



**DECONSTRUCTING THE DEMOCRATIC MODEL IN THE POLITICAL
NOVEL: CITIZEN DON DELILLO'S NONCONFORMIST PRACTICE IN *LIBRA***

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Introduction

Characteristic of the American literary production of the 18th century, known as the Age of Reason, the social function of literature has actually not been abandoned by many American writers over several times. Expressed through the productions of such Puritan writers as Anne Bradstreet and Edward Taylor, and restated by many other American men of Letters, among whom one can cite the Transcendentalist writers Emerson and Thoreau, the social objective of literature expressed in various forms, covers such fields as education, the environment, and politics. Common to all these artists insuring the American experience of literature is the purpose of conscience-awakening that travelled down the ages. That function developed not only through religious and moral instructions, but also in the ecological and political fields.

The narratological and semiotic approach to literary works refuses any reference to the writer for the analysis and the understanding of the work of fiction. But when a fiction deals with politics, through a speculation on the assassination of Heads of State by covert agents of the CIA and a reference to historical events, and when it comes to be the expression of an opinion about those historical events that marked international relations in the course of the Cold War, an allusion to the writer, not simply as an artist but more importantly as a member of human society or as a national of a State yields significant results.

This article postulates that the American writer Don DeLillo is a citizen in the full meaning of the term, for at least two main reasons. First, through his literary productions, he discloses a frothing intellectual activity which, like the Scribe's intellectual works in ancient societies, marks a significant contribution of an individual to the shaping of his nation. Such literary achievements, it can be stated, constitute an important heritage of the nation, marking simultaneously the writer's duties as well as his responsibility for the advancement of the American nation. Second, writing about politics is a way to participate in the political debate of one's time, especially when the issues are related to a crucial turn of modern history characterized by the Cold War. Exploring the political field in his fiction may be a way for the writer to better affect both his nation and his time – as the American transcendentalist writer Henry David Thoreau would state. DeLillo's novel *Libra* poses as an obliteration of the



Western hegemonic version of democracy that qualifies the Western world – including the US – as the best defender of democratic principles in modern society.

Fitting in with Derrida's deconstructionist criticism of the traditional structure of binary oppositions, DeLillo's novel *Libra* subscribes to a postmodern vision in which the democratic model represented by the Western world in general and the United States in particular is obliterated, while its weaknesses and ugliness are exposed through the activities of covert agents all of whom are busy plotting against the sovereignty and the liberty of other nations.

In terms of reception of his fiction, the writer might destroy people's trust in him as a good American citizen, when he apparently tramples underfoot the sacrosanct principle of the pre-eminence of the reason of State over any thing else. He also runs the risk of being accused of rebellion when he unveils what is hidden. Yet, if one admits that the deconstructionist approach is an act of refusal of the traditional model, because it is in essence a rejection of the hierarchical order and dichotomies previously founding our thoughts, one must deduce that DeLillo is an intellectual rebel who rejects in his fiction the idealistic version of American democracy. The term "différance" used by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida expresses not only the idea of difference but also, more importantly, a defiance of the traditional scheme constructed by the society. Similarly, DeLillo's novel tends to show that while people may proudly refer to the US democracy as something of a model, as compared with other less privileged political regimes, events in the novel invert that opposition when actions of conspiracy against the sovereignty of other independent nations are chronicled. Dealing with various plots of the US executive power under the responsibility of which subversive actions are operated, *Libra* takes away the sacred aura of the democratic principles the US pretends to defend. The writer's act of rebellion takes the form of a questioning of the quality of the great democracy the US commonly represents. The nonconformist posture he adopts is meaningful, as it raises the following problematic: Which sense and orientation must be given to the act of rebellion in a world where people are in need of models? That is the question to be discussed in this article. In the first section of the analysis, the focus will be laid on a description of the constructing process of the American myth of democracy. A reflection on how DeLillo who poses as a nonconformist, views the Western-American version of democracy will be conducted in the next articulation of the work. The third and last part of the study discusses the sense and essence writer's nonconformist practice.

