

The Reification of Islam in Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*

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Abstract:

Since the advent of the cold war, American popular culture, media, and literature portray Arabs and Muslims as dangerous creatures and terrorists. For a cohort of critics, the American novel is a glaring example of what might be called the one-sided representation of Islam and Muslims. Post 9/11 American novel has taken the incidents seriously to react against terrorism and Islam. From 9/11's ashes, Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* makes its readers live the traumatic events and feeds on the issue of terrorism to bring back the old cultural antagonism between West and East, or 'Self' and 'Other'. Within this context, this article examines the subjective representation of Islam in DeLillo's novel. Relying on the critical assumptions of Edward Said, Ian Almond, and Michel Foucault, this scrutiny aims to show that postmodernist American fiction does not respond to the principle of refraction and the flexibility of meaning

Keywords: Arabophobia; Islamophobia; Don DeLillo; Postmodernism; 9/11.

1. Introduction

After the immediate failure of Modernism, Postmodernists announced a new literature that must depict the truth as it is, rather than as it should be. Advocates of Postmodernism seek to represent reality far from being discussed in binary oppositions like white and black, male and female and so forth. Their evidence is derived from the philosophy of the Algerian born French thinker Jacques Derrida who has opposed the way modernists represented reality in their fictional works. Thus, the concept of '*deconstruction*' emerged and interfered in the literary domain. It simply means the deconstruction of the modern truth that was represented in a binary opposition, where there was no "peaceful coexistence of a vis-à-vis", rather there would be a violent hierarchy. Jacques Derrida asserts that deconstruction is not a method, but it is a practice which aims to revolt against Logocentrism. According to Hal Foster, Postmodernism "aims to deconstruct or rewrite modernism in order to open its closed systems" (ix).

2. Postmodernism: Philosophical and Thematic Concerns

The peak of Postmodernism is the process of deconstruction¹. Indeed, Postmodernism is based on the rejection of traditional binary oppositions. Binary oppositions, however, can be biological, cultural or even thematic as far as literature is concerned. For, in literature there was a revolt against the thematic and biological binary oppositions like male versus female and man versus woman. Consequently, this process led to another literary school named Feminism which is regarded as a rupture against the traditional image of male's oppression and the superiority at the expense of females' inferiority. Therefore, Feminists overturned the hierarchy and have given more importance to women's needs and their concerns.

Postmodernism is a success and a failure at the same time. Taking the example of the feminist studies, it can be regarded as a victory and a success. However, Postmodernism failed at overturning one of the

1. The refraction of truth.

main important binary oppositions upon which the world is organized. In dealing with the binary between the Westerners and Easterners, deconstructionists could not overturn this hierarchy for a number of reasons including the effect of mass media. This latter plays a crucial role in making the West superior at the expense of the Eastern part of the globe. The struggle between the West and East reached its fullest peak following the 9/11 attacks. The effects of mass media and its role in declaring the war against the East and Islam is better understood in literary works.

Although the struggle between the East and the West appeared centuries ago, the 9/11 attacks gave it a new shape and a new dimension. Following that terrorist attack, Islam has become the main victim of their mass media. Media in the other hand has influenced literature, and the masters of literature lost their sights. They have not employed their eyes to see the truth; rather they have seen the truth through media's screens. This paper is an attempt to depict the postmodern representation of Islam in Delillo's *Falling Man*. It seeks to show the violence-like reaction of Westerners in dealing with the subject of Islam and depicting it as a threat.

3. 9/11 Events' Impact on the Binary

On September 11th, 2001 the world was taking a new dimension. It was Tuesday when the world was finally connected. The whole world was linked through telescreens. Perhaps it was the first time when people from different social classes, races, and different colors felt themselves equal. They were all attached to mass media getting information of what was happening in the United States. In that day, series of violent terrorist attacks were committed in America. Simply, it was an apocalyptic day on the American ground.

Since that day, concepts like terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism have become the centre of discussions. Mass media and literature declared the war against Islam and the Middle East. Literary speaking, many fictional works have been created to deal with this subject and its

traumatic effects which followed that terrorist attack. Of all American novelists, however, no one was able to deal with subject skillfully as Don Delillo and John Updike. The two novelists seek to portray the idea of terrorism in relation to Otherness locally and globally.

The battle between West and the East is not recent. History proved that its roots, at least, can be traced to the Middle Ages. Islam is always misunderstood in the sense that it is regarded as a violent religion which encourages suicide and terror and as a faith which was spread by the sword. Westerners in general and Americans in particular prefer to see themselves as the centre of the world. Thus, the West is what can be described as the “Self”, while the East must be inferior and, therefore, it is the “Other” or let say the “Orient”. Westerners dislike all Easterners whether they are Muslims or Christians. For that reason, intellectuals like Edward Said raised their pens to defend the East with its Muslims and Christians.

