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Manifestation of trauma

A psychoanalytical Analysis of The Unconscious in Don De Lillo's the
Falling Man.

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Dedication

To my family, whose love, patience, and unwavering support have been my strength through every step of this journey.

To my teachers who guided me with knowledge and inspired me to grow.

To myself, for having the courage to continue, even in the moments of doubt.

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Abstract

Don De Lillo's *Falling Man* (2007) offers a deeply human portrayal of trauma in the 9/11 attacks, focusing on how catastrophe reshapes ordinary life rather than how it can be explained or resolved. The novel approaches trauma as something that lingers quietly, revealing itself through silence, disconnection, and fractured attention.

Keith, a survivor of the attacks, moves through the world with a sense of emotional distance, as if part of him remains trapped in the moment of impact. His difficulty in sustaining relationships and his reliance on repetitive habits suggest a mind struggling to live in the present while unconsciously returning to the past.

De Lillo also shows how trauma exceeds individual and becomes part of a shared cultural condition. The repeated media images of the falling bodies and the unsettling performances of the "*falling Man*" artist confront the public with a reality they attempt to repress. These moments expose a collective discomfort with mourning and an inability to find language adequate to such.

Words often fit the characters, and conversations drift into pauses and avoidance, reflecting the limits of speech in the face of extreme violence. Rather than offering healing or closure, *Falling Man* insists on endurance. Trauma remains unresolved, shaping perception and identity long after the event itself. Through its fragmented structure and restrained emotional tone, the novel captures the quiet persistence of trauma and reveals how both personal and national identities are altered by historical catastrophe.

Keywords

Trauma, Psychoanalysis, the Unconscious, Post 9/11 Literature

List of Abbreviations

PTSD: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

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General introduction

General introduction

The Falling Man written by Don De Lillo explores the deep psychological effects of the 9/11 attacks. Rather than focusing on the details of the attacks themselves, the novel deals more with what happens after the event, especially inside the minds of individuals (Keith and Lianne) who experienced it. It shows that trauma is about not only what people see, but also what they feel, remember, and sometimes can't express. The story through trauma can shape a person's inner world. Characters in the novel suffer from anxiety, silence, emotional disconnection, and loss of identity, (emotionally empty especially his relationship with his wife), these reactions are not always visible - like the repetitive thoughts inside the mind of Lianne- or easy to explain. Some characters becomes silent, while others try to continue their lives as if nothing happened. However, in deep they are affected. This shows that trauma often works in hidden ways, thoughts emotions and behavior without the person being fully aware of it. This research uses a psychoanalytic approach to better understand how trauma is represented in the novel. Especially the ideas of Sigmund Freud that show the role of the unconscious mind in forming the behavior of people. Human rarely have control over their actions because many feelings and memories are lead them into the unconscious. These hidden aspects return indirectly, such as dreams, repeated actions, or emotional responses.

In *Falling Man*, trauma explained by the characters in indirect way, it appears through their actions, relationships, and silence. Some of them repeat certain manner or memories without awareness; this can be related to the idea of repetition, where the mind attempts to process a traumatic event by living it again in different forms. Another important concept is repression; it is the process of pushing the memories a way because they are hard to deal with. However, these memories do not disappear; they continue to affect the person unconsciously. Moreover, the novel shows how trauma can affect relationships between people. After the disaster, communication become difficult. Characters (Keith, Lianne, and Justin) face problems to express their feeling, which make distance between them. This emotional gap reflects the internal conflict they are experiencing. Trauma, therefor, is not only an individual experience but also something that influences social connections and human interaction. In this respect, another important aspect of the novel is identity confusion. After trauma, individuals feel as if they are another once, they may question about their real identity. The novel highlights through characters who feel disconnected from their previous lives, this reflects the idea that trauma can break the link between continuity and personal identity, making it difficult for them to recognize who they are. In addition, literature itself plays a significant role in expressing trauma. Sometimes, real experiences are too complex to be explained directly. Through storytelling, symbolism, and character development, literature sheds light on these hidden emotions. *Falling Man* is an example of how fiction can represent

psychological struggle in a meaningful way. It allows readers to understand trauma as an ongoing internal struggle. This study analyzes how trauma is presented in the novel by focusing on the unconscious mind and its influence on the characters. After surviving the attacks, Keith walks through the city in shocked state, he acts automatically without clear thinking. By using psychoanalytic concepts such as repression, the research seeks to show that trauma is not always visible but can be understood through indirect signs. The analysis also highlights the importance of literature in revealing what is difficult to say openly, *Falling Man* provides a powerful exploration of trauma and its effects on human psychology.

In order to answer the main question of this research paper, the researcher intends to divide it into three question and attempts to answer them in the three analytic chapters.

They are as follows:

1-How does De Lillo represent male trauma through Keith.

2-How do media images and the performances of the “*falling Man*” artist function as symbols of repressed memory and collective mourning in the aftermath of 9/11 attacks?

3-How does *Falling Man* represent trauma as a condition of silence and emotional disconnection rather than as a process of healing or recovery?

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the representation of trauma in *Falling Man* by De Lillo, and examine the psychological state of the main characters -Keith, Lianne, Justin, Hammed, Nina, and Florence - after the events of 9/11, also show how trauma affects memory, identity, and human relationships in the novel, and to use Freud’s ideas about repression, the unconscious, and repetition to understand the characters in text. Qualitative approach is appropriate because the research focuses on interpreting themes, characters, and narrative style. By close textual analysis the research prove that the novel represent trauma, and emotional disconnection on the characters. The novel *Falling Man* is our primary source as a data of this research by the help of some critical Books that include trauma as secondary sources. The researcher adopts textual analysis as the main method for this study. The novel is examined in detail by selecting important passages and analyzing them thoroughly.

This dissertation is divided into three main chapters, each of which addresses a different aspect of trauma and its representation in *Falling Mam* by Don De Lillo.

The first chapter presents the theoretical framework of the study. It introduces the concept of trauma from a psychological perspective, explaining its meaning and distinguishing between individual and collective trauma. It also explores psychoanalysis, focusing on the ideas of Sigmund Freud, particularly the unconscious, repression, and repetition. In addition, this chapter discusses trauma

through the work of Cathy Caruth, especially the connection between trauma and memory. Finally, it provides a historical background of the September 11 attacks to better understand the context of the novel. Also the ideas of Carl Jung that has a significant role in trauma and recovery.

The second chapter focuses on the psychoanalytical reading of the novel. It begins with a brief overview and summary of the story. Then, it analyzes the main characters as traumatized subjects. The character of Keith is examined through his behavior, silence, and emotional disconnection. Lianne on the other hand, is studied in terms of her psychological instability, including anxiety, fear, and repetitive thoughts. This chapter also explores how trauma appears indirectly in the novel through the unconscious and repetition, such as repeated actions and expressions.

The third chapter also deals with collective trauma and identity after 9/11. It examines how society as a whole was affected by the traumatic event and how this reflected in the novel. It also analyzes the fragmentation of identity, showing how the characters lose their sense of stability and struggle to rebuild their identities in a post-traumatic world.

Theoretical Part

Chapter One

Trauma and Psychoanalysis

Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical framework of the research. It focuses on the main ideas related to trauma and psychoanalysis, which helps us understand the psychological effects of shocking events on individuals and society. This chapter explains what trauma is in psychology and shows the difference between individual trauma, which affects a single person, and collective trauma, it introduces the basic ideas of Sigmund Freud, especially the unconscious mind, repression, and repetition. The chapter also presents trauma through the work of Cathy Caruth and Carl Jung, who explains how traumatic events are not fully understood at the moment they happened but return later through memory and repetition. Showing how traumatic memories can be fragmented or difficult to express. The chapter looks at trauma in the context of the 9/11 attacks, an event that had deep psychological effects on individuals and society. Understanding this historical context helps us better analyze how trauma is represented in literature. It provides the key concepts and theories needed to study trauma and its psychological impact in a clear and simple way.

