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DeLillo's *Falling Man* as the Counter Narrative against Islam and Terrorism

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Abstract

This research work aims to trace the DeLillo's orientalist representation of muslims in *Falling Man*. It is the critique of Islamic movements and terrorism. The novel captures the catastrophic events of 9/11 and its aftermath and creates a discourse against both Islam and terrorism connecting both of them together. Since major character Hammad, a Muslim terrorist who has involved in the attack, there is mockery in the tone of the novel against entire Islamic religiosit and terrorism. DeLillo, in *Falling Man* attacks both the Islam and terrorism as the typical American writing. The discourse of terrorism has become one of the dominant preoccupations of American literature since the terrorist attacks on 9/11. Being untouched with the depth of the incident, DeLillo's narrative questions against the Islam and upcoming terror and horror in the world where human beings themselves are leading to their destruction. In doing so, DeLillo critiques both Islam and terrorism through his Western perspective as an orientalist representation of the non-west. This research work tries to observe his novel *Falling Man* through the perspective of anti-terrorism evoking DeLillo's notion against war and horror through his counter narrative to terrorism and Islam.

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I. DeLillo's *Falling Man* as a Response to 9/11

Since the catastrophic events of 11th September and its aftermath, the discourse of terrorism has become one of the dominant preoccupations of American literature because the terrorist attacks on 9/11 shocked the world. Many texts have struggled to portray adequately the effect that the event had on ordinary people, and the shock-waves that rippled across the United States. While some have argued that the trauma from the events is still too raw to be able to depict. However, others have tried to use texts and media as a way of understanding the horror of 9/11. One such text is Don DeLillo's novel, *Falling Man*, which was published in 2007 and has been hailed as the closest fiction has so far come to catching up with this huge piece of history. Based on the historical incident occurred of terrorist attack on twin tower and its consequences, the novel tries to present the counter narrative of the terrorism.

Don DeLillo is one of the preeminent masters of contemporary fiction whose novels of terror, both before and after 11th September, have spurred a great deal of criticism. This research work tries to observe his novel *Falling Man* through the perspective of anti-terrorism evoking DeLillo's notion against war through his counter narration to terrorism. For this purposes, this research tries to deal with the narrative of *Falling Man* which of course is from the perspective of Muslim terrorist but equally give message that the root of terrorism is upon the dual side both European/American and Islam. The terror and violence is situated due to the hatred relationship between each other. DeLillo's obsession with the terrorist narrative tries to message the multiple perspective towards the attack as the counter narrative of terrorism.

In *Falling Man*, DeLillo manifestly identifies terrorism with Islam. Adopting a Western position, the writer tells the story of a group of Muslims who blatantly

conduct the terrorist attacks of 9/11 in an attempt to take revenge on the West for its unrestrained growth in the course of modernity. As such, he lays the blame on Islam as being incompatible with the West's history of civilization. Thus, in his putatively historiographic rendering of 9/11, DeLillo, focusing on the American, or generally speaking Western side of the event, complies with the governmental discourses and presents a totalizing reading of it. In doing so, DeLillo strongly opposes against war and terrorism. Unlike the other texts that critique the terrorism through the perspective of victim, DeDillo presents the counter narrative to the terrorism even through the perspective of the characters who have involved in the terrorism and terrorist attacks in order to reveal the savagery of terrorism.

There are several crucial aspects in which this novel creates a significant literary momentum while trying to explain the post-9/11 situation. The novel questions what is the world now? Its title begins to open the door to the answers that man is falling, leading themselves to destruction. The image that the title evokes is the banned photograph of a man free falling from the north tower of the World Trade Center, a horror captured in time. There are different falls that structurally and emotionally support the novel. All these falls are due to the increasing terrorism and terrorist attack which has created the chaotic situation around the entire world. Men are falling leading themselves to death and destruction. In this sense, *Falling Man* is the counter against the terrorism and violence around the world as the major thematic structure of the novel.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the novel is its narrative. DeLillo is different from his fellow contemporaries fictionalizing the same topic is his interest in the attacker, namely, the aspect of terrorism. The perspective, that in this novel has a name, acts as a catalyst, a horrific tool used to construct a border between the old and

the new. DeLillo encompasses this terrorist momentum by speaking from a perspective of the terrorist himself. In this connection, David Wyatt writes:

A daring move in which he takes on the challenge to observe the opposite sides, conflicting them to portray the world of today.

Furthermore, the attack on the World Trade Center marks the great age of terrorism, its peak. In all its horror, the terror becomes one of the rare graspable things in the novel, and its role gains weight and importance in the world that ensues. (157)

Finally, it is essential to consider the novel's specific structure and symbolism that builds around it. The postmodern disconnectedness of thoughts, fragmented narrations and the tone that echoes throughout the novel reflect the imminent world of after, the post 9-11, most realistically. DeLillo unites the world with the tragedy, as well as its characters, offering us a unique perspective of the tragedy. He tries to make think what kind of a world this is. He gives the depth of the issues with the help of the visualization and imagery as the only effective communication in the novel. By uniting those aspects, *Falling Man* becomes a symbol of a specific time, a turning point in history which stands as the counter narrative of terrorism.

What seems to be a theoretic prequel to the novel, Don DeLillo's essay "In the Ruins of the Future" proves that nothing can really be definitively said about 9/11. Rather he says as Abel mentions, "Instead focuses on the affective quality of the event's singularity and on how language can stylistically image and, in the process, reconfigure what it means for contemporary thought to respond ethically to whatever the event's content might be" (2). This might sum up DeLillo's strategy in *Falling Man*.

Although *Falling Man* lacks traditional storytelling, DeLillo's introduction chapter does not lack momentum. The arguable detachment and emptiness in narration seem illogical, in those chapters where readers are transported back into that beginning of a certain end, as the readers again become dreaded witnesses to destruction of power. He presents the depth of the event as he writes, "Smoke and ash came rolling down streets and turning corners, busting around corners, seismic tides of smoke, with office paper flashing past, standard sheets with cutting edge, skimming, whipping past, otherworldly things in the morning pall" (3). Yet as the aftermath to the event, as the story progresses and the world proves to be crumbled, so does the narration.

David Wyatt claims, "However incredibly close its characters come to 'the roar' and 'the buckling', the narration holds it at a considerable distance" (156). Although it is not only the opening chapter that describes a start of the new world, and as the novel's structure may suggest, it never lets readers really leave. The novel, rather its main part, wrapped between the first and final chapter, consists of fragmented perspectives of the survivors, Keith, Lianne, Justin, Florence, and the opposite, terrorist perspective, contrasting the victimized to the victims. The narrative structure also causes a detachment of characters' emotion, and place in the world, their belonging and un-belonging. This is extracted from all the characters.

The protagonist, Keith Neudecker, is a measure, an instrument that testifies to the tragedy's immensity, the one most affected by it. Keith becomes a register for the world in its making, and still bluntly unaware of it, with just a hint of a symbol yet to be defined. DeLillo writes, "There was something else then, outside all this, not belonging to this, aloft . . . A shirt came down out of the high smoke, a shirt lifted and drifting in the scant light and then falling again, down toward the river" (4). The

account of something gentle falling is tragic beauty as well as is the symbolic to the title.

If this is the world now, then it seems every notion of what was normal, sensible, American, had vanished. The characters are stuck in, and DeLillo lets them exist only in terms of the tragedy, however intimate the account of the mother Lianne, father Keith and son Justin may be. In this new world, they function only in response to the tragedy, just as other respond to the overall work. Dealing with indescribable loss, the characters never really evolve, progress, nor tend to go outside the frames of the tragedy. Lianne probably sums it best right at the beginning as he says, “Nothing is next. There is no next. This was next” (10). There is a point where progress stops and returns to ground zero due to the terrorism which is the state of falling men.