I. The US Constructing its Myth of Democracy

More than the anthropological definition it covers, that is, more than the idea according to which myth was created out of ritual, as reference to the book *Myth, Literature and the African World* (Wole Soyinka, 1990: 32), the term myth in this work has much in common with the notion of ideology. In this work, it may not be created out of ritual, as it derives from the history of the United States of America. It covers all "forms of consciousness" that are



determined by the hegemonic objectives of the US in order to legitimize its interventions in the world (Roger Webster 2001: 60-61). Inside the nation, this myth becomes a very powerful idea that every American citizen should be committed to and which sustains the “life orientations” of the whole community, as Amouzou of the University of Kara, Togo, would say in his documented work titled “Operative Myths and the Requirements of Cultural Emancipation in Asare Konadu’s *Ordained by the Oracle*¹.

The construction of the myth of democracy in US began early in the eighteenth century from the years of the Revolution to the independence of the nation. The myth becomes a reality in people’s mind as the nation today might claim to have fought against the colonial system at a time when it was a group of colonies, becoming accordingly a model for other colonized peoples fighting to gain their independences. Following the Revolution, the Declaration of Independence strengthens the myth through the democratic principles founding and justifying the nation’s need of self-government.

Concerning the evolution of values, the United States as a nation is juxtaposed with Europe, the Old continent. The former being regarded as the Atlantic daughter of the latter, according to the phrase used by the French philosopher Pierre Manent in his reflections on democracy in Europe², the values of humanism, liberty, and democracy are thus given similar meanings and importance in the two worlds. For instance, a close reading of the US Declaration of Independence shows that European legacy early proclaimed under the influence of the Catholic Church in the sixteenth century during the Renaissance period, when humanism was defined in terms of human condition, tolerance, and reason. Likewise, the notion of liberty fundamentally mentioned in the Declaration restates that definition of humanism, which in turn provides the text of the American Revolution with all its democratic substance. The American vision of democracy draws its justification as well as its force from the philosophical tradition of the Old continent based on the sovereignty of the people. The American University teachers of Law Kenneth Janda, Jeffrey M. Berry, and Jerry Goldman are right when they define democracy as “authority in the people,” at least, if we consider that the notions of authority and sovereignty are inseparable from one another. When the Declaration acknowledges the right for the governed to alter or abolish any form of government when it is incapable to ensure such rights as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, it means to affirm that sovereignty attributed to the people in a democratic system. The myth of democracy in the US is shaped, in this case, by the historical link between the nation and the Old continent serving as a model.

However, according to Pierre Manent’s reflections, the American view of democracy and the European thought of the term have neither the same characteristics, nor the same

¹ Akoété Amouwou, “Operative Myths and the Requirements of Cultural Emancipation” in Asare Konadu’s *Ordained by the Oracle*, in *Particip’Action*, p. 168

² Pierre Manent, *La raison des nations: Réflexions sur la démocratie en Europe*, Paris, Gallimard, 2006, p.15.



orientations. Describing the two different versions of democracy defended by Europe, on the one hand, and the US, on the other, he uses the term “quiétisme” and “activisme.” He means that while the European interpretation of democracy offers to each people some sort of freedom in order to part with its past of intolerance and oppression, the American version of democracy is transformed into a mission for which US administrations assume the right to resort sometimes to force, if necessary, and impose democracy (Pierre Manent, 2006: 15). If the US had not been in history a nation with an experience of colonizer, it now gives the impression of affirming its power through an activism oriented towards the expansion of democracy which, indeed, becomes a noble reason for all its external interventions. That activism, in this sense, reads positively as a way for the nation to construct its myth of democracy through some mechanism of exportation of the values related to the notion.