Trauma and Psychoanalysis

1-1 Definition of Trauma

Trauma is the act of facing or experiencing a very stressful or scary event, that are difficult to manage because it is out of our control. It could happen after one accident, or an ongoing event that happens over long period. Most people experience an event in their lives that could be considered traumatic, but each one react differently. Trauma can happen at any age, and it can affect us at a long time after the event has happened.

Trauma, according to Sigmund Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, it begins with an external shock, in sudden way and disturbing that comes from outside the person, like an accident or loss. This shock is out of expectation and without preparation. What makes it more serious is the overwhelming intensity of the experience. The event is emotionally or mentally strong more than the ability of the person. As a result, there is a rupture of the mind's protective system, that protect the human mind from stress and imbalanced states, but when we feel traumatized, this protection breaks down. Therefore, we struggle to cope, and the experience come again in different forms such as anxiety, memories, or distress. (Freud 33)

"We describe as 'traumatic' any excitations from outside which powerful enough to break through the protective shield. It seems to me that the concept of trauma necessarily implies a connection of this kind with a breach in a otherwise efficacious barrier against stimuli. " (Freud 33)

Depending on what Caruth say that Trauma is does not have a direct link with the event, because what making it hurtful is the reaction of the mind with it afterward. May be the experience is finished, but still its effect is active in the inner of the person. It has an aftereffect; it may comeback through memories, dreams, or emotional reactions, even after a long time. These feelings often happen unexpectedly so you feel it the same strength like the real one. In addition, you will not understand it when it first happens; therefore, the event is too overwhelming at that moment. The mind does not have the ability to process it immediately, so comprehension comes later, but sometimes never completely. (Caruth 58)

Judith Herman in his book *Trauma and Recovery*, he relates Trauma with how much the person can resist, because trauma overwhelms the person, means that the experience is so powerful for the human to get over it emotionally and mentally. It makes him feel like he is no longer in safe; the person may feel that his society becomes insecure. It causes connection from external world and even internally, trauma can destroy some elements on us like trust, relate, feel close to people, or our position in the world. (Herman 33)

Trauma in Psychology

Psychological trauma is an emotional state that appears in a long time with a deep stress caused through some strong event (violence, abuse, or disasters) that change the human feelings especially safety. It happened when the person loss his capacity to cope, it is shown by fear, helplessness, or dissociation. Common accidents (natural disasters and unexpected loss) can cause long-term, impacts on the health mentally and physically.

In *The Interpretation of Dreams* by Sigmund Freud mention that the experience of trauma is the proses of hitting the person strongly like a chock, without being ready for it or get it at that moment. Because the mind face problems to manage what happened, so it stays inside the person, affecting his thoughts and feelings later on. (Freud 159)

“Dreams are the guardians of sleep and not its disturbers. We shall have to return to this assertion later on and we shall then be able to explain it. For the present we will only say that dreams are the disguised fulfilment of repressed wishes.”
(Freud 159)

Trauma according to Caruth occurs when the event is strong more than the ability of the people to understand what happened around them, their minds lose the control to process the event. Because of this, they may both recognize or not what happened now. Therefore, the experience takes a place inside the mind of person in a fragmented way, change it to become a forbidden thing neither to think nor to talk and over time it swish to an issue that can't solve. (Caruth 04)

Trauma: Individual VS Collective

Individual trauma is an act that happened to just one person and in a different way. It happens to someone faced a shocking event that he can't easily handle. Such as abuse, serious accidents, loss, or neglect. Trauma is hard therefore we experienced it differently with a deference of each one mind. Sometimes, the situation feels so overwhelming that the person can't cope with it in a normal way. Therefore, the experience lives with them extensively. It affects their ideas, feelings, and even their health. All of us have passed by a traumatic experience we may feel anxious, fearful, or emotionally unstable. Overall, individual trauma is not just about what happened, but also about how deeply it affects a person's ability to feel safe, stable, and in control of their life. (Herman 33)

Individual Trauma aspects

Herman in his book *Trauma and recovery* has divided trauma into three types.

Intense trauma, Happens after a deep shock or scary, like a car accident, a natural disaster, or an attack. What is good in it that it happens only once, but it can be powerful enough to hurt a person immediately so he loses his ability to cope. After that he may feel shocked, scared, or keep reliving the event in his mind. In some cases, it can develop to same psychological problems.

Long-term trauma, develops when someone is uncovered to disturbing events that repeated through time. This can be like continuous abuse, living in a country of war, or society neglecting. It can

affect a person's mental wellness or actions; sometime it causes steady stress, fear, escape, and serious long-term health issues.

Intricate trauma refers to repeated and lasting traumatic experiences, especially those that involve close relationships, such as family. It usually happens in situations where the person can't move on; making it, even more destroy. This type of trauma affects many aspects of a person's life, including their emotions, identity, and relationships, and can have deep and lasting psychological effects. (7-32 Herman)

However, collective trauma affects a whole group in society; this is a result of a community that experiences a very painful or shocking event together. Some examples clarify this, wars, natural disasters, or colonization. In addition, its impact can be psychological and social. People who belong to the same group share the same feelings of fear, loss, or sadness. These common memories can change how they interact to the world around them. It can also influence how they communicate as a community. After such events, the safety among the groups is manly broken. The insecurity becomes the strongest feeling with others feelings such as vulnerable, or uncertain about the future. Their behavior, relationships, and daily life changes definitively. Collective trauma can also shape traditions, beliefs, and cultural identity. In many cases, its shifts to a heritage, it develops through generations. Overall, collective trauma is a deep and lasting experience that affects both individuals and the group as a whole. (Erikson 154)

Types of Collective Trauma

Natural disaster trauma, it is the experience earthquakes, floods, or fires. These cases can be very terrifying and dangerous; it leads to the increase of the homelessness or the loss of loved ones. So, people may feel anxious, depressed, or shocked in a deep way. Sometimes, they relive the experience as flashbacks this is mantel side but they may face even physical pain. However, support from the community, having a therapy, and building strength can help people to recover rapidly.

Pandemic trauma appears during large health crises that affect many people around the world. It is a phobia of being sick, or isolated, and facing financial issues. They often feel helpless and totally uncertain. Like COVID-19, that all of us had experienced it and it left on us the senses of anxiety, stress, or repeatedly thinking what will happened after this crisis.

War trauma, is caused by living in armed conflict. It includes violence, destruction, or being forced to migration. These experiences can have serious long-term effects on mental health, such as anxiety, depression, or traumatic stress reaction.

Terrorist attack trauma, results from harsh acts that are meant to create fear and panic among people. Victims often feel shocked, helpless, and panicked because these events happened suddenly and intense. This type of trauma can lead to strong stress reactions or long-term psychological problems like PTSD, especially because it threatens people's sense of safety. (Erikson 154)

1-2 Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious

Sigmund Freud ideas

Sigmund Freud is a tinker who tried to understand how the human mind works. He believes that our conscious mind is something occasionally used, however, the unconscious, is almost control our feelings, and thoughts that we are not aware of. For example, sometimes we feel sad, afraid, or uncomfortable without knowing why. Freud also talked about repression, when a person ignores painful memories because they are difficult to face. Nevertheless, these memories stay inside and can come back later, like dreams or anxiety. He also explained the idea of repetition, where people repeat the same situations or mistakes without understanding why.

Unconscious

The unconscious according to Sigmund Freud, is the piece of the mind that includes thoughts, memories, wishes, and fears that a person is not aware of, but influence the behavior, emotions, and choices. In Freud's point of view, people are not fully conscious of everything they think or feel, a big part of inner life exists deep inside and is hidden from awareness because it may be painful, unacceptable is society, or hard to face. These hidden contents do not disappear; they are stored in the unconscious, where they continue to affect the person indirectly by dreams, slips of the tongue, symptoms, or repeated behavior.

