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THE HIDDEN SMART BOMB: Terrorism Discourse and War Semantics (Towards a Global-American Grounding)

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"It's clearly a tragic day for America. In a long, hard war, we're going to have tragic days. But they're necessary. They're part of a war that's difficult and complicated."

Donald H. Rumsfeld, the secretary of defense, after guerrillas shot down an American helicopter in Iraq, killing 16 soldiers. *NY Times.com*, Nov. 3, 2003

"…to think differently – this thought must enter deeply into our intentions, actions, and so on – our whole being."

David Bohm, "The Implicate order: a new approach to reality"

This is a non-academic essay of civil disobedience to challenge the US ideology of vanity and pride. Please do not read if you are jingoistically patriotic, self-centered and bigotedly support patriarchal, sexist, dualistic, manicheistic fundamentalists (Christian and Islamic or whatever), who start drooling when they hear the word Armageddon, and especially if you are Mr. Simpleton Hunting.

Losing Ground?

I would like to start by claiming that Mr. Rumsfeld's discourse openly reveals that the American discourse of innocence, and the belief that war is indispensable in the US's self-imposed role of world's saviour, is losing ground. Rumsfeld should, and truly sensible Americans will, I am sure, ask themselves why the same discourse of a long war has been repeatedly used in all of the many invasions of America's history. Has it got to do with the Calvinistic belief in the elect? Do American politicians believe that they are 'elect' enough to 'sivilize' (Ref. to Huck) the so-called uncivilized nations of the earth? How **has** the US developed this vanity? And perhaps even more important a question, why has the US developed it, or out of which need? Is this role of the world's gendarme or saviour a mask

veiling the true intention of prevailing on earth only by possessing, or at least controlling, the natural resources of the earth? Who will be drinking the last drop of water on earth? Surely it must be an American. (Michael Haneke says that all questions imply their answers).

The New York Times.com page also highlighted on November 3, 2003, Richard W. Stevenson's article titled "As Casualties in Iraq Mount, Will Resolve Falter?" But before the article, there is the sad picture of the Chinook helicopter crash 'after being hit by a *guerilla* missile'. The memory, or the history of the word *guerilla* is hidden in Webster's definition of the word: a **guerilla** is

> Someone engaged in harassing, raiding or sabotage operations carried out by small bands of irregulars acting independently. The term was first used of the Spaniards who harassed Napoleon's army during the Peninsular War. This method of warfare hasoften been used against enemy occupation, esp. where the terrain allows the guerillas to hide and live off the country. Tito's partisans in Yugoslavia were an outstanding example in the 2nd World War (1995:427).

This definition clearly includes guerillas like Mustafa Kemal, like Commandante Castro or Che Guevara, like Lorca (with his poetry, and you might even have heard of a *For Whom the Bells Toll* by Ernest Hemingway, who was a journalist siding with the guerillas fighting against the fascists, who shot Lorca dead, and Hemingway was American, right?). Since the word is a variant of *guerra* (war), *guerilla* also implies that there is an enemy to 'war' against. In this sense, the use of the word guerilla implicity invalidates US troops presence in Iraq, because all US-causes to attack Iraq have been proved to be virtual, and hence is in fact the loss of the viewers' interest in the *Matrix* or *Lord of the Rings* trilogies. Reality is not what we see on TV; it is what the parents, and the other loved ones of the dead soldiers truly experience. It is the mother in*Saving Private Ryan* who elegantly collapses on her porch when she understands that bad news is at her door. From that scene, a sensible human being should arrive at a conclusion that war should be no more, and that saving a private is a big lie, just as was expressed in Wilfred Owen's 'cult' poem "Dulce es Decorum Est Pro Patria Mori". I also remember Luigi Pirandello's story "War" at the end of which the father stops boasting that his son fought for the emperor and died for his country, bursting into tears when the woman in the same compartment with him asks: "Is your son really dead?" Stevenson in his above mentioned *NY Times* article reminds the readers of Bush's former so-called intention, and wonders if he will abandon "**his quest to bring a stable democracy to that country"**. It is impossible for many people to agree with this rhetoric of the vain and make-believe saviour, whereas from first-hand knowledge, I know that the soldiers who are in Iraq only wish to be lying on their couches enjoying their beer in front of their TV at home. What a pity for the Americans who are challenging the wrong boundaries, and supporting a so-called Mr. President who by no means fits in my memory of the picaresque rogue, who enjoys his rite-of-passage as a hero on the *quest* to *bring* (mind you, the writer does not say *take*, which underlies the expected and welcomed angelic saviour) **a stable democracy** (I wonder how a country of no stable democracy indoors can take it elsewhere) to **that country** (feel the sense of superiority). The world is made up of the United States of America, and those countries, ie., the others, which are entitled to benefit from US opinions, US ways, US this, US that.