The representation of the US as the Atlantic daughter of Europe coupled with the nation’s particular version of democracy indicates two major phases in the construction process of its myth of democracy. The first phase is identical to the one in Europe and the two phases merge together to constitute what Gérard Mairet describes as the organic myth of the West³. As a monolithic alliance the US and Europe constructed and keep on constructing their myth of democracy on the ground of an alleged superiority over the other peoples in the world. Distinguishing itself from these peoples, the Western bloc embodied, here, by the US raises its ideal of governance, in general, and democracy, in particular, to the status of universal values. The myth becomes a desire of power either subtle or aggressive at times.

At home, such aggressiveness of the American version of democracy often led to intolerance and terror in the nation, as eloquently shown in *Libra* through references to the years of McCarthyism. Indeed, the case of the Rosebergs evoked in chapter 3 of the fiction extended to the fight against gays, the “clean-cut boy,” reminds of various assaults on individual freedom in America’s democratic history. One possible reading of the indictment of the Rosebergs in accordance with the construction of the myth of democracy is that it might have been justified by a noble cause, that of striving to maintain the myth, which should never be weakened. In fact, the US as a nation protecting its democracy might have believed that the force of its political regime lies in the people themselves, as these are expected to become the channels through which the myth of democracy develops or replicates. Simultaneously, the human channels of the myth have to be controlled so as to prevent any possible threat against it. If the execution of the Rosebergs may appear as an act of intolerance, it might have served as a form of expiatory sacrifice that confirmed the power of the myth. That capital punishment could appear as the myth’s capacity to protect the American people against any danger – the danger of communism in this case – coming from the other side. It therefore appears that the myth of American democracy is constructed

³ Gérard Mairet, “L’idéologie de l’Occident: signification d’un mythe organique”, in *Histoire des idéologies: de l’Église à l’État du IX^e au XII^e siècle*, p.23



through the American citizens themselves because like any ideology, the myth seeks to take root in the mind of every single individual for it to legitimate the power of the system inside the nation.

Also important about the case of the Rosenbergs is that the myth of democracy is shaped through the negation of any idea that happens to be different from the national political stream. In turn, it tends to dictate values and form opinions, since the objective is to shape in individual mind what the French philosopher Gérard Maitre calls the “universitas,” that is, all ethical, political, and legal representations of civil life⁴. The negation of any other value system considered not to be in accordance with the national model leads proportionally to a valuation of the myth. But DeLillo’s book does not duplicate the representations of America’s democracy. In other words, the writer refuses to become the channel for the perpetuation of an idealizing myth. Additionally, the fiction defined here as an expression of the voice of an American citizen becomes the channel through which the writer unveils the backyard or the hideous face of that democracy so proudly cited as a great one.

II. The Western-American Version of Democracy Viewed by a Nonconformist

In accordance with the Derridean tradition of deconstruction, this part will try to show the two phases in the deconstruction of the myth structure. Quoting some passages in *Libra* this section intends to destroy in the first phase the balance of power according to which the Western world, in general, and America, in particular, represents the vehicle of democratic principles. That is the phase of subversion of the myth of America’s democracy. In the second phase, DeLillo’s fiction tends to extract from the myth its status-enhancing image. Yet, this deconstructive approach to democracy in America necessitates, first of all, the reading of some instances of nonconformist practices in books other than DeLillo’s *Libra*.

One of the central features of any human society has always been the division between the ruling class, on the one hand, and the governed on the other. Yet, although such a division is necessary for any organized structure, the hierarchical division was and is the cause of the emergence or the activating of revolutions, because political and social divisions pose as evidence of differences in interests, which in turn are potential source of crisis. The crisis may lead to what we know as social and political conflicts, or it may be funneled through pure intellectual actions when conducted by intellectuals. The very nature of the human being seems to teach us that such crises are inevitable, because the sense of disobedience to an external force limiting our liberty is an innate quality. That instinct search of freedom develops and often becomes one of the various forms of anarchism as the French philosopher Michel Onfray detects in himself when he confesses: «Je sais ma fibre anarchiste depuis mes

⁴ *Ibidem*, p.183



plus jeunes années » (Michel Onfray, 1997: 9)⁵. Reaffirming that anarchist feeling, he adds that it is impossible for him to be submissive to established authorities (Onfray, 1997: 9). Through these terms, indeed, the philosopher gives to this human instinct an argumentative dimension as well as a philosophical basis. At another episode of history, with other striking words, too, the American transcendentalist philosopher and writer Ralph Waldo Emerson teaches his disciples, among whom one can quote Thoreau, the necessity for the human being to refuse some conventions. He teaches a principle of existence when he says: “Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist”⁶.

