Negative Dialectics in John Updike's
Terrorist: A New Historicist Reading

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Abstract:

Widely acknowledged as one of the best narratives that depict the atrocities of 9/11 in America, Updike's *Terrorist* has been tackled as the magnum opus that embodies cultural hegemony, the life of Muslim Americans as an ethnic minority in America, and how they interact with the forms of oppression practiced against them. A scrutinizing look, however, at the text in terms of being a discursive formation initiates a process of a textual analysis that transcends the binary oppositions of the oppressor and the oppressed, the dominant culture and the marginalized one, and casts light on the epistemic fabric that shapes the linguistic input of the text. The aim of the present paper is to explore the hidden enunciative function that endows different signs with all their possible interpretations, and that ultimately determines how discursive analysis to be carried out in the research points out how the experience of terrorism, and the sophisticated process of identity formation should be deterritorialized. Interacting within the space of the text, terrorism as a political and a human phenomenon, and identity formation as a highly complex and incessant process, feed the discourses of politics, history, and religion, and are mutually determined by them. The research explores, with no a priori assumptions, the interstitial space in which terrorism, identity formation, and the discourses of history,

politics, and religion interact and overlap. It also makes use of new historicism as the critical approach that envelopes the argument presented, and that can, due to its revolutionary assumptions, reveal how politics, religion, and history function as negative dialectics in a way that allows the reader to reason phenomena without being victimized by fixed points of reference, reductionist binary oppositions, or ambiguous elementary propositions.

Keywords: discourse - negative dialectics - terrorism - identity formation - politics - religion - history - discursivity - episteme - deterritorialization.

مجلة وادي النيل للدراسات والبحوث الإنسانية والاجتماعية والتربوية (مجلة علمية محكمة)

الديالكتيك السلبي في رواية "الإرهابي"
لجون أبدايك: قراءة في ضوء التأريخية الجديدة

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ملخص البحث:

تعد رواية "الإرهابي" لجون أبدايك من أفضل الأعمال الروائية التي صورت حياة المسلمين في أمريكا بعد أحداث الحادي عشر من سبتمبر ورصدت بدقة الهيمنة الثقافية التي تمارسها الثقافة الأمريكية على مختلف الثقافات، كما سلطت الضوء على المقاومة الفكرية والثقافية التي تصدر عن الأفراد الذين ينتمون لثقافات مختلفة ضد محاولات الهيمنة الأمريكية. ويهدف هذا البحث إلى تقديم قراءة نقدية تحليلية للرواية في ضوء التأريخية الجديدة، الأمر الذي يلقي الضوء على العمق الفكري الذي تتميز به الرواية وعلى أسلوب الكاتب في التعامل مع الأساس المعرفي الذي تقوم عليه الكثير من العلوم الإنسانية وعلى الأساليب الخفية التي تصاغ بها المعرفة، ويوضح البحث – أيضًا – من خلال القراءة النقدية والتحليلية للنص – كيف أن ظاهرتي الإرهاب وتشكيل الهوية يجب أن يتم التعامل معهم بشكل مختلف بعيدًا عن الأنماط الفكرية السائدة والتي يشوبها الكثير من التبسيط المخل. ويهدف البحث أيضًا إلى توضيح التداخل والتفاعل بين الخطاب الديني والتاريخي والسياسي من خلال الإطار الفكري الذي تنتهجه التأريخية الجديدة والطريقة النقدية التي تتعامل بها مع المنتج الفكري والظواهر الإنسانية بعيدًا عن الفرضيات المسبقة أو التبسيط المخل.

الكلمات الدالة: الخطاب – الديالكتيك السلبي – الإرهاب – تشكيل الهوية – السياسة – الدين – التاريخ – الممارسة الخطابية – الأساس المعرفي – إعادة تعريف المفاهيم.

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1. Introduction

Metaphysical thinking concerns itself with creation of categories for an understanding and an interpretation of reality and the lived experience, while epistemology deals with the mechanisms through which this interpretation is verbalized and communicated among people. This epistemological investigation is embodied through a discourse that is determined by an epistemic fabric, and governed by power relations that codify the production of this discourse. Discourse[1], in any text, then, is no longer an autonomous entity that is self-sufficient, or that is able to reveal a homogeneous meaning that yields no paradoxes. Being part of a discursive[2] formation that conditions its mode of being, discourse is the field that enables theorists to look at the epistemic[3] fabric of knowledge, and to investigate the ground of thought that looks at particular statements at a particular time as knowledge. According to Barbara, "a text's difference is not its uniqueness, its special identity. It is the text's way of differing from itself. And this difference is perceived only in the act of rereading. It is the way in which the text's signifying energy becomes unbound… through the process of repetition, which is the return not of sameness but of difference" (Johnson 4).