Freud in his book *The Interpretation of Dreams* also believes that the unconscious often expresses itself in deferent forms, especially in dreams, which he describes as a way of revealing unconscious

wishes in symbolic language. In simple way, the unconscious is the hidden part of the mind that shapes human reactions without the person fully realizing it, and it plays a central role in understanding psychological conflict, memory, and trauma. Freud also declare that the unconscious is the real psychic, its inner nature is just as unknown to us as the reality of the external world. (Freud 613)

Repression

Sigmund Freud in *the Ego and the Id* believed that repression is a psychological process, which the mind rejects thoughts, memories, or desires that are painful, disturbing, or unacceptable, and prevents conscious awareness of them. Simply, it means that a person does not forget these experiences completely, but he hides them in the unconscious because they are threatening to face directly. However, even if these ideas are repressed, they do not disappear, they can still influence the person's feelings and behavior indirectly, such as anxiety, wired emotions without explanation, dreams, or repetitive actions. For example, a person who experienced a very traumatic event in childhood may not consciously remember it clearly, but they may still feel fear or discomfort in situations that remind them of that experience. Another example is someone who has strong anger to a person but represses it because they believe it is socially unacceptable, later this repressed anger may appear in dreams or in sudden emotional reactions that seem unexplained. In this way, Freud sees repression as a defense mechanism that protects the mind from psychological pain, but at the same time creates hidden conflicts inside the unconscious. (Freud159)

Repetition

Repetition According to Sigmund Freud is explained in his work *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* by a disposition of a person to unconsciously relive or recreate past experiences, especially painful or traumatic ones, instead of remembering them in a clear and controlled way. Freud calls this idea the repetition compulsion, meaning that the mind does not always try to remember the past as a story, but often repeats it through behavior, emotions, or situations without the person realizing. In simple terms, it means that a person can be stuck in patterns from the past and keep acting them out again and again. For instance, someone who experienced emotional rejection in childhood may later find themselves frequently starting relationships where they feel abandoned, even if they consciously want something

different. Another example is a person who has experienced loss or trauma and keeps putting themselves in situations that recreate similar feelings of fear, defeat, or sadness, without understanding the connection to their past. Freud explains this as the unconscious mind trying to process what was not fully understood or resolved at the time it originally happened. So, repetition is not just a habit, it is the mind's method of returning to unresolved experiences in an attempt to master or understand them, even if it brings discomfort. (Freud 18)

1-3 Trauma

Cathy Caruth

The relationship between memory and trauma

According to Cathy Caruth, the relationship between memory and trauma is not direct or simple, but fragmented and divided. She explains that when a traumatic event happens, the mind can't completely understand or process it at that exact moment because the experience is too intense and overwhelming. As a result, the event is not stored in memory in a clear and organized way like normal event. Instead, it stays partially unresolved and later returns in unexpected forms such as flashbacks, bad dreams (nightmares), or sudden intrusive memories. For Caruth, memory in trauma is not something stable or controlled by the human beings; it is something that comes back repeatedly without warning, showing that the trauma was never fully recognized when it happened at first. This means that memory and trauma are deeply connected lately. Trauma is first experienced in doubt, but it is only later that the mind begins to remember it, even though this remembering is incomplete and fragmented. In simple terms, she sees memory in trauma as something broken and repetitive, where the past keeps returning to the present, making it difficult for the person to separate what happened from what they are still reliving in their mind. It explained that trauma is like a deep emotional wound that does not stay silent. Even if a person tries to forget what happened, the pain continues to speak through memories, emotions, or repeated thoughts. The story of a wound refers to how people express trauma by trying to tell what happened, but it is never fully clear or complete. In simple words, it means that psychological pain always finds a way to show itself, even when the person can't fully explain it. (Caruth 4-8)

1-4 Carl Jung ideas

According to Carl Jung in his book *Man and His Symbols* trauma is not merely a painful event that occurs in a person's life, it is a profound psychological experience that can leave lasting effects on the unconscious mind. Jung believed that when an individual encounters an overwhelming event the conscious mind may be unable to fully understand or process what has happened. As a result, certain emotions, memories, and experiences associated with the traumatic event are repressed and pushed into the unconscious. Although these traumatic elements are hidden from conscious awareness, they do not disappear. Instead, they continue to influence the individual's thoughts, feeling, and behavior in indirect ways.

Jung argued that unconscious wounds often manifest through dreams, symbolic images, emotional disturbances, and recurring patterns of behavior. The traumatized person may experience anxiety, fear, confusion, or a sense of disconnection without fully understanding the source of these feeling. Because the traumatic experience remains unresolved in the unconscious, it repeatedly seeks expression and recognition. For Jung, the unconscious mind actively attempts to bring these hidden wounds to the surface so that they can be acknowledged and integrated into consciousness.

Furthermore, Jung viewed trauma as a force that can fragment the personality, creating internal conflicts between conscious and unconscious aspects of the self. Healing therefore requires more than simply remembering the traumatic event. It involves confronting the repressed material, understanding its psychological significance, and integrating it into a more complete sense of identity. Through this process, individuals can gradually overcome the hidden effects of trauma and move toward psychological wholeness and self-understanding. (Jung 24-28)

According to Carl Jung, trauma is not simply a painful memory that remains in the mind after a disturbing event. Rather, it is a deep psychological wound that affects both conscious and unconscious aspects of the personality. Jung individual's ability to fully understand or process them at the moment they occur. As a result, the emotions, memories, and conflicts associated with trauma may be pushed into the unconscious, where they continue to influence psychological life in hidden ways.

One of Jung's most significant contributions to the understanding of trauma are his belief that unresolved psychological wounds frequently reappear through symbols and dream. Since traumatic experiences are often difficult to express directly, the unconscious mind communicates them indirectly through symbolic images, recurring dreams, fantasies, and emotional reactions. For Jung, dreams are

not random events but meaningful expressions of unconscious material. A person who has experienced trauma may repeatedly encounter symbolic representations of fear, loss, danger, or helplessness in dreams without immediately recognizing their connection to the original traumatic event. These symbols act as messages from the unconscious, attempting to draw attention to unresolved psychological conflicts. (Jung 52)

Jung also connected trauma to his concept of the “shadow”. The shadow refers to those aspects of the personality that individuals reject, suppress, or refuse to acknowledge. Traumatic experiences often generate painful emotions. Because these emotions can be difficult to accept, they may become part of the shadow. Although hidden from conscious awareness, they continue to affect behavior, relationships, and self-perception. Individuals may project these unwanted emotional reactions without understanding their origin. In this way, trauma become embedded within the hidden dimensions of the personality. (Jung 137-174)

Furthermore, Jung argued that trauma can lead to psychological fragmentation. A traumatic experience may disrupt a person’s sense of identity and create a feeling of separation from certain aspects of the self. Individuals may feel emotionally numb, disconnected from their emotions, or unable to reconcile different parts of their personality. This fragmentation often produces confusion, inner conflict, and a sense of alienation from oneself and others. The traumatized person may struggle to understand their own reactions because important elements of experience remain split off from conscious awareness. (Jung 158-174)

Despite these difficulties, Jung viewed healing as a process of integration rather than suppression or forgetting. He believed that recovery occurs when individuals gradually confront and acknowledge the unconscious material connected to trauma. Through self-reflection, dream analysis, therapy, and personal insight, people can beg to understand the meaning of their emotional wounds. The goal is not to erase the traumatic event but to integrate it into a broader understanding of the self. By accepting previously rejected emotion and memories, individuals can reduce inner conflict and achieve psychological balance.