In his book *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said writes: “Throughout the exchanges between Europeans and their ‘others’...the one idea that has scarcely varied is that there is an ‘us’ and ‘them’, each quite settled, clear, unassailably self-evident” (xxv). Said believes that Westerners perceive themselves as being the only “good guys” which McCarthy introduces in his novel *The Road*. Easterners, on the other hands, are seen as the “bad guys”. The opposition between Westerners and Easterners touched its highest peak following the terrorist attack. That attack has changed the whole world and increased the space between the ‘Self’ and its ‘other’.

4. On the Ruins of the Future and Falling Man:

If the world has changed, literature must be touched by that change too. Novelists like John Updike and the British Ian McEwan portray terrorism and its traumatic effects in their fictional works. As a typical Eastern racist intellectual, Salman Rushdie explores the notion of terrorism from post 9/11 perspectives in his novel [*Shalimar the Clown*](#).

Surprisingly, Don DeLillo the author of *Americana*, *White Noise* and *Cosmopolis*, returned to the events after six years. In 2007, DeLillo published a new distinct novel entitled *Falling Man*. Perhaps, no one expected his return to Islam after six years.

In his previous works, Don DeLillo criticized America's modern life in the wake of globalization and the extreme consumerism. In *Cosmopolis*, he portrays America as being the land of chaos, violence and consumerism. To do so, he relies on the story of the cyber-capitalist protagonist Eric Packer. Unexpectedly, DeLillo unmasked America and described it as the land of hyper-reality, stemming this idea from the philosophy of Jean Baudrillard. In this novel, however, Don DeLillo discusses terrorism in an American context; Americans are described as terrorists and this is the aftermath of the abusive use of technology.

In *Falling Man*, a radical change has been noticed in DeLillo's thought. Unlike *Cosmopolis*, in this novel DeLillo portrays an external threat in a form of terrorism and violence. DeLillo returns to that day and describes it with minute details. On its surface level, the novel turns around the reactions of survivor of the 9/11 attacks. The protagonist, Keith, is a lawyer working in the World Trade Centre. DeLillo in this novel insists on the painful role of memory. Though he passed the difficult moments and reintegrated in the social mood, his memory takes him back to the day of the attacks. It is the traumatic effect which DeLillo wants to depict. From a mythological point of view, Keith seems to be a reincarnation of Tithonos whose memory brought him nothing but pain. On its deeper level, however, the novel is over-loaded with Western ideologies and orientalist discourses. Therefore, the novel can be regarded as a response to the 9/11 attacks. But, how does DeLillo's novel respond to those attacks?

Jean Baudrillard has been affected by the 9/11 attacks. After those attacks, Baudrillard did not wait much time to use his pen and respond to that day. In less than one month, he published an essay entitled "The

Spirit of Terrorism”. Describing the attacks as historical events which nations will narrate, Baudrillard writes:

The whole play of history and power is disrupted by this event, but so, too, are the conditions of analysis. You have to take your time. While events were stagnating, you had to anticipate and move more quickly than they did. But when they speed up this much, you have to move more slowly –though without allowing yourself to be buried beneath a welter of words, or the gathering clouds of war, and preserving intact the unforgettable incandescence of the images. (4)

Baudrillard, just like Delillo, insists on the traumatic effects of those attacks. Further, he seeks to justify the harshness being practiced on Islam. For him, it was the horror of the events which obliged such responses. Sartre’s “nothingness” is found in the novel as well as in Baudrillard’s text. Following the events, Delillo’s characters seek to discuss the horror of the attacks. Meanwhile, several existential thoughts and ideas come to the surface. One of these ideas is nothingness. Keith in his discussion of the subject with Lianne says that “Nothing is next. There is no next. This was next”² (Delillo 24). Keith, as an American, felt the absence of meaning in human existence. The same idea is found in “The Spirit of Terrorism”. Baudrillard tells that “We try retrospectively to impose some kind of meaning on it, to find some kind of interpretation. But there is none”(30).