The common denominator to Emerson, his disciple Thoreau, the writer of the famous political pamphlet *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience*, and later to Michel Onfray, with his *Politique du rebelle*, is therefore the desire of existing as free human beings and free citizens in their respective communities. The disobedience they develop in their works apparently promotes an obstinate feeling of rebelliousness. But one must make no mistake; the act of rebellion is justified by certain events of their times, and above all a desire of contributing to the improvement of political, economic, and social facts of human society.

With his political fiction *Libra*, the American writer Don DeLillo perpetuates the same tradition of rebellion when he questions the value of the American democracy. Adding a dissenting voice to a debate over the greatness of that democracy, the book deconstructs the binary structure in which nations in the world are qualified as poorly developed, mainly due to partial or total absence of democracy, and developed nations, when they are governed on the ground of democratic rules. That hierarchical division also shows that praiseworthy regimes are those respectful of human rights and the sovereignty of other nations in the world. Instead, those qualified as dictatorial regimes are to blame, because it is essential to preserve the humanistic values on earth. In this sense, since it is defined as one of the greatest democracies, common opinion heartily accepts the pre-eminent position held by the USA on the international scale. The promotion of humanistic values of tolerance and human rights, as to say, needs a leader.

Still, the discordant voice of DeLillo in *Libra* comes to show that America is not that allegedly great democracy. The writer’s voice sounds subversive when many passages in his fiction reverse the hierarchical opposition in which the US holds the position of one of the best democracies in modern world. If the case of the Rosebergs has been described in the preceding section as a way to maintain the myth of democracy, it becomes here the manifestation of restrictions to freedom. The novel’s allusion to the execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg reminds of a historical period marked by hysteria about communism. That generated intolerance, because “The idea was to make all communists look like traitors”

⁵ Onfray confesses his feeling of disobedience to authorities or institutions when he argues: “I know the anarchist streak in myself early in my childhood.”

⁶ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays and Lectures*, reprint, 1983, p. 261



(*Libra*, 39). When the character of Lee Harvey Oswald refers to that episode of America's political life, he means to highlight a negative facet of the myth of democracy. Oswald's words remind of the measures for a close surveillance of many citizens. Just because communism is considered a menace to the nation's democratic ideals, many people deprived of freedom of thought are constantly monitored by government services, hence the effect of Foucault's Panopticon. As no one wishes to be regarded as a traitor, and because it would be an honor to monitor the neighbor, just to ensure that he or she is not a communist, the "automatic functioning of power" – that of the myth of democracy – is perfectly assured (Foucault, 1977: 201).

The effect of that policy of witch hunt is obvious in terms of assault on citizens' freedom of thought. Considering the correlation between the notion of liberty and that of democracy, it can be stated that the passage in *Libra* about the episode of the fight against communism at home weakens the pillars of America's democracy. In such an atmosphere of terror created by the state apparatus, the citizens become less free human beings, but more subjects of the system that limits their liberty. In the end, when the people as a social body in any democratic regime cannot express its liberty, the notion of sovereignty founding democracy loses its substance.

On the one hand, the deconstructive approach used in the novel means to induce to an examination of the containment policy and the corresponding scale of national values that generated in American history restrictions to individual freedom. On the other hand, it questions the democratic development of a nation. *Libra* focuses on the containment policy that initially aimed at curbing Soviet influence abroad, but which becomes an instrument used to condition the American's psyche. In his description of life in Russia, the character of Lee Harvey Oswald, created by the CIA operatives for the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, observes: "fear rules the country" (*Libra*, 206). Ironically enough, in the context of the policy of McCarthyism evoked in the novel, this statement is directed at the US of that period. In the same way, too, when Oswald's mother reveals her intention to write a book dealing with Russia and "the evils of that system" (*Libra*, 228), the novel may suggest the evils of the American democratic system.