Jung considered trauma to be a psychological wound that continues to live within the unconscious until it is recognized and integrated into consciousness. Its effects may appear through dreams, symbols, emotional disturbances, and fragmented experiences of the self. Healing becomes possible when individuals engage with these hidden aspects of their psyche, transforming suffering into self-knowledge and moving toward a more complete and unified sense of identity. (Jung 166-190)

1-5 Trauma after 9/11

Historical context

To understand what happened on September 11, 2001, we need to go back in history and look at the political and social events that shaped the world before that day. The attacks did not happen suddenly or without reason. They were the result of chronic tensions, conflicts, and ideological differences, especially between the United States and parts of the Middle East. After the end of the Cold War in 1991, the United States became the most powerful country in the world. It started to play a major role in global politics, especially in the Middle East. This region is very important because of its oil resources and its strategic location. However, American involvement in this region created anger and grudge among some groups. One of the key events was the Gulf War. When Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, the United States led a military coalition to promote Iraqi remove by force. After the war, U.S. troops remained in Saudi Arabia. During the 1990s, a militant group called Al-Qaeda began to grow. It was founded by Osama bin Laden, a Saudi-born leader who strongly against U.S. presence in the Middle East. He believed that the United States was interfering in Muslim countries and supporting governments that were seen as unequitable. Bin Laden and his followers developed a radical ideology. They decided to fight against what they saw as oppression. Throughout the 1990s, Al-Qaeda performed several attacks against U.S. goals. Another important factor was the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine. The United States has long supported Israel, which caused anger in many parts of the Arab and Muslim world. This added to the feeling that the U.S. was unfair and biased in its foreign policy. Inside the United States, many people did not fully realize the gravity of the risk. The idea that such an extensive attack could happen on American soil seemed unlikely to many at the time. All of these elements (political involvement, military presence, ideological conflict, and growing extremism) created a tense global situation. This stress eventually led to the tragic events of September 11, 2001, when members of Al-Qaeda hijacked four airplanes. Two planes crashed into the World Trade Center towers in New York, one hit the Pentagon, and the fourth crashed in Pennsylvania after passengers tried to stop the attackers. The attacks shocked the world because of their scale and violence. Nearly 3,000 people were killed, and thousands more were injured. It was not only a physical attack but also a psychological one, creating fear and trauma that affected millions of people. (Kean et al 1-14)

After 9/11, the United States launched the “War on Terror,” starting with the invasion of Afghanistan to remove the Taliban, who were protecting Al-Qaeda. This marked the beginning of a new period in global history, with increased security measures, military actions, and political changes around the world.

In conclusion, the events of September 11 can't be understood without looking at the historical context behind them. They were the result of years of conflict, political decisions, and ideological struggles. Understanding this background helps us see that trauma, whether individual or collective, is deeply connected to history and shaped by larger global forces. (Kean et al. 47-54)

Conclusion

We have presented the main theoretical ideas that help us understand trauma from psychological and psychoanalytic perspective. We arrive to a clear definition of trauma and how it can affect both individuals and groups. Because trauma is not only a personal experience but can also be shared by a whole society. Then explored the basics of psychoanalysis through the work of Sigmund Freud. His ideas appear in a way it explains how traumatic experiences are hidden in the mind but continue to influence thoughts and behavior. In addition, Cathy Caruth, explains that trauma returns later through memory and repeated experiences not at the moment. We have discussed trauma related to the context of the 9/11 attacks; this historical event helps arrive to the idea that trauma can shape human experiences and be represented in literature. The study of this chapter provides a clear theoretical base that will help in analyzing how trauma appears and develops in the selected literary work.

Practical Part

Chapter Two

Psychoanalytical Reading of Falling Man

Introduction

A psychoanalytic reading of *Falling Man* reveals that trauma is not presented as a clear or fully understood experience but as something complex, that appears indirectly in the characters' behavior, emotions, and thoughts. In the novel, trauma is expressed through silence, emotional distance, anxiety, and repetition, which reflects the difficulty of processing a shocking and overwhelming event. The novel presents characters who struggle to deal with what they have experienced, especially when it can't be easily explained or expressed. Keith, for example, shows signs of deep trauma through his silence, and sense of disconnection, suggesting an inner conflict that remains unresolved. His behavior reflects an inability to fully confront or understand the traumatic event.

In contrast, Lianne's experience highlights another dimension of trauma. Her anxiety, fear, and repetitive thoughts show trauma can affect the mind in persistent and intrusive ways. Even though her experience is different, it still reveals the lasting psychological impact of trauma.

Trauma in the novel also appear through repetition and unconscious processes. It returns in the form of repeated actions, habits, and speech, rather than clear memories. This suggests that trauma is not easily remembered or controlled, but continues to exist in hidden ways. Overall, *Falling Man* presents trauma as an ongoing psychological condition that shapes behavior, emotions, and identity over time.

2-1 Background of the author

Don De Lillo is an American novelist and playwright considered as one of the most important figures in contemporary postmodern literature. He was born on November 20, 1936, in New York City, in a working-class Italian-American family in the Bronx. He grows up in a densely urban environment that shaped his literary imagination, particularly his attention to mass media, consumer culture, and the psychological effects of modern life. De Lillo studied at Fordham University in the Bronx, where he graduated in communication arts. Before becoming a professional writer, he worked in advertising, an experience that helped him develop a critical awareness of language, media manipulation, and the power of images central themes in many of his novels. He published his first novel, *Americana*, in 1971. However, his major recognition is in the 1980s with famous novels, such as *White Noise* (1985), which explores themes of death, media saturation, and environmental catastrophe, and *Libra* (1988), a fictional reimagining of the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

One of his most influential later works is *Falling Man* (2007), which a strong relationship with the trauma of the September 11 attacks. In this novel, De Lillo examines disconnected identity, psychological shock, and the difficulty of symbolizing trauma in language issues that match closely with psychoanalytic and trauma theory. De Lillo is writing characterized by fragmented narrative structures,

and a deep worry with how individuals experience reality in a media all over the world. His fiction often reflects on themes such as surveillance, terrorism, capitalism, language, and social anxiety.

De Lillo is associated with postmodern literature because his works question stable meaning, break the boundaries between reality and representation, and highlight the instability of truth in contemporary culture. Despite this complexity, his writing consistently focuses on human experience especially fear, isolation, and the look for abstract meaning and digital society. (De Lillo 214)

2-2 Overview of the Novel

Falling Man is a novel that explores the psychological, emotional, and social consequences of the 9/11 2001 attacks in the United States. Everything is covered in ash, smoke, and confusion. People are running through the streets in panic, holding their faces, coughing, and trying to survive. The city was unreal and totally destroyed. Keith a survival man who walks through the destruction in shock, as if his body is present but mentally disconnected from what is happening around him. He sees horrifying scenes, injured people, falling debris abandoned objects, and even people jumping from the towers. Keith is injured and confused. He eventually receives help from a stranger man work in a van and electrical contractor who drive him away from Ground Zero. Although he survives and he is still alive, but he is emotionally death, as if part of him is still stuck in the event. The trauma follows him even after he leaves the disaster zone. The story shifts to Keith's relationship with Liann, his ex-wife. After 9/11, Keith unexpectedly comes back into her life –they were no longer married- Their relationship is complicated, they are separated, but they still share a child, Justin. His return is not fully explained at first, but it is clear that the attacks have disrupted all boundaries in their lives bringing people back together in strange and uncertain ways. Lianne struggler with fear and emotional instability after 9/11. She takes care of her son and deals with her mother, Nina, who is dominant in her opinion and emotionally clever. Their conversations reveal tension about relationships, safety, and how people choose to live. Lianne's mother is critical of Keith and of Lianne's choices, especially her marriage and her emotional reliance. Meanwhile, Keith goes through medical treatment for his injuries. Doctors remove glass from his face and check him carefully, but his physical wounds are not only issue, his psychological state is deeply affected. He experiences moment of detachment, memory disturbance, and emotional emptiness. Even ordinary sounds and experiences feel distorted to him. Keith tries to return to his apartment in the damaged city. He moves through military checkpoints, and restricted zones filled with ash, police, and soldiers. The city feels like a war zone. Everything familiar now looks strange and

broken the same as the moment of the event. When he finally reaches his apartment, he realized how empty his life has become. This moment forces him to understand that something in his inner is changed. At the same time, Lianne is involved in a support group for people with memory loss and cognitive decline. She guides them in writing and storytelling exercises. Through these sessions, the novel shows that the memory is very fragile and how people struggle to hold on to their identity. In post 9/11, even ordinary lives feel unstable, and everyone seems affected by collective emotional trauma. In another thread of the story, Lianne witnesses a strange performance artist known as Falling Man. This man hangs upside down from buildings, imitating the bodies of people who fell from the Twin Towers. The performance shocks people and creates anger and discomfort. For Lianne, it symbolizes how the trauma of 9/11 keeps returning into public life; people can't escape it, even in art or daily routines. The novel ends up with Keith, Lianne, and others are all trying to rebuild meaning, but they remain emotionally fragmented. (De Lillo 7-213)