Don Delillo walked on Baudrillard’s paths and published an essay entitled “In the Ruins of the Future”. What signifies the impact of the former on the latter is the period of the publication. Two months after Baudrillard’s essay, Delillo published his. This essay introduces the way literary intellectuals are integrated in politics. Six years after the

2. Delillo, Don. *Falling Man*. (New York: Scribner, 2007). All Subsequent references will be cited in the text.

publication of the essay, readers become aware of DeLillo's skillfulness in describing the moments of the attacks. In the novel, small objects like shoes, phones and credit cards are given much importance. The novel, the setting's description suggests that "[t]here were shoes discarded in the street, handbags and laptops, a man seated on the sidewalk coughing up blood. Paper cups went bouncing oddly by" (16). The idea of paying attention to these small objects has been explained in his essay. Thus, DeLillo writes:

These are among the smaller objects and more marginal stories in the sifted ruins of the day. We need them, even the common tools of the terrorists, to set against the massive spectacle that continues to seem unmanageable, too powerful a thing to set into our frame of practiced response. (35)

DeLillo's essay met some serious responses. In the essay, DeLillo also introduces the issue of identity in media and fiction. As far as national identities are concerned, DeLillo surely knows that their representations (identities) will be identified in relation to the terrorist attacks and media. Representing the East, mainly, in the post 9/11 era is problematic. To illustrate this idea, Macro Abel writes:

What makes [DeLillo's] essay remarkable is not merely what it says about 9/11 but how, *in responding to* the event, it simultaneously puts the notion of response at stake. Resisting the demand to speak with moral clarity and declare what the event means, his essay instead shows that response is always a question of response-ability, or the ethical how [...] What DeLillo's response thus teaches us- its most significant intervention in the post-9/11 discourse - is that present-day attempts to image [sic] a (traumatic) event's sense cannot operate exclusively on the level of the event's content (the representational what) without attending to the rhetorical mode

of presentation, the ethical how. Or, rather, what DeLillo shows [...] is that what an event means is always already shot through with how it appears. (qtd in Andrews 15).

5. Vivid Description of the Incidents: The Real and Factual in *Falling Man*

DeLillo believes that the best writer is the one who starts from the moment of the events. Before accusing Islam and Muslims, the author must depict the horrors and the trauma which followed the attacks. Peter Boxall argues that “DeLillo’s attempt to enter the moment in a more real, visceral way is a feature of his recent output” (35). Apart from creating a personal counter-narrative as an essential goal, DeLillo perceives describing the horror of the events as a crucial step. For him, the “The writer begins in the towers, trying to imagine the moment, desperately” (Halliwell and Morley 250). This is the only justification of why he has chosen a descriptive beginning for his novel. In this respect, the story opens:

It was not a street anymore but a world, a time and space of falling ash and near night. He was walking north through the rubble and mud and there were people running past holding towels to their faces or jackets over their heads. They had handkerchiefs pressed to their mouths. They had shoes in their hands, a woman with a shoe in each hand, running past him.
(15)

Although the story is empowered by the actions of its characters, DeLillo is also involved in the description of the events. His presence is suggested through the given minute details. As a good writer, DeLillo starts from the ruins and provides a significant image of the explosions. In this respect, he writes: “In time he heard the sound of the second fall. He crossed Canal Street and began to see things, somehow, differently. Things did not seem charged in the usual ways, the cobbled street, the cast-iron buildings” (17). DeLillo begins with a description of the setting using a suggestive style. His language, if it does not impose certain

impacts, it ensures readers' sympathy and their emotional responses to what Americans suffered from.

6. McWorld versus Jihad: Re-Orientalizing Islam in *Falling Man*

After describing the horrific events, Delillo turns his eyes to the East. By so doing, he starts describing the East from an extremist Islamic point of view. Islam is described as a violent religion. In this respect, Delillo has fallen for the East versus West, Arabs versus Americans or McWorld versus Jihad formulas. Although his criticism is of less significance compared to that Updike in his novel *Terrorist*, in the sense that he usually criticizes Americans and their daily habits, Delillo also dismisses Islam and the East. The novel is encumbered with several examples which illustrate this idea. For, Islam in the novel is the shoot target.

In his essay "Islam and the West Are Inadequate Banners", Edward Said writes that "What is bad about all terror is when it is attached to *religion* and political abstractions and *reductive myths* that keep veering away from *history* and sense" (1). Said's claim is very significant as it really fits the objectives of this paper. Identifying "terror" with the "Orient" (East/Eastern) is a strong manifestation of what Said calls "Orientalism". However, relating "terror" to "Islam" is the triumph of racism and orientalism. In his book *Orientalism*, Said expounds the usefulness of "Othering" Oriental identities in the construction of hegemonic Western identities: "I myself believe that Orientalism is more particularly valuable as a sign of European-Atlantic power over the Orient than it is as a veridic [sic] discourse about the Orient" (6).

Said insists on the role of literature (fiction) as a political means by which myth can be created. However, he does not mean a myth or story that can be narrated and passed over generations. For him, this new myth is created to survive and therefore to serve the one who has created it. In Hegel's terms "Master" and "Slave", the slave is the "anti-thesis"

of the master who is the only “thesis”. The master, however, equals nothing without his slave. The slave serves his master and therefore empowers him. Hegel’s “synthesis”, unfortunately, cannot be applied in such dichotomy. Similarly, there’s no peaceful co-existence between the West and the East. Said declares the absence of “compromise” between Westerners and their others.