Within the framework of new historicism, a text's difference and its inner mechanisms of signification are the main object of study. New historicist thought welcomes discontinuities and points of rupture, and carefully examines the set of rules which govern the production of knowledge in a specific historical period. It is, thus, "a movement away from the all-encompassing global narratives of history and politics, and a countervailing stress on the local and particular forms of difference and struggle" (Connor 252). The contours separating cultural mechanisms, historical records, and literary and aesthetic reflections are thus blurred, leaving the

recipient in an interstitial space in which all the humanistic disciplines interact together and create a dialogical context that can encompass the unseen and the unarticulated. New historicist thought studies "in parallel a canonical literary text and non-literary ones from the same period (its co-texts), without, in theory, privileging the former, [new historicism] deconstructs the hierarchical opposition between history (traditionally conceived as factual) and literature (fictional)" (Ciobanu 205). Creating a metaphysical thinking that is down-to-earth and that does not seek fixed points of reference, new historicism introduces metaphysical forms of reasoning that welcome negative dialectics, and produces interpretive methods that are nourished by the interaction between overlapping discourses, minor histories, and the actual human experience.

The aim of the present paper is a twofold one. It seeks to elucidate how new historicist thought can accommodate a genealogical reading of John Updike's *Terrorist* as a text and a context that tells history without a priori hypothesizing, that departs from the reductionist outlook of binary structures, and that introduces to the reader a discursive formation that departs from idealist historical inevitabilities. Second, it offers a close textual analysis of the narrative that imparts how the discourses of history, politics, and religion interact together through enunciative functions that take the reader beyond the limits of a mere cultural analysis of the life of minority groups under the pressure of hegemonic culture, or the binary representation of the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed. According to Saif Fakhrulddin, "the interpretations of the relationship between Muslim minority groups and American cultural imperialism were identified in terms of the social discussion of oppression" (9). Most readings of the narrative have, thus, been entangled within the web of binary structures that look at the forms of oppression practiced by the hegemonic American culture over the minority groups represented through the Muslim-Americans living in America. The present research does not offer a hermeneutic reading of the

oppression of hegemonic culture over minority groups. It rather examines the text as a discourse that reveals the epistemic fabric of the heterogeneous discourses in the text, and how historical and literary studies do not exist "as the opposite sides of a pendulum, but more in a web-like crisscrossing network as contemporary theory has gradually obliterated the boundaries between text and context and between history and fiction" (Lai 2).

2. New Historicism and Negative Dialectics in *Terrorist*

An intellectual thought and a poststructuralist way of reasoning that totally departs from the strategies of historicism, new historicism is a discursive practice that dwells on the problem of representation and the philosophy of the sign. Revolting against modernism's fake humanism and autonomy, new historicism shatters the alleged universality of historical and political readings, and enlarges its scope to capture minor histories that ultimately deconstruct the seemingly coherent accounts of Western culture. According to Sergio Ruminott, "modernity itself, as a category and as a historical period, seems too general to capture the particularities of those nations – beyond Europe – that claim their own historicity" (326).

Foucault's poststructuralist account of history and his investigation of the role power plays in determining the ground of thought that produces knowledge in a specific historical context have influenced new historicist thought, endowing it with a philosophical background that is able to accommodate the silenced, the unseen, and all those who have been categorized as the second unprivileged term of Western binary oppositions. Foucault's analysis of the epistemic fabric of knowledge and how discursivity determines the structure of that episteme have shaped the new historicist method of reasoning and of reading historical and literary texts. According to Sara Mills, in "*The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), Foucault attempts to chart these changes [in the discursive systems] systematically so that he can map the discursive limits of episteme, that is, the sets of discursive structures as a whole within which a culture thinks" (56). Power,

for Foucault, completely dissolves itself in discourse, creating a space in which power and knowledge are not external to each other. And power conditions the epistemological production, determining from within the changes that happen in the discursive structures.

