novelist and the terrorist:

> There is a curious knot that binds novelists and terrorists. In the West we become famous effigies as our books lose the power to shape and influence. Do you ask writers how they feel about this? Years ago I used to think it was possible for a novelist to alter the inner life of the culture. Now bomb-makers and gun men have that territory. They make raids on human consciousness. What writers used to do before we were all incorporated. (Don DeLillo, 1991: 41)

The arts have a transformative power in Don DeLillo's terrorist novels, and this fact allows the creation of a counter-narrative, this counter-narrative is formed during the passage from terrorist as social actor in the universe of the novel, as it happens in *Players*, the notion is later given in-depth treatment in *Mao II*, under the form of a staged battle between the terrorist and the novelist. In his post- 9/11 novel *Falling Man*, terrorism itself is the main theme of the novel along trauma. This passage from terrorist as a character and theme of discussion in his novels to terrorism as an international phenomenon, no longer focusing on the person but on his act, is market by an increasing usage of art in his novels. If in *Players* the arts have a small dosage in the content of the novel (a cinematic passage: a no sound movie depicting golfers killed by terrorists). In *Mao II* a prevalence of the arts is noted through direct reference to Andy Warhol's works (real ones: *Crowd, Mao II* and imagined ones *Gorby I*), the author's focus on photography and other visual and literary arts throughout the novel, and performance art: "No, artists. And the Great Wall is supposedly the only man-made structure visible from space, so we see it as part of the total planet. And this man and woman walk and walk. They're artists. I don't know what nationality. But it's an art piece. It's not

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Nixon and Mao shaking hands. It's not nationality, not politics" (DeLillo, 1991:70) --- reference to: The Lovers (The Great Wall of China Walk), by Marina Abramovic and Ulay, 1988.

In his post- 9/11 novel *Falling Man* the prevalence of the arts increases: there is art, artists-real ones Giorgio Morandi and his still art, and imagined ones: David Janiak and his performances, and art critics and dealers are present in the novel. Art is present even in the title of the novel, Falling Man being one of the characters, David Janiak, 'a performance artist known as the Falling Man', that through his art "brought it back, of course, those stark moments in the burning towers when people fell or were forced to jump" (DeLillo, 2007:40). The title of the novel coincides with the title of a photograph by Richard Drew of a man falling from the North Tower of the World Trade Center, during the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center Towers on the 11th of September 2001.

The research conducted clearly presents a set of elements meant to speak in favour of continuity in form in Don DeLillo's terrorist narratives. The event of the 9/11 terrorist attacks did not create a disruption in Don DeLillo's treatment of the terrorism theme in his novels, but an increase in the "tools" used in one of his pre-9/11 terrorist narrative, *Mao II*, written after an important event in world history, the end of the Cold War. Such findings are relevant for discussions that rule out theories regarding 9/11 novel or ground zero fiction as an example of discontinuity in the form of the novel, by proving that one of the novels enlisted under these proclaimed topics, is part of a developing terrorist narrative of one of the most renowned American writers: Don DeLillo.

Haruki Murakami's Closed Circuit Terrorism

This subsection is dedicated to illustrating and analysing Haruki Murakami's perspective over terrorism and how the event of March 20 transformed his notion of the narrative, and putting forward the research topic of a Haruki Murakami terrorist narrative: *1Q84* (2009-2010).

Haruki Murakami discusses terrorism in terms of closed and open circuits, in an interview given in October 2001, he declared:

> The open circuit is this society, and the closed circuit is the world of religious fanatics: Islamic fundamentalists or groups like Aum Shinrikyo. I think they are all the same in a way. Their worlds are perfect, because they are closed off (…) In Japan most people think that terrorism is the US' own problem. But that isn't right. The same thing can happen at any moment, in Tokyo, Berlin or Paris, because this is a war between closed and open circuits, different states of mind. (qtd in W French)

He admits that the event of the domestic terrorism attack that Japan experienced on 20th of March 1995 had a huge impact on his activity as a writer: "Time for me to be heading back (…) Go back and do one solid work something other than a novel, to probe deep into the heart of my estranged country. And in that way, I might reinvent a new stance for myself, a new vantage-point". (Murakami 2003: 204) From this urge Haruki started working on a series of interviews of the victims of the terrorist attack. After the material was released in Japan he realized that his work was not complete and started working on a set of interviews with members and former member of Aum-the religious organization that was behind the terrorist attack. These materials were published in 2003 in English under the title *Underground: The Tokyo Gas Attack and the Japanese Psyche*. The book is structured into two parts, the first, entitled Underground, contains thirty-four of the sixty interviews that were originally conducted with the victims of the attack, and the second, entitled *The Place That Was Promised*, presents eight interviews from people representing Aum.