To serve the West, Delillo creates a new mythical figure. This mythical figure, however, is not the story’s protagonist. This antagonist is Osama Bin Laden. Describing Ben Laden as a mythical figure suggests the influence of media on literature. Moreover, it turns Delillo into an un-postmodern author. Islam and Bin Laden are described from one single angle. In this respect, Delillo breaks Derrida’s rules and instead of refracting the truth, he reflects it from one side. The leader of Al-Qaeda is the only figure which creates the suspense in the story. In the novel, Justin and his friends spend much time gazing from the windows “searching the skies for Bill Lawton”(74).

Delillo’s first step toward Orientalism is suggested through Bill Lawton. The founder of Al-Qaeda is firstly mentioned as an unknown man. After introducing him as Bill Lawton, the name of Bin Laden comes to the surface. In this respect, Delillo writes: “He was hearing Bill Lawton. They were saying bin Laden.” (97). It becomes significant that Delillo has taken his part in what he sees as the duty of defending America. Delillo portrays the “jihadist” Bill Lawton from media’s point of view. Thus, readers may encounter the influence of media on literature. The fact that Bin Laden is introduced to Delillo’s readers, it means that the novel’s first objective is to portray Muslims as terrorists.

Intertextuality is one of the main techniques used by Delillo to give his text a special taste. Intertextuality is a prominent aspect in many postmodern art forms, in which works of art or literature frequently refer to each other through parody or pastiche. In Delillo’s case, intertextuality plays a crucial role in achieving the author’s goal. There

are several examples which illustrate the dominance of this technique. Delillo brings to his text art, philosophy and poetry.

Art and Philosophy serve the purpose of Delillo's novel. To justify his attack of Islam, Delillo focuses on the traumatic affects of the attacks on people's life. Modernists and postmodernists are interested in revealing the role of art through texts. However, there is a clear difference in their perception of the link between the high and the low models of art. For modernists, art in its two models must be mixed and can be regarded from a positive point of view. In other words, the role of art is positive and usually needed for redemption. With postmodernism, art has been given two roles. It depends on the author's objective and his attitudes. Don DeLillo has invited Giorgio Morandi and his paintings to the novel. There is a strong reference to Morandi's *Natura Morta* in the text when Lianne says:

These were groupings of bottles, jugs, biscuit tins, that was all, but there was something in the brushstrokes that held a mystery she could not name, or in the irregular edges of vases and jar, some reconnoitre inward, human and obscure, away from the very light and colour of the paintings. *Natura Morta*. The Italian term for still life seemed stronger than it had to be, somewhat ominous, even, but these were matters she hadn't talked about with her mother. Let the latent meanings turn and bend in the wind, free from authoritative comment. (25-26).

Lianne's speech suggests Delillo's interests in the small objects. However, Morandi's painting signifies Baudrillard's influence on Delillo's thought. In his book *Simulacra and Stimulation*, Jean Baudrillard introduces the problems we face in our contemporary reality in which the distinction between what is "real" and what is "imagined" is continually blurred and meaning is systematically eroded. As a post-modern philosopher, Baudrillard is better known for

his theory of “hyperrealism”. He believes that the world consists of signs that are associated with their “actual referents in reality”. However, this world has been replaced by the post modern simulacrum. In this respect, signs have lost their meanings and their association with reality. The postmodern world consists of hyperrealities, or simulations of reality. Therefore, Baudrillard announces that the simulations of reality “hyper-real” are “more real than the real” (56).

Delillo aims to inform his readers that the indictment of Islam is justified. The 9/11th traumatic effects and the pains which Bill Lawton brought to America obliged him to victimize Islam and Muslims. With Delillo, however, the hyper-real becomes more real than the real. With regard to trauma, Delillo employs the images of the painting to suggest the real pain. Morandi’s paintings have an ominous power following the fall of the Twin Towers. In fact, for readers as well as for the novel’s characters, bottles of Morandi’s *Natura Morta* are more real than the towers. The painting plays a figurative role and has captured Lianne in “a mystery that she could not name” (283).