Considered as the fulcrum of Stephen Greenblatt's new historicist orientation, *Practicing New Historicism* and his influential article "Resonance and Wonder" announce the advent of a turn in new historicist thought. Foregrounding counter-histories and anecdotes, Greenblatt introduces a new historicist thought that abstains from offering "*traditional close readings*" that "build toward an intensified sense of wondering admirations… [and heads toward] new historicist readings [that] are more often skeptical, wary, demystifying, critical, and even adversarial" (2001, 9). He thus practices a new historicist way of reasoning that questions both the ontological essence and the epistemological matrix of different discourses. According to Greenblatt, new historicism should seek "ethnographic realism, and [should seek] it principally for literary purposes. That is, we had no interest in decisively leaving works of literature behind and turning our attention elsewhere; instead, we sought to put literature and literary criticism in touch with that elsewhere" (2001, 28). Destabilizing the literary texts and the historical records, Greenblatt's new historicism pays heed to the problematic issue of human agency and its being part of a discursive web in which power dissolves itself, paving the way for *contingency* to disrupt all historical inevitabilities. Human agency, for Greenblatt, is that postmodern self that exercises power within its surrounding cultural matrix, and that is, simultaneously, subject to power exercised against it from the official political and cultural institutions.

Linda Hutcheon's concept of historiographic metafiction has problematized the whole field of historical knowledge. According to Hutcheon, "historiographic metafiction… keeps distinct its formal auto-representation and its historical context, and in so doing problematizes the very possibility of historical knowledge,

because there is no reconciliation, no dialectic here – just unresolved contradiction" (1996, 106). History and art, for Hutcheon, are immersed in dialogical encounters that stress difference, not similarity, that highlight points of rupture, not historical inevitability, and that blur the contours between history and art. Historiographic metafiction, for Hutcheon, revisits the past and locates the aporia that lurks there in the epistemic fabric that has verbalized that *past*. According to her, "theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs is made the grounds for [a] rethinking and [a] reworking of the forms and contents of the past" (In Jencks, 1992, 77-78). Intensely self-reflexive, works of historiographic metafiction expose suppressed histories to allow a redefinition and a recontextualizing of realities and truths.

A new historicist reading of Updike's *Terrorist* seeks to locate the literary text, without a priori assumptions, in its socio-political and historical context, and to cast light on the hidden tension within the connotations of the text and its historical reality. Levy, the school counselor, says, "history is a machine perpetually grinding mankind to dust" (Updike 20). Levy's comment problematizes the concept of history, and introduces the reader to the postmodern idea of "the presence of the past" (Hutcheon, In Jencks, 1992, 77). History, in *Terrorist*, is not a self-enclosed humanistic discipline that reveals facts. It is, rather, part of a discursive formation that is influenced by power relations that govern its enunciative function. Talking to Levy, Ahmad says, "look at the history the school teaches, pure colonialist. Look how Christianity committed genocide on the Native Americans… with everything in Washington run by the Jews to keep themselves in Palestine" (Updike 36). This dialectical relationship between history, politics, and religion creates a *resonating* effect, and "an involved contemplation of complex, dynamic cultural forces which a viewer (or a reader) feels… with the power and experience of wonder" (Lia 12).

A text that encompasses minor histories which deconstruct a whole gamut of official historical records, *Terrorist* is crammed

with many references to historical incidents that question the whole system of signification of Western historical version. Ahmad says, "Religion's images now attract hatred, as in the wars of Reformation" (Updike 12). The reference here to the old European wars of religion is a "direct engagement… in the processes of signification through re-contextualized social and historical references" (Hutcheon, In Jencks 88). The process of recontextualizing historical events stimulates the reader's mind to think about the ground of thought that verbalizes these historical incidents. Shaikh Rashid links the attempt of Abraha Al-Habashi to destroy Kaaba to the American war on Iraq: "let's hope they were equipped with thicker skins [the elephants] than the unfortunate Humvees supplied to Bush's brave troops in Iraq" (Updike 100). Shaikh Rashid's interpretation of the Quranic historical incident is emblematic of an interpretive process that is based on propositions that finally shape the interpretation presented. Minor histories, within the text, are also susceptible to epistemological scepticism. Ahmad says, "What evidence beyond the Prophet's blazing and divinely inspired words proven that there is a next [life]?" (Updike 2). The realm of the unseen is subject to a questioning process that interprets phenomena from a rationalist point of view. *Terrorist*, as a text that embraces counter discourses that question the soundness and credibility of official ones, is a discursive formation in which the past and the present are entangled within a web of dialogical encounters, with no resolution and no historical inevitabilities.