Lianne tries to cope with the tragedy getting through to Keith. When he leaves the ruins to go back to Lianne he seeks that progress now, in the family comfort. Yet this is a reflex, a natural wish of belonging, to some world at least, that brings him back home, whatever home is. He is a walking image, seen through Lianne’s eyes, “standing numbly in the flow, a dim figure far away inside plexiglass” (40). However, neither of them progresses. Keith’s poker plays and Lianne’s Alzheimer’s group are means of escapism, even before they grasp what they are escaping from. Their son Justin, on the other hand, represents the child’s perspective of coping with the world of the adult. He tries to find sense in something not even adults can wholly comprehend, as he searches the skies with binoculars for Bin Laden, or as he incorrectly, understands hears, Bill Lawton. The American protagonists are lost and unaware of the world they have yet to get to know, and without a proper honest communication, they will never succeed in it.

To portray to which extent that has gone is quite evident in Chapter Five, when Lianne, observing Keith playing catch with his son, says:

. . . as a hovering presence now . . . He was not quite returned to his body yet . . . There was something critically missing from the things around him. They were unfinished, whatever that means. They were unseen, whatever that means . . . Maybe this is what things look like when there is no one here to see them . . . saw a man she'd never known before. (60)

In narrative and worldly emptiness, DeLillo portrays the post 9/11 era. Lianne “saw a man she'd never known before” (60). But is Lianne the person she knows, the person she was before. This is the area of the unknown, into which DeLillo throws his protagonists. Man can only exist in a world they are able to understand, explain or define. But this is DeLillo's main agenda, proving there is no way of achieving that, finding a way out of the rubble following the morning of 9/11 since DeLillo evokes the consequences brought by the terrorist attack on Twin Tower.

It is the main antagonistic idea that the threat of terror the novel introduces is the means used to construct a new world. It marks the age of terror, one of the greatest issues in the post 9/11 world. When the hijacked planes soared into the two towers, terrorism became the most powerful force, gaining momentum, strength when it conflicted with the present American way.

Unlike a natural catastrophe or an isolated criminal act, the world of terror becomes a graspable idea in the DeLillo's tragedy. DeLillo is interested in both the victimizer and the victim, and their respective worlds, insofar that he dares to conflict them, with terrible consequences. He is not only paying tribute to the victims of that

fateful day, but tries to explore the fundamental goals of the attacker, with an aim of providing us with reasons how the new world came to be.

In his essay “In the Ruins of the Future” DeLillo claims, “Today, again, the world narrative belongs to terrorists . . . The terrorists of September 11 want to bring back the past” (33-4), and that bringing back the past into the present leads to indefinable, unspeakable consequences in *Falling Man*. When the two opposite ideologies, beliefs and worlds collide, tragedy ensues, or as Linda S. Kauffman puts it, “Capitalism and terrorism: two forces on a collision course, both out of control” (357). In her comparative essay on the terror in *Falling Man*, she rightfully claims that “In both the essay and *Falling Man*, DeLillo contrasts Al Qaeda with America; medieval vengeance with advanced technology; a brotherhood of martyrs with global markets” (356). DeLillo’s brave tackling of the attacker’s perspective makes his account that much more relevant to the understanding of the tragedy.

The embodiment of that terrorist perspective, the character of Hammad is even having doubts about jihad. He says, “But does a man have to kill himself in order to count for something, be someone, find the way?” (175). However, he resists the urges for the purpose of the act of terrorism, “The world changes first in the mind of the man who wants to change it” (175), as DeLillo seems to suggest the power of the past, the notion of the strong minds is what will bring change to the world, what marks the end of one world in its latter horror.

DeLillo does suggest the strength of terror rising, and it is through Hammad, through mental strength, that this perspective and strength comes forth. It is precisely this strength of the mind what marks the beginning of the age of terror. The hijacking of the planes, with Hammad in one of them, signifies the beginning of that change

that first occurred in the minds of the Islamists, as terror becomes the only thing that is positively graspable, horrifying as it is, and in the novel and in the post-9/11 world.

Without dwelling too deeply on the political ideas and connotations of the terrorist perspective in the novel, it is simply necessary to acknowledge its role in the author's attempt to portray the worlds, the attacker as well as the attacked. It is the symbol of fall of the free world, in every sense, what represents the stature of terror in its highest form; its success brings out the tragedy. In its peak, the age of terrorism divides the before and after, the pre-9/11 and post-9/11 world, as the narration struggles with what is left in those ruins.

It never comes more close and obvious as in the final chapter, when DeLillo conflicts capitalism and terrorism, the present and the past, which can only lead to destructible consequences, "He [Hammad] fastened his seatbelt. [...] A blast wave passed through the structure that sent Keith Neudecker out of his chair and into a wall" (239). Within the same sentence, Hamad's perspective switches to Keith's, the two worlds, ideas and meanings collide, cementing an image of downfall, destruction in human minds, the image so profoundly significant that changed the course of history.

Discussing perspectives of the 9/11 representations, in "September 11 and Postmodern Memory" David Wyatt claims that this switching of perspective provides a "sense that they are not as far apart as they might seem, [...] a moment having less to do with the history of empathy than the laws of physics" (157). As told by Wyatt, DeLillo's point exactly, that the clash between the terrorism and consumerism, past and present is the overall cause of the fall of world, or rather, man. Moreover, a terrible crash explosion, carved in the minds of 9/11 witnesses, blasts as the views of the terrorist, the past, clash with the views of the modern, American. The two

therefore, cannot coexist, as DeLillo politically seems to allude, as disastrous consequences spread rapidly, affecting the world at large.

Kauffman sums it up concisely, “*Falling Man* portrays the contradictions between present and past; life and death; time and eternity. It records, moreover, the precise moment when these contradictions collide with deadly impact” (56). The novel is then, not only a mark of a great change and a hymn to the tragic day, but also a warning and a literary memorial to the rise of terrorism as a great threat to the present, and future, whatever the world may be.

What is undoubtedly apparent throughout the novel is its perspective switching structure and detailed emptiness in communication. There seem to be spaces, voids left between the sentences or rather as Wyatt says, “stunned numbness [that] depends upon highly procedure-driven sentences, ‘He wore’ – ‘He kept’ – ‘He saw’ – ‘He started’” (156). The novel lacks communication in its traditional sense, something DeLillo’s narrative seems to suggest evolves out of the post-9/11 world, the world of after. Where Keith does not even attempt to communicate, on his way to a mental recovery, Lianne desperately searches for something meaningful, something that would speak to her as she tries to find, “Everything seemed to mean something. Their lives were in transition and she looked for signs” (67).

She searches the newspapers “until she had to force herself to stop” (67), yet the meaning is distant, unavailable. This is DeLillo’s point in the complete structure – meaning cannot be found and communication restored, as the effects of the tragedy outgrow it, “We have our own ruins. But I don’t think I want to see them” (116). Keith and Lianne find themselves in a labyrinth they must crawl out of. They are unaware of what awaits them in the end, as Kauffman writes, “In *Falling Man* after the terrorist attacks, life takes on a dimension of unreality – disoriented in time and

space. The characters feel puny, insignificant” (371). However, there is no escaping this labyrinth at all, and by concluding the novel with the same scenes he has started with, DeLillo makes sure to understand this.

If there is no communication, what does the story tell us? Keith and Lianne do not find any sort of resolution, as they seem to have nothing left to say. “‘The every-word, every-breath schedule we were on before we split. Is it possible this is over? We don’t need this anymore. We can live without it. Am I right?’ ‘We’re ready to sink into our little lives,’ he said” (76). Nevertheless, there exists a certain telling, or rather showing, and it is profoundly horrifying, that it replaces any other form. It is not a conversation that ever took place between the main characters but it functions in the same way the tragedy functions. Through images and visualization, the fundamental of the event of 9/11 is reflected in the novel. This is where the novel acquires its communicative strength, and defining symbolism of the *Falling Man*.

