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THE NEW MILLENIUM AND THE AGE OF TERROR.
LITERATURE AND THE FIGURE IN THE CARPET

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Abstract: The 2001 terrorist attacks on USA marked a crucial moment in the debates referring to the provocations of the new millennium, concerning the rapport between civilizations. The characterization of our time as « the age of terror » reflects more than a rapport “barbarism” - “civilization”, “culture” - “inculture”, “sacred” - “lay”, a clash of ethic and religious fundamentalisms. Literally analyses, born from the ashes of the twin towers, were and are confined to look at the rapport between the Occidental and the Oriental world as one between two incompatible cultures. Their meeting, in the postcolonial and deterritorialisation epoch, is seen as one exclusively violent. But literature offers another battle field, one that proves that beyond our crushing world people, no matter what their culture is, are living the same anguishes of the meeting with the *Other* and feel the same threats of difference. The literary perspective, by sublimating reality, offers a fresh image of the man at the beginning of the new millennium and the enantiomorphic clash between fundamentalisms. The disease of our times, denounced by the 9/11 texts, is malign and is called *over-simplification*.

Key Words: fundamentalism, terrorism, 9/11, cultural and religious conflict, enantiomorphism, literature.

„What is a rebel? A man who says no.”
 Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, 1951

Preamble

“Jihadist free, and more radical than ever” is one of the front page titles of the European edition of „International Herald Tribune” from 17th November 2011.¹ The article signed by Souad Mekhennet surprises the anguished actuality of an unseen war, of the postmodern conflict between two worlds in a completely antagonist relation on one side, an explicable relation of social *enantiomorphism*² in the context of migration, of actual *deteritorialisation*³ and, on the other side, a virulent clash of religious ideologies, religious and antireligious fundamentalisms.

What attracts the eye in the cited article is the fact that Souad Mekhennet speaks about a new provocation of this ideological and religious conflict at the beginning of the third millennium, a conflict that has been prefigured in the centre of old conservative Europe for some time, a territory more lay, a clash of religious convictions and identities, with prejudices and old languages, but with new „weapons” of extermination. In conservatory Austria, more deprived today by its imperial aura of the 19th century, the author analyses how „Austrian’s prison term lifts his street credibility as a new generation rises”⁴, proposing a new case analyses of a young militant Islamic, aged twenty-six, arrested in Wien for terrorist activity and freed that year. The conclusion of the editorialist specialised in the Islamic problem is that: „Western and Arab intelligence officials say the case of Mr. Mahmoud illustrates, again, how supporters of jihads ideas become more radicalized in prisons. “They may have a good time or bad time in prison as for the treatment from the guards,” said Thomas M. Sanderson, deputy director of the trans-national threats program at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies. “But the bottom line is that they have time for reflecting and become even stronger.”⁵

Such a popularization perspective of one of the anguishes of the modern contemporary world, which has as main objective the possible terrorist attacks, refers to our ancestral fear of unpredictable and violent death and demonstrates, at the same time, the superficiality of our world. Western societies proved their inadaptation to the new world and the inflexibility towards the old world, even the lack of dialogue between cultures. Trying to preserve *hard* traditions, Europe is still unprepared for such a dialogue with colonized worlds and has great difficulties in accepting them too closely. Noam Chomsky is right when talking about those «Western societies, which fail to comprehend that others do not share their „standards of democracy, freedom and humanism”»⁶ But the

same inadaptation is specific for the other societies with which the Western one comes in contact. The same inflexibility for the definite values of the *Other* characterise human existence since old times. The media perspective on this cultural conflict, inside old conservatory Austria, threatened by the terrorism that adapted postmodern times as well, using the internet for popularisation, conversion and the planning of attacks, is literal and superficial, without setting to analyse the causes and especially the solutions, but opting intentionally for this quotidian disease, „over-simplification”. Formulas such as „the Evil Empire and its agents” sustain this ancestral fear of the unknown, the dark, translating our inadaptation to a changing world.

In his 1951 essay *The Rebel (L'homme révolté)*⁷, as an immediate echo to the dramatic dehumanisation during the second World War and anticipating the new type of aggression at the end of the millennium, Albert Camus noticed a change of the manner in which modern man faces violence. His thesis, plausible in the context of postmodern “terror age”, starts from acknowledging the fact that in the past “the crime” was that of a solitary man, being a protest cry, whereas in postmodern times crimes against humanity have a more general or universal character, being justified in the name of an ideology. Anticipating the dilemmas and anguishes at the beginning of the new millennium, facing the terrorist threat or the mass destruction weapons (atomic, biologic), in other words facing the *technologization of crimes*, therefore its depersonalisation, the analyses of the existentialist philosopher can be understood today from a different perspective.