3. The Discourses of History, Politics, and Religion in *Terrorist*

The discourses of history, politics, and religion in *Terrorist* represent silent discourses and points of rupture that disrupt the notions of autonomy, self-legislation, and self-determination of Western culture. *Terrorist*, can thus be read as a *genealogy* in which "the endless self-reflexive and essentially

bourgeois discourse of the modernists is replaced by the literature of silence… of fragments or fractures' (Pippin 169). The discourse of secular modernity in the text is deconstructed by the silent discourses that pinpoint the aporia within it.

History, in *Terrorist*, is not a metanarrative that legislates its own ontological existence. History has become "another very complex signifier with many meanings… In a word, 'the death of history' does not refer to the death of *history* but rather to the 'death' of 'history' as a sign" (Lucy 42). Charlie explicitly comments on the atrocities committed in Palestine and Iraq, foregrounding a historical discourse that casts light on the aggression and irrationality of the Western world. Charlie says, "look at America abroad-war. They forced a country of Jews into Palestine, right into the throat of the Middle East, and now they've forced their way into Iraq, to make it a little U.S. and have the oil" (Updike 145). Mentioning Palestine and Iraq is an emphasis on a historical dimension that embodies "the fear [of those who are *silent*] of a secular, cosmopolitan, rational culture, together with the anxiety, paranoia, hatred and anger that attend such fear" (Pippin xix).

With the absence of history as a self-enclosed entity, one is able to reconceive and recontextualize signs and historical incidents. The text refers to the "Zanj" (Updike 144), as an ethnic minority, and to "the doomed American war against Vietnamese self-determination" (Updike 141). The reader thus is invited to indulge in a process of historicizing minor and silent histories away from the fixed points of reference imposed by the official historical institutions. Commenting on the historical ties between the Muslims and the Jews, Ahmad says, "before Israel, Muslims and Jews were brothers – they belonged to the margins of the Christian world, the comic others in their funny clothes" (Updike 291). The historically complex relationship between Muslims and Jews is revisited, re-historicized, generating a discourse in which history and culture interact together. Introducing a binary structure in which the Christian world is the first privileged term and Muslims and Jews are considered as the unprivileged "comic others";

Ahmad is inviting the reader to think of that interstitial space that brings about "a particular confrontation with the power[4] relations and institutions that hold a monopoly and [that] produced the hegemonic discourses in the cultural field" (Ruminott 365).

Politics and religion are two discourses which assert themselves to be intricately interwoven within an American context. According to Michael Corbett,

> Religious incentives have always been
>
> the determinant of different ethics and
>
> values in the American society. Arousing
>
> controversy as far as its role in the
>
> American society is concerned, religion
>
> has, moreover, initiated political
>
> conflict within the American political
>
> circles (15, trans. mine.)

In *Terrorist*, Ahmad echoes the dialectical relationship between politics and religion. He says, "they [the teachers] are paid to instill virtue and democratic values by the state government down in Trenton, and that Satanic government farther down, in Washington, but the values they believe in are Godless" (Updike 2). This dialogical encounter between the *seemingly* different discourses of politics and religion creates an interstitial space in which Ahmad's religious pragmatism interacts with the secular version of Christianity, on the one hand, and with the American politics, on the other. This dialectical relationship between politics and religion is revisited, from a different angle, through the reference to Jack's grandfather: "even his grandfather's socialist faith had gone sour and musty with the way communism had worked out in practice" (Updike 22). The extratextual connotations of the words "faith" and "Communism", and making use of the word "Communism" and not "Marxism", deeply investigate the nature of faith, the

soundness of some political systems, and the linguistic input through which these concepts are expressed.

