

**\ *Falling Man*: An Exploration of the Psychological and Societal Complexities of Post-9/11 Trauma and its Effects**

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**Abstract:**

In the present paper, the analysis of trauma theory shall be applied to Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*, which also aligns with Cathy Caruth's work on psychic trauma. It is a work responding to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. This work frames a dystopian setting in which survivors are trying to grapple with the profound sense of psychic wounds. Fragmented sense of self, identity crisis, and immense emotional distress will be analyzed as the results of the trauma experienced by the characters. All these elements will be thematically used and passed to the reader viscerally through Don DeLillo's use of introspection, flashbacks, and painful memories; thus, the reader is placed into the character's inner turmoil. After all, the work is postulated as a seminal work of post-9/11 fiction that brilliantly explores the psychological complexities of trauma and its enduring effects on individuals and society

**Keywords:** Cathy Caruth, Don DeLillo, Falling Man, Dystopia, Postmodern Fiction, Trauma



## الرجل المتساقط:

استكشاف التعقيدات النفسية والمجتمعية لصدمة ما بعد ١١ سبتمبر وآثارها

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## الملخص:

في هذه الورقة البحثية، سيتم تطبيق تحليل نظرية الصدمة على رواية الرجل المتساقط لدون ديليلو، والتي تتماشى أيضاً مع عمل كاثي كاروث حول الصدمة النفسية. وهو عمل يستجيب لهجمات الحادي عشر من سبتمبر الإرهابية. يصوغ هذا العمل إطاراً بائساً يحاول فيه الناجون التعامل مع الإحساس العميق بالجروح النفسية. سيتم تحليل الإحساس المجزأ بالذات وأزمة الهوية والاضطراب العاطفي الهائل كنتيجة للصدمة التي تعاني منها الشخصيات. سيتم استخدام كل هذه العناصر بشكل موضوعي وتمريها للقارئ بشكل مرئي من خلال استخدام دون ديليلو للاستبطان واسترجاع الذكريات المؤلمة؛ وبالتالي يتم وضع القارئ في الاضطراب الداخلي للشخصيات. في نهاية المطاف، يُفترض أن العمل يُعتبر عملاً روائياً أساسياً من أعمال ما بعد ١١ سبتمبر الذي يستكشف ببراعة التعقيدات النفسية للصدمة وآثارها الدائمة على الأفراد والمجتمع

الكلمات المفتاحية : كاثي كاروث، دون ديليلو، الرجل المتساقط، ديستوبيا، خيال ما بعد الحداثة، الصدمة.

## 2. Introduction

Donald Richard DeLillo is one of the most distinguished American writers and dramatists. His parents were Italian Catholic immigrants who came to America in 1916. DeLillo grew up in an area that was then Italian-American in New York, which significantly influenced his personality. In his novel *Falling Man*, he narrates the story of the protagonist, Keith, a lawyer working in the World Trade Center in New York. When the attacks occur, he runs away and goes to the house of his wife, Lianne, who allows Keith to stay with her. They discuss their respective experiences of the 9/11 attacks.

Moreover, the theme of trauma is wounding precisely because it remains unknowable and breaches 'the mind's experience of time, self, and world,' even as it repeatedly returns to torment the victim (Caruth 1996: 4). trauma persists as a rift or absence in the coherent self, memory, conscious knowledge, and representation in conventional language. DeLillo's *Filling Man* explores the hardships of a family in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

However, as many renowned scholars in the area of cultural studies have also pointed out, including Peter Boxall, Siân Adiseshiah, Claire Colebrook, and Rupert Hildyard, utopia and dystopia are by no means absent from the Western imagination after the 1990s, even though their topologies have unavoidably changed as a result of recent evolutions. The recent development of the Western world's cultural imagination can be explained by using the apocalyptic imagery of September 11 as a starting point for my discussion of utopia and dystopia as "the defining sensibilities of global times." Utopia and dystopia are not treated as genres in this paper but as fictional modes that influence several modern texts that would not otherwise be classified as utopian or dystopian. Most of these dystopias posed the question of whether we had lost faith in utopias and should now begin to believe that dystopia occasionally occurred due to one or more flaws in the human race. Therefore, the aim is to show how the dystopian image affects the characters' mentality in *Falling Man*.