The first phase of the deconstruction of America's democracy evident in these passages of the novel is one in which the nation is described through a gloomy face characterized by practices contradicting democratic principles. Indeed, when any opinion other than the one officially admitted in the political stream is strictly forbidden, the risk of dictatorship becomes greater and greater. The second phase in the deconstruction comes into being when the novel opposes the traditional opinion about the hierarchical division between perfect democracies and non democratic regimes. When the novel tends to compare the US to Russia, the opportunity is offered to detect the evils of America's myth of democracy. At least, the image of America is brought back to a less proudly proportion. That consists in describing the nation



not as a perfect democracy, but rather as one that follows its way toward the best regime respectful of human rights. Nations, it is safe to say, follow their own ways to democracy. In this sense, therefore, the novel shows that the democratic development in America is certainly outstanding, but also characterized by some episodes of weaknesses inherent to any process of growth. *Libra* envisages such failures as means to evaluate the process, but not to attribute to America's democracy the etiquette of perfection that leaves no possibility of questioning.

Likewise, *Libra* deconstructs the idealizing image of America's democracy when it questions the ideal as compared with the reality about the strategic and economic interests of the superpower. The deconstruction occurs when the novel denounces the interest-oriented policy of the US to the detriment of a policy that encourages and promotes democratic values. Chronicling the activities of covert agents in some foreign nations qualified as "banana republics" it is noted that the democratic ideal is mostly overlooked when the national interests are at stake (*Libra*, 126). Projects of conspiracy against leaders in these "banana republics" are orchestrated by US agents for the sake of economic interests. The strategy designed by CIA agents consists in creating corporations, like the "Cuban-Venezuelan Oil Trust" and the "United Fruit" serving as covers (*Libra*, 125). When DeLillo reveals what the novel mentions as "top-secret" concerning facets of the American foreign policy, he may be accused of not carrying out his civic responsibility. He takes the risk of being regarded a bad citizen and a nonconformist, because such a secret as the plot of the "assassination of foreign leaders" (*Libra*, 138) should never be revealed.

DeLillo's nonconformist practice in his novel means to denounce, in effect, the American version of democracy marked by what Pierre Manent calls "activisme" in his analysis of Europe's and America's interpretations of their roles in the expansion of democracy worldwide. The byproduct of this activism is the possibility of resorting to force in other nations accused of dictatorship. In this way, for instance, various scenarios of invasions of foreign nations as well as assassination of foreign leaders are chronicled in the novel. Instead of promoting democracy, the novel mentions the case of exile leaders provided with "cash for arms and ammunition" in order to kill their President (*Libra*, 174 – 175). The case mostly cited in the novel is about the formulating of plans to kill the Cuban President, Fidel Castro (*Libra*, 20-22, 219). While America proclaims its faith in the power of democracy, it paradoxically makes use of violence to ensure the changeover of political power in foreign countries.

Although such an exposition of the criminal actions of the US falls within the field of fiction, it nevertheless goes against the democratic correctness of the US. That is all the more probable as DeLillo's fiction reveals the nation's antidemocratic practices both at home and in its relationships with other nations. The deconstruction of America's myth of democracy is similar to a nonconformist exercise of the writer, as he apparently refuses to carry out a fundamental duty of the citizen, that of striving for the nation's public image. On the surface,



therefore, DeLillo's book helps define his citizenship in terms of anti-model. Despite the pertinence of that view, the following section is intended to propose an analysis of the sense and essence of citizen DeLillo's nonconformist practice.