Delillo engages with trauma, Islam and terrorism from a hyper-real view point. The representation of the terrorist figure is linked to horror and violence. Osama Bin Laden is associated with the highest form of terror. Leach believes that “the immediate American response to single out and ‘demonize’ Bin Laden speaks of a parallel urge to symbolize and ‘envision’ the enemy” (qtd in Andrews 79). The image of Bin Laden in the texts becomes more painful than the attacks. Accordingly, Ben Laden becomes more terrifying and frightening than terror itself. He is the source of pain for characters. Lianne seems to be a fragile character in the sense that she cannot escape the shock of terror. Delillo informs his readers that “she saw the face in the newspaper, the man from Flight 11. Only one of the nineteen seemed to have a face at this point, staring out of the photo, taut, with hard eyes that seemed too knowing to belong to a face on a driver’s license” (34). In the text we

are told that the images of horror and terror are installed in Lianne's consciousness. In this respect, DeLillo writes:

Every time she saw a videotape of the planes she moved a finger toward the power button on the remote. Then she kept on watching. The second plane coming out of that ice blue sky, this was the footage that 165/296 entered the body, that seemed to run beneath her skin, the fleeting sprint that carried lives and histories, theirs and hers, everyone's, into some other distance, out beyond the towers. (165)

Poetry is another example of intertextuality. The use of poetry in the text has multiple interpretations. DeLillo mentions a Victorian poem which fits the subject of his novel. The Victorian poet Percy Bysshe Shelle is present in the text. There is a strong reference to his poem entitled "Revolt of Islam". Lianne finds a postcard from a friend which was sent to her before the attacks but arrives three days after. The shock of the attacks has a strong affect on her mind. However, this postcard has made her conscious of the way the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks "have penetrated her life when she becomes affected by an uncanny coincidence" (Andrews 65). DeLillo tells us that "the face of the postcard was a reproduction of the cover of Shelly's poem in twelve cantos, first edition, called Revolt of Islam" (21). Lianne shows that "it was a matter of simple coincidence, or not so simple, that a card might arrive at this particular time bearing the title of that specific book" (21). In this moment the postcard helps her to leave the dream-like state. The postcard causes her to awake, while it highlighted the theme of "an altered sense of reality" (Andrews 65).

The presence of Shelle's "Revolt of Islam" has an Orientalist meaning. The importance of intertextuality is in depicting the effects of the past on the present. In other words, it draws the reader's attention to the development of Western ideologies. In *The Map Of Love*, Ahdaf

Soueif draws a parallel between Victorian ideology and the modern one. She depicts the impact of Victorianism on nowadays Western thoughts. For her, if Victorian era was an age of imperialism, modern existence is the era of Neo-imperialism. With Neo-imperialism, Orientalism reached its highest peak. Shelly's poem signifies that Delillo adds to his critic of Islam a Victorian stereotypical view point to justify this attack and maintain that the violent-like nature of Islam is not new. Consequently, Delillo points out the influence of the past on the present. On the effects of the past on the present, Edward Said writes:

Appeals to the past are among the commonest strategies in interpretations of the present. What animates such appeal is not only disagreement about what happened in the past and what the past was, but uncertainty whether the past is really past, and concluded, or whether it *continues*, albeit in different forms, perhaps. (xi)

Shelle's poem plays a crucial role in identifying Delillo as a Neo-Orientalist. Delillo's text has the weight of a Victorian novel in the sense that it carries the same stereotypes. Embracing those stereotypes leads the text to lose its postmodern weight. Accusing Islam and describing it from one angle must lead to the "loss of historical reality". In fact, the text has lost its essence due to the reproduction of the past ideas. Jameson (2001) describes the loss of historical reality in writing by assuming that the historical novel "can no longer represent the historical past; it can only 'represent' our ideas and stereotypes about the past" (79).

Don Delillo has waged the war on terrorism and Islam. According to Walter Benn Michaels, the war between Westerners and Easterners resembles the Cold War. However, what makes the difference between the two is that this contemporary war (McWorld vs Jihad) lacks a clear enemy. Michaels, however, does not relate terrorism to Islam. In dealing with the subject, he represents terrorists as "Global Outlaws"

(107). The universality of terror serves the west. Edward Said assumes that “European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self” (21). Moreover, Ian Almond observes the variation in representing the Orient’s identity in different contexts. However, he believes that these variations are all attached to Racism and Otherness. This ‘Otherness’, Almond believes, is “like the volume control of any stereo or radio” and “can be turned up or down according to the required context” (105).

Just like John Updike, Delillo introduces Muslims as violators of the American life style. He is convinced that Muslims are by nature criminals, and that this criminality comes from Islamicism. Delillo’s characters are fully aware of Muslims and their objectives. The narrator informs us that “they were in this country to pursue technical educations but in these rooms they spoke about struggle” (101). The narrator often mentions the places where terrorists meet. The first space he mentions is a room where they gather to exchange speeches and practice their prayers. There is also a reference to “the mosque” (100, 101, 102, 104,105,213), “the portable prayer room at the university” (102), and “dar al-ansar” (106). The narrator’s consciousness reflects Delillo’s keenness to criticize Islam. Further, the narrator describes Muslims’ isolation and their attitudes toward the American (West) life style. In this respect, Delillo writes: "There was the feeling of lost history. They were too long in isolation. This is what they talked about, being crowded out by other cultures, other futures, the all-enfolding will of capital markets and foreign policies" (103).