2-3 Keith as a Traumatized Subject

Keith is presented in the novel as a man who survives a catastrophic event of 11/9 attacks but can't fully return to his previous life later on, he feels as if the events are repeated in his inner in every single moment, even when he is setting with people his mind is sticking in the same point of what he has seen, like in the scene of the dinner table where his wife Lianne and his son Justin are discussing about Justin's school project about Bill, at the same time Keith state remembering the collapse of the two towers and the member of the victims that he saw. (De Lillo 71-75), he always feels like he is uncomfortable, scared, and deep anxiety. He enters in a long journey of sadness and depression, his becomes stressful and irritable. And this has a strong relationship with the scene of the TV watching, Keith, Lianne, and Justin are all watching a poker tournament on television, he lost the control over his attention because he remembers the two survival players of poker, without showing any emotions and with a tired face he left the room quickly (De Lillo 211-213). In his previous life –before the event – he was so connected to people in his work, in the street, or even with his neighbors and family members, however, after he transformed to a silent person who loses passion of everything that was joyful in the past. He appears quiet, withdrawn, and emotionally distant, as if something inside him has been interrupted. Instead of expressing his feelings openly, he tends to stay silent and detached, moving through his daily life in an automatic way. After the catastrophe for a short while, he starts seeing some bad dreams that reminds him by what happened, as the third person narrative describe,

"The high room was dimly lit, men seated heads up, or standing or walking through, and out of the stealthy tension in the come the shouts a horse breaking out of the pack, a runner rounding second [...] There were the dreams, of course, the dream of paralysis, the gasping man, the dream of asphyxiation, the dream of helplessness". (De Lillo 165)

Even when he is awake, he sees it in a form of flashbacks. When his wife tries to talk with him about the event he refuses strongly and left the room, he gets red from everything that made him remember the event. His behavior suggests that he is deeply affected by what he has experienced even if he does not clearly articulate it. He finds a big difficulty to sleep or he passed by what we call it restlessness after the attacks, as it shown here,

"They slept in the same bed because she could not tell him to use the sofa and because she liked having him here next to her. He didn't seem to sleep. He lay on his back and talked but mostly listened and this was all right." (De Lillo 19)

Keith struggles to reconnect with the world around him for example, the conversation between him and his wife is too small, asking and answering with short sentences, and even the speech with his son Justen is almost absent, he is totally abandoning from his responsibilities as a husband and a father. Here is an example of a conversation between Keith and his wife Lianne, to show how short it is,

Lianne: Why did you come here?

Keith: That's the question, isn't it?

Lianne: For Justin, yes?

Keith: So he could see you were alive. (De Lillo 21)

By talking about the relationship between the father Keith and the son Justen, it characterized by miscommunication, as the conversation between them is too brief, when Justen and his friends are doing their project of the Bill a short dialogue occurs now

"Keith: What are you looking for?

Justen: We're not looking. We are waiting.

Keith: Waiting for what?

Justen: For him.

Keith: For who?

Justen: Bill Lawton."(De Lillo 73)

He returns to familiar routines, such as playing poker, not because they bring him joy, but because they offer a sense of control and distraction over his sudden strong reactions. His relationships, especially with his family, are marked by distance and hesitation. He is physically present, but emotionally absent and unavailable, which reflects the lasting impact of trauma on his identity. (De Lillo 155)

"Now he finds himself drifting into spells of reflection, thinking not clear units, hard and linked, but only absorbing what comes, drawing things out of time and memory and into some dim space that bears his collected experience. Or he stands and looks. He stands at the window and sees."(De Lillo 155)

Behavior

Keith's behavior after the attacks clearly indicate that he is traumatized and still under the event's shock. He becomes distant, emotionally and physically passive, every day is the same as the day before no activity no change the same routine is repeated, and emotionally numb, he doesn't indicate his love to his wife, he becomes no longer shearing to her the same care as she does. Inside, and in the other side, his son Justen and the relationship between them that characterized by silence all the time and disconnection even in playing they choose serious games, this habit begins after the catastrophe because we can observe the change. For example, when he returns home, he does not express strong emotions or try to explain what he experienced. Instead, he acts as if he is disconnected from reality. This shows that trauma has affected his ability to react normally. His involvement in poker games later in the novel also reflects his psychological state. Poker becomes a way to escape reality and avoid confronting his

trauma. This behavior can be linked to the idea that individuals try to cope with trauma through indirect actions.

Silence

Silence is one of the most important signs of Keith's trauma. This state has appeared from the beginning means just after the towers fall, the reaction of Keith was so weird he walks through the street that is full of the ash and many people are scrumping and shouting, running to find a save place, .in addition to the sound of the radios around him, he simply stays silent and just observing the scene. (De Lillo 7-9), in the novel the author depicts Keith as a speechless subject when he is sitting in his apartment before changing his previous residence, he was observing all the places especially his room he was quiet and silent instead of crying and express his sadness he was just looking at the walls. (De Lillo54). He rarely speaks about the attacks, and when he does, his words are limited and unclear, he find a difficulty in speaking, for example in the hospital when the Doctor is extracts the glass from his face and body he was talking with him about the event and what he has collect from the other injuries as information he does not stop talking and while speaking sometimes he ask him to make him talk but his responds is only with " I don't know ". (De Lillo 16), at home when Lianne asks him why he came to the apartment while he is supposed to go to hospital his answer was "It's hard to reconstruct. I don't know how my mind was working" (De Lillo 21)

Here we understand that trauma has a strong link with memory. His silence shows that he is unable to process or express what he went through. In the conversation between Keith and Florence – a survivor from the attacks he starts describing what happened to him in details, in this time Keith was listening as if he was not in the scene or he is listening this fir the first time without contribute or add any information. This reflects the idea that trauma can't always be expressed through language. According to psychoanalysis, traumatic experiences are often repressed because they are too painful to describe. Keith's silence, therefore, is not just absence of speech, but also a sign of deep psychological suffering.

Disconnection

Keith experiences a strong sense of disconnection from himself and others. Even when he is physically present with his family, he seems emotionally absent. His relationship with Lianne lacks

communication and intimacy. This disconnection shows that trauma breaks the link between the individual and reality. Keith lives in a state between past and present, unable to fully return to normal life. This reflects the fragmented identity of a traumatized subject. Keith clearly represents a traumatized individual who struggles to find stability after the events of September 11 attacks. His behavior reflects confusion and an inability to make firm decisions. This is evident when he says, "Gave myself a year... Cut it to six months... Cut it to four, was gone in two", this quote shows that Keith cannot commit to a plan, which reflects his unstable mental state. In addition, his response "What else? Where else?" (De Lillo 197) highlights his loss of direction and purpose, he is looking for someone to tell him what is the second step. These elements demonstrate how trauma affects his thinking and disconnects him from reality. (De Lillo 197)

2-4 Lianne and Psychological Instability

Lianne is presented as a woman who is deeply affected by fear, anxiety, and a constant sense of unease after the attacks. Unlike Keith, who becomes silent and withdrawn, Lianne remains mentally active but emotionally overwhelmed. She is highly sensitive to her surroundings and struggles with intrusive thoughts, especially about death and memory. She tries to maintain control over her life through routines, writing sessions, and caring for her son, but underneath, she feels fragile and unsettled. She is also portrayed as someone who is haunted by the idea of loss, particularly because of her father's illness, which makes her fear mental decline and death even more, when she notices the shift of her husband's manners, she linked them with her father's illness Alzheimer's so she realized that her husband is facing a mental problem. In simple terms, Lianne is a person who is trying to stay strong and organized, but is internally anxious and shaken. This clearly appears in this quote, "She thought of all the things she could lose." (De Lillo 103)

Anxiety

Lianne suffers from constant anxiety after the attacks. She becomes overly sensitive to small details and easily disturbed by daily situations. For example, she reacts strongly to certain noises or behaviors, which reminds her of danger. In the conversation with her mother Nina try to make her daughter calm and to control her over stress, at the moment she stands by the window thinking about what will happen in the coming years after the attacks. Even with her son Justen, his behaviors, and

his relation with his friends that she described it by a secret so she refuses this in a kind of exaggeration. (De Lillo 13-17). This anxiety increased to the point that she become affected even by external factors that had nothing to do with it, so she began to interfere even in her neighbors and their way of life, who plays wailing music in her apartment and Lianne hears it while she is going down the stairs and she feels internal discomfort and this is what leads her to quarrel with her. (De Lillo 20), her anxiety shows how trauma can affect not only direct victims but also those around them. She lives in a state of fear and uncertainty, which affects her mental stability.