III. Sense and Essence of DeLillo's Nonconformist Practice in *Libra*

Clarifying the meaning of his disobedience, the American writer Thoreau who is viewed as one of the famous nonconformist writers in American literature, argues:

We must affect our country as our parents,
And if at any time we alienate
Our love or industry from doing it honor,
We must respect effects and teach the soul
Matter of conscience and religion
And not desire of rule or benefit. (Thoreau, 1948: 300-301)

Many teachings can be drawn from this poetic description of the individual's act of patriotism and inversely his disobedience. But the present reflection will focus on two of these teachings. In fact, the association of the citizen's patriotic duty with the act of disobedience in the pamphlet is meaningful: the Transcendentalist writer shows the necessity to love and serve one's country; but he adds that if the citizen happens not to conform to that duty, the justification must not be the desire of drawing from this choice any personal interests but rather the realization of a duty, that of contributing to the development of the country. Conclusively, Thoreau's disobedience is justified by moral concerns associated with humanistic values.

Like Thoreau's promotion of civil disobedience, DeLillo's nonconformist orientation in *Libra* makes sense and is substantially charged with values, from the point of view of the citizen's duty. The fragmented style appropriate for postmodernism may not offer a coherent organization of the plot, but the various suggestions contained in *Libra* can be perceived by the attentive reader. The preceding section has discussed the deconstructive process of America's myth of democracy. Actually, beyond its refusal of the traditional structure in which America's democracy may be presented as superior to the one in "banana republics" and communist regimes, the deconstruction of the myth positively carries the justifications and orientation of DeLillo's non-conformism.

When the writer evokes the case about the execution of the Rosebergs(*Libra*, 39), he means to redefine in a roundabout way democracy as a regime in which the nation builds its unity. The correspondent image of democracy suggested in the novel becomes different from the one by which it serves as an instrument of orientation of people's opinions. DeLillo's fiction gives a new sense to any democratic regimes, in that these are asked to promote and guarantee plurality inside the nation. In other words, the evocation of the gloomy years of



McCarthyism in *Libra* conveys the necessity for people to be given their status of free human being. More than a mere reference to the Rosenbergs, the writer denounces that form of democracy in which the state apparatus is transformed into an obstacle to freedom of thought. Being “mindful of his social role” – in reference to the terms by Remy Oriaku⁷ – the writer suggests in his novel a return to a philosophical sense of democracy according to which the human comes into being when he or she is given liberty.

DeLillo is equally critical of America’s foreign policy when revelations about the covert activities of CIA operatives are made. These activities range from projects of assassination of foreign leaders to plans of invasions of other nations just to make them “blow up” (*Libra*, 173). The chronicling of such practices by an allegedly democratic nation is clearly designed to denounce “the evils of that system” – to paraphrase the novel itself (*Libra*, 228). Associated with this denunciation is the writer’s intention to rebel against those officials in ‘democratic countries,’ who are paradoxically disrespectful of the sovereignty of other nations. Exposing publicly the ugly face of his own nation, DeLillo’s revelations about the activities of the American intelligence can be interpreted as a form of nonconformist attitude that presents him as a citizen disrespectful of the State secret. Eloquently enough, his satirical description of the course of history calls for a revolution in international relationships. In fact, his novel stirs up the notion of citizenship which becomes not so much the expression of the individual’s love of his country as some sort of dissolution of this citizenship in order to acquire a universal status when a person comes to love and respect the other peoples. A passage in the novel deals with Lee H. Oswald who tells the receptionist at the US embassy in Russia that he intends to dissolve his American citizenship” (*Libra*, 154). He may think that that creates diversion to make Russian authorities accept him in the country where he is sent to operate as a covert agent. But ironically, it is the whole notion of citizenship that needs to be conceptualized again. Therefore, if DeLillo appears as a rebel who does not conform to the traditional stream of patriotism, his novel, at least, enables one to realize that democratic nations remains to be constructed in the sense of respect of the sovereignty of other nations as the sovereignty of the people is respected in democracies. If he deconstructs America’s democracy, he actually means to construct it, extending his own civil responsibility to the promotion of humanistic values which any society should be built on. For the US of which he is a national, that consists in proposing an improvement of the state of the world in the sense of the substitution of the ‘policy of interests in the name of democracy’ for the ‘democracy of values’. To paraphrase Emerson who described in the past his disciple’s nonconformist attitude, DeLillo’s refusal to remain in line with the traditional image of the citizen who is respectful of the good image of his country gives to democracy its own ethics⁸. Likewise, the