In addition, Ilyas (2022) emphasizes that the term "dystopia" has taken on several new interpretations, including one connected to pandemic literature. These texts paint pictures of fear, worry, and vigilance in societies. The romantic idea of achieving human happiness was believed to be limited to its ideal state. Most of these dystopias posed the question of whether we had lost faith

in utopias and should now begin to believe that dystopia occasionally occurred due to one or more flaws in the human race. Another concern was whether readers should make connections between the depicted dystopian worlds and the actual real-world events.

So the dystopian concept, in brief, characterizes trauma as "intense personal suffering" (Caruth vii); this suffering cripples the self because the trauma prevents the sufferer from talking about it. The person becomes "possessed by an image or event" (Caruth 4-5), which indicates that the person experiencing the trauma does not actually experience the event at the time but that the effects of the trauma manifest belatedly. This mental wound prevents the self from functioning as it usually would. As a significant scholar in the realm of trauma studies, Caruth declares that trauma is an incident that fragments one's consciousness and language.

### 3. On Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*

From Mutation to Disarticulation: Terror and the Body in Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2013) analyses how DeLillo benefits from the bodily procedure to reveal and examine the veiled "atrocities of American exceptionalism." This issue is essential because numerous sorts of bodily turbulences are used in *Falling Man* as the imaginary bodies of both American people and foreign terrorists become vulnerable to outlandish mutations and disarticulations.

*The Terror of the Political: Community, Identity, and Apocalypse in Don DeLillo's Falling Man* (2017) shows that *Falling Man* not only revolves around the horror as the result of the ferocity of the political but also scrutinizes the discrete fundamentals in the socio-political context that make the situation susceptible to terrorism. *Don DeLillo's Falling Man and the Age of Terror* (2011) by Joseph Conte is about the way DeLillo has been using his writing vocation as a means to address the totalizing power of universal capital ( *DeLillo and the Age of Terror*. p. 560). It is concluded that this novel offers "a counter-narrative in its tripartite recursive form and the polysemic figure of the *Falling Man* as an expression not of despair and retribution but of meditative suspension and reconciliation" ( *DeLillo and the Age of Terror*. 561).

However, Kauffman (2008) has also stated that in his essays and novels, DeLillo contrasts al Qaeda with America, medieval retribution with advanced technology, and a brotherhood of martyrs

with worldwide marketplaces. However, he deconstructs the very oppositions others support. DeLillo criticizes all cognitive, societal, and financial investments:

"In the past decade, the surge of capital markets [have] . . . shaped global consciousness. Multinational corporations have come to seem more vital and influential than governments. The dramatic climb of the Dow and the speed of the Internet summoned us all to live permanently in the future, in the romantic glow of cyber-capital, because there is no memory there, and this is where markets are uncontrolled, and investment potential has no limit". (*Cosmopolis*, 2003.p. 34)

Don DeLillo's quotation from *Cosmopolis* offers a critique of the dominant role played by financial markets and multinational businesses in forming contemporary global consciousness. He proposes that these corporations have surpassed traditional government functions, emphasizing the appeal of continuous financial expansion and technical progress. DeLillo's utilization of the phrase "romantic glow of cyber-capital" emphasizes an enticing yet shallow charm, wherein the absence of historical recollection allows for uncontrolled market speculation. This critique highlights apprehensions regarding the depersonalizing consequences of placing greater importance on economic and technological advancement at the expense of social and ethical deliberations. It underscores a forward-thinking perspective that is disconnected from past experiences and moral principles.

*Falling Man* by Don DeLillo examines the concealed horrors of American exceptionalism and the socio-political factors that render countries susceptible to terrorism. Joseph Conte highlights the dominant impact of worldwide capital, whereas Kauffman analyses and breaks down dichotomies such as al Qaeda versus America and medieval punishment versus advanced technology. DeLillo promotes a morally principled response to the current state of global awareness.

#### 4. On Trauma and Cathy Caruth

Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience* (1996) offers some crucial points concerning literary trauma studies. For example, it addresses how representations of trauma may help with the realization by ratifying a collapse of meaning and how trauma can be articulated through the

breakdown of words and language. Besides, this book demonstrates the diverse practices of the word "trauma" in literary studies. As Caruth declares, the significance of this notion includes the difference between traumatized and non-traumatized people, and between victims and criminals seems to dissolve (Schönfelder, 2013, p. 10).