Fear

Fear is another dominant emotion in Lianne's life. She is afraid of the outside world and becomes obsessed with safety. For example, the fear from the Alzheimer's disease that her father was suffer from, this what leads her to become afraid of being this disease hereditary and menace her health and loos the memory, the personality, and the identity. (De Lillo 155), to link this fear with her marriage to Keith when she saw in the TV the towers feel and she told her mother "I thought he was death" with a deep internal scurry, this fear is linked to the unpredictability of the attacks, which destroyed her sense of security. Her fear also appears in her interactions with others, especially when she feels that her environment is not under control. This shows how trauma changes the way individuals perceive reality. (De Lillo 13)

Repetitive thinking

Lianne often experiences repetitive thoughts about the attacks. She can't stop thinking about what happened, even when she tries to focus on normal life. Even when she tries to find some logical interpretations she finds herself in the same cercal of thinking all these ideas are on her monologue. This repetition reflects a key idea in psychoanalysis; trauma returns in the form of repeated thoughts and memories. Instead of being forgotten, the traumatic event continues to invade the mind. Lianne experiences trauma through anxiety and repetitive thinking. She becomes deeply affected by small details, as shown when she wonders, "What detail might there be that was not unbearable?" This question reveals how everything around her feels painful and overwhelming. In addition, she is trapped in memories from the past, especially related to her father. The phrase "The shorter the barrel, the

stronger the muzzle blast” stays in her mind, and the narrator explains that “the force of that term, muzzle blast, carried through the years”. This repetition shows how trauma makes her relive past moments and connect them to present loss, increasing her anxiety and emotional suffering. (De Lillo 155- 157)

2-5 The Unconscious and Repetition

How does trauma appear indirectly

Trauma in *Falling Man* does not always appear directly. Instead, it shows itself through small actions, like physical stasis and sensory detachment of Keith, walking in the ash, the poker tables, and the MRI Ritual which scares everyone but, Keith lay on it in a normal way and in a state of complete calm in order to escape from the noise that was negatively affecting him outside. Next, Lianne and her compulsive memory and monitoring, especially in monitoring the neighbor, the Alzheimer’s group, and staring at the hijacker repeatedly at the newspaper photo. (De Lillo 80). And some behaviors, such as the inability to perceive personal injury, when he was walking in the Easy Park, he loses his shoes and money with no attention even the woman that she was running to catch the bus he did not notice her, and when he arrive to the emergency room, he did not show that his wounds are hurting him. This idea clarified when he says that he looks at his leg and it was not his, he looks at his pants and it was someone else pants, he was in a mind and a body that were not his. (De Lillo 61) also the author uses symbols to show that trauma is here, the term to fly means to run away from self-awareness, also the phrase Dim Space that symbolize disconnection no reaction, no moving just observing the lights and the walls. Another signal that directly leads us to realize that trauma appears everywhere the common example of the performance artist known as the “Falling Man” recreates the image of a man falling from the towers. This indirect representation shows how trauma exists in the unconscious mind. It can’t always be spoken, but it appears in symbolic forms. (De Lillo 65-214)

Repetition

To speak about repetition actions or sayings you have to know that trauma has a strong relationship with it, we start by actions. Repetition in Actions Both Keith and Lianne repeat certain actions as a way to cope with trauma. Keith plays poker repeatedly, (De Lillo 155) while Lianne engages in daily routines that give her a sense of control. This repetition reflects Freud’s concept of “repetition

compulsion,” where individuals unconsciously repeat traumatic experiences in order to understand them. Next Sayings, language in the novel also reflects repetition. Characters often repeat certain phrases or struggle to express themselves clearly. This shows the limitation of language in describing trauma. The inability to find the right words leads to repetition, hesitation, and silence such as Lianne always repeat these phrases "Is this a bed time?", "What did I want?", (De Lillo 19) and Keith also has cartoon phrases that he repeated, "Bill Lawton", "I am standing here." In addition to them Nina is usual repeat this sentence when she was talking to Lianne "you wanted to feel dangerously alive." This confirms that trauma affects both thought and communication."(De Lillo 73)

Conclusion

In conclusion, this part has shown that trauma in *Falling Man* is not presented as direct experience, but rather as complex psychological condition that continues to affect the characters long after the traumatic event. Through a psychoanalytic reading, it becomes clear that shapes the inner world and behavior of both Keith and Lianne in different but interconnected ways. Keith's emotional withdrawal, silence, and disconnection reflect a deep struggle to process what he has experienced, while Lianne's anxiety, fear, and repetitive thoughts show how trauma can also spread indirectly to those around the traumatized subject. Both characters demonstrate that trauma is not only something remembered consciously, but also something that returns in fragmented forms through behavior, emotions, and thought patterns.

The analysis of repetition and the unconscious further highlights that trauma in the novel appears indirectly. It resurfaces through repeated actions, speech, and psychological patterns, confirming the psychoanalytic idea that what is not processed returns in disguised forms. *Falling Man* portrays trauma as an ongoing and unresolved process that continues to shape identity, perception, and relationships.

Chapter Three

Collective Trauma and Post 9/11 Identity

Introduction

The events of 9/11 created not only individual trauma, but also a shared experience that affected society as a whole. In *Falling Man*, trauma is presented as something collective, shaping the feelings, thoughts, and daily lives of people after the attacks. The novel reflects an atmosphere of fear, uncertainty, and emotional disturbance, where individuals struggle to make sense of what has happened around them. This collective trauma influences how people see themselves and the world. It affects social life, relationships, and even simple routines, creating a sense of instability and insecurity. The impact is not limited to those who directly experienced the event, but extends to the wider community, showing how trauma can spread at a social level. At the same time, this situation leads to a fragmentation of identity, the characters find it difficult to feel stable or connected to their previous sense of self. They experience confusion, loss, and disconnection, as if their identities have been shaken by the traumatic event. In this way, *Falling Man* presents identity as fragile and changing, deeply influenced by both personal and collective trauma.

3-1 Collective Trauma

Society after 9/11

The events of September 11, 2001 marked a profound turning point in modern society, reshaping how people understood safety, identity, and everyday life. In the aftermath of the attacks, a sense of uncertainty and weakness became part of daily experience, as individuals struggled to process the shock and emotional stress of what had happened. Public spaces, once taken for granted, were now viewed through a lens of carefulness and fear, while media images of destruction and loss remained deeply embedded in collective memory. At the same time, society witnessed a shift toward heightened security, political pressure and a growing awareness of global interconnectedness. This transformation was not only physical and political but also psychological, as people attempted to reconcile the ordinary routines of life with the lasting impact of trauma.

The novel shows how society after 9/11 became dominated by shocking and unforgettable images. People began to see the world through trauma everything felt changed, unstable, and haunted by what happened, the author describe the society as remains and debris that what this passage highlights,

“The world was this as well, figures in windows a thousand feet up, dropping into free space and stink of fuel fire, and the steady rip of sirens in the air this was the world now.” (De Lillo 33)

What happened exactly was not completely unexpected, cause of previous circumstances, conflicts, and politics, was excessing before, so even though the event felt sudden, the signs were already present but they did not pay attention to them if they do would not be as hurting as it was.) This reflects a shift in society toward fear, suspicion, and political awareness. After 9/11, people began questioning security, government preparedness, and global threats more seriously.