The thanatic anguishes of the postmodern man are strictly linked to the violent death that breaks his quiet routine. War is somewhere else, but the adversary of the western man found the ways in which to transfer terror in the middle of the occidental world and defence has become suddenly difficult because the adversary is unseen. Unlike Afghanistan or Iraq, where war became part of people’s every day life, contributing to their social chaos, people learning to survive it, representing the menace as the Western world, USA or Europe, terrorism generates an unseen chaos, of a world that loses its stability mark, whose canons are annulated, in which death dislocates mundane routine. The world of the occidental man, unlike that of the Afghan or the Iraq people, is changed by the shocking changes that destroy habits and routine and these transformations are not to be understood, even unacceptable. Anticipated and analysed by the majority of contemporary thinkers, considered more serious than an economical crises, the Occident goes through an ethical crises without precedent, being forced to acknowledge that its world is changing, not in accordance with its inflexibility and traditional intransigence or the ethical fundamentalism that marks its history. Although Oswald Spengler was right when, at the beginning of the last century, prophesising *The Decline of the Occident*⁸, spoke about the Western

thinker and his ethical fundamentalism, saying that „It is this that is lacking to the Western thinker, the very thinker in whom we might have expected to find it insight into the historically relative character of his data, which are expressions of one specific existence and one only; knowledge of the necessary limits of their validity; the conviction that his “unshakable” truths and “eternal” views are simply true for him and eternal for his world-view; the duty of looking beyond them to find out what the men of other Cultures have with equal certainty evolved out of themselves.”⁹ Such a statement should be extended today, updated to the postmodern world.

Today we can state, more than ever, the fact that the ethical fundamentalism of the West is in open conflict with the religious fundamentalism of Islam and this conflict is not based only on confronting different ideologies, as we are tempted to believe when we have „a literal approach”¹⁰ or even a scholar approach, but it is also a question of social nature in the epoch of post-colonial migration which brought the interaction between cultures or the cultural sock of the new millennium.

More than that, to have a “literal” perspective on the conflict between the two worlds, in the spirit of what the West names “political correctness” or, better said “literal correctness”, we must appreciate the rapport as being one of socio-cultural enantiomorphism, as we speak about a reciprocal mirroring of this. The conflict of these worlds is generated by their structural enantiomorphism, dictated by their reversal in the mirror. We could start from the premise that there are two worlds structurally identical, but in a reversed order, so that any attempt to superpose them will generate cultural incongruence, as we can seldom observe, with reciprocal aggressions, hard to imagine and understand violence.

At the beginning of the Third Millennium religious and/or ideological violence contradict Jean-François Lyotard’s¹¹ perspective referring to the postmodern disbelief in meta-narrations, as in discussing these enantiomorphic positions legitimate narrative structures are recuperated: the image of saving heroes (“the army of the West”, “Islamist extremists”, “terrorist groups” etc.), great dangers (“Islamist jihad”, “terrorist attacks”, “the invasion of the West” etc.), the noble scope of actions/violence (denouncing American colonialism, fighting against autocratic regimes etc.). In our times the justification of violence is done by resorting to meta-narratives or, more precisely, to detouring them in favour of propaganda argumentation, of diverse authoritative actions.¹² This is sustained by Sandu Frunză’s statement that: „The modern man, who is said to have abandoned the grand narratives at the foundation of his/her spiritual life, keeps a natural inclination towards myth, ritual and the meaningful constructions of the imaginary.”¹³ This can only be a classical source of ideological manipulation of man by resorting to the anthropological structures of the imaginary. More than that, “The modern

man cannot ignore them, whether accepting or not their presence as elements that influence directly human existence as part of a modernity built on rationality.”¹⁴

Faced with the enantiomorphism of our worlds, the questions that concern us should avoid any „over-simplification” we are used with in the post-modern knowledge society based on the acceleration of information and the risks that converge from here. Just by avoiding simplistic judgements, a priori conspiratorial theories through which a world, whichever it is, is “the Evil Empire” and analysing, not necessarily “the domestic roots of Arab and Islamic terror”¹⁵, but the domestic roots of our world, we will succeed in understanding that our world is configured ab initio on the structure of our cultural enantiomorphism and only through such an analyses we will succeed to avoid any form of fundamentalism. One of the instruments in this context could be literature, which sublimates such experiences, surpassing the social conflict in favour of a psychological-subjective one, activating reason, the human fundament of specific cultural differences and not of confessional or political conflict. Convincing arguments in this manner are countless and could be sufficient to remind the anticipatory force of literariness, such as that of the novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) by George Orwell, in which the traumas of post-war totalitarian regimes are anticipated, or *The Satanic Verses* (1988) of Salman Rushdie in which terrorist conflicts are foreseen.

Therefore, Camus’ assertions become utile. In such a post-traumatic context, he affirms that:

“The important thing, therefore, is not, as yet, to go to the root of things, but, the world being what it is, to know how to live in it. In the age of negation, it was of some avail to examine one’s position concerning suicide. In the age of ideologies, we must examine our position in relation to murder. If murder has rational foundations, then are period and we, ourselves, are rationally consequent. If it has no rational foundations, then we are insane and there is no alternative but to find some justification or to avert our faces. It is incumbent upon us, at all events, to give a definite answer to the question implicit in the blood and strife of this century.”¹⁶

“The Age of Terror” and its fundamentalisms

The debates on contemporary fundamentalism try to postulate the fact that this violent identity crises is placed closely to the Enlightenment epoch and the term, even if it is of recent date „ is a term of abuse levelled by liberals and Enlightenment rationalists against any group, religious or otherwise, that dares to challenge the absolutism of the post-