The political discourse in *Terrorist* functions also as a discursive formation that reveals the mechanisms of power at work in a particular historical context. According to Foucault, "the State, for all the omnipotence of its apparatus, is far from being able to occupy the whole field of actual power relations, and further because the State can only operate on the basis of other, already existing power relations" (Foucault, 1980, 122). Power, in the text, functions from the bottom up and is exercised by Ahmad, and even by Levy, against the official power of the State and the linguistic system of signification which disseminates its ideas and aims. Ahmad comments on the policy of the American government as follows: "outposts of the Zionist-dominated federal government, attempting with welfare enrollment and army recruitment to prevent the impoverished from rioting and looting" (Updike 11). Levy comments on Bush's foreign policy as follows: "… and Bush's wars soaking up what used to be a surplus" (Updike 37). Through the political discourse, the reader is able to analyze the web of power relations in the American context, and to identify the aporia in the official political discourse and its fake claims to equality and liberty.

Through the discourse of religion in *Terrorist*, the unspeakable is foregrounded, and the reader is entangled within a web of epistemological scepticism as far as the nature of belief is concerned. For Ahmad, "to worship a God known to have died – the very idea affects Ahmad like an elusive stench" (Updike 47). The nature of belief is subject to epistemological scepticism, and the reader is confronted with questions that touch upon how propositions are formulated and verbalized. The discourse of religion is also juxtaposed with the discourse of science. Within the framework of Western scientific discourse, "only what we can measure and deduce from measurement is true. The rest is the passing dream that we call ourselves" (Updike 2).

This juxtaposition between scientific and religious discourse

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is foreground once again when a link is established between God "as described in the ninth sura of the Quran" and "the second law of thermodynamics" (Updike 3), that establishes entropy as a physical property of thermodynamic systems. These dialogical encounters between science and religion not only cast light on how propositions are presented as true and sound, but also on the enunciative function that legitimizes the credibility of certain statements in a historical context.

4. Deterritorialization[5] of concepts in *Terrorist*

Deconstructing binary structures and allowing minor and silent discourses to indulge in dialogical encounters with the official ones, *Terrorist*, as a piece of historiographic metafiction, has deterritorialized concepts and introduced a web of relations that allow different interpretations to be presented and discussed. According to Foucault,

> the identity of a statement is subjected
>
> to… conditions and limits: those that
>
> are imposed by all the other statements
>
> among which it figures, by the domain
>
> in which it can be used or applied, by
>
> the role and functions that it can perform
>
> (Foucault, 1980, 103)

Terrorist, as a discursive formation, proves itself to be open to a reading and to a process of recontextualizing concepts with no premeditated strategies or a priori hypothesizing.

History, as a concept, has been subjected to an interpretive process in which the reader marks out "the dispersion of the points of choice, and defines prior to any option, to any thematic preference, a field of strategic possibilities" (Foucault, 1980, 37). Charlie says, "history isn't something over and done, you know.

It's now, too. Revolution never stops. You cut off its head, it grows two" (Updike 180). History is defined here through an enunciative function that stems from the points of view of minor and silent histories. Power – indicated through the use of the word "revolution" – functions from the bottom up; generating a historical version in which the second unprivileged term of Western binary oppositions is given room to destabilize the first privileged and official one.

The concept of terrorism has been radically deterritorialized in *Terrorist*, and the reader is made to listen to what *seems* to be a justification for acts of terrorism. Commenting on the West's cultural mechanisms of representing the Arabs, Riyad Manqoush says, "while the tropes of Arabian night, harems, sheikhs, mummies, and Arab villains still prevailed, a new image [that of Arab Muslims as terrorist] started to emerge after the establishment of Israel in 1948 and more specifically after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war" (74). Charlie's comment on those who died in the Towers acts as a counter discourse that casts light on an unspeakable minor history. Charlie says that those who died were the ones who further "the interests of the American empire, the empire that sustains Israel and inflicts death everyday on Palestinians and Chechnyans, Afghans and Iraqis" (Updike 184). Charlie's counter discourse is confronted with another discourse presented by Levy when he talks about religious fanatics and computer geeks as the two sides of the same coin. He says, "religious fanatics and computer geeks: the combination seems strange to his old-fashioned sense of the reason-versus-faith divide" (Updike 25). Levy's comment introduces a binary structure in which reason is the first privileged term that has the right to comment on faith and not vice versa. Functioning as part of a discursive formation that is susceptible to an endless process of interpretation, the concept of terrorism is deterritorialized and the reader is given a chance to listen to different interpretations without being guided by a set of predetermined propositions.