⁷ Remy Oriaku, “Contrast, Complementarity, and Conscious Craftsmanship in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*”, in *Safara: revue internationale de langues, literatures et cultures*, p. 5

⁸ The American critic Edward Wagenknecht quotes Emerson who talks of Thoreau in the following laudatory terms: “Thoreau gives me my own ethics. He is far more real and daily practically obeying them, than I(...)”, in Wagenknecht, *Henry David Thoreau: What Manner of Man?*, p. 7



writer's revelations may appear as something of the antinomy of the citizen's duty, that of praising his nation. But actually, these revelations serve the cause of democracy in a country that is said to be based on the principles of this political regime. That is the perspective in which DeLillo's *Libra* can be read.

Critics say that the title alludes to the astrological sign of the character of Lee Harvey Oswald. They argue that the astrological sign Libra presented in the form of scale, becomes the symbol of the forces of history that weigh in the life of Oswald, the creature of Nicholas Branch, a retired senior analyst of the CIA hired to write the secret history of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy (*Libra*, 15). Such statements are certainly accurate as they describe events in the novel. Yet, in the perspective of DeLillo's nonconformist practice with regard to his status of citizen of the US, one can add to the preceding reading a new analysis. The astrological sign Libra is noticeably the unique sign of the zodiac that does not represent animals or humans. That makes it an odd element in the group. Just as the sign Libra does not conform to the tradition of astrological signs representing living beings, DeLillo's sense of citizenship signals that the individual can possibly go against the idealizing image of his own nation. Far from being negative, that non-conformism turns out to be intellectual processes that promote a balance between the interests of the US, as a superpower, and the democratic ideal which DeLillo's book calls for.

Conclusion

As it can be noted, the present study about the deconstruction of America's myth of democracy has offered the opportunity to chronicle many forms of intrigues and manipulations involving US officials and the CIA in particular. Making use of a fragmented style, a distinctive feature of postmodern literature, the novel *Libra* accordingly presents pertinent aspects about the hideous face of democracy in a nation that is supposed to make the promotion of the values of liberty and humanism as well as the respect of foreign nations' sovereignty.

Still, it may be replied that DeLillo does not come to this conclusion when he proposes a redefinition of democracy in accordance with these values. Associated with this possible reply is the fact that the novel does not apparently deal with the issue of democracy. That viewpoint remains true only on the surface. On closer inspection, however, one discovers that the description of the course of history in the novel can be read as a criticism of America's activism concerning the nation's version of democracy. The tradition in this field consists in holding that the US is a model of democracy in modern world. Conversely, DeLillo demonstrates in his fiction that the democratic correctness is not to be attributed to this nation, hence the deconstruction of this model proved by restrictions on individual freedom of some of the citizens coupled with a foreign policy often unworthy of a great democracy.



In this sense, therefore, DeLillo becomes a nonconformist who refuses to give to his own country the etiquette of correct democracy. However, it must be noted that his nonconformist posture aims at suggesting that the state apparatus should not control the citizens' freedom, and that a great democracy should not resort to force or violent actions in its relationships with other nations.

It follows that DeLillo's fiction answers the question about the sense and orientation that must be given to an act of rebellion. The book tends to argue that in a world where people are in need of models, great nations like the US should give sense to democracy. When DeLillo shows some sort of disrespect to the tradition in which the American nation poses as a model, he justifies his nonconformist posture. As a citizen, he contributes his fiction to the construction process of democracy. It can be argued that his work helps affect his country in a positive way.

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Revue Baobab: numéro 11



Deuxième semestre 2012

ORIAKU, Remy, “Contrast, Complementarity and Conscious Craftsmanship in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*” in *Safara, Revue internationale de langues, literatures et cultures*, Saint Louis, Sénégal, Université Gaston Berger, Février 2006.

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