Enlightenment outlook.”¹⁷ The history of the concept is relevant for its conservatory or the ethical fundamentalism of the protestant West at the beginning of the last century, being rooted in the Tracts in 1910 by the Milton brothers and entitled *The Fundamentals: A Testimony of Truth*¹⁸, written by conservative theologians, with the purpose of defeating the religious fundamentals of Christian ethics. We can affirm that the defensive fundamentalism of the end of the century, Protestantism became in time an offensive one in the case of neo-protestant confessions, which set to Christianise a great number of “pagans” in the Muslim world and not only in the 20th century. The non-violent offensive of neo-protestant confessions, reported to the aggressive defensive of Islamic neo-fundamentalism of the second half of the 20th century reveals the enantiomorphic rapport analysed before, the two worlds being in a mirror image and their discrepancy translating each one’s attempt to dominate.

“The trial of the monkey” (1925) in Dayton, Tennessee, in which professor John Scopes was accused of teaching the theory of evolutionism in a public school, contrary to the creationist fundament of American society, demonstrates the religious radicalism of the last century, reconfirming the kantian negative thesis¹⁹ on the Enlightenment as an *unfinished process*²⁰, even towards the half of the last century. But the Scopes trial reveals another aspect, subsidiary to the religious conflict, referring to the amplification of the scandal by industrials of the region for publicity purposes, leading to economical effects, as they inferred the public effect of such actions in the context of American religious conservatory ideas at the beginning of the 20th century. „Culturally, states M. Rutheven, the media battle was a devastating defeat for fundamentalism.”²¹

Nevertheless, the public debate referring to conflicts generated by fundamentalisms reappeared only in the context of the '90s, after the fall of the Berlin Wall and of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, although, after the 1989 accord for stopping the Cold War, it was expected for terrorist attacks to diminish. In the second half of the 20th century the two fundamentalisms, the ethical and the religious ones were amplified proportionally with the development of the media mechanisms. Anybody can notice „the success of extremists in exploiting the media”²² and this form of control brings solid arguments for the psychological fundamentals of their actions, activating through media a collective unconscious, a generalised fear that annuls reason.

The term *terrorism* has entered our language in the 18th century and it defined violence actions upon the population with the purpose of making it obey the norms, postulating a sub-diacent rapport of force, exercised by a power that held the control on a majority that had to be subdued. Due to the fact that the rapport majority – minority is indirectly proportional with the one between the power and the masses, the coercive methods have been, since the birth of terrorism, very violent. Intimidation with the

purpose of reaching political or religious objectives, were the instruments of fundamentalists, in their attempt to impose their norms, canons. Terry Eagleton, offering the necessary philological perspective on the phenomenon, places the modern history of terrorism in the context of the French Revolution:

„As a political idea, it first emerged with the French Revolution—which is to say, in effect, that terrorism and the modern democratic state were twinned at birth. In the era of Danton and Robespierre, terrorism began life as state terrorism. It was a violence visited by the state on its enemies, not a strike against sovereignty by its faceless foes.”²³

This is another example of political enantiomorphism, modern terrorism being born at the beginning of democratic liberalism, therefore justifying its actions.

Nevertheless, the definition of terrorism still brings out lively debates in the Occidental world, due to a subjective perspective on the fundamentalist phenomenon. Al Qaeda Wahabism, ETA or Chechen segregation, Islamic nationalisms, such as Hamas or Hezbollah, the offensives of the Occident in countries with authoritarian regimes, justified actions such as “humanitarian aid” (Iraq, Afghanistan) or even individual terrorist attacks, such as the ones from Oslo and Utøya from the 22nd July 2011, probe this subjective, autarchic perspective on the phenomena. Noam Chomsky proves to be right when he states that “an act of terrorism enters the canon only if it is committed by their side, not ours.”²⁴ In this manner, the way the United States Code defines the “act of terrorism” is relevant:

“(A) involves a violent act or an act dangerous to human life that is violation of the criminal laws of the US or any State, or that would be a criminal violation if committed within the jurisdiction of the US or of any state; (B) appears to be intended (i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by assassination or kidnapping.”²⁵

But such a definition probes just the literal perspective on a complex and divergent phenomenon. The justification of the American offensive in countries considered having “terrorist potential”, by invoking the principle of suzerainty and defensive, is nothing but an enantiomorphic formula, which is related to political argumentation, mirrored by the

religious one, attributed to the extremist groupings that generated the violent attacks of modern times. In a chapter entitled „The Snares of Literalism”, Malise Ruthven brings out one of the grave dilemmas of our world facing the “hard” past, as Gianni Vattimo²⁶ would say, an interpretative radicalism of texts that fundamentals out culture:

“Fundamentalists everywhere tend towards a literalist interpretation of the texts they revere. A survey by the Gallup organization in 1980 found that 40% of the American public claimed to believe that the Bible is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally, word for word. Similarly, most believing Muslims, not just those described as Islamists or militants, are fundamentalist in the sense that they take the Koran to be the literal Word of God, as dictated to the Prophet Muhammad through the agency of the Angel Gabriel (Jibreel).”²⁷