After 9/11 society became more aware of human vulnerability. People realized how fragile life is and how deeply connected individuals are to one another through shared grief and fear. Loss and vulnerability are natural parts of being human. As people, we are shaped by our relationships with others, we depend on family, friends, and society to feel secure and supported, because we are always at risk of losing them. These attachments make our lives meaningful but they also make us fragile; when we lose someone or something important, we feel pain and insecurity. This shows that vulnerability comes from caring about others, our social bonds give us strength but they also expose us to loss. Being human means living with both connection and the possibility of separation, so vulnerability is not a weakness but a result of our relationships. (Butler 20)

Depending on Sontag ideology, the word "We" should not be assumed when people are observing the suffering of others, this idea shows that not everyone responds to pain in the same way. Susan Sontag suggests that viewing other's suffering is not a shared or equal experience. Media images of trauma have changed how people see and understand pain, people often experience suffering indirectly through screens and images. However, their emotional reactions can vary greatly from person to person; some may feel empathy while others may become emotionally distant. This creates both connection and separation at the same time, seeing suffering does not always lead to the same human response. This highlights how media images of suffering changed society. People consumed trauma through screens, but their emotional responses differed creating distance as well as empathy.

Caruth also suggests that trauma is not only the result of something being destroyed it is also a deeper and more complicated question about what it means to survive. In other words, trauma is not limited to loss or physical damage it also involves the difficulty of continuing life after that loss. This idea helps us understand the experience of people after 9/11; they were not only facing the impact of destruction and violence. They were not only facing the impact of destruction and violence; they were also trying to cope with the fact that they remained alive; survival itself became something confusing and emotionally heavy. People struggled to make sense of life witnessing such events living on became uncertain and psychologically complex; trauma therefore affects both memory and the ability to move

forward. It disrupts normal understanding of time and experience, survivors may feel trapped between the past event and the present, and they often relive what happened while trying to continue daily life, this creates a constant inner conflict between survival and suffering. Caruth's idea shows that trauma is not just about what is lost it is also about how the mind tries to process survival itself. After 9/11 this struggle became part of collective human experience, people had to redefine what it means to continue living thus survival becomes not simple relief but a complex psychological burden. This helps explain post-9/11 society, people were not only dealing with destruction but also struggling to understand how to live after such an event. Survival itself became psychologically complex. (Caruth 4)

Material Waste (Destruction of the Physical World) :

In the novel, the author captures the transformation of the physical environment into debris and ruin. The city is no longer recognizable as an organized, living space; instead, it becomes a landscape of ash, dust, and destruction. What was once solid buildings, streets, order turns into waste. In this sense, material waste after 9/11 is not only about collapsed towers but also about the collapse of structure itself, where the familiar world is reduced to fragments.

“It was not a street anymore but a world, a time and space of falling ash and near night. He was walking north through rubble and mud and there were people running past holding towels to their faces or jackets over their heads. They had handkerchiefs pressed to their mouths. They had shoes in their hands [...] he wore a suit and carried a briefcase. There was glass in his hair and face, marbled bolls of blood and light.” (De Lillo 7)

Human Waste (Loss of Lives and Bodies) :

Although this sentence appears factual and restrained, it represents a massive human loss condensed into a single moment. Thousands of lives are reduced to a timestamp. This reflects a disturbing dimension of human waste; individuals become numbers, statistics, or brief entries in official reports. The human body, once living and meaningful, is erased so quickly that it can only be recorded in simplified, almost clinical language.

“He stood and looked at him and the man opened his eyes and died. This is when he wondered what was happening here. Paper was flying down the hallway, rattling in a wind that seemed to wash down from above. He went back down the hall and into the office opposite. The man was still on his knees; his forehead pressed against the frame of the doorway. He was covered in a layer of ash, like someone in a burned-out room, but he was light skinned beneath the ash, a young man, a client or consultant, and he was trying to listen to the phone.” (De Lillo 214)

Here, the human body is described as if it were already part of the ruins. The ash covering the man blurs the boundary between person and debris. This imagery suggests that human beings themselves are turned into remnants of destruction, reinforcing the idea of “human waste” in a deeply symbolic and disturbing way.

Psychological Waste (Trauma, Memory, and Emotional Rupture) :

After 9/11, people were left with a lasting psychological impact fear, anxiety, and a constant awareness of vulnerability. This “psychological waste” is not visible like debris, but it lingers in the mind. Butler suggests that human identity itself becomes shaped by this vulnerability, meaning that trauma is not temporary; it restructures how people think, feel, and relate to the world.

After a traumatic event the mind cannot take everything at the moment it happened, the experience comes too fast and feels overwhelming to understand right away. Because of that, it doesn't fully become part of normal memory; it stays hidden in the background of the mind later it can come back suddenly without warning this can happen through memories that feel very real, flashbacks, or strong mental images. Sometimes even small things can trigger these memories, the person may feel like they are reliving the event again this makes it hard to move on completely the mind keeps going back and forth between "then" and "now" to create confusion about time and reality, as Caruth says trauma is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, it explains why psychological damage after 9/11 persists over time. Trauma does not end with the event; instead, it returns in memories, flashbacks, and repeated images. This creates a form of psychological “waste” where the mind can't fully process what happened, leaving individuals trapped between past and present. (Caruth 4)

3-2 Fragmentation of Identity

How did the characters lose their stability

The events of September 11, 2001 deeply unsettled the foundations of modern society, not only through physical destruction but also through a lasting disturbance in the way people experienced everyday life. What once appeared stable public spaces, routines, and social interactions suddenly felt uncertain and fragile. The attacks exposed how easily systems of order could collapse, replacing a sense of security with fear and unpredictability. In the aftermath, individuals were left to navigate a world where danger no longer seemed distant, but immediate and possible at any moment. This shift was not limited to political or structural changes; it also affected how people thought, remembered, and related to one another. As a result, society did not simply recover and return to normal, but instead entered a state of ongoing instability shaped by trauma, anxiety, and a continuous search for meaning.

The moment that shows how the normal structure of life breaks apart. Buildings, which usually represent safety and stability, become places of danger. Society loses its sense of order because what people once trusted workplaces, cities, routines no longer feel secure. Stability disappears when the familiar world turns unpredictable.

“The world was this as well, figures in windows a thousand feet up, dropping into free space, and the stink of fuel fire, and the steady rip of sirens in the air. The noise lay everywhere they ran, stratified sound collecting around them, and he walked away from it and into it at the same time.” (De Lillo 7)

After 9/11, society becomes more aware of its own vulnerability. People begin to feel that danger can come at any moment, from anywhere. This constant awareness of risk weakens social stability because it replaces confidence with fear. Daily life continues, but it is no longer grounded in a sense of safety. They are given over from the start to the world of others this makes them vulnerable to violence. (Butler 23)

Sontag declare that in the aftermath, society becomes overwhelmed by images and memories of destruction. Instead of fully understanding the event, people repeatedly return to shocking visuals. This creates confusion and emotional overload, making it difficult to rebuild a stable sense of meaning or direction, may be value is assigned to memory, not enough to thinking. (Sontag 105)

Collective Level: Society as a Whole

At the collective level, society after the September 11 attacks experienced a shared shock that disrupted its sense of order and unity. This reflects how the event was both sudden and deeply destabilizing. On a collective level, society lost its confidence in systems that were supposed to provide protection. There is a sense that something fundamental failed, and this realization created a lasting insecurity. People began to question institutions, safety measures, and even the predictability of the future.

Butler shows that society was reshaped through shared grief. On one hand, this created a form of unity, but it was a fragile one, built on loss and vulnerability rather than stability. The collective identity that emerged after 9/11 was therefore unstable, because it was grounded in trauma rather than confidence. (Butler 20)

Individual Level: Personal Experience of Instability

At the individual level, the loss of stability appears more intimate, affecting memory, identity, and emotional life. The novel reflects a deep sense of disorientation. The character feels disconnected from time, as if the present moment no longer belongs to him. On the individual level, stability is lost because people can no longer experience reality in a continuous, normal way. Time feels broken, and identity becomes uncertain. (De Lillo 1), this explains how individuals remain trapped in the event. Even after it is over, the mind continues to return to it. This repetition prevents emotional stability, because the person can't fully move forward. The past keeps interrupting the present, making it difficult to rebuild a sense of normal life. The loss of stability after 9/11 operates on both levels at once. Society as a whole becomes more uncertain and fragile, while individuals struggle internally with memory, fear, and disorientation. (Caruth 5)

Together, these experiences show that instability is not only a political or social condition, but also a deeply personal one that shapes how people live and understand their world.