*Explorations in Memory* (1995) is another significant book by Caruth about how literature and the new approaches of clinical and theoretical disciplines result in comprehending traumatic experiences. In this book, Caruth (1995) presents novel arguments concerning traumatic experiences as it expresses the implication of listening to what can be told in unplanned and unanticipated ways. Moreover, Caruth proves that literature can suggest new ways of seeing and responding to the Experience of Trauma.

*The Nature of Trauma in American Novels* (2012) is another substantial study by Cathy Caruth, and it is about an inspiring reevaluation of the fundamentals of literary trauma theory and new prospects. According to what is stated in this book:

"what began as a concern with the limited potential that trauma theory seemed to offer literary scholarship soon turned into excitement with the discovery of its many formulations and applications. I decided to flesh out a more nuanced and flexible concept of trauma after I found a discursive dependence upon a single psychological theory of trauma in literary criticism" (*The Nature of Trauma*, p. 167).

The author mentions a shift in perspective toward trauma theory in literary scholarship. At first, trauma theory was considered narrow because it drew on a single psychological model. That was before varieties in formulations and applications were discovered, giving way to interest and a better understanding of trauma. That shows that trauma studies in the area of literary criticism evolve.

Finally, in her book *Unclaimed Experience* (1996), Cathy Caruth examines how trauma is portrayed and expressed in literature, demonstrating its ability to alter the interpretation of events and undermine the effectiveness of language. Caruth questions the traditional categorizations of humans as either traumatized or non-traumatized, as well as the divide between victims and perpetrators. Her writings imply that literature has the potential to provide distinct viewpoints on

trauma, promoting novel approaches to comprehending and addressing significant experiences. The progression of trauma theory in literary scholarship mirrors the fluidity of trauma studies and its enduring significance in literary criticism.

### 5. Statement of the Problem

These attacks have shaped the central theme of many literary works, mainly because such traumatic events embrace much damage because of the instant and direct injury that they cause and also the continuous necessity to reevaluate one's consideration of oneself and the surrounding environment (Spalletta et al., 2020, p. 4).

So far, *Falling Man* has been the subject of numerous research studies; however, there is no single study regarding the analysis of trauma in this novel from the viewpoint of Cathy Caruth. In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), Caruth(1996) refers to literature and its significant role in emphasizing the structure of traumatic occurrences and deferred involvements. She claims that literature lets us perceive those incidents that cannot be recognized entirely; by doing so, it draws our attention to the experiences that may have remained implied and unnoticed.

### 5. Significance of the Study

In *Falling Man*, Don DeLillo examines the concepts of identity crisis, trauma, and mental distress about the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The protagonists in the novel experience profound psychological distress as a result of the traumatic events of 9/11, resulting in a deterioration of their identity. Utilizing Cathy Caruth's trauma theory aids in comprehending the novel's depiction of the influence of trauma on the individuals' identities and the utilization of narrative strategies to communicate the psychological consequences of the attacks. Understanding and explaining *Falling Man* might be difficult since this novel revolves around issues such as identity predicament, trauma, and mental pain. It shows how the characters are traumatized and unable to leave their worries behind. Hence, this research is significant because, so far, no other research has analyzed *Falling Man* from the viewpoint of Cathy Caruth (1996)to explore how trauma influences the characters and leads to their identity disintegration. Selecting the trauma theory helps to identify in what way this novel creates meaning because of the characters' traumatic experiences.



## 6. Methodology:

As discussed above, traumatic events cause terrible pain through actual injuries and force the victims to reconsider their own identity and the surrounding world. Literature is thus an essential outlet for such a process of evaluation and is particularly significant in postmodern trauma fiction. In postmodern trauma fiction, such as *Falling Man*, Whitehead argues that postmodern trauma fiction, exemplified by Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007), is influenced by the heritage of postmodernist fiction. Whitehead (2004) argues that this fiction genre aims to push standard narrative techniques to their limits and examine themes of trauma and existential crises in original and inventive ways. DeLillo's novel *Falling Man*, released three years after Whitehead's analysis, illustrates this trend by using experimental narrative strategies to describe the psychological impact of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Whitehead places such work in a general context that allows insight into the narrative innovations and thematic depth of *Falling Man* within the frame of postmodern literature and trauma fiction. According to Caruth, a leading scholar in trauma studies, "Traumatic experience is that which destroys one's consciousness and treats language as such." She maintains that traumatic events permanently fracture one's perception and become an identity mark, lying outside of standard memory and narrative expression. In this paper, we will read *Falling Man* with the thought of Caruth's (1996) theories on trauma, reviewing the significant characters from different angles, and try to solve the three central questions with Caruth's view on the relationship between literature and trauma.