The narrator perceives Muslims’ problem of integrating in the American society. Psychologically, they are not well prepared to accommodate to Western living way. Delillo seeks to portray the setback of Muslims in accepting non-Islamic traditions. This complexity leads to their imprisonment. In other words, since they

are unable to deal with external traditions they become suppressed and psychologically imprisoned. As a result, they “needed a space of their own” (102). Once they isolate themselves, however, they find themselves detached from their society. Consequently, they decide to destroy the social milieu.

Don Delillo balances between the omniscient narrator and the free indirect thought³ in his text. The narrator is able to read Muslim characters’ minds, and knows their favorites and hates. He knows the places where they meet as he knows their attitudes toward America. The narrator tells about Hammad’s interests and reads his mind. About his interests, he says: “He was very genius, others said, and he told them that a man can stay forever in a room, doing blueprints, eating and sleeping, even praying, even plotting, but at a certain point he has to get out” (102). The narrator smoothly moves to read his mind. Delillo aims to depict Islam is a threat that menaces America and that Americans themselves need to get rid of. This is perceptible when the narrator says:

Even if the room is a place of prayer, he can’t stay there all his life. Islam is the world outside the prayer room as well as the *sūrahs* in the Koran. Islam is the struggle against the enemy, near enemy and far, Jews first, for all things unjust and hateful, and then the Americans. (102)

Delillo depicts the psychological problems of Muslims in a utopian society. Just like Updike, Delillo believes that Muslims are enclosed and imprisoned in their minds, while Westerners are open-minded. They are unable to progress culturally and that is why they seek to destroy the land which gave them an opportunity to realize their dreams. Throughout the novel, we are told that America is the

3. It is also referred to as **free indirect discourse**; a style of [third-person narration](#) which uses some of the characteristics of third-person along with the essence of [first-person](#) direct speech.

right place where Muslims could easily commute and practice their daily hobbies:

The men went to Internet cafés and learned about flight schools in the United States. Nobody knocked down their door in the middle of the night and nobody stopped them in the street to turn their pockets inside out and grope their bodies for weapons. But they knew that Islam was under attack. (105)

In this passage, DeLillo seeks to portray America from a tragic angle. In tragedy, hamartia is often described as a hero's "fatal flaw". In DeLillo's case, Americans' flaw is the result of their blindness and ignorance of what was happening before the attacks. DeLillo accuses Islam and Muslims, while he strongly criticizes Americans. He identifies America as the land which provided Muslims with knowledge. It was the utopian land which gave the opportunity to learn and make their dreams true. They were ungrateful and planned to make the 9/11 a miserable day for Americans.

DeLillo accuses Islam and describes it as a religion of backwardness. This is one of the main evidences which suggests the Orientalist and stereotypical discourse in the text and the post 9/11 fiction. Reading DeLillo as an Orientalist can be achieved through his characters' attitudes toward Islam. Lianne's speeches suggest the Orientalist nature of DeLillo's works. Being shocked by the horrors of the attacks, Lianne discusses the issue with Nina. While Nina relates the events to "politics and socio-economics", Lianne replies: "It's not the history of Western interference that pulls down these societies. It's their own history, their mentality. They live in a closed world, of choice, of necessity. They haven't advanced because they haven't wanted to or tried to" (65).

Lianne's speech identifies her as a racist and depicts the Orientalist weight of DeLillo's work. She describes Muslims as

ignorant people. Americans perceive Muslims as belonging to “middle ages”. This stereotype is empowered by the American mass media which seeks to reduce the value of Islam. Furthermore, media and literature have been combined to reach the Western objectives. In fact, media and literature aim to destroy the beautiful image of Islam.

The last idea which this paper aims to depict is the identification of Muslims with jihad and fundamentalism. The common point between Delillo’s *Falling Man* and Updike’s *Terrorist* is the reference to Islamic plots against America. Moreover, both authors attempt to portray the loss of innocence as an aftermath of Islam’s Fundamentalism. They perceive Islam as a threat which victimizes children and young people. Ahmed’ story in Updike’s *Terrorist* is echoed by Hammad’s tale in Delillo’s *Falling Man*. If Ahmed has lost his innocence due to the teaching of Sheikh Rashid, Hammad also finds himself a victim of the surrounding atmosphere.