But such a “hard” position reminds us of the stagnation of mentalities, if we were to rapport to the beginning and the end of the last century. Then and now we observe ideological manipulations of the masses, with intentional intensifications of the fundamentalisms with over-normed aims that translate the “will for power” and the need of political domination with subsidiary aims. The technique of amplifying ideological, religious or political conflicts has similar roots with those from “the trial of the monkey”. Literalness has become a vital instrument in this manipulating game in which „there is language that has been interpreted not only to permit killing, but where killing in the name of God becomes a sacred obligation.”²⁸

The attempts of dividing postmodern terrorism into periods mark the moment Munich 1972 as a turning point, when the terrorists associated to the group entitled “Black September”, a Palestinian paramilitary grouping kidnapped and killed eleven Israeli official athletes participating at the Olympic games. The apogee of world terrorism, in the actual variant, is considered the moment 9/11 of terrorist attacks on USA, moment that meant a re-launch of the world debates on what was generically called “the age of terror”. If in the case of the Munich event Europe became aware that this could take place beyond its traditional borders, being exposed to political and identity conflicts, creating, for the first time, a stable contra-terrorism strategy, in the case of 9/11 attacks the debates did not stop at the “9/11 Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States Report”²⁹, rapport in which the causes are estimated, the events are described and solutions for the national and global problem of Islamic extremism are brought. More than that, the dramatic events from the 9th of September, 2001, when 19 Islamic terrorists, associated to „Al Qaeda”, hijacked four passenger planes,

provoking the destruction of the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre in York City and the Pentagon, attacks that resulted in the deaths of almost 3000 victims, provoked real world reactions towards the cultural and religious conflicts of our world, proving that, in essence, a literal perspective of our world is not enough, causing reciprocal aggressions and gaps impossible to imagine before, when terrorism was seen as an isolated, local phenomenon.

The impact of the attacks on our world is still hard to quantify and still rising. Maybe it is sufficient to remind that after the attacks USA was involved in counter-terrorism activities without precedent (4000 FBI agents involved in investigations) and the level of security at its frontiers and the European ones was raised considerably and the impact was one of political, social and economical nature. Likewise, after the moment 9/11, the American society, as results from the rapport of the Commission, but also from the debates that propose, according to Chomsky's theory, "a literal approach", stated the vulnerability of a system in continuous defence, the weaknesses of a "self-sufficient" society. The rapport on a crucial moment in postmodern history in the American society not only brought out the vulnerability of a system that seemed invulnerable, as not only the terrorists had been prepared inside the American system, but also Osama Bin Laden and Ayman al Zawahiri who, from 1998, in an article in form of „Fatwa”³⁰, anticipated the 2001 attacks.

Not differentiating between militaries and civilians, the two protagonists of the article, but also of the sceneries of terror from September 2001 are exponential for the literality of the interpretation of the Koran. At the same time they denounce the barbarism, depravation and atheism of the Occidental world, just as the West denounces the barbarism, decay and anti-Christianity of the Islam, to demonstrate again the rapport of the social enantiomorphism. More than that, they anathemize American colonialism and evoke the obligation of every Muslim to defend natural rights. They operate with classical Islamic symbols, loaded with affective and identity value, speculating the primary needs of people of liberty and economical stability in the context of the economical precariousness of the third world. Associating questions of social nature (unemployment, migration, hunger) to problems of identity, cultural and religious nature, they induce the idea of domination and evil that comes from the outside and against which any Muslim should fight. In the '70s - '80s more Islamic countries knew a rapid development, due to petrol exploitation and in the '90s this development had been reduced, whereas unemployment reached a high rate, there were social inequalities and the level of living decreased, this generated disappointment. Moreover, young people educated in religious schools or even in laic schools were mainly focussing on technical domains, not the socio-humanistic ones, a fact that contributed to the vulnerability of people facing fundamentalist values. Bin Laden's arguments could seem

convincing, as he represented Islam as victorious in his fight with the outside enemy, the cited example being the one of the Afghan Islamic jihad against Soviet occupation.

Nevertheless, the phenomenon 9/11 brought about the internationalisation of terrorism and its interpretation as irrational global phenomenon, exclusively of religious nature. These were the effects of literalness, to the detriment of the understanding the complexity of this phenomenon. In the irrational and subjective vertigo of interpreting the phenomenon, as a natural sequence of the process of *mourning travail*³¹, using Freud's formula, the main objective of the analyses was that of identifying America's enemies and the first interpretation placed, at the basis of this conflict, an identity and religious difference, that led to a real "Clash of Civilisations"³².

As the anticipatory theory of Samuel Huntington states, after the Cold War, when the conflict was between the democratic West and the Communist East, in the new millennium the conflict will be one between major civilisations, Western Latin American, Islamic, Sinic (Chinese), Hindu, Orthodox, Japanese, and African. Huntington reacts to Francis Fukuyama's theory who, in his 1989 "The End of History?"³³, claimed the climax of the evolution of Western democracy and the necessity of "universal and homogenous" state that will upgrade the political problem in favour of social democracy. In accordance to Allan Bloom's theories³⁴, Fukuyama's position is criticised by Jacques Derrida in *Specters of Marx*³⁵, which is not in accord with the ideals of liberal-democracy.