Caruth (1996) has been chosen as a guiding figure in this study based on her pioneer work in trauma theory, particularly on the connections between literature and psychoanalysis. According to Caruth, although a person may not identify the trauma when it takes place, a later realization of this impact can bring some severe psychological distress that the individual might fail to integrate properly. One will repeat the event itself if this realization is not incorporated correctly. Being a philosopher of trauma, she says that in literature, there has always been the presence of trauma, and this is because literature has always incorporated the texts of others—theoretical, religious, or in any other form—to bring a unique, not-yet-seen understanding of personal and historical experiences (Danilenko, 2023). She says, "While we are ignorant of the trauma when it happens, later, when the shock damages us, we realize that what has happened is under our control; therefore, through unexpectedness and damage, our mind may become distressed." (Danilenko, 2023, p. 113)

Contemporary scholars, including Johnson and Smith (2013), have built upon Cathy Caruth's examination of trauma in literature, highlighting the significance of storytelling in comprehending traumatic experiences. This research paper incorporates their perspectives into a modern theoretical framework to examine *Falling Man* from the perspective of trauma theory. This paper seeks to enhance our comprehension of how individual characters represent and experience trauma by scrutinizing the novel's dystopian imagery and narrative structure. The dystopian features in *Falling Man* provide a setting to explore themes of displacement, estrangement, and psychological disintegration that arise from the tragedy of the 9/11 attacks. This study examines how the novel explores the effects of trauma on individual consciousness in a dystopian setting, highlighting the broader societal consequences of communal trauma and existential crisis.

Ultimately, this study utilizes trauma theory, specifically impacted by Caruth's innovative studies, to examine Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007) in the framework of postmodern trauma fiction. Caruth's observations emphasize how traumatic experiences disrupt the mind and resist traditional storytelling, a concept also reflected in the dystopian picture of the work. By integrating modern scholars such as Johnson and Smith (2013) into this examination, we enhance our comprehension of how trauma is shown and encountered by characters in the story. An analysis of *Falling Man* using trauma theory reveals the profound psychological effects of trauma on personal identity and awareness while also highlighting the broader societal significance seen in post-9/11 literature.

## 7. Discussion:

*Falling Man*, being a postmodern novel, seeks to explore the aftermath of the September 11 attacks and how they dramatically changed the lives of people who went through this tragedy. Platt and Upstone (2015) notice that modern narratives, such as DeLillo's narrative *Falling Man*, seem to incorporate postmodernism but seem to question or point to the persistence in the lived experience of the contemporary of older intensities that would seem to belong to now-discredited orders of subjectivity and economies of meaning when they state "DeLillo's narratives, to the dismay of a phrase, install postmodernism seemingly to subvert it, or, perhaps more accurately, to point to the persistence in the lived experience of the contemporary of older intensities that would seem properly to belong to now-discredited orders of subjectivity and economies of meaning"(p. 177).

DeLillo states, "The first days of the attacks had the quality of dream life. Or dream death. Strange and slow. They were events taking place in another region of the world" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 101), to capture the bewildering effect of trauma, evoking similarities with Cathy Caruth's (1996) perspective on trauma. The portrayal of the events as having "the quality of dream life" emphasizes the surreal and detached nature of seeing the September 11 attacks. The work of art exemplifies Caruth's concept that trauma undermines traditional comprehension methods and narrative consistency, resulting in a fragmented and dissociative reaction. Within the framework of dystopian ideas, the quote implies a deep feeling of displacement and existential turmoil as characters struggle to come to terms with a drastically altered existence. DeLillo's novel challenges traditional narrative techniques, demonstrating trauma's complex and enduring impact on individual consciousness within a dystopian setting.