Lianne plays a central addressee of a disturbing theatrical performance: “He brought it back, of course, those stark moments in the burning towers when people fell or were forced to jump” (ibid. 33). It begins and ends there, in the spot where the performance artist, David Janiak, hangs suspended on a harness wires, upside down:

Traffic was barely moving now. There were people shouting up at him, outraged at the spectacle, the puppetry of human desperation, a body’s last fleet breath and what it held. It held the gaze of the world, she thought. There was the awful openness of it, something we’d not seen, the single falling figure that trails a collective dread, body come down among us all. And now, she thought, this little theater piece, disturbing enough to stop traffic and send her back into the terminal. (33)

This research aims to shed light on DeLillo's inscription of anti-terrorist discourse in *Falling Man*, attached with religious and political abstractions and reductive myths that keep veering away from history and sense. For this judgment is perhaps Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* which, intended or not, by representing 9/11 through the restricted lenses of anti-terrorist discourse. The manifest of the terrorists portrayed in the novel testifies to this claim. Exploring DeLillo's representation of the terrorist figures in the novel, this research discusses how DeLillo's representation of 9/11 turns into a critique of terrorism or anti-terrorist narrative.

Comparing the war on terrorism with the Cold War, Walter Benn Michaels examines the important differences between the two. What makes the war on terrorism new, he observes, is its lack of a clear enemy. Unlike the Cold War, it is not a war against some fixed ideology, say Communism (such as the Maoist group in DeLillo's 1991 novel *Mao II*). Yet, it is not clear from which nations the terrorists come either.

Thus, according to Michaels, "the war is no more between liberal capitalism and socialism, neither is it simply the war between liberalism and Islam" (106). According to Michaels, the question of enemy in the war on terrorism is much more complicated than that of the Cold War since Michaels does not "flatly identify terrorism with Islam" (107). Michaels tends to introduce the terrorists as global outlaws whose only objective is to threaten the universal law of world citizenship.

Referring to Fukuyama's *The End of History*, according to which the end of the Cold War is seen as the end of ideological conflict, Michaels argues that since the enemy "can no longer be ideological or national," he should be defined as "a kind of criminal . . . who represents a threat not to a political system or nation, but to the law" (107).

Some of the critics have focused on the 9/11 terrorism as the result of otherness towards Muslim by the Western civilization. In the context of 9/11 terrorism, it seems that the volume of this Otherness reaches its peak as is reflected in the post 9/11 fiction. DeLillo largely draws on this Othering in his construction of Muslim terrorist identities in *Falling Man*. Relying on the Orientalist thesis of the incompatibility of Islam with Western modernity, DeLillo introduces Muslims as violators of American style of life, a criminality rooted not in their being individually seditious but in their collective Islamicism.

Describing the secret life the small group of (terrorist) Muslims lead in New York— where “every cabdriver ... [is] named Muhammad” (28) the omniscient narrator, for instance, says “they were in this country to pursue technical educations but in these *rooms* they spoke about the struggle” (79). The “rooms” generally refers to the prayer rooms in which Muslims gather to say their prayers and often share their memories and experiences. “The mosque” (77, 80, 81, 82, 176), “the portable prayer room at the university” (80), “the apartment on Marienstrasse” (79), and “daral-ansar” (83) are some examples the narrator catalogues for such spaces. This preoccupation with the concept of space implies a sort of agoraphobia, fear of open spaces (which may symbolically imply their narrow-mindedness), on the part of Muslims. More pointedly, Muslims are represented as seeking refuge in enclosed spaces sheltering from what they consider as the corrupt West, “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” (80).

From narrator’s perspective, Muslims’ fear of the place also hints at their, in Bruce Janz’s words, “inability to come to terms with the other,” the West (191).

Pondering over this fact, the narrator winds up his contemplation with a short, but revealing sentence, “they needed space of their own” (80). Thus, since Muslims cannot accommodate to the West’s civilization, they find themselves imprisoned in the Western societies, suppress their xenophobia, and finally, turning into global “parasites,” decide to destroy their host community.

The fact that the target of terrorists’ attack in 9/11 is the World Center Towers in the US has inspired many terrorism scholars to ponder over its symbolic significance. One of these scholars is Bruce Janz who studies the cultural narrative of terrorism in relation to the notion of the place as “reinforcing personal and cultural identity” of a nation (191). He observes that the narrative of place is “meant to establish home as constitutive of the self, as a place of dwelling in a Heideggerian sense” (192).

Seen in that light, George Lakoff, in the wake of 9/11, says the Twin Towers “were intimately tied up with our identities and with a vast amount of what we took for granted about our everyday life ... it became a symbol of America” (52). What is usually highlighted in such writings is the terrorists’ “tendency to dissipate the place identity of America as the world’s ‘cosmopolis’” (192).

In response to this tendency, however, the discourse of “war on terrorism” is employed in order to “re-legitimize” the place identity of the United States. As such, ironically, terrorism as a narrative helps to reinforce the place identity of the target of the attacks. Pace this critical stance, Peter Boxall casts doubt on the epistemological certainty of “the meaning and historical location of the [9/11] attacks, about whether they represent transformation or continuity” of the US foreign policy (230). Boxall further suggests that “the disappearance of the towers may not signal a break in the

historical continuum, but might rather turn out to be a part of it; an endorsement of the Virilian acceleration of time, a correction of it” (230).

This being the case, the Other against whom the identity of the place is to be constructed becomes Islam in post 9/11 fiction. In his early representation of the Muslims in *Falling Man*, the narrator, in free indirect speech, reads Hammad’s mind this way, “Islam is the world outside the prayer room as well as the surahs 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” (80). Thus, to “satisfy the need for a clear enemy and a coherent narrative” (193), DeLillo has recourse to the construction of a threatening Islam as the only enemy and Other of the United States.

Richard Gray also touches upon the issue of Islam as the Other of America’s post-Cold War. He maintains that “with the collapse of Communism,” America lost its oppositional identity, and, as such, needed to reconstruct a new other that would enable it fashion a new globalized identity (135). Accordingly, the theme of what is to be American comes to the forefront of post-Cold-War fiction, and is mainly explored in the encounters between Americans and non-Americans or preferably anti-Americans. Gray proposes that the missing piece of 9/11 puzzle is what Deleuze and Guattari call strategy of “deterritorialization” whereby the novelist can explore the relations between different cultures and identities constituting American nation— the effort DeLillo makes in *Cosmopolis* (141).

Gray observes that in the multicultural society of America, the boundaries between “center” and “margin” have been violated (129) and that makes America vulnerable to the constant threat of cultural clashes. The idea that Muslim identities are taking benefit from the fluidity of the boundaries in American society is very well reflected in the following passage in *Falling Man*:

This recalls Coetzee's (2004) *Waiting for Barbarians* in which the writer represents the imperial forces as being in dire need of an imaginary enemy as an excuse for the state to maintain its totalitarian control over townspeople. The men [Muslims] 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. (82)

In this short passage, DeLillo very aptly both foreshadows the plane attacks of 9/11 by Muslim terrorists, who had learnt about flight in American schools, and more importantly answers the question of the motivation behind their terrorism—defending Islam against Western cultures, hence the idea of the invisibility of Muslim identity in American fluid society.

Without giving a clear picture of their social life, the narrator merely depicts Muslims as being living in a utopian land, “the land of the free” in which everybody is equally entitled to the right of absolute liberty. While enjoying the benefits of American civilization, these ungrateful Muslims, take up arms against it and vehemently seek its fall and destruction. The footprints of the same “statement” can be traced in DeLillo's earlier novels as well, which taken together, construct, in Edward Said's terminology, an underlying “structure of attitude and reference” based on which further propositions are less disturbingly made (61).

One of the discursive functions of the marginal characters such as Omar H. in *Falling Man* is this. They create a cultural “topography” in DeLillo's Orientalist oeuvre making possible, maintaining, and reinforcing the Orientalized textual attitude toward Arab figures that turn up as Muslim terrorists in *Falling Man*. From the

narrator's perspective, there is a strong "struggle" between Islam and "the enemy, near enemy and far, Jews first, for all things unjust and hateful, and then the Americans" (80). By "struggle," he means the clash between Western and Islamic cultures. In another passage, it is said that, to the young Muslims, everything seemed to be "corrupt of mind and body, determined to shiver Islam down to bread crumbs for birds" (79). Generally speaking, the theme of cultural clash between Islam and the West pervades the novel.