But if authority overdoes the truth that he is ruling, I start to believe that the authority has started to have doubts about his/her power, that the collapse is at hand. Stevenson's 'murky enemy' in Iraq, is attacking the enemy who has invaded his country. Hence, the enemy whose nature is murky is the US.

(And I do not have space and patience enough to analyze why he is called President Bush, and not American President Bush? Why do Turkish newscasters also call him the President Bush, as if the American President is the President of the whole world? Is globalization already established, and of all people, Bush is the leader of us all, our saviour to save us from ourselves?)

Remember *The Horse*, the Hungarian playwright Gyula Hay's play, in which everyone turns into horses to underline allegorically the fact that one becomes a replica of the tyrant (here it is Caligula) if he is too blind. Hence, the riot of the animals in Orwell's *Animal Farm*. It is high time that Americans established a stable democracy in the United States of America.

However, in order to challenge some boundaries for economic or symbiotic reasons, the Challenger (also the name of a NASA missile?) needs blind individuals, as well as blind masses. The title of the PALA conference was: "**Challenging Boundaries**", which reminds me of the *sine qua non* existence of a horizon to go to, the "ask for more" doctrine, or the ubiquitous frontier ideology, which was subtly criticized in *The Truman Show*.

The panel I attended at the PALA conference was entitled "Rhetoric and/as Terrorism: Before and After September 11." Being a man, as the Turkish saying goes, who always seeks a calf under the ox, i.e., a sceptic, I sense in this title the need to show, even to promote September 11, 2001 a date as important as the birth of Christ, which is the turning point of history, which I never understand why. Why is it not the birth of any other man but Jesus? Why should the world history change after 9/11? Because 3000 people were killed? If so, why is any other tragedy not as important for Americans? Have the Americans forgotten that if they had not joined the WW2 so late, at least 6 million people could have been saved? Then I ask, why does "La Vita est Bella?" end so hypocritically with the American tank as a gift to the Jewish boy? If the planes hitting the WTC and the Pentagon mean to the public that "**They** are in the house now," (Mel Gibson in *The Signs*), do I have to approve of anything and everything the superpower extravagantly does after the attacks, like attacking Afganistan, like invading Iraq under the veil of a Holy Coalition. (I wonder what Hawthorne's Young Goodman Brown would have to say if he met this Holy Coalition in the forest.)

"Ground" means:

1. "**Solid surface of the earth, firm or dry land**": Out of the ashes and on that solid surface will rise a new tower, and other smaller towers forming a supporting circle around it. The solidity of the ground brings to mind Tom Cruise's falling off the top of the highest building in NY, supposedly one of the twin towers, also alluding to the Fall, and the natural depravity of man. But, this long war, this long journey of man, this purgative way towards spiritual regeneration can only be justified by tragedies like the 9/11 attacks, which is, to me, just one of the millions of other tragedies in the world which make me shed tears. But the American way of self-pity - that they have become so vulnerable now that they are the super power - also underlines that they are suffering from a self-centered foreign policy, that they are so "elect" that everyone

wants to attack them, which is nothing but paranoia. (Hence the replication myths of the other, evil, and all sorts of apocalyptic products);

2. **"Land having an indicated character"**: From now on, the unfortunately empty space, and later the new towers built on Ground Zero, will be like the altar of the Acropolis of the globalized world. Wishful thinking or not, this is in the hearts of many Americans, as New York is like a wounded woman, who has gained tragic grandeur, and Ground Zero is like the scar on her face, as a proof of the ordeals she has had to go through to reach her target. This land has an indicated character, the land of the chosen, the land of the righteous, the point that deservedly legalizes our past, present and what we shall do in return (symbolized in the feather in *Forrest Gump*);

3. **Grounds**…
    a. **A tract of land appropriated to a special use**: The ***Retaliation de Dieu*** myth justifies the US creating new protectorates, and making a long list of countries challenging American boundaries.
    b. The foundation or basis on which a theory or action rests; reason: That is why I consider 9/11 itself as grounds to my statement;

4. **Subject for discussion; topic**: Eg. "Careful, you're treading on delicate ground." This also implies how delicate the nature of rhetoric, the word, the discourse of any kind is, as it gives away the intention of its user;

5. **Rational or factual support for one's position or attitude**: I.e., the ground we fall to, September 11, 2001, the attacks the US was subjected to, are to be rational, factual grounds for retaliation, for any US or "coalitioned" measure taken afterwards;

6. **In fine arts** (in popular art, the cinema and in literature) it stands for:
    a. **a coating of some substance serving as a surface for paint, ink, or other media in art: "Lead white is a traditional ground for oil paintings":** Though there is no need to interpret this, I just want to remind the reader of the warfare games played in the unfortunate history of us human beings, which is full of such cause-and-effect, ie., war and retaliation ridden foreign policies.