The speech put forth by the media regarding the sarin gas attack "was an obvious exercise in opposites": 'good' versus 'evil', 'sanity' versus 'madness', 'health' versus 'madness' (Murakami 2003:196), and Haruki Murakami felt that it did not meet his standards of understanding the event:

> None of which told me what I wanted to know. No, mine was a very simple question: what actually happened in the Tokyo subway on the morning of 20 March, 1995? Or more concretely: What were the people in the subway carriages doing at the time? What did they see? What did they feel? What

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> did they think? If I could, I'd have included details on each individual passenger right down to their heartbeat, as graphically represented as possible. The question was, what would happen to any ordinary Japanese citizen- such as me or any of my readers- if they were suddenly caught up in an attack of this kind? (Murakami 2003: 196)

The interviews with the victims of the attack are meant to offer direct interaction with the people that were there that day, and through this he aspects to really understand what has happened: "Once I'd discovered the real person, I could then shift my focus to the events themselves. (…) Furthermore, I had a hunch that we need to see a true picture of all the survivors, whether they were severely traumatized or not, in order to better grasp the whole incident. I leave it to you, the reader, to lend an ear, then judge. No, even before that, I'd like you to imagine the event" (Murakami 2003: 7).

About the interviewing process for part 1 of the book, the writer declared:

> At the beginning of every interview I would ask the interviews about their background- where they were born, their upbringing, their family, their job (especially their job)- in order to give each a "face", to bring them into focus. What I did not want was collection of disembodied voices. Perhaps it is an occupational hazard of the novelist's profession, but I am less interested in the "big picture" as it were, than in the concrete, irreducible humanity of each individual. So perhaps I devoted an inordinate proportion of each two hours interview to seemingly unrelated details, but I wanted to make sure the readers had a firm grasp of the character speaking. (Murakami 2003: 197)

These lines make obvious the fact that Murakami filters the event of the sarin gas attack through his social status as a novelist. The interviewers- talk about their nature-personal stories/trauma and allow him to develop on the relation between the novelist and his narrative domain: "Simply put our memories of experiences are rendered into something like a narrative form. To a greater or lesser extent, this is a natural function of memory- a process that the novelist consciously utilizes as a profession." (Murakami 2003:200)

Haruki Murakami's reaction to the sarin gas attack is that he will place his future work into a "new narrative", first he had to reconsider the value of his own work because of the impact the event had on him: "Especially after conducting interviews with the family of Mr Eiji Wada- who died in Kodemmacho Station- and with Ms "Shizuko Akashi"- who had lost her memory and speech and is still in hospital undergoing therapy- I had to seriously reconsider the value of my own writing. Just how vividly could my choice of words convey to the reader the various emotions (fear, despair, loneliness, anger, numbness, alienation, confusion, hope…) these people experienced?" (Murakami 2003: 204).

He discusses the new narrative in terms of appropriating the language to the nature of the events, the us versus them oppositions and vocabulary is not able to express the events from his perspective and he feels the need of focusing on "another narrative" meant to purify the existing one:

> Eventually I stopped making judgements altogether. "Right" or "wrong", "sane" or "sick", "responsible" or "irresponsible"- these questions no longer mattered. At least, the final judgement was not mine to make, which made things easier. I could relax and simply take in people's stories verbatim. I became, not the "fly on the wall", but a spider sucking up the mass of words, only to later break them down inside me and spin them out into "another narrative. (Murakami 2003: 204)

> If we are to learn anything from this tragic event, we must look at what happened all over again, from different angles, in different ways. Something tells me things will only get worse if we don't wash it out of our metabolism. It's all too easy to say 'Aum is evil.' Nor does saying 'This had nothing to do with evil or insanity' prove anything either. Yet the spell cast by these phrases is almost impossible to break, the whole emotionally charged 'Us' versus 'Them' has been done to death. No what we need, it seems to me, are words coming from another direction, new words for a new narrative. Another narrative to purify this narrative. (Murakami 2003: 197)