Aside from the Muslim terrorists, there are some other characters marked with Islam who take on diminutive roles in the novel. One of them is Elena who lives in the same apartment building together with the main characters of the novel, Keith and Lianne. She is used to playing a kind of music which appears to Lianne as belonging to "another set of traditions, Middle Eastern, North African, Bedouin songs perhaps or Sufi dances, music located in Islamic tradition" (67).

In order to trace the counter narrative against terrorism and Islam in *Falling Man*, this research includes the idea of otherness by Edward Said. *Orientalism* by Edward Said is a canonical text of cultural studies in which he has challenged the concept of orientalism or the difference between east and west, as he puts it. He says that with the start of European colonization the Europeans came in contact with the lesser developed countries of the east. They found their civilization and culture very exotic, and established the science of orientalism, which was the study of orientals or the people from these exotic civilization. Edward Said argues that the Europeans divided the world into two parts; the east and the west or the occident and the orient or the civilized and the uncivilized. This was totally an artificial boundary; and it was laid on the basis of the concept of them and us or theirs and ours. The Europeans used orientalism to defined themselves. Some particular attributes were associated with the

orientals, and whatever the orientals weren't the occidentals were. The Europeans defined themselves as the superior race compared to the orientals; and they justified their colonization by this concept. They said that it was their duty towards the world to civilize the uncivilized world.

The main problem, however, arose when the Europeans started generalizing the attributes they associated with orientals, and started portraying these artificial characteristics associated with orientals in their western world through their scientific reports, literary work, and other media sources. What happened was that it created a certain image about the orientals in the European mind and in doing that infused a bias in the European attitude towards the orientals. This prejudice was also found in the orientalist (scientist studying the orientals); and all their scientific research and reports were under the influence of this. The generalized attributes associated with the orientals can be seen even today, for examples, the Arabs are defined as uncivilized people; and Islam is seen as religion of the terrorist. Based on the similar ideas, this research looks at orientalist gaze upon Islam in *Falling man* as an American Empirical writing.

II. Representation of the Islam in *Falling Man* of Don DeLillo

The work of Don DeLillo has frequently focused its attention on terrorism, and therefore the cameo role of Hammad, an imaginatively created member of the terrorist group who carried out the attack on the World Trade Center, is unsurprising in his post-9/11 novel *Falling Man*. The intrinsic interplay of fact and fiction that frequently characterizes post-9/11 novels and situates them within discursive frameworks of debate about the role of literature in documenting such events and its relevance to understandings of significant historical moments. Within such contexts, DeLillo's novel focus on the success or failure of his depiction of the American protagonist, Keith Neudecker, who survives the attack on the World Trade Center as the counter agenda against the terrorists and terrorism. DeLillo's novel from both sides: including victim and victimizers, evokes the hatred toward both terrorism and war. DeLillo offers a faltering humanizing of the terrorist that complicates popular understandings of terrorism. The inclusion of Hammad in an otherwise constrained personal sphere of experience implicates its specificity within a global political narrative.

DeLillo slowly builds his characters. For example his protagonist, Hammad, as a young Muslim who has the citizenship of United States, Hammad becomes involved with a terrorist group whose members are Muslims from different countries around all over the world. He writes, "They read the sword verses of the Koran ... [and were] determined to become one mind" (83). Influenced by his charismatic friend, Mohamed Mohamed el- Amir el-Sayed Atta, he is initiated into the clandestine meetings of the group and finally turns out to be the terrorist who headed the airplanes toward Twin Towers. Despite having the authority of omniscient point of view, the narrator evades developing a multidimensional character for Hammad, portraying him,

with an Orientalist tendency, as “a bulky man, clumsy ... [who] thought all his life that some unnamed energy was sealed in his body, too tight to be released” (79).

Hammad’s peculiar contact with the world outside the “room” testifies to his unhealthy relationships with non-Muslims. Before his assimilation of Amir’s subversive ideas, he is described as a sensual, bodily young man leading a hedonistic life. His experiences of the reality are mainly rendered through sensory impressions. His first appearance in the novel is a good example, “[he] cupped his hands to his mouth and exhaled six or seven times, slowly and deliberately, feeling a whisper of warm breath on his palms. A woman on a bike went past, pedaling hard” (77).

Immediately after this scene, he is again described with the same implications and in similar moods, “Hammad stood nodding. He felt the 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). The trope of body consciousness becomes a metaphor for Hammad’s essential sensuality in the course of novel. And interestingly enough, the only aspect of Hammad’s life which is developed in detail is his sexual relationships with his roommate Leyla who is “German, Syrian, what else, a little Turkish” (81). What is attractive to Hammad, the narrator says, is her “dark eyes and a floppy body that liked contact” (81). In fact, DeLillo magnifies Hammad’s sexual self at the expense of his social, cultural, and religious selves in order to give a unified picture of his identity.

Hammad is reduced to the level of a pleasure seeking man whose identity is torn between strong instinctual desires and religious demands. The narrator observes that “he had to struggle against himself, first, and then against the injustice that haunted their lives” (83).

On the one hand, he dreams of getting married with Leyla to have babies, and on the other hand, as Amir's reproachful comments suggest, he finds himself guilty of being too corporeal. The following passage makes the point clear, "Amir looked at him, seeing right down to his base self. Hammad knew what he would say. Eating all the time, pushing food in your face, slow to approach your prayers. There was more. Being with a shameless woman ... What is the difference between you and all the others, outside our space?" (83).

In another scene, Hammad commits a sort of "retail terrorism it is committed by individuals or groups as opposed to the "wholesale terrorism" of governments" (9). In this passage, DeLillo wants to complete his picture of Hammad representing him as a dim-witted ruthless murderer. Together with two other Muslims, Hammad goes for hunting a man whose identity remains unclear. Being unsure what that act is all about, Hammad hits the guy three or four times and readily leaves the place.

Afterwards, thinking over what he has done, Hammad hypothesizes that perhaps he was "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" (82). The obsession with the matter of "growing beard" becomes an element of humor in characterization of Muslims, adding to their abnormal habits and single-mindedness. The narrator says that Muslims were all growing beards and "one of them even told his father to grow a beard" (79). Hammad who has recently joined the group feels a bit uneasy with growing long beard, "he spent time at the mirror looking at his beard, knowing he was not supposed to trim it" (82). However, he gradually gets used to it and even feels more secure with it:

The beard would look better if he trimmed it. But there were rules now and he was determined to follow them. His life had structure. Things

were clearly defined. He was becoming one of them now, learning to look like them and think like them. This was inseparable from jihad. He prayed with them to be with them. They were becoming total brothers. (83)

Another trademark motif deployed by DeLillo as an Orientalist writer is his representation of the Muslims as an indistinguishable mass with an un-pliable fixed identity.

Exploring the post 9/11 situation and terrorism writers seeks for terrorist or enemy of America. Steuter and Wills aptly observe that “seeing the enemy as an indistinguishable mass is an essential strategy” employed by novelists in the process of constructing the other (27). Steuter and Wills further says, “That would enable the West to justify the carnage of the civilians in their war on terrorism because if the terrorists allegedly lack of individual identity, every citizen of their country becomes a terrorist as well. In short, to advance the discourse of war on terrorism, they have to become as indiscriminate as their bombs” (27).

Furthermore, the Muslims’ lack of individual identity, epitomized in Hammad’s blind capitulation to Amir’s authoritative rhetoric, is to designate their willingness to be ruled over by fascist systems. In the small community of Muslims portrayed in the novel, this is charismatic Amir who appears to be manipulating the lives of the members. His description, time and again, evokes the image of a fascistic leader, “Amir is the man who led discussions ... he was intense, a small thin wiry man who spoke to Hammad in his face. He was very genius, others said” (79). Or in another passage, he writes, “this was Amir, his mind was in the upper skies, making sense of things, drawing things together” (81).