In *Terrorist*, Ahmad refers to Sayyid Qutub and introduces a multiplicity of concepts that should be treated as historically

determined by interpretive traditions away from historical universality and inevitability. Ahmad's discourse refers to the concepts of *jähiliyya*, *jihad*, and *ummah*. He says, "but the concept of *jähiliyya*, meaning the state of ignorance that existed before Mohammed, extends also to worldly Muslims and makes them legitimate targets for assassination" (Updike 298). The proposition that the "state of ignorance" should "extend also to worldly Muslims" reveals an ambiguous elementary hypothesis that lacks a sound process of logical argumentation. For Ahmad, "*jihad* doesn't have to mean war… It can mean inner struggle" (Updike 146), and for him, the concept of *ummah* is an "encompassing structure of divine law that brings men rich and poor to bow down shoulder to shoulder" (Updike 165). Acting as signifiers that invite the reader to think of miscellaneous signifieds, the concepts of *jähiliyya*, *jihad*, and *ummah* act as points of rupture, and a historical discontinuity, not only in the epistemological matrix of Western discourse, but also in that of Eastern and Islamic discourse. The aforementioned concepts introduce the logic of the "unity in difference" that lies "at the heart of Greenblatt's conceptualization of the relationship between parts and whole in his historical analysis of a cultural constellation" (Pieters 31).

5. Identity Formation in *Terrorist*

Susceptible to the influence of a plethora of discourses that crisscross together, identity is configured and reconfigured. According to Bhabha, "the third space of enunciation which makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process, [and which] destroys this mirror of representation as an integrated, open, expanding code" (37) is the space in which the formation of identity takes place. In *Terrorist*, a new syntagmatic structure of overlapping discourses is created; a new technique of self-representation is introduced, and both the archive and cultural contemporaneity are abandoned.

Imprisoned within a web of overlapping historical, political,

and religious discourses, Ahmad struggles for autonomy against structures of domination, epistemological scepticism, and unstable mechanisms of signification. For him, "the world is difficult… because devils are busy in it, confusing things and making the straight crooked" (Updike 8). Ahmad is, moreover, alienated by the discourse of hatred that is being launched against Islam. He sometimes watches some channels that discuss "the anti-Islamic fury that has perversely possessed the present-day West" (Updike 194). Caught within a network of often contradictory social, religious, and cultural determinants, Ahmed is also subject to the linguistic influence that is the outcome of certain concepts pertaining to Islam and made use of by Islamists to achieve specific political purposes. Charlie tells Ahmad, "you can't do just you and God, ... without the *ummah*, the knowledge and practice of belonging to a righteous group, faith is a seed that bears no fruit" (Updike 228).

The process of identity formation, in *Terrorist*, is thus a highly problematic one that succumbs to interconnected, yet, heterogeneous determinants. Ahmad's identity is subject to paradigms of thought, logical and illogical, and to a linguistic input that sometimes communicates a meaning which has not been intended in the first place. It is also destabilized by cultural ruptures that bring about his feeling of alienation and estrangement. Ahmad "feels his pride of isolation and willed identity to be threatened by the masses of ordinary hand-pressed men and plain, practical women who are enrolled in Islam as a lazy matter of ethnic identity" (Updike 174). Ahmad's estrangement is thus "bound up with the abandonment of a belief in historical inevitability, for, with this abandonment, the values of present could no longer seem the necessary outcome of an irreversible teleological progression" (Greenblatt, In Carbonell 544). The dialogical encounters – within the framework of the text – between overlapping discourses, along with a linguistic input that is deconstructed by many self-reflexive paradoxes, have brought to the forefront the real mechanisms of identity formation away from predetermined propositions or a priori transcendental hypotheses.

6. Conclusion

A piece of a historiographic metafiction that blurs the contours between history and fiction, and that problematizes the issue of historical referentiality, Updike's *Terrorist* provides the reader with a synchronic interpretation of history and with syntagmatic structures of thought that defamiliarize his/her understanding of both the present and the past. Within the framework of the text, the present and the past are united in difference, and interacting in negative dialectics, producing a text that is a historical context and a history that is a text. The intellectual content and the linguistic input of *Terrorist* arouse the reader's *wonder*, and cast light on an intellectual impossibility to depend on assumptions and propositions taken for granted in the past. Cultural ruptures and historical discontinuities are in function in the text, commenting on the official cultural institutions, problematizing the issue of cultural representation, and deconstructing the arbitrary relationship between signifiers and signifieds.