During the US&UK coalition attacks on Iraq there was a protest slogan on the internet: "Bombing for peace is like fucking for virginity." Loss of virginity, in morality-ridden brains makes a girl ordinary, but for the US forces to bomb 'that' country is to take revenge on a virtual offense, the enemy's penetration, committing sin by touching the untouchable cult city; hence her tragic grandeur. New York is now like Maria Magdalena, the sacred whore, and in all of us there is one. The moment the horn of the unicorn is broken (and remember it only approaches virgins), the horse, the sanctity is gone. New York is no longer the unreacheable, we can all touch it. I.e., it is no longer too exclusive to touch. I can easily be a part or a member of the cult in its aura. Now that it has been penetrated I can much more easily empathize with America, having gone through catharsis, having been purged of my feelings of pity and fear. Hence, the approval of the retaliation by many Americans immediately after the attacks. (I hear that nowadays the majority in America is no longer supporting the foreign policy of the Bush administration, I hope Americans give up enjoying the title "happy slaves");

7. **Ground** also means the place we walk on, and that is how we feel safe and secure. I would never appreciate any act that aims at taking the ground I am walking on away from me. But perhaps the meaning that is the closest to the myth of the phoenix is the meaning of the word connoting life. In nature, the ground holds life in it, the root (zero?) is held by the ground, and life blooms out of it by the help of, for instance, water (alluding to faith, as the retailiation is appropriated in the name of God, which is part of the replication myths of American history—Ref. to: "With God on Our Side" by Bob Dylan). This explains why the miracle happens at the end of *The Signs*: The evil alien is killed by the sacred water poured all over it after it receives a deservedly swinged baseball bat (national sport), and that is how Mel Gibson, who had lost his faith in God after the unfortunate car accident killing his wife, restores his faith when his cry is heard by God only to bring his son back to life, reminiscient of the taught need of the Christians for the rebirth of Jesus Christ, and if that is not happening, the possibility of the anti-Christ's ubiquitousness, which good believers should always keep in mind. That is why many people thought at first that the US attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq were ***ground attacks***; that is how the US administration (please note how careful I am not to use the word "Americans") places its argument on a foundation.

Zero, a number found by El-Harizmi, means:

1. **The figure or symbol 0, which stands for the absence of quantity in the Arabic notation for numbers** (remember the vertical fall/flow of numbers in the *Matrix*: the message sent by the falling numbers off the tower of Babel is that they died to save us, similar to Jesus's crucifixion. The fall of the twin towers is therefore like cutting off Ada's (in Jane Campion's *The Piano*) finger 'thanks to' which she is washed of her sins, also reminding the viewer of the almost archetypal American heroine Hester Prynne's adultery. The sixth time I watched*The Piano* was only to see which finger was cut off, because it was the same finger she touches her piano with, when she starts a new life with her new metal-coated finger; and the finger she was making a new start with was the finger that creates the musical note So, which is considered the beginning note in the simplest musical measure. In other words, similar to Katherine Anne Porter's "In my end is my beginning" the circular nature of history is replicated in images, in rhetoric, in signs, in legends and myths, hence the formation, the re-vitalization and appropriation of the Western collective memory as global memory;
2. **Naught, nothing:** It is nothing but it still is there;
3. **The origin of any kind of measurement; the line or point from which all divisions of a scale, as a thermometer, are measured in either a positive or a negative direction:** Hence the title of the panel: "Before and After September 11". The media subtly monitored the world's welcoming 9/11 as the zero point, which is the end and also the beginning of all scales;
4. **The mathematical value between + (plus) and – (minus) :** Therefore, although it seems to be naught or nothing, it has a value, as something new will start from this point;