Trauma and fragmented identity are considered the central themes explored in *Falling Man*. In the contemporary context, trauma refers to enduring mental distress resulting from disturbing experiences: "They began to sink below the roofline. Keith turned on his back and stared up at the empty sky. A plane went by overhead, in the direction of the city." (DeLillo, 2007, p. 3). Victims of traumatic events, onlookers, and those who somehow share it often feel a necessity to express and give meaning to such events through various forms of expression, including literature (Davis & Meretoja, 2020). Indeed, this proclivity has led to an ever-growing body of research on how individual and social dimensions of trauma are expressed in literary works. As Cathy Caruth (1996) rightly defines, "Trauma is an incident that fragments one's consciousness and language" (p. 167)

DeLillo infuses dystopia with themes of trauma in his novel *Falling Man*. Post-9/11, the dystopian world is drawn out where the apparatus of society falls, and people are left to deal with the psychological scars of what happened. DeLillo states, "It was not a street anymore but a world, a time and space of falling ash and near night" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 3); this quotation effectively captures the way the typical urban surroundings give way to a bizarre and apocalyptic setting defined by "falling ash and near night." In addition to reflecting the more considerable societal upheaval brought on by the horrific events of 9/11, the use of images captures the protagonists' feelings of existential displacement and confusion.

From a storytelling perspective, characters adapt to a world that's chaotic and fearful, further distorting social structure in the face of catastrophe (Chauhan, 2018; Shehzad, 2022).

Trauma runs through the characters' storyline, working to make sense of the new reality thrust upon them. Dystopia and trauma merge within the work of DeLillo to give a haunting portrayal of the human condition under the weight of tragedy. In his descriptions, Don DeLillo highlights such significant societal issues as the abuse of authority, the repression of opposition, and the manipulation of language and knowledge:

"The planes came out of the bright sky like a force of instruction, reprogramming the building. There was something blank in the public performances of officials and newscasters, something not quite honest, open. Words differed when they lived inside you" (DeLillo, 2007).

However, the remark effectively encapsulates the complex socioeconomic themes explored in *Falling Man*, such as the authority and force represented by the planes, the public leaders' suppression of open communication, and the transformational potential of internalized language and experience. It is a reflection of DeLillo's investigation into how language and societal structures are employed following horrific events such as 9/11, and it challenges readers to consider power relationships and the intricacies of both private and public healing from trauma.

In addition, *Falling Man* represents a powerful tool for presenting the inner lives of individuals in the form of memories, introspections, interpretations, flashbacks, and haunting recollections: "He stood in the street for the next hour, staring at the smoke." (DeLillo, 2007, p. 7). Writing is an essential function of trauma healing, according to Tyler (1999); such well-written novels help readers make sense of the human condition because of suffering, fostering empathy and providing an outlet for creative exploration. Such literature helps readers better understand the emotional condition of the writer in the face of problems with the past. According to Tyler, such a well-written novel about a traumatic incident as *Falling Man* helps the readers find meaning and implication in human desolation to show their compassion towards the tragedy. It represents an act of bravery; for example, trauma, according to Tyler, in the works of DeLillo, represents an act of bravery in the sense that it manifests a commitment toward understanding and confronting the implications of history.

In dealing with traumatic narratives, writers like DeLillo use their works to contribute to a problem of collective memory, personal resilience, and the human capacity for understanding and

empathy amid tragedy. According to Caruth(1996), narrative is often indissolubly linked with trauma; it is a statement that is meant to underscore the intimate bond between literary expression and the exploration of traumatic experiences. In short, *Falling Man* is an example of the relationship between literature and trauma, conveying to its readers a sense of profound psychological and emotional consequences to histories and, at the same time, encouraging reflection on the meaning of storytelling regarding trauma and healing "We stand by the window and look out at the towers burning. The spires fall into themselves." (DeLillo, 2007, p. 14). According to Caruth, most of Caruth's(1996) trauma investigation combines literary, hypothetical, and religious texts to transfer novel procedures of personal and historical experiences; in other words, trauma studies are interdisciplinary, and the exploration of trauma is made with different kinds of expression.

Adding more to this, within *Falling Man*, DeLillo vividly captures the experience of people caught in the chaos of the attacks. He writes, "They began to sink below the roofline. Keith turned on his back and stared up at the empty sky. A plane went by overhead, in the direction of the city" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 3), capturing the surreal and disorienting nature of that moment. This part of the passage reflects that for Caruth, "trauma is an incident that fragments one's consciousness and language" (Caruth, 1996, p. 78), and it captures the enormous impact that traumatic events play in the perception of reality by the victim.