Cultural and religious identity is major factors behind the conflict between West and Islam. West focuses on individual identity but Islam has collective identity. Eric Fromm is one of the theorists pursuing the link between dispersal of the individual identity and totalitarianism in modern time. His argument can shed some light on our discussion. According to him, as Shaffer writes:

[B]y becoming part of a power which is felt as unshakably strong, eternal, and glamorous, one participates in its strength and glory. One surrenders one's own ... freedom; but one gains a new security and a new pride in the participation in the power in which one submerges. One gains also security against the torture of doubt. [He] is saved from making decisions, saved from the final responsibility for the fate of his self, and thereby saved from the doubt of what decision to make. He is also saved from the doubt of what the meaning of his life is or who "he" is. (68)

DeLillo's characterization of Hammad very well concurs with Fromm's theory. Hammad as a self-divided person is depicted as being in dire need of a totalitarian leader like Amir to decide for him and thereby give meaning to his life. In fact, this is through the filter of Amir's identity that he gains meaning. When he was initially doubtful about the whole affair, the narrator says "Hammad wasn't sure whether this was funny, true or stupid. He listened to everything they said, intently" (79).

Even when he had become an inseparable part of the group, he could not totally drop his hesitation, "Hammad in a certain way thought this was unfair. But the closer he examined himself, the truer the words" (83). The truer Amir's words appeared to him because this was Amir who thought in his stead. Even, in the last minutes of his life, the time he is heading the plane toward the intended tower, he

finds peace only in Amir's commanding words, "Forget the world. Be unmindful of the thing called the world ... This is your long wish, to die with your brothers" (238).

DeLillo not only criticizes the terrorism rather connects the terrorism with Islam and their collective cultural identity. On the Orientalist motif of the Orient as an indistinguishable mass, Sara Mills writes: "[t]he fact that sweeping generalizations were made about particular cultures made them less communities of individuals than an indistinguishable mass, about whom one could amass 'knowledge' or which could be stereotyped: the inscrutable Chinese, the untrustworthy Arab, the docile Hindu, and so on" (109). DeLillo with the narrative of post 9/11 attack, tries to critique the terrorism and Islam connecting them each other through his anti-protagonist and his activities.

There is the dominant of interpretations of 9/11 terrorism in contemporary post-9/11 fiction. Thus, DeLillo's representation of Hammad as an Al-Qaeda terrorist characterizes the general regarded as the notion of anti-terrorism nature of the post-9/11 fiction. There are a lots of text regarding the issues of anti-terrorism. Dominic Head's survey of John Updike's *Terrorist* (2007), Amis's (2006) short story "The Last Days of Muhammad Atta" and McEwan's (2006) *Saturday*, as exemplifying some of the major novelists' response to the attacks, bears witness to the novelists' more or less "rudimentary character portraits" (120). Criticizing Updike (2007) for his "unnaturally reductive portrait" of Ahmad, the Hammad-like Al Qaeda terrorist, Stephen Abell aptly notes that since characterization of Ahmad "is not contextualized," he stands "for nothing other than his religion" and so "is no more than a Muslim Metonymy" (117). In this sense, the narrative of anti-terrorism is also one of the prominent issues of contemporary fiction writing. DeLillo's *Falling Man* too stands as the similar fiction that criticizes the terrorism due to its polyphonic characterization of

terrorism. About such characterization, Knudson Hoffman writes, “A polyphonic characterization of the terrorists would certainly take into account the counter narratives implicated in their multi-sided reality . . . an enemy is a person whose story we have not heard” (1).

One of the fundamental criticisms to be leveled against DeLillo’s fiction, especially reflected in his *Falling Man*, is his representation of 9/11 terrorism from a restricted (hegemonic) point of view which consequently results in an incomplete single-sided view of reality. By categorizing the terrorist events of 9/11 under the flag of Islam, DeLillo tries to unify its meaning and create a totality of its reality. This totalization does not just mean to unify, but rather means to unify with an eye to power and control as the critique of terrorism through the Western view points.

Falling Man apparently fails to uphold this avowedly postmodern “critical distance” from the historiography of 9/11 events, and consequently, installs an unpostmodern account of it. De-contextualization and de-politicization of the 9/11 terrorism are the means through which DeLillo represses any recognition of the contingency of the historical conditions in which that event takes place. The international trauma of the events is depicted from the limited point of view of the individuals who had been actual victims of terrorism. In this way, not only does DeLillo evade his responsibility of demythologizing the grand narrative of terrorism, but also contributes to its damaging effects by replicating its image as occurred in reality.

One of the thematic strands of DeLillo’s novel is its implicit association of Islamic Republic of Iran with the terrorist movements marked with Islamic fundamentalism. Introducing Iran as “the black hole” in that novel (233), DeLillo does his best to give an “order,” through his narrative, to the un-discursive events of

Iran's pre- and post- Islamic Revolution. In *Falling Man*, he returns to Iran more straightforwardly, crudely, through the dominating discourses flourished in the wake of 9/11 terrorism. Having an eye upon the discourse of Iran as the axis of evil, for instance, DeLillo, now tries to establish, though subliminally yet effectively, an ideological relationship between 9/11 terrorism and Iran as an Islamic nation. The references made to Iran constitute one of the subplots of the novel narrated within the sections devoted to the terrorists' narrative.

The story of the terrorists begins with Hammad's listening to an "older man's story" (77). The "older man" talks of his experiences in the war against Iran when he was "a rifleman in the Shatt al Arab, fifteen years ago . . . a soldier in Saddam's army" (77). The picture he draws of the war teems with hatred images towards Islam with the focus on Iranians, depicting them as "fanatical," "violent," "dull," "irrational," and "superstitious," whose only motivation behind war was to avenge "the Shia defeat and the allegiance of the living to those who were dead and defeated" (78). Besides being "revengeful," Iranians are represented as being inherently "fanatical" and "superstitious," the two derogatory codes which would bind them with the Islamic fundamentalist terrorists. The motif of Iranians' fanaticism is developed in four succeeding paragraphs all about Iran's war. "The older man's story" has it that:

Thousands of shouting boys. Some carried rifles, many did not, and the weapons nearly overwhelmed the smaller boys, Kalashnikovs, too heavy to be carried very far. He was a soldier in Saddam's army and they were the martyrs of the Ayatollah, here to fall and die. They seemed to come up out of the wet earth, wave on wave, and he aimed and fired and watched them fall. He was flanked by machine-gun

positions and the firing grew so intense he began to think he was breathing white-hot steel. (77)

Of the “thousands of shouting boys,” says the Iraqi soldier, “many did not” carry rifles, and more notably, they were “here to fall and die” (77). Being fanatical, irrational, and superstitious, Iranian “boys,” and not soldiers, all of a sudden decide that they should fulfill their “allegiance” to their fathers “who were dead and defeated” (78), wage war on Iraq, and enter their neighbor’s lands only “to fall and die” (77). This story is furthermore consolidated in other paragraphs, “he said he was twice regretful, first to see the boys die, sent out to explode land mines and to run under tanks and into walls of gunfire, and then to think they were winning, these children, defeating us in the manner of their dying” (78).

The significance of this story is made clear when later on the narrator says Muslim terrorists “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” (80). When pieced together, these scattered images reveal a unified message, and that is introduction of Iranians’ “manner of dying” as one of the possible models for terrorists’ suicidal acts. This issue is more pointedly revealed in the following passage describing the moments before “the aircraft [hijacked by Hammad] struck the tower” (239):

[Hammad] didn’t know how he’d been cut. He’d been cut by one of his brothers, how else, accidentally, in the struggle, and he welcomed the blood but not the pain, which was becoming hard to bear. Then he thought of something he’d long forgotten. He thought of the Shia boys on the battlefield in the Shatt al Arab. He saw them coming out of trenches and redoubts and running across the mudflats toward enemy

positions, mouths open in mortal cry. He took strength from this, seeing them cut down in waves by machine guns, boys in the hundreds, then the thousands, suicide brigades, wearing red bandannas around their necks and plastic keys underneath, to open the door to paradise . . .