As a young extremist Muslim, Hammad is a member of a terrorist group which gathers Muslims from different countries who “read the sword verses of the Koran ... [and were] determined to become one mind” (83). Hammad becomes influenced by his friend Mohamed Mohamed el-Amir el-Sayed Atta who convinced him to plot against America and head the airplanes toward Twin Towers. In the text, Hammad is described as “a bulky man, clumsy, and thought all his life that some unnamed energy was sealed in his body, too tight to be released” (102).

In Freud’s psycho-analytical approach, “the unruly id and the harsh super-ego both have to be brought to heel by a savvy ego” (Jacobsen 66). The ego is found as a victim of the clash between the morality principle (super-ego) and the Id which represents the unstructured desires. Hammad is found in the text representing the victimized ego. He is a victim of his sexual desires and the demanding moralities of his religion. This is highly paradoxical.

Hammad is described as a violent murderer who willingly plots against innocents, yet readers as well as the novel's author know that he was a victim of the surrounding atmosphere and wrong teachings of Mohamed el-Amir el-Sayed. Simultaneously, Delillo's description of Hammad provides certain empathy and leads readers to sympathize with. His detachment is illustrated through his sexual desires which also put forth the distorted identity of Muslims in America who failed integrate and cope with the American living way. Hammad's first appearance in the novel is redolent. Before embracing Amir's Jihadism, Hammad looks very sensitive and therefore he is described as a sensual young man. In this respect, we are told that he "stood nodding. He felt cold in his bones, the misery of wet winds and northern nights... waiting for the rain to stop, and he kept thinking that another woman would come by on a bike, someone to look at, hair wet, legs pumping" (78).

Throughout the novel, Delillo exposes Hammad's private life in a reference to his sexual relations with his roommate Leyla "the Pretty eyes and knowing touch" (107). The author, however, magnifies the protagonist's sexual self at the expense of his religious and socio-cultural selves. Furthermore, the hero is reduced to the sexual level and portrayed as a pleasure-seeking man whose identity is torn between his desires and moral obligation. Accordingly, the narrator notices that he is compelled to "struggle against himself, first, and then against the injustice that haunted their lives" (106). In this respect, Linda Kaufmann argues that "Hammad is particularly memorable because he secretly harbours doubts about jihad. He wants marriage and children. He has an overwhelming desire simply to be "normal"—which he knows he must resist." (355). Moreover, Aaron Mauro suggests that "DeLillo offers Hammad's internal monologue as evidence of his confusion, but the terrorist rationale is so absurd that even Hammad struggles to believe it.

To complete his Orientalist objectives, Delillo describes Hammad as a violent murderer. Identifying Hammad as a killer illustrates Delillo's mission of relating terror and violence to Islam. The narrator informs us that "Hammad and two others went looking for a man on the Reeperbahn" (104). Readers are left with minute details of the murder and the way Hammad is involved in the affair:

One of the men called his name, then the other. He looked at them and waited and Hammad advanced and hit him three or four times and he went down. The other men advanced and kicked him. Hammad hadn't known his name until they shouted it out and he wasn't sure what this was all about, the guy paying an Albanian whore for sex or the guy not growing a beard. He had no beard, Hammad noticed, just before he hit him (104).

Delillo focuses on technology and its role in violence and assassination. In *Cosmopolis* Delillo criticizes Packer's abusive use of technology in threatening people's lives. In *Falling Man*, however, there is a slight reference to technology as a means that encourages violence and provides terror. Muslims, in the text, are provided with videos of jihad and terror. The narrator lets the reader know that Hammad and his companions "looked at videos of jihad in other countries and Hammad told them about the boy soldiers running in the mud, the mine jumpers, wearing keys to paradise around their necks. They stared him down, they talked him down" (103). This reference foreshadows the last scene of the story. This passage makes the end of the story clear, and readers are expected to see the last moments of the story. Hammad's story ends with the already planned attacks. The narrator describes the Hammad's last moments before the "aircraft". In this respects, Delillo writes:

The aircraft was secured now and he sat in the jump seat across from the forward galley, keeping watch. He was either supposed to keep watch here, outside the cockpit, or to patrol the aisle,

box cutter in hand. He was not confused, only catching a breath, taking a moment. This is when he felt a sensation high on his arm, the thin wincing pain of slit skin (284).

Hammad's story plays two important roles. On the one hand, it supports Delillo's attack on Islam and Muslims. On the second hand, however, it depicts Delillo as an Orientalist. The traumatic effects of the events influenced ordinary people and intellectuals. Ordinary people, however, may not respond to the attacks as the intellectual. As an intellectual, Delillo felt the pain and has employed his skills to portray images of violence, terror and shock which followed the attacks.