The dialogical encounters – within the framework of the text – between overlapping discourses destroy historical determinism and fixed points of reference. Caught within the web of negative dialectics, the discourses of history, politics, and religion shatter the peace through which we embrace elementary propositions and teleological assumptions. This dialectical relationship between overlapping discourses has generated an epistemological context in which discourse can never lead to an unchanging truth, and in which power is brought to the forefront as a mechanism that governs the production of statements in a particular historical moment. The reader is thus invited to analyse and interpret the epistemic fabric of these discourses and the enunciative function that governs the production of statements. Discourses *resonate* within *Terrorist*, inviting the reader to study the knowledges that operate as the dominant discourses in a given historical period, and

to investigate the deployment of these knowledges to achieve ideological purposes.

The discursive analysis and the new historicist reading of *Terrorist*, presented in the research, have, moreover, questioned the teleological positivism that surrounds some cultural and religious concepts, and have highlighted the problem of subjectivity and identity formation. Concepts, such as, *history, terrorism, jähiliyya, jihad, ummah*, have been deterritorialized, and treated as parts of a discursive system that changes over time, producing an unstable web of signifiers and signifieds which ultimately shocks our cultural views of reality and of the linguistic systems of signification. With silent histories at work, overlapping discourses caught within a web of negative dialectics, and concepts deterritorialized, identity formation is problematized. Within the framework of the text, the issue of subjectivity, as a focal point in new historicist thought, is treated as an intertext, an interdisciplinary one, that refuses to succumb to teleological positivism or transcendental a priori hypotheses.

Endnotes

1. Discourse: According to Mills, "For Foucault, all knowledge is determined by a combination of social, institutional and discursive pressures, and theoretical knowledge is no exception. Some of this knowledge will challenge dominant discourses and some will be complicit with them" (33). He also elucidates the meaning and the function of discourse in the field of linguistics: "Within those areas of study which draw on linguistics as a method of analysis, the term discourse is often used in ways which contrast sharply with definitions used by cultural and literary theorists" (131).

2. Discursivity and Discursive Formation: The terms discursivity and discursive formation are used to refer to the discourse and how it functions. According to Dreyfus, "studying discursive formations requires a double reduction. Not only must the investigator bracket the truth claims of the speech acts he is investigating… he must also bracket the meaning claims of the speech acts he studies; that is, he not only must remain neutral as to whether what a statement asserts as true is in fact true, he must

remain neutral as to whether each specific truth claim even makes sense, and more generally, whether the notion of a context-free truth claim is coherent" (48). According to Hawthorn, "Foucault uses the term discursive formation in a way that seems interchangeable with discourse… All societies, following Foucault, have procedures whereby the production of discourse is controlled, selected, organized and redistributed… These procedures govern, variously, what Foucault terms discursive practices, discursive objects, and discursive strategies" (47).

3. Episteme: episteme determines the structure of any discourse. Mills illustrates that, "Foucault is the only theorist who has seriously attempted to examine the change in… discursive systems over time and the changes that this subsequently causes to those cultures' views of reality" (56). He also refers to Foucault's work on the epistemic fabric of knowledge: "In the archaeology of knowledge (1972), Foucault attempts to chart these changes [in the discursive systems] systematically so that he can map the discursive limits of an episteme, that is, the sets of discursive structures as a whole within which a culture thinks" (56).

4. Power: Foucault's concept of power as mentioned in *The History of Sexuality*: Foucault's aim is "to move less toward a "theory" of power than toward an "analytics" of power: that is, toward a definition of the specific domain formed by relations of power, and toward a determination of the instruments that will make possible its analysis" (Foucault 82).

5. Deterritorialization: The term is made use of in a former research of mine entitled "Gilles Deleuze and the Encounter with Nothingness: A Postmetaphysical perspective". The term is used by Gilles Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition*, and it refers to the process of recontextualizing concepts and investigating what concepts *cannot* mean. In Colebrook's book entitled *Understanding Deleuze*, he comments on the meaning of deterritorialization as follows: "life creates and furthers itself by forming connections or territories. The very connective forces that allow any form of life to become what it is (territorialise) can also allow it to become what it is not (deterritorialise)" (xxii).

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