"Instead of singing the advent of the ideal of liberal democracy, states Derrida, and the capitalist market in the euphoria of the end of history, instead of celebrating the 'end of ideologies' and the end of the great emancipator discourses, let us never neglect this obvious macroscopic fact, made up of innumerable singular sites of suffering: no degree of progress allows one to ignore that never before, in absolute figures, never have so many men, women, and children been subjugated, starved, or exterminated on the Earth. (And provisionally, but with regret, we must leave aside here the nevertheless indissociable question of what is becoming of so-called 'animal' life, the life and existence of 'animals' in this history. This question has always been a serious one, but it will become massively unavoidable.)"³⁶

In this context of the difficulties of analyses of the primary causes that generated the aggressive conflicts of the present, we are obliged to diversify the analyses instruments and the conclusions must be drawn by a divergent mind which brings at the same level the religious and political ideologies that form the basis of fundamentalism. Beyond the impact of restructuration of the world after the Cold War or the one of religious identity of Islam, we are forced today to notice the cultural and economical reconfiguration of the West, which is forced to accept the difference inside. Being used to colonial expansion for centuries, under

diverse forms, including that of religious conversion, the Occident is in an unprecedented situation to which he has to find solutions. The aggressions on the conservatory Occident are dual: on one side it is to be found in the situation of recognising and admitting its ex-colonies, in the post-colonial era, on the other side the explosion of post-structuralist ideologies which researched the rapport authority-majority, questioning the excessive normative and repressive character that dominated the existence of the West along its tradition in the 70's. Jerrold M. Post observes, in his analyses "The Psychological Dynamics of Terrorism"³⁷ that:

"although psychology plays a crucial role in understanding terrorism, a comprehensive understanding of this complex phenomenon requires an interdisciplinary approach, incorporating knowledge from political, historical, cultural, economic, ideological, and religious scholarship."³⁸

The figure in the carpet

The interdisciplinary perspective proposed by the majority of those who have tried or are still trying a scientific approach of the causes of terrorism in attempting to find the solutions of this phenomenon at the beginning of the third millennium, can be completed by a second perspective, as the literary one. *The literary perspective*, in spite of a romantic appearance in an age of capitalist pragmatism, would mean, in a first phase, the return to the argument of *literariness* and, in a second one, to the sublimation of the reality with which a literary text operates when it succeeds to subclass history. In other words, the literary perspective synthesises all these taxonomic variables, offering the pluralist image of man in accordance to its trans-historic nature. Salman Rushdie, one of the most well known contemporary writers who approached the conflict of the worlds, offered in 2001 some representative marks of the modern Occidental society that place it in disagreement with traditional, fundamentalist societies: "freedom of speech, a multiple-party political system, universal adult suffrage, accountable government, Jews, homosexuals, women's rights, pluralism, secularism, short skirts, dancing, beardlessness, evolution theory, sex."³⁹

But all these values are recent in the Occidental culture, as well, being recognised especially in the ethical practice of the 20th century which, after the '60s-'70s rediscovered the values of democratic liberalism. We are forced to admit that in Europe and in USA the fundamental values evoked as primordial causes of the terrorist attacks, such as "Pluralism, tolerance and free speech are somewhat ambiguous values."⁴⁰ And these are not representative for the European tradition. Moreover, we notice nowadays, more and more in New Europe, that local identities and values

are in conflict with the global ones, proposed by the European Union. The pacifist objective of the Union "The European Union is set up with the aim of ending the frequent and bloody wars between neighbours, which culminated in the Second World War."⁴¹ or the one of economical progress "As of 1950, the European Coal and Steel Community begins to unite European countries economically and politically in order to secure lasting peace."⁴² are today put down by the hard mental recurrences, by the diverse and conservative European ethos. Beyond the economical crises, with serious social implications, we are assisting to an identity crises with roots in our past resistant to changes, inadaptable and fundamentalist. The two worlds are in a strange process of social enantiomorphism, which seems to be the primordial root of this conflict. Justifying, through its leaders, the protective actions of the sovereignty and identity of "our land" as "right and just", the two worlds reflect each other.

Gulliver, Jonathan Swift's character in his "*Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World*" (1726), discovers other worlds constructed after the model of 18th century England. Swift's testimony is a protest against social inequalities, against dubious moral and a manifest for dialogue, an exercise of adaptability. It is not sufficient to consider that the *Other* does not share the same ethical, religious, cultural values, as we notice from another novel of the same period. *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) of Daniel Defoe, is the brute, the savage that has to be converted to our values that seem naturally superior, so automatically more just and fair, but the essence of humanism promoted by literature is to understand and find a set of common values. The misanthropy of the Enlightenment author is explainable, if we were to look at the similar situation of our worlds in conflict.

One of the explanations of the function of literature, its role in rapport with knowledge belongs to the American writer Henry James who, in his novel *The Figure in the Carpet* (1896) proposes an essential metaphor of the way in which we should relate to the "secret" message of literature and the way it sublimates reality. The metaphor of literature, the figure in the carpet contains a message that has no secrets. The young researcher, the conceited reader who decodes the world of the architect narrator wastes his existence in the failed attempt to identify a secret message, coherent in the folds of every text, a puzzle that will offer millenary answers to the questions of humanity. The illusion of the figure in the carpet, the truth hidden behind the figures is part of the authentic play of literature and life. By an excessive rapport to reality literature only gets further from it and its implicit profound meaning, that of transcending through sublimation, of offering through the ambiguities behind the text the divergent scheme of hypothesis on reality filtered through human ambiguity.