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Haruki Murakami's new vision over the narrative form for his oeuvre together with the theme of the religious sect and its actions, and the questions about authorship are all encompassed in his novel *1Q84* (2009-2010). Despite the fact that the word terrorism appears only twice in the lengthy novel [3], the piece deals consistently with the theme of terror, terror infliction, violence and powerlessness. And can be seen as an example of terrorist narrative considering that terrorism is one of its literary themes, the Sakigake cult present in the novel is a reminiscence of the Aum cult from the real life events, and the event of the terrorist attack on March 20 1995 seems to be forever present as Hurakami builds the narrative structure of the novel and its characters, a dystopian world, that of 1Q84- a fictionalized version of the year 1984 , two long-lost lovers who are drawn into a distorted version of reality.

In *Underground* Murakami discusses the event of the sarin gas attack in relation to other dark moments from Japanese history, and makes it all about people, their life and choices, in 1Q84, he introduces passages from the youth years of one of the characters that are place in pre-World-War ll Manchuria:

> Perhaps the entity called Aum Shinrikyo resembles pre-World-War ll Manchuria. Japan established the puppet state of Manchuria in 1932, and in the same way, the best and brightest- the cutting-edge technocrats, technicians, and scholars-gave up the lives promised them in Japan and went off to the continent they saw as so full of possibilities. For the most part they were young, extremely talented and well educated, their heads full of newly minted, ambitious visions. As long as they stayed in the Japanese State with its coercive structure, they believed it was impossible to find an effective outlet for all their energy. (Murakami 2003: 306)

> In preparing to write my last novel, *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, I did in-depth research into the so-called 1939 Nomonhan Incident an aggressive incursion by Japanese forces into Mongolia. The more I delved into the records, the more aghast I became at the recklessness, the sheer lunacy of the Imperial Army's system of command. How had this pointless tragedy gone so wantonly overlooked in the course of history? Again, researching the Tokyo gas attack, I was struck by the fact that the closed, responsibility-evading ways of Japanese society were really not any different from how the Imperial Army operated at that time. (Murakami 2003:207)

Haruki Murakami proves to respect the trajectory of a new narrative post-Aum fiction dealing with the theme of terrorism proving the interdependency between terrorism in literature and literary terrorism.

Conclusion

The article was set to analyse the relationship between literature and terrorism in order to illustrate the role of literature in the cultural response to terror in the works of two contemporaneous writers: Don DeLillo and Haruki Murakami, the nature of the works was focused on the topic of interest, "terrorist narratives". In the Western culture, depicted by Don DeLillo's terrorist narratives, the

[3] "On October 6, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat was assassinated by radical Islamic terrorists. Aomame recalled the event with renewed pity for Sadat. She had always been fond of Sadat's bald head, and she felt only revulsion for any kind of religious fundamentalists. The very thought of such people's intolerant worldview, their inflated sense of their own superiority, and their callous imposition of their own beliefs on others was enough to fill her with rage. Her anger was almost uncontrollable. But this had nothing to do with the problem she was now confronting. She took several deep breaths to calm her nerves, and then she turned the page. (Murakami, 2010:98)"

"But who can possibly save all the people of the world? Tengo thought. You could bring all the gods of the world into one place, and still they couldn't abolish nuclear weapons or eradicate terrorism. They couldn't end the drought in Africa or bring John Lennon back to life. Far from it—the gods would just break into factions and start fighting among themselves, and the world would probably become even more chaotic than it is now. Considering the sense of powerlessness that such a state of affairs would bring about, to have people floating in a pool of mysterious question marks seems like a minor sin. (Murakami, 2010:335)"

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interest in the theme of terrorism in literature dates from the 1970s, only to be later forgotten, and present the events of 9/11 in fiction as a source of discontinuity in literature, and is overtly internationalised. Whereas, in the case of Haruki Murakami's fiction all is local, about the Japanese society and its people. Still both authors are able to illustrate in their works that the role of literature in the cultural response to terror is to filter the event through the narrative domain and in doing so are able to offer to the readers a better understanding of what happened.

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