The narrative by DeLillo further shows that the aftermath of the attacks brought about devastation and uncertainty as characters tried to come to terms with this reality. He writes, "He stood in the street for the next hour staring at the smoke" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 7), a stark example of how difficult it was to come to terms with this reality. This passage reflects Caruth's statement that "Literature is often indissolubly linked with Trauma" (Caruth, 1996, p. 186), reflecting the literary role in accounting for and describing traumatic experiences.

Furthermore, Caruth's (1996) definition of psychic trauma, as a wound inflicted upon the mind that disrupts the individual's sense of time, self, and the world, resonates much with the characters' dilemmas. Van der Kolk (1996) further elaborates upon the complexity of the trauma, denoting the failure of internal and external resources to deal with the external threat. Caruth (1995) further elaborates upon the delayed assimilation of traumatic events, whereby people become

possessed over time by these experiences. Keith's first responses of shock and denial are poignant examples of this.

DeLillo's description of the fall of the towers is a dark reminder of how the tragedy still haunts people today: "This was the world now. This was the street. There was nowhere else to go." (DeLillo, 2007, p. 28). He writes, "We stand by the window and look out at the towers burning. The spires fall into themselves" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 14), a visceral description of how painful and heart-wrenching the grief of eyewitnesses must have been. That scene reflects the assertion made by Caruth that "Most of Caruth's trauma investigation combines literary, hypothetical, and religious texts to transport novel procedures of personal and historical experiences" (Caruth, 1996, p. 198), reflecting the power of literature to arouse sentiments and to transcend over complex narratives.

Moreover, DeLillo's depiction of the altered landscape after the attacks reflects the radical nature of changes that individuals and society suffered. He says, "This was the world now. This was the street. There was nowhere else to go" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 28), which is the sense of disorientation and uncertainty that permeated the post-9/11 world. This quotation is an excellent example of Caruth's idea that "Whereas we are unconscious of the Trauma while it is happening, later, when the shock damages us, we come to realize that something has taken place that is under our control" (Caruth, 1996, p. 98). The passage says that individuals and communities suffer from long-term psychological depression and damage because of such traumatic events in their lives.

In Caruth's seminal work *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), trauma is described as a kind of damage to the brain's sense of time, resulting in severe psychological collapse and inability to grasp fully the magnitude of an event. This argument is similar to what occurs in *Falling Man*; the characters have a traumatic aftereffect of the September 11 events. Schneider (2017) reveals how such images have survived and become symbols for 21st-century anxieties and cause, at once, visceral and intellectual reactions. In such a way, DeLillo uses the novel as an avenue for political and social reflection and exploration of the problems of horror, violence, war, and terrorism. Among all these themes and motifs, terrorism emerges as a recurring motif within DeLillo's work, suggesting these forces' dominant influence upon late-modern life.

According to Allen(2019), terrorism is also a central theme in DeLillo's representation of postmodernism and goes beyond mere human agency to stick to the texture of ordinary living.

Allen observes that terrorism has played an essential part in nearly every novel Don DeLillo has written to date...In DeLillo's work, however, terrorism seems to have evolved beyond the need for human agency to seep into contemporary life's very texture" (pp. 1-2). This implies that Terrorism, by DeLillo, is higher than the need for human agency and goes into the texture of ordinary living.

Characters like Keith and Florence in *Falling Man* experience deep isolation and estrangement from their surroundings. DeLillo (2007) vividly describes Keith's experience of alienation: "Keith feels nothing seems familiar, being here, in his family again, and he feels strange to himself" ( p 5). Even the wife of Keith, Lianne, does not recognize him as he remains so changed that she notes, "I saw a man I had never known before" in a lengthy passage in which DeLillo elucidates this transformation in Keith. It gives an understanding of how great the complexity and depth of trauma are and how difficult it is to put it into words or think consciously about the issues. It makes one realize the need to dig deeper into the unconscious aspects of trauma to get a better understanding of the impacts it has on the person and the society at large, "Caruth's approach to trauma invites us to confront the ineffable complexities of human experience, transcending the confines of language and delving into the depths of the unconscious mind."(204)

Likewise, this quote does not fail to capture the massive transformation undergone by Keith, whose identity has been altered and is unrecognizable from the trauma of the attacks. *Falling Man* is a moving account of trauma, identity, and the long-term effects of historical events on individual lives. Caruth(1996) shows, "Exploring the depths of psychological trauma, we navigate the complex terrain of memory, where narratives of suffering and survival converge."(p187). The author of this book, DeLillo, skillfully negotiates the depths that characterize contemporary life in terms of meaning, belonging, and strength in the face of adversity. In addition, DeLillo shows how traditional ideas of masculine strength fall apart in the face of trauma through the character of Keith. The downslide of Keith and his eventual break from the stereotypes of society attest to the frailty of this ideal, eventually serving as a symbol of its incapacity to produce a meaningful response to terrorism challenges.