Every sin of your life is forgiven in the seconds to come. (238)

Reading Hammad's distressed mind, the narrator speaks of the "strength" that the remembrance of the story of Iranians' "suicide brigades" conveyed to Hammad, who is now similarly committing suicide. Thus, drawing a parallel between Iranian "boys" and Hammad, both being Muslims, DeLillo puts emphasis on the ideological impact that Iran might have had on these fundamentalist terrorists.

The stance toward Iran, as said earlier, is by no means original. DeLillo's novel is but a repetition of the bulk of discourses reproduced on the "irreducible" Iran since the Islamic Revolution. A broad array of discourses ranging from media narratives to scholarly books and articles disseminate and keep in circulation this ideological proposition.

In the above two passages, DeLillo explicitly makes use of one of the purely Orientalist constructs of Iran-Iraq war: the fictitious image of Iranians' wearing "plastic keys to paradise" (80, 238). This Orientalist image however has accrued factual status to itself because of its production and constant reproduction within the imperial nexus of power relations and mainly through mainstream media. It bears mentioning that, Azar Nafisi, an expatriate Iranian writer living in America, has already registered this theme in her memoir, *Reading Lolita in Tehran* and has contributed to the strengthening of the discursive validity of the image. Her story has it that:

In those days, I had become an avid and insatiable collector. I saved pictures of martyrs, young men, some mere children, published in the daily papers ... I cut out Ayatollah Khomeini's praise of the thirteen-year-old boy who had thrown himself in front of an enemy tank and collected accounts of young men who were given keys to heaven to wear around their neck as they were sent off to the front: they were told that when they were martyred, they would go straight to heaven.

(159)

A brief comparison between Nafisi's and DeLillo's narratives demonstrates how greatly the latter is indebted to the Orientalist motifs and images implicated in the former. What makes DeLillo's intertextual use of this image is its lack of any sense of parody that would problematize its textual historiography. Since his Orientalist position is guided by the hatred to Islam and terrorism. In this sense, there is a strong hatred and Western gaze of DeLillo in order to criticize terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism.

Though acclaimed as a postmodern writer, DeLillo, in this novel, greatly relies on the hatred toward Islam as Orientalist discourse. It is one of the potent meta-narratives of contemporary time, and while preserving its constructed values, enhances the classical structures of othering, silencing, and marginalization. What DeLillo offers in this novel as the "representation" of terrorism is inflected with Orientalist parameters. Don DeLillo's novel indeed turns out to be one of the "writings" of the (American) empire.

The underlying conceit of the post-9/11 novel exploits the reader's awareness of the socio-political text exterior to the literary work, and these imbrications of the

real and the fictive are at once limiting and productive. Thus, inclusion of the ‘terrorist’ Hammad, in *Falling Man* has an air of inevitability for a novelist such as Don DeLillo for two reasons. First, DeLillo is well versed in writing about terrorism, and second, this particular characterization corresponds with other post-9/11 discursive constructions of terrorists and terrorism.

DeLillo acknowledges that “there are people who say my books have a prophetic quality” (7). He claims “to show the things that are happening in such a way that one can understand them more clearly. And maybe I do see some things more clearly and a little earlier than others do. For example, terrorists appear in my books again and again. Why? Well, because they exist!” (8). Pankaj Mishra observes that, “DeLillo makes no attempt to extend his exploration of terrorism. It is significant that, when confronted with the most audacious act of terrorism to date, DeLillo neglects the political reverberations of such violence” (9). Mishra’s claims fuel the debate about the failure of imagination inherent in hegemonic post-9/11 fiction, and imply that a more nuanced mode of representation can be found in the work of those postcolonial or migrant authors more engaged with the complexities of contesting cultures.

DeLillo’s narratives challenge the ‘conventions and traditions that are informed by the familiar oppositions between ‘them’ and ‘us’, East and West, and the pre-modern and modern. Yet as intellectuals seek to deconstruct these binary oppositions, the questions about how global security might be adequately addressed are confounded. Nivedita Majumdar notes the dichotomy of representation that posits the concerns of the political with that of the literary, “Outside literature, terrorism is often explained as a product of cultural difference or psychological aberration. In literature, however, regardless of whether terrorism is cast in a sympathetic light or

unequivocally rejected, the phenomenon is often embedded within a context that is both historicized and humanized” ().

In *Falling Man*, when the Muslim figure of Hammad is woven into the domestic narrative of an American survivor of the 9/11 attacks, the literary impulse of humanizing is conditioned by a political subjectivity inscribed by the vital issue of contemporary terrorism and security. *Falling Man* depicts the life, the mission and the death of Hammad as a form of signature to the attacks on America that morning of 11 September 2001. It is also a reiteration of the stereotypical willingness of the Muslim terrorist to embrace death. How the plot of death and the willingness of the terrorist to die impinge upon the form and production of post-9/11 literature is clearly presented in *Falling Man* as the counter narrative of Terrorism and Islam.

Falling Man focalizes Keith Neudecker’s experience of the attacks on the World Trade Center and his aimless drifting within the boundaries of time and space. The structure of the novel depicts a cyclical movement that reinforces his entrapment within the temporality of that experience. Despite being integral to the actuality of events, and understandings of its representation, the character of Hammad makes only a cameo appearance and his place in the novel is often critically overlooked. The function of Hammad is to underline the tensions between the West and a geo-political Islam, the infusion of this within the everyday American sensibility is perhaps a more disturbing presence. Hammad explores the wider implications of representations that promote a doctrinal complicity with death. It would be simplistic to read Hammad as purely an articulation of a terrorist.

There is an expression of a nihilistic faith in death and destruction even in the character. This sentiment is inscribed within a wider discourse that is envisaged as Islam. Hammad’s peer, Amir, gives voice to this notion when he states “Islam is the

world outside the prayer room as well as the *s rah* 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” (79-80). Thus, the historical binaries of conflict and opposition are firmly articulated. Though there is the lack of a clearly defined enemy, the war on terror is the major phenomenon in the novel and it is presented as the hatred toward Islam and terrorism. *Falling Man* collaborates in the discursive renderings of this enemy and assumes the responsibility of collective understanding of the 9/11 attacks as the counter against terrorism.

DeLillo indicates that September 11 can only be understood geopolitically as the clash of two opposing frames of reference, two worlds on a collision course. There is even the geopolitical stalemate wherein Hammad summarizes the defining difference between East and West. Certainly, the characterization of Hammad is resonant of these sensibilities. There is a crucial subtlety in the representation of this terrorist figure. A frequently examined episode demonstrates Hammad’s struggle for identity, “the closer [Hammad] examined himself, the truer the words. He had to fight against the need to be normal. He had to struggle against himself, first, and then against the injustices that haunted their lives” (83).

This self-reflexivity of Hammad is interpreted as a reluctant terrorism. Hammad is particularly memorable because he secretly harbors doubts about jihad. He wants marriage and children. He has an overwhelming desire simply to be “normal” which he knows he must resist. 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 as the critique against terrorism and Islam in the novel.

The many estranged features of the novel is the fact that the narrative in the novel. It is not limited to Keith and Lianne and their immediate next of kin,

interspersed with the interrupted family idyll and the account of the main characters' bouts of melancholia is the story of Hammad. A view that is endorsed by Adam Kirsch who claims in the "attempt to inhabit the minds of the September 11 terrorists—showing them training in Hamburg or undercover in Florida . . . Mr. DeLillo's psychology turns shallow and abstract." (13) For the most part, the applauding of Hammad's desire for normality seems mistaken or naive. For a group of terrorists seems to involve being actively engaged in a struggle against the West. It is a commonplace that the conventional order for a terrorist is the act of terror and its domain hence the identification. DeLillo also appears emphatic in this respect as the narrative voice states that "they read the sword verses of the Koran" (83).