The time during which Delillo's *Falling Man* was written suggests that the text is postmodern. Undoubtedly, however, the text post-modernity is questionable. The rise of postmodernism, as previously explained by Forster, is reactionary. It appeared to re-open modernism's closed systems. To do so, writers must abandon the traditional portrayal of reality in terms of binaries. Accordingly, this Derridean strategy, Linda Hutcheon argues, "leads to the acknowledgment, not of truth, but of truths in the plural truths that are socially, ideologically and historically conditioned" (19). Yet, Delillo apparently failed to fulfill his postmodern duties. He failed to represent the truth far from oppositions and discussed the issue of terrorism from one single side. Any reading of the novel suggests that Delillo could not avoid the traditional binary opposition of West versus East. In a view of that, Verslys assumes that Delillo's fiction indicates that September 9/11 can only understood geopolitically as the clash of two frames of reference, two worlds on a collision course" (44). For Verslys, this can be called a "geopolitical stalemate" in which "Hammad summarizes the difference between East and West" (45).

Following the fall of Communism, Richard Gray argues, America lost its oppositional identity and as such needed to reconstruct a new other that would enable it fashion a new globalized identity. The dominant theme in *Falling Man*, just like any post 9/11 fiction, is relating terror to faith. The stereotypical images and Orientalist discourse in Delillo's *Falling Man* are meant to reproduce the other in terms of terror. Steuter and Wills believe that "seeing the enemy as an indistinguishable mass is an essential strategy employed by novelists in the process of constructing the other" (27). To increase the attack on terrorism, Steuter and Wills argued, they have to become "indiscriminate as their bombs" (27).

In *The Archeology of Knowledge*, Michel Foucault analyzes the relationship between, on the one hand, the excavator of knowledge and, on the other, humans or concepts that are subject of that excavation. He terms this disconnect between excavator and the excavated "Exteriority". By this, Foucault tends to argue that what is observed about the subject is noted from the outside, rather than observed from the inside. He explained that a characteristic of the enunciative function is that "the analysis of statements treats them in the systematic form of exteriority" (120). The point to be stressed is that the analysis of someone's culture, by someone who is outsider, would never be objective to count as analytical. Distance and objectivity are very needed for a proper analysis. Based on this Foucauldian argument, one is able to question Delillo's analysis of Muslims and Islam. Thus, to what extent is it possible for Delillo to understand a group of which he is not a member?

Essentially, Edward Said who seeks to 'de-orientalize' the Orient, once claimed that "as a judge of the Orient, the modern Orientalist does not, as he believes and even says, stand apart from it objectively. [...] His Orient is not the Orient as it is, but the Orient as it has been Orientalized" (104). In *Falling Man*, the traumatic events are tackled from a restricted point of view which, in turn, results in a complete

single-sided view of truth. Hammad's story is of a graver import. He is introduced to readers as an archetypal figure used by DeLillo to represent the Muslim community. When the narrator states that "they read the sword verses of the Koran" (120), DeLillo analyzes and criticizes not only an individual, rather the text of the Surah is used to attack a community of which the author is not a member. Hence, a sort of exteriority can be noticed. Accordingly, the reality that the text tends to portray is not a reality as it is, but a reality that the author himself, and the West, seek to advertize. Evidently, the author's interest in the identity of Hammad and the terrorist group encourages othering a non-Western faith. In *The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction*, Walter Laqueur argues that "it is impossible to provide a psychogram or ... (composite) picture of the typical terrorist, because there never was such a person. There has been no terrorism per se..." (79-80).

7. Conclusion

On DeLillo's *Falling Man* books can be written. The expensiveness of the work's ideas and its richness with vivid images of the attacks gives it a special effect. DeLillo's response to the attacks is loaded with racist attitudes. His first step is display images of the Twin Towers' fall, and the shock which accompanies it. Gradually, he introduces Bill Lawton as a mythical figure and a leader of Al-Qaeda. Further, he links terror to Islam and Muslim. In this respect, he declares a fierce battle against Islam. To justify his attack, he brings images that suggest the American sufferance. Moreover, he weaves an account of events and strengthens his ideologies relying on philosophy, painting and poetry.

Falling Man represents DeLillo's attempt to wage a war on Islam and Muslims. Though acclaimed as a postmodern text that must refract the truth this novel is over-loaded with Orientalist discourse. It enhances the classical stereotypical images which have always been used to silence, other, and marginalize the subaltern. DeLillo represents terrorism from a very limited and restricted hegemonic

angle which results in a blurred single-sided perception of reality. Accordingly, Delillo's work has lost its postmodern essence and therefore, Delillo broke with Derrida's teachings.

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