The vagueness of the new world representation and the inadaptation to "The Age of Terror" after September 2001 are the key elements in Ian

McEwan's successful novel, *Saturday* (2003). A "post 9/11" novel, *Saturday* observes the discrepancy between the classical British family of the neurosurgeon Henry Perowne and the instable world 18 months after the 2001 terrorist attacks. Starting abruptly with Perowne waking up at 3 a.m. and seeing a plane on fire on the London sky, McEwan's novel filters the representative anguish of the Western man faced with cultural difference and the instability of the contemporary world. His family is an image of the Occidental world facing its own anguish generated by uncertainty and insatiability. "Clearly, the Perownes represent the very flower of Western civilization -- decent, thoughtful, productive, cultivated, deeply, fundamentally good. And yet. It is 18 months after the Twin Towers. Are such humane values enough to safeguard them in a world in which one can never know, hardly even guess, from where the blow will fall?"⁴³ These are fundamental questions that displace Perowne from his everyday routine.

In an interview from 31st May 2006, the American prose writer John Updike, speaking about his twenty-second novel, *Terrorist* (2006), offers precious information referring to one of the objectives that formed the basis of this successful novel: "I think I felt I could understand the animosity and hatred which an Islamic believer would have for our system. Nobody's trying to see it from that point of view. I guess I have stuck my neck out here in a number of ways, but that's what writers are for, maybe."⁴⁴ This reversed perspective is what literature offers, compensating the emptiness and abuses of literality. "A lot of the Koran does not speak very eloquently to a Westerner", says Updike. "Much of it is either legalistic or opaquely poetic. There's a lot of hellfire -- descriptions of making unbelievers drink molten metal occur more than once. It's not a fuzzy, lovable book, although in the very next verse there can be something quite generous."⁴⁵

Updike's objective, with the novel *Terrorist*, is that of offering another perspective and the distance towards our ethical conservatory ideas. But the abuse of literality is recognized by the prose-writer who melts in the main character, Ahmad, the young man converted to Islam, both identity ambiguities and a radicalism more specific for young people than Islamic fundamentalists. Beyond conventions and ideological manipulations, beyond literality, Ahmad becomes a symbol of young people searching for identity. His meditations about the immorality of the world, the corruption of the society, the uselessness of the liberal education, the atheism of the contemporary world and its barbarism are, apparently, just the effects of a young Islamist fundamentalist. In essence, his meditation reflects the derisory contemporary world, filtrated through the eyes of a young man who can not find his place in an inform world in which he „don't want to be liked”:

“Ahmad is eighteen. This is early April; again green sneaks, seed by seed, into the drab city's

earthy crevices. He looks down from his new height and thinks that to the insects' unseen in the grass he would be, if they had a consciousness like his, God. In the year past he has grown three inches, to six feet—more unseen materialist forces, working their will upon him. He will not grow any taller, he thinks, in this life or the next. If there is a next, an inner devil murmurs. What evidence beyond the Prophet's blazing and divinely inspired words proves that there is a next? Where would it be hidden? Who would forever stoke Hell's boilers? What infinite source of energy would maintain opulent Eden, feeding its dark-eyed hour is, swelling its heavy-hanging fruits, renewing the streams and splashing fountains in which God, as described in the ninth sura of the Qur'an, takes eternal good pleasure? What of the second law of thermodynamics?"

More than the famous British surgeon of Ian McEwan's novel, the young Ahmad suffers an acute identity dilemma, specific more to his age than his belonging to a certain community, that place him in disagreement to the rational world and the principles that governed his existence. Questioning the valueless of Ahmad's world, the character interrogates himself exclusively. But in this context, the authors that tried to surprise the complexity of the 9/11 phenomenon were aware of the fact that the only literary plausible fact is that of inferring the psychological conflicts of those who have lived the dramatic experience of the terrorist attacks. Not even a realist narration would be capable of reproducing the emotional intensity of the moment, but it would have risked turning common a definite moment for our contemporary history, through its dramatic sense.

Frédéric Beigbeder, in his novel *Windows on the World* (2003), presents such a perspective, trying to infer and rebuild the whole anticipatory tension of the moment of the World Trade Center attack. The action takes place in the restaurant in the north tower in the morning of plane crashes and describes, minute by minute, the moments before the explosion till the crash of the tower: from 8:46 a.m. to 10:29. Carthew Yorsten and his two sons live the drama of the imminent death in this restaurant. The force of Beigbeder's novel consists in the tension of the disaster, in the amplifying fear, correlated with the meditation on fatality. It is, certainly, a paralyzing fear that projects the characters in the dark:

"Beigbeder is a smart, sarcastic writer who likes to shock; confronted by 9/11, he is not only cowed, but cowardly. When he comes to the climax of his

novel -the deaths of his characters, the collapse of the north tower - he refuses to write about it. The pages are scarred with odd unexplained interventions - "(paragraph cut)" and "(page cut)" - which look like the work of an editor, but actually seem to represent Beigbender's choice to step away from his keyboard. But if you are going to attempt to write the unwritable, why give up at the vital moment?"⁴⁶

we read in a Josh Lancey review from 2004 in "The Guardian". But the chronicler is wrong. The author who does not describe in detail his characters' death is not a coward. On the contrary, modernity taught us that a text says more through what it does not say, through what it suggests and anticipates, through the tension that prepares a crucial event that does not need to be described. The stake of literature that describes the 9/11 events is the same. Dramas take place inside the characters who sublimate, this way, reality. "The unwritable" becomes, therefore, "writable" through anticipatory tension and that express the force of *literarity*.