The text of this *surah* is directed not to an individual, but to the Islamic community. Yet, the singular interpretation by the terrorists promotes a specific logic. DeLillo writes, "Amir said simply there are no others. The others exist only to the degree that they fill the role we have designed for them. This is their function as others. Those who will die have no claim to their lives outside the useful fact of their dying" (224). Rather than an 'other' that carries a trace of the self, here Amir voices a disturbing nihilism. The purpose of the terrorist being to die is complemented by his mission to kill, and this norm results in a common death. DeLillo writes, "That of the terrorist and its traceless 'other'. This nihilism is contingent upon a belief in the validity of death through the mission itself. Hammad is ultimately convinced there is no purpose, this is the purpose. . . He did not think about the purpose of their mission as all he saw was shock and death" (177). Paradoxically, this nihilism hinges on a commonality of belief amongst the terrorists and Islam.

Muslims and terrorists are described as being "strong-willed, determined to become one mind. While also urged to "[s]hed everything but the men you are with.

Become each other's running blood" (83). DeLillo further writes, "individual desire [...] has to give way to group solidarity¹⁶ is reflected in Amir's declaration that "the world changes first in the mind of the man who wants to change it. The time is coming, our truth, our shame, and each man becomes the other, and the other still another, and then there is no separation" (80). This re-emphasizes the dilemma of a shadowy, abstract enemy and an alternative concept of a centre grounded on the bonding of men that is fatal to America.

Through the imaginative re-construction of the terrorist, DeLillo creates a dialogue with Judith Butler's commendation that "we should emerge from the narrative perspective of US unilateralism to consider the ways in which our lives are profoundly implicated in the lives of others" (6). DeLillo articulates this through the interplay of narrative strategy and plot. Convention probably dictates that post-9/11 fiction engages with terrorism and/or refers in some way or other to 9/11. *Falling Man* would presumably fulfill this to the satisfaction of a political analyst. Yet its literary achievement resides in how the humanity of the individual characters are interwoven.

The bond between terrorist groups goes beyond their mission to commit acts of terror: the organizational body looks after their families after their death. Mustapha Marrouchi writes:

Al-Qaida is like a holding company run by a council (Shura) including representatives of terrorist movements. It verges not on Islamo-fascism no matter how hard Christopher Hitchens and his tribe of neo-cons want us to believe, but on totalitarianism, with sub-divisions to manage key functions: ideology, administration, military action, and the media. This organization provides all the backup terrorist operations needed,

including care for the families of martyrs. It forms alliances and engages in terrorist joint ventures with other movements such as the Egyptian al-Jih d or Abu Sayyaf group in the Philippines. (1344)

Keith and Hammad are defined by their difference from each other, but more so, Keith and his kin are defined by what they do not understand about the terrorism that affects them so significantly. The moot point being that Hammad exists to mark the differences between two cultural systems grounded not only on their conventional disparities, but also on their mis-readings and misunderstandings. The Islamic world is identified as the space from which the fight against the West is being waged. The perceived interplay between Islam and death as glorious concept and vengeful mission looms as a permanent threat in the everyday life of American people.

Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* by representing 9/11 through the restricted lenses of Orientalist discourse aligns itself, in Orientalist propensity to identify the signifier terrorism with the Orient, or more precisely saying, with Islam as the signified. The manifest 'Orientalizedness' of the terrorists portrayed in the novel testifies to this claim. There is DeLillo's Orientalist representation of the terrorist figures in the novel while representing 9/11. Comparing the war on terrorism with the Cold War, Walter Benn Michaels writes, "What makes the war on terrorist new? Is its lack of a clear enemy" (105- 113). Unlike the Cold War, it is not a war against some fixed ideology, say Communism. Yet, it is not clear from which nations the terrorists come either. According to Walter Benn, "thus, the war is no more between liberal capitalism and socialism, neither is it simply the war between liberalism and Islam" (106). Thus the question to enemy in the war on terrorism is much more complicated than that of the Cold War.

Through he does not flatly identify with Islam, Michaels tends to introduce the terrorists as global outlaws whose only objective is to threaten the universal law of world citizenship. Referring to Fukuyama's *The End of History*, according to which the end of the Cold War is seen as the end of ideological conflict, Michaels (2003) argues that since the enemy "can no longer be ideological or national," he should be defined as "a kind of criminal... who represents a threat not to political system or nation, but to the law" (107). Adopting this position, Michaels (2003) champions an "internationalization," or better to say, globalization of the discourse of war on terrorism. Here, through, it is not clear whose law is under discussion. This haziness however paves the way for re-enactment of the bulk of Orientalist archive in evoking the long-established image of the Orient as the other. This is one of the primary discursive functions of Orientalist discourse which function as Said writes, "[B]y setting itself off against the Orient as sort of surrogate and even underground self,"(4). Edward Said, further notes, "European culture gained in strength and identity" (4).

In this regard, Ian Almond aptly observes that the Orient takes up different identities in different contexts all marked with varying degree of Otherness. And this Otherness, "like the volume control of any stereo or radio, can be turned up or down according to the required context" (195). In the context of 9/11 terrorism, it seems that the volume of this Otherness reaches its peak as is reflected in the post 9/11 fiction. DeLillo largely draws on this Othering in his construction of Muslim terrorist identities in *Falling Man*.

Relying on the Orientalist thesis of the incompatibility of Islam with Western modernity, DeLillo introduces Muslims as violators of American style of life. For DeLillo, a criminality rooted not in their being individually seditious but in their collective Islamicism. Describing the secret life the small group of terrorist Muslims

lead in New York, DeLillo writes, “every cabdriver ... [is] named Muhammad” (28). Similarly, the omniscient narrator, for instance, says “they were in this country to pursue technical education but in these *rooms* they spoke about the struggle” (79).

The dominant theme in the novel is the notion of spatial death within the sphere of terrorism. DeLillo’s interest in the identity of the terrorist encourages a definition of terrorism within specific spatial and temporal parameters. It is impossible to provide a psychogram or an Identikit picture of the typical terrorist, because there never was such a person. There has been no ‘terrorism’ per se, only different terrorisms. However, DeLillo connects the identity of terrorist as Muslim as if he is criticizing both Islam and terrorism connecting them each other.

Falling Man actually underlines this when it obliquely refers to the “Belsan school hostages and massacre in Russia, September 2004, by Chechen terrorists” (206). Perhaps with more significance, Lianne acknowledges that her mother’s lover, Martin, had in the past been a terrorist in Germany, but she is chilled by the thought that “he was one of ours [...] godless, Western, white” (195). Yet whatever Martin had done “it was not outside the lines of response” (195). In contrast, the incomprehensibility of Hammad’s willingness to die becomes a defining element of terrorism. While terrorism is commonly registered by its dramatic and devastating impact, such as the collapse of the towers and the sight of people falling from them, it translates into Horror through the haunting effect of realizing it was part of a pre-determined plot—an absent presence.

DeLillo writes, “There was the statement that death made, the strongest claim of all, the highest jihad” (174). By drawing attention to the terrorists’ plot and their plotting, *Falling Man* transcends the images and discursive representations of TV and other mass media. The repetitive images of devastation and destruction constantly

testify to the horrors of terrorism. It validates the consequent war on terror in order to seek justice. DeLillo's presentation of the plot/ting of spatial death chimes with the vocal rhetoric of horror and a coming future of horror based on a set of beliefs that define the terrorists. There is sense of lost self, "We are willing to die, they are not. This is our strength, to love death, to feel the claim of armed martyrdom" (178). It is the ironic imbalance of power that perpetuates the fear, as "One side has the capital, the labour, the technology, the armies, the agencies, the cities, the laws, the police and the prisons. The other side has a few men willing to die" (46).