5. **The lowest point or degree:** This recalls its antithetical connotations, the highest point or degree, that NY is martyred, by falling to the lowest degree; in fact the WTC has reached the highest point in God's eyes. One has to experience *Inferno* before appreciating *Purgatorio*, and*Paradiso*. But before Dante, we must remember some Greek and Roman mythology upon which the signification and approval of Western civilization is established: Remember Icarus falling into the depths of the Aegean, remember Prometheus, hence the Bellonaic justification of warfare;
6. **The absence of a linguistic element, as a phoneme or morpheme in a position in which one previously existed or might by analogy be expected to exist:** This explains some of my comments made so far;
7. **In linguistics, it notes a hypothetical morphological element that is posited as existing by analogy with a regular pattern of inflection or derivation in a language, but which is not represented by any sequence of phonological elements: Eg., " 'Deer' has a zero plural."***The twin towers,* if not the World Trade Center, will exist in our memory by analogy, and I am sure it will find its metonymical usages in the English language very soon. Eg., "The 9/11 effect" or "The 9/11 syndrome" (remember the metonymy the 'Chinese Syndrome');
8. **In mathematics;**
    a. **the identity element of group in which the operation is addition**
    b. root (function of a complex variable has the value zero); therefore, the US action taken after 9/11 is an addition to the country's identity, a new life will spring from those roots…etc.;
9. **(In military jargon): A sight setting for both elevation and windage on any particular range *causing a projectile to strike the center of the target on a normal day*** [emphasis mine]**, under favorable light conditions, with no wind blowing:** Well, I could not better describe that ominous day, September 11, 2001. The psychoanalytical connotations of the center of capitalism (New York City), and the center-of-that-center (World Trade Center, which I called the Khabe of Western Capitalism) was hit at ***the very beginning of a new day.*** I am suggesting again, the assumed circular structure of time, and that the end might be a beginning;
10. **A single-engine Japanese fighter plane used in WW II:** The planes 'entering' the WTC were not single-engined, but the word Zero definitely reminds many Americans of the Japanese attack on the Pearl Harbor, as a result of which the US joined the war. I do not know why history keeps repeating itself. Perhaps it has no imagination;
11. **"Zero Hour"**:
    a. (Military jargon, especially in WW I) **the time set for the beginning of an attack.** Therefore, the early hours of September 11 marked the beginning of an attack on the US, also starting the US attacks on the suspect countries that are supposed to be feeding terrorism (according to the BBC, there are some 60 more countries in the list);
    b. **(Informal). A decisive or critical time:** It sure is.

In addition to so many connotations, suggestions and associations the words *Ground* and *Zero* bring with them separately, or independent of each other, the term "**Ground Zero**" all by itself is "**the point on the surface of the earth or water directly below, directly above, or at which an atomic or hydrogen bomb explodes**." Therefore, the attacks on the WTC, the towers collapsing with images similar to the mushroom images of the atomic bombs the US forces (please note, I refrain from saying 'Americans') on Hiroshima and Nagasaki (I still wonder why the death at Ground Zero of hundreds of thousands of Japanese, and the destruction of future generations on those two spots only, never had the same value as the birth of Jesus Christ. Maybe it is so for the Japanese, as it happened to them and not to us, so it is their tragedy, for which we can only feel sympathy. Is this how human beings are taught to relieve their guilty consciences?)

Therefore, the tragically opened space of the World Trade Center, this "Ground Zero", has become the epitome of the embodiment of all meanings, connotations put in the words *ground* and *zero* on the way to establishing a foundation for what will come after 9/11. American history aspires to have an expression like "**Before 9/11** and **After 9/11", which will in time be a term to stand for the turning point of a universally accepted American-based global history.**

To conclude, there are boundaries that are challenging US aspirations, longings, hunger. Therefore, the US memory should be shaped so that Americans should approve of the US powers challenging these boundaries. (Hence, the power that lies in the pun). In both interpretations boundaries exist. In other words, *boundaries* are taken for granted, accepted as living entities, as ***the other***. These boundaries may be challenging because they are supposedly evil and thus dangerous, hence the approval of their destruction; or they may be different or not 'sivilized' like the native-Americans, so they have the right to be changed by the vain generals of the frontier history; or these boundaries have all the natural resources I must use to exercise my power (like oil) or to survive first and then to prevail (like water and other natural resources). The US**has** (not **have;** in this sense it is **one, and like the 'deer' it is both singular and plural, but since I am referring to govermental policies, and not the people of many different states, by using *has* I put the blame on one big State, which has unfortunately come to symbolize for many *tempest tost* the capitalistic, imperialistic ideology still fed by a sick memory, the psychic residue created by primordial images, archetypal metaphors, patterns of legends and myths, fears, aspirations etc., which should be destroyed or kept inactive, like the delusions of the protagonist in *A Beautiful Mind*, for the hope of healthy future generations**) been challenging the geographical boundaries of others and also their tolerance, as the US has turned out to be the devil incarnate, for some, at the presence of which many believe in God (fear of the devil is essential to establish the love of God, remember?); but even if not so, it is definitely a country ruled by an ideology diabolically using the discourse of terrorism as a weapon against whoever is a threat to **his** will, **his** power, **his** order, **his** democracy, **his** very being. "We are the people" is misunderstood by the present ideology; now it means yes "We are the people" and "You are threats to my existence, the others" hence the rain of "patriots, cruises, tomahawks".

These days we are watching *Matrix Revolutions*, the attacks on Zion. Neo (the new Jesus Christ), with all the images, metaphors around him, is aiming at structuring a new conceptual universe. Hence, the *sine qua non* nature of the discourse of terrorism, the searching and destroying smart bomb. If only Rumi, then Emerson and Thoreau could rise, seeing how wildly misused their ideas are, they would, I am sure, say: "This is not what I meant, this is not what I meant at all."