Falling Man through the ideas of Carl Jung

Falling Man can be read through the ideas of Carl Jung, especially his concepts of the unconscious, the shadow, and individuation. The novel shows how trauma remains hidden beneath conscious awareness and returns through images, memories, and acts. Keith's emotional detachment after 9/11 reflects a fragmented self-struggling to inveigling to integrate a traumatic experience. The performance artistic known as the Falling Man functions as a symbolic figure that brings repressed fears and collective grief into public view. Jung argued that unresolved psychological conflicts often emerge through symbols rather than direct expression, and DeLillo present trauma in a similar way. Characters repeatedly confront memories they can't fully understand or explain. The novel also illustrates aspects of the shadow, as fear, vulnerability, and become unavoidable realities after the attacks. Through these experiences, the characters search for meaning and psychological balance in a shattered world. Although complete healing emotions is an important step toward self-understanding and integration.

The falling figure functions as a powerful symbol that carries the shared fears and anxieties of society after 9/11. Rather than presenting trauma directly, DeLillo represents it through an image that repeatedly returns to public consciousness. Jung argues that symbols express psychological experiences that can't be fully explained through ordinary language. In this context, the *Falling Man* embodies feelings of vulnerability, loss, and mortality that many individuals struggle to articulate. The image connects personal suffering with collective memory, showing how trauma continues to exist beneath conscious awareness. Through this symbol, DeLillo illustrates the persistence of unconscious fears and the difficulty of fully processing traumatic events. (DeLillo33)

The act that reflects Keith's emotional condition after surviving the attacks. His intense feeling of loneliness suggests a profound disconnection from both himself and the people around him. From a Jungian perspective, trauma can disrupt the balance of the psyche and create a sense of fragmentation. Keith is unable to return to his previous identity because the traumatic experience has altered his perception of reality. His isolation reveals an inner struggle that remains largely unconscious and difficult to express. Jung believed that psychological healing requires confronting hidden emotions and integrating them into conscious awareness. Keith's loneliness therefore represents not only suffering but also the beginning of a confrontation with the deeper aspects of the self. (DeLillo 15)

Conclusion

In conclusion, the chapter has shown that the impact of 9/11 in *Falling Man* goes beyond individual suffering and extends to a wider collective experience that affects society as a whole. The novel illustrates how trauma becomes a shared condition, shaping the atmosphere of fear, uncertainty, and instability in the post 9/11 world.

Through the idea of collective trauma, it becomes clear that the characters are not isolated in their reactions; they are part of a society that is also struggling to understand and process what has happened. This shared psychological impact contributes to a general sense of disorientation and emotional disruption in everyday life. The chapter also highlights how this collective trauma leads to a fragmentation of identity. The character loses their sense of stability and continuity, finding it difficult to rebuild coherent understanding of themselves in a world that has fundamentally changed. Overall, this analysis shows that *Falling Man* presents after 9/11 as fragile and fractured, deeply shaped by both personal and collective trauma.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

This study has explored the manifestation of trauma through a psychoanalytic reading of Don De Lillo's *Falling Man*, focusing on the way in which traumatic experience is inscribed in the unconscious, expressed through behavior, and reflected in both individual and collective identity after the event of 9/11. By drawing on psychoanalytic theory, particularly the ideas of Sigmund Freud and later trauma theorists such as Cathy Caruth, the analysis has attempted to show that trauma is not simply a past event that remains fixed in history, but rather a continuing psychological process that reshapes memory, identity, and perception in deeply complex ways.

At the theoretical level, the first chapter established a conceptual foundation for understanding trauma as both an individual and collective phenomenon. In psychological terms, trauma was presented as an overwhelming experience that exceeds the subject's capacity for immediate understanding or emotional processing. This inability to fully integrate the traumatic event at the moment of its occurrence leads to fragmentation in memory and a delayed return of the experience. Freud's psychoanalytic framework helped clarify this dynamic through his concepts of the unconscious, repression, and repetition. The unconscious was understood as the hidden space where unprocessed experiences are stored, while repression functions as a defense mechanism that pushes painful memories out of conscious awareness. However, these repressed memories do not disappear; instead, they return indirectly through repetitive behaviors, symptoms, and symbolic expressions. Cathy Caruth's trauma further deepened this understanding by emphasizing that trauma is defined by its belatedness. In other words, traumatic events are not fully experienced in the moment of their occurrence but only become meaningful afterward, through their repeated and often indirect re-emergence. This perspective is particularly significant when applied to post-9/11 literature, where trauma is not only personal but also collective, affecting entire societies and reshaping cultural and political consciousness. The historical context of 9/11 thus becomes essential in understanding how trauma operates on both an individual psychological level and a broader social level, producing shared experiences of fear, insecurity, and identity disruption.

The second chapter shifted the focus to a psychoanalytic reading of *Falling Man*, examining how trauma manifests in the lives of the novel's characters. Keith, as a central figure, embodies the fragmented traumatized subject. His behavior is marked by emotional withdrawal, silence, and a sense of disconnection from his surroundings. Rather than directly expressing his trauma, Keith experiences it in a muted and indirect form, suggesting that his psyche is struggling to integrate the violent and chaotic

experience of the attacks. His silence is not simply absence of speech but a psychological response that reflects the difficulty of articulating the traumatic event in language. Similarly, Lianne's character illustrates another dimension of psychological instability. Her anxiety, persistent fear, and repetitive thought patterns indicate a mind that is unable to achieve closure or emotional stability after the traumatic event. She constantly revisits the past, both consciously and unconsciously, demonstrating how trauma disrupts the normal flow of time and traps individuals in cycles of recall and anticipation. Her mental state reveals how trauma affects not only memory but also perception, making the present feel unstable and uncertain. A significant aspect of the analysis in this chapter is the role of repetition and the unconscious. Trauma in *Falling Man* does not appear in a direct or fully conscious form; instead, it emerges through fragmented actions, symbolic gestures, and recurring behaviors. These repetitions are not meaningless habits but rather expressions of the unconscious attempting to process what can't be fully remembered or verbalized. In this sense, the novel illustrates Freud's idea that the return of the repressed occurs in disguised forms, often beyond the subject's awareness. De Lillo uses this narrative structure to show that trauma is not a singular moment of suffering but an ongoing process that continues to shape behavior and identity long after the original event. The third chapter expanded the scope of analysis to collective trauma and post-9/11 identity. Here, trauma is no longer confined to individual psychology but becomes a shared social condition that affects cultural memory and national identity. The aftermath of 9/11 created a collective psychological rupture, where society as a whole experienced a loss of stability, security, and coherence. This collective trauma is reflected in the fragmentation of identity among the characters, who struggle to maintain a sense of self in a world that has fundamentally changed. The boundaries.

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Appendices

The collapse of the Twin Towers.



The artistic representation of "Falling Man"



تقدم رواية الرجل الساقط للكاتب ديليلو (2007) تصويراً إنسانياً عميقاً للصدمة في أعقاب هجمات 9/11. وتركز على كيفية تشكل الحياة بعدها بدلاً من تفسيرها أو إيجاد حلول لها وينكشف هذا من خلال الصمت الانفصال وتشتت الانتباه. كيث أحد الناجين من الهجمات يعيش في العالم بحالة من التبعاد العاطفي كما لو أن جزءاً منه لا يزال عالقاً في لحظة الاصطدام. التخلي عن العلاقات واعتماده على عادات متكررة يشيران إلى أن عقله يكافح من أجل العيش في الحاضر بينما لا يراي يعود إلى الماضي.

يبين ديليلو كيف تتجاوز الصدمة حدود الفرد لتصبح جزءاً من حالة ثقافية جماعية فصور وسائل الإعلام المتكرر للأجساد الساقطة تؤدي إلى قلق جماعي مع العجز عن إيجاد لغة قادرة على استيعاب هذه المفاجعة. تؤكد الرواية فكرة التحمل والاستمرار رغم الصدمة مع إعادة تشكيل الإدراك والهوية بعد مرور الزمن عنها إلا أنها تضل بشكل خفي.