Further consideration of the allusions to time and temporality related to plot allow me to extend these points. Keith's wife, Lianne, "wanted to disbelieve" but nevertheless seeks solace in her visits to church (232). Here plotting is signified by the dignity of human ruins in the crypts and graves of churches which bring her closer to the past. She derives a certain tranquility from the sense of history plotted out by the spatial death that resides in a natural logic of time. Lianne seems to validate this culturally sanctioned appreciation of the present that draws on traditions of the past and rituals of death that celebrate life. While Lianne seeks understanding through a value system grounded on faith, belief and certainty, she cannot be completely consumed by this in the same way as Hammad who "prays and sleeps, prays and eats . . . the plot shapes every breath he takes" (176). His existence is a consequence of the doctrine of terrorism. Amir speaks into Hammad's face, "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" (79). However, in *Falling Man*, the past and any psychological individuality of lived experience is erased as Hammad urges "let these things fade into dust. Leave these things behind even as we sleep and eat here.

All dust. Cars, houses, people. This is all a particle of dust in the fire and light of the days to come” (174).

Muslims or Islamic people are told that they were swept along in the Shi'i love of martyrdom and the heightened atmosphere of patriotism which was disseminated through visits to schools and an intensive media campaign. The Bassij are best known for their employment of human wave attacks which cleared minefields or draw the enemy's fire actions in which tens of thousands are estimated to have been killed. Some reports tell of the Bassij marching into battle marking their expected entry to heaven by wearing plastic “keys to paradise” around their necks.

In *Falling Man* Hammad tells his fellow terrorists “about the boy soldiers running in the mud, the mine jumpers, wearing keys to paradise around their necks” (80). These images are reinforced in the novel when Hammad glorifies the violence of death as he comes close to his own:

He thought of the Shia boys on the battlefield in the Shatt al Arab. He saw them coming out of trenches and redoubts and running across the mudflats toward enemy positions, mouths open in mortal cry. He took strength from this, seeing them cut down in waves by machine guns, boys in the hundreds, then the thousands, suicide brigades, wearing red bandannas around their necks and plastic keys underneath, to open the door to paradise. (238)

This is the preordained text that Hammad and his fellow terrorists have been plotting. Like the novel's structure it also is cyclical and repetitive, as the narratives are continually self-perpetuating. Movement and action remains within its own spheres of temporality and is ultimately destructive.

The critical neglect of Hammad's position in the novel underscores the nature of the politicized readings of post-9/11 literature, while my foregrounding of this figure argues that it is imperative that the effects of 9/11 are not perceived merely within the ambit of American history. Yet, as the narrative focus and the dialogue indicates, Americans claim ownership of the day and circumscribe it within their own political and cultural settings either through their apathy or withdrawal. This compulsion accounts for the war on terror being repeatedly justified and inflected through the day of 9/11.

Although the war on terror is fought as a rather conventional military intervention, its continuance retrospectively sanctions and perpetuates 9/11 as a permanent introspective and ideological pre-occupation with fighting terrorism, a state of stasis. Jean Baudrillard claims that terrorism "puts the finishing touches to the orgy of power, liberation, flows and calculation which the Twin Towers embodied, while being the violent deconstruction of that extreme form of efficiency and hegemony" (59).

The success of any '9/11' novel can mainly be measured by how it effectively brings terrorism into the foreground. Thus, the foregrounding of a terrorist plot acknowledges the insertion of history into the timelessness of the fragmented and episodic framing text in that the sense of history being made elsewhere attests to the novel as a political narrative from which the American protagonist is alienated. The spatial vacuity into which Keith's life is thrust by the terrorist plot provides an ironic twist to the American writing.

The American defense organizations and political commentators were taken completely unawares by the sophisticated level of the plotting that was fermented among the substrata of global security networks, and the consequent war on terror

actually sustains the temporal vacuum in which the notion of plot(ting) fosters a state of permanent threat. Delillo's writing of Hammad into the novel produces a dynamic between narrative and story that enacts this paradox of stasis and action within the post-9/11 world. However as an American writing, *Falling Man* connecting both Islam and terrorism together stands as a counter narrative of terrorism in general and specific against Islam.

III. DeLillo's attack on Islam and Terrorism in *Falling Man*

DeLillo's novel, *Falling Man* with the capture of the catastrophic events of 11th September and its aftermath created the discourses against both Islam and terrorism connecting both of them together since in the name of narrative of Hammad, a Muslim terrorist who has involved in attack, mocks entire Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism as the American writing. The discourse of terrorism has become one of the dominant preoccupations of American literature because the terrorist attacks on 11th September and being untouched with the depth of the incident, DeLillo's narrative though using the narration of terrorist questions against the Islam and upcoming terror and horror world where human being themselves are leading to destruction.

In doing so, DeLillo as the Orientalist author critiques both Islam and terrorism through his Western perspective. The novel has portrayed adequately the effect that the event had on ordinary people, and the shock-waves that rippled across the United States. *Falling Man* has been hailed as the closest fiction which is based on the historical incident occurred of terrorist attack on twin tower and its consequences presents the counter narrative against the terrorism in general and Islam in particular. This research work has tried to observe his novel *Falling Man* through the perspective of anti-terrorism evoking DeLillo's notion against war and horror through his counter narration to terrorism and Islam. For this purposes, this research has tried to deal with the narrative of *Falling Man* which of course is from the perspective of Muslim terrorist but equally give message that the root of terrorism is Islamic fundamentalism which collapse with American individualism.

The major character, Hammad a muslim is presented as the symbol of terrorism and violence since he is strongly guided by his collective cultural and

religious identity of Islam that insists him to involve in terrorist attack against America. Through Hammad, DeLillo narrative tries to message that the Islamic fundamentalism is major cause behind the war, terror and horror.

DeLillo manifestly has identified terrorism with Islam. Adopting a Western position, the writer tells the story of a group of Muslims who blatantly conduct the terrorist attacks of 9/11 in an attempt to take revenge on the West. As such, he lays the blame on Islam as being incompatible with the West's history of civilization. DeLillo, by focusing on the American, or generally speaking Western side of the event, complies with the governmental discourses and presents a totalizing reading of it. DeLillo strongly opposes against war and terrorism. DeDillo presents the counter narrative to the terrorism even through the perspective of the characters who have involved in the terrorism and terrorist attacks in order to reveal the savagery of terrorism connected with religious orthodox as an American author.

The title of the novel itself marks the destruction of people by war and terror. Man is falling, leading themselves to destruction. The image of a man falling from the north tower of the World Trade Center is a horror of contemporary world. There are different falls. All these falls are due to the increasing terrorism and terrorist attack which has created the chaotic situation around the entire world. Men are falling leading themselves to death and destruction is the major aspects or thematic lines of the novel. This fall in the novel is due to the terror and violence. In this sense, *Falling Man* is the counter against the terrorism and violence around the world as the major thematic structure of the novel.

However, while depicting the fall of man in the novel, the author brought Islamic fundamentalism as the major causes of this destruction. Hammad's position in the novel underscores the nature of the political, geographical and religious readings

of the novel. He is involved in 9/11 terrorist attack. He is immigrated Muslim in America. He is guided by strong religious faith and cultural collective identity. Although the novel effectively brings terrorism into the foreground, it injustices Islam while making the central Muslim character a terrorist to attack in twin tower. *Falling Man* connecting both Islam and terrorism together stands as a counter narrative of terrorism in general and Islam in specific.

The role of the critic, according to Edward Said, is to “speak truth to power” through undertaking a “contrapuntal reading” of the writings of the empire (78). By “contrapuntal reading,” he specifically means “an effort to draw out, extend, give emphasis and voice to what is silent or marginally present or ideologically represented” (78). This research approaches DeLillo’s *Falling Man* contrapuntally with the aim of exposing its patterns of affiliations, of “opening it out to what went into it and to what its author excluded” (79). Though DeLillo is acclaimed as a postmodern writer, his novel relies on the Orientalist discourse, one of the potent meta-narratives of othering, silencing, and marginalization of Muslim community. DeLillo offers in this novel as the representation of terrorism with Orientalist parameters since he represents Muslim as terrorist in general. Don DeLillo’s novel turn out to be one of the writings of the American empire by othering the Islam.

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