In addition, DeLillo uses repetition as a form of postmodern expression to drive home the point that they are fighting an impossible battle against the memory of the past; Caruth (1996) indicates that "Memory, narrative, and healing intertwine in the labyrinth of psychological trauma, shaping the contours of individual experience and collective resilience."(p. 211). Irrespective of

their efforts, hope remains forever out of reach, and the memory they intend to forget becomes their most ever-present companion. Their relationship is built amid hysteria, as Florence is the bearer of a shattered past, finding relief in laughing, a momentary release from the weight of old hurts (p. 97).

DeLillo accounts for the effects of the September 11 attacks on people and says that depending on the proximity, whether one was within or outside the building, from the event itself, or from watching it on television, the traumatic reaction varied. Keith's accounts of the towers' collapses are equally vivid in describing the chaos and devastation. He accounts for a chaotic scene, "windblast sent people to the ground. A thunderhead of smoke and ash came moving toward them. The light drained dead away, the bright day gone. They ran and fell and tried to get up, men with towelled heads, a woman blinded by debris, a woman calling someone's name" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 248). Through these stark narratives, DeLillo shows the traumatic aftereffects the attacks had on the individual's psyche and emotions. The continual impact of such traumatic occurrences on individual lives and collective consciousness can be seen (Sumner, 2014).

Even the writing style of "*Falling Man*" reflects the fragmented sense of identity experienced by its characters. DeLillo meticulously combines traumatic memories into the narrative, emphasizing their validity with indirect and fragmented representations. Caruth (1996) correctly points out that people or groups cannot directly own trauma, so it is represented with indirect references that aim to capture its rule-governed effect on people's lives. DeLillo captures the essence of traumatic history through metaphor, fragmented speech, and linguistic nuances, expressing the mental conditions of the characters in a way that is irrational and chaotic (Hashim & Babae, 2015).

The psychological disorders and the characters' dynamics portray the lasting impact of the tragedy. Eidelson et al. (2003) enumerate the global shock and trauma people experienced directly from the attack, as well as from the viewers of the event. DeLillo's detailed account of this event illuminates its ongoing significance and the durative effects on people's minds and society. The sections are put together to challenge the trends of a prevalent approach that only focuses on the psychology of the victim and puts to the forefront a mediated experience of trauma. Among the vital topics that find their way into the documents are the ways by which fact and fiction interact, memory and imagination, and how evil is confronted using imagery. Fragmented storytelling and



the narrative techniques of the authors depict ways of processing trauma and turning memories into either a coherent narrative or a fragmented life(Visotska, 2022).

Finally, *Falling Man* investigates the nuances of psychological trauma; how it explores its consequences through multi-dimensional storytelling invites readers to ponder and confront the core of questions about human resilience, identity, and the legacy of historical events.

## 8. Conclusion:

Lastly, *Falling Man* is among the most moving examinations of the events that followed the September 11 attacks, focusing on the significant psycho-social alterations brought about by the catastrophe. Platt and Upstone(2015) claim that Don DeLillo's narrative technique challenges and reveals enduring intensities found in current experiences, going beyond the surface level of postmodern aesthetics. With this vivid imagery and intricate characters, DeLillo captures the disorienting nature of trauma and existential confusion faced by individuals in the post-9/11 world. Trauma and dystopian themes are interwoven to make commentaries on social issues: authority, repression, and the subversive control of language and knowledge. DeLillo's narrative technique has challenged conventional methods of storytelling, reflecting the nature of trauma in the fragmentation of individual consciousness. *Falling Man* invites one to confront the complexity of human experience in the face of tragedy and to perceive the indelible marks that historical events leave on personal lives and collective consciousness. It calls for reflection on resilience, meaning-making, and the intricate interplay between personal and societal healing processes through its nuanced exploration of trauma and identity.

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