But in the amazing flux of novels⁴⁷ that sublimate the dramatic experience of the terrorist attacks of 11th September 2001 and the effects of this aggression on young people at the beginning of the new millennium, our attention is drawn by the 2005 novel of Jonathan Safran Foer, entitled *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. Oskar Schell, the narrator character aged nine, lives, as well, a post-traumatic experience, the action taking place two years after his father's death in the 11th September terrorist attacks. In spite of negative critics, Foer's novel is representative for the way violence, created by the profound civilisation gaps, was filtered through literature. The absence of the dialogue is compensated by a complex monologue of the young Schell, a monologue sometimes too difficult for the age of the character, but which marks, as we have noticed in the novel *Terrorist* of John Updike, the world turning towards itself, till autism, of a child. Unlike Ahmad, Schell is a pacifist, in spite of his trauma, the loss of his father, and his obsession will be to find the door that the key found in his father's room would unlock. This key is for Foer's character, the figure in the carpet, the desperate attempt to find the significance of his father's existence, the mystery that lies not beyond his death, but beyond his life. But the figure in the carpet presupposes the sublimation of reality, of a trauma that is part of the game of literature, that is interposed between the world and being, transcending the world. The key of the father is that which is supposed to open a world beyond which they would find the compensation for the absence of the father, covering an affecting void. For us, Schell's search in the New York labyrinth, Ahmad's hate towards the infernal Occidental civilization represent frustrations of the difference, compensations of our muteness when meeting the *Other*, the

search for solutions by making our dilemmas grow in the labyrinthic world of the new millennium. Literalness can not be a solution. Only by seeing beyond Schell's key, beyond Ahmad's fury, we will understand the provocations and complexities of culture clash.

Instead of conclusions: Literature and the epiphany of darkness

Terry Eagleton, in his "Invitation to an Orgy", observes that "If civilization and barbarism are near neighbours as well as sworn antagonists, it is partly because the evolution of humanity brings with it more sophisticated techniques of savagery."⁴⁸ In "the abstract logic of modernity"⁴⁹, Dionysus, the God of irrational orgy, becomes for our world a universal mark of uniformity, „the death of difference”, a negation of the Other who, as long as s/he exposes his/her identity, becomes the enemy. In such a context, terrorist anarchy and colonial absolutism use the same coercive, submitting instrument, terror, with the same justification of instrumenting actions. Both parties in conflict justify their offensive through the need for defence facing „the empire of the evil”. In this case, the enantiomorphic process of fundamentalisms is better reflected by the distancing and sublimation of the phenomenon, therefore the elimination of irrational, Dionysian effects. *Literal* analyses on extremist violence only increase gaps that, through *literary* analyses, seem to become abstract. The thin line between Good and Evil is one of the major themes of literature of all times: Othello and Iago, Faust and Mephistopheles, Zeitblom and Leverkühn, Alyosha and Ivan Karamazov are characters in the history of literature that argument this enantiomorphic process.

In one of the most analysed modern 20th century texts, *Heart of Darkness* (1903), Joseph Conrad proposes an anticipatory perspective on the rapport Good-Evil and especially our anguish facing an abstract terror that haunts the new millennium. Charles Marlow's fear facing Darkness can be assimilated to our fear of meeting another world, difficult to understand, barbarian, full of prejudices, but reflecting our own image:

“The fact is I was completely unnerved by a sheer blank fright, pure abstract terror, unconnected with any distinct shape of physical danger. What made this emotion so overpowering was—how shall I define it?—the moral shock I received, as if something altogether monstrous, intolerable to thought and odious to the soul, had been thrust upon me unexpectedly.”

Literature does not set out and can not solve any conflict of our world. But, through literature, we can become aware of the fact that the impact of conflicts and violence on people generate violence and dramatic psychological traumas. Literature is a manifesto of “The horror! The

horror!" of our literalness, of our modern disease as an unfinished, actual process: *over-simplification*.

Notes:

¹ This study was conceived in the context of the postdoctoral research, "The contradictions of the Literary Canon. Interdisciplinary Approach", within the project "CommScie", program co-financed by European Social Fund by POSDRU/89/1.5/S/63663, 2007-2013.

² *Encyclopedia Britannica*: "enantiomorphism", (from Greek *enantios*, "opposite"; *morphe*, "form"), also called Antimer, or Optical Antipode, either of a pair of objects related to each other as the right hand is to the left, that is, as mirror images that cannot be reoriented so as to appear identical", <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/186401/enantiomorph>.

³ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, Trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane, (London and New York: Continuum, 2004).

⁴ "International Herald Tribune", Thursday, November 17, (2011): 3.

⁵ "International Herald Tribune", Thursday, November 17, (2011): 3.

⁶ Noam Chomsky, *Pirates and Emperors, Old and New. International terrorism in the Real World*, (London: Pluto Press, 2002): 142.

⁷ Albert Camus, *The Rebel. An Essay on Man in Revolt*, With a Foreword by Sir Herbert Read, a revised and complete translation by Anthony Bower, (First Vintage International Edition, 1991).

⁸ Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West. Form and Actuality*, Translation with notes by Charles Francis Atkinson, (London: George Allen and Unwin LTD. Ruskin House).

⁹ Spengler, *The Decline of the West. Form and Actuality*, 23.

¹⁰ Chomsky speaks about "two ways to approach the study of terrorism. One may adopt a literal approach, taking the topic seriously, or a propagandistic approach, construing the concept of terrorism as a weapon to be exploited in the service of some system of power." Chomsky, 119.

¹¹ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, (Manchester University Press, 1984).

¹² See Rodica Frentiu, "Exploring the Boundary between Morality and Religion: the Shin-shinshukyo (New New Religions) Phenomenon and the Aum Anti-Utopia", *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 9, no. 27 (2010): 46-70.

¹³ Sandu Frunză, "Media communication and the politics of the symbolic construction of reality", *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 10 issue 29 (2011): 184. See also Sandu Frunză, "Political Communication and the Median Space of Religious Experience", *Revista de cercetare și intervenție socială*, vol. 39 (2012): 176-186.

¹⁴ Sandu Frunză, "Media communication and the politics of the symbolic construction of reality", 184-185. See also Sandu Frunză, "Increasing competence – an ethical duty of civil servants", *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences*, Special Issue, (2012): 32-41.

¹⁵ Chomsky, 34.

¹⁶ Albert Camus, 3. A relevant explanation of suicide may be seen in Md. Yousuf Ali, "Understanding Suicide Attack: Weapon of the Weak or Crime Against

Humanity?", *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 10, issue 30 (2011): 236-257.

¹⁷ Malise Ruthven, *Fundamentalism. A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford University Press, 2007), 5.

¹⁸ Ruthven, 7.

¹⁹ Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?", in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rainbow, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 32-50.

²⁰ Jurgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, Translated by Frederick Lawrence, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1987).

²¹ Ruthven, 14.

²² Chomsky, 24.

²³ Terry Eagleton, *Holly Terror*, (Oxford University Press, 2005), 1.

²⁴ Eagleton, VII.

²⁵ "United States Code Congressional and Administrative News", 98th Congress, Second Session, 1984, October 19, volume 2, par. 3077, 98 STAT.20707, West Publishing Co., St. Paul, Minnesota.

²⁶ Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Post-modern Culture*, Translated by John R. Snyder, (Polity Press, 1991).

²⁷ Ruthven, 40.

²⁸ Jerrold M. Post, *The Mind of Terrorist*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 160.

²⁹ <http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/report/index.htm>

³⁰ The interpretation of the Islamic law by an authorized, recognised religious.

³¹ Sigmund Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia", *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, Vol. 14 (London: The Hogarth Press), 239-260.

³² Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, (Simon & Schuster, 1998). See also Christine A. James, "Huntington or Halliburton? The Real Clash of Civilizations in American Life", *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 3 issue 8 (2004): 43-54.

³³ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, (Free Press, 1992).

³⁴ Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987).

³⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx, the state of the debt, the Work of Mourning, & the New International*, translated by Peggy Kamuf, (Routledge, 1994).

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 53.

³⁷ *** *The Roots of Terrorism*, Edited by Louise Richardson, (New York: Routledge, London, 2006), 17.

³⁸ *** *The Roots of Terrorism*, 17.

³⁹ Apud Christopher Hewitt, *Understanding Terrorism in America. From the Klan to al Qaeda*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 9. See also Liliana Mihut, "Two Faces of American Pluralism: Political and Religious", *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 11, issue 33 (Winter 2012): 39-61

⁴⁰ Christopher Hewitt, 20.

⁴¹ http://europa.eu/about-eu/eu-history/index_en.htm

⁴² http://europa.eu/about-eu/eu-history/index_en.htm

⁴³ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A45066-2005Mar17?language=printer>

⁴⁴ <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/31/books/31updi.html?pagewanted=all>

⁴⁵ <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/31/books/31updi.html?pagewanted=all>

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<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2004/sep/11/featuresreviews.guardianreview17>.

⁴⁷ We could mention here some novel such as *Brick Lane* (2003) by Monica Ali, *Windows on the World* (2003) by Frédéric Beigbeder, *Everyman* (2006) by Philipp Roth or *Falling Man* (2007) by Don deLillo, novels that exploit the dramatic effects of the attacks of 11 September 2001 on the contemporary world.

⁴⁸ Eagleton, 17.

⁴⁹ Eagleton, 21.

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*** *The Roots of Terrorism*. Edited by Louise Richardson. New York, London: Routledge, 2006.