Architected Enemies in Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*

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Abstract

As one of the prominent literary figures in the United States, Don DeLillo (2001) urged novelists to produce a counter-narrative in response to September 2001 attacks. *Falling Man* (2007) was published six years after the watershed event. This paper aims to investigate DeLillo's exemplification of Islam and Muslims in the light of post-9/11 discourse on Islam and Muslims. It also seeks to situate the novelist's depiction of Islam and Muslims within due geopolitical implications. By means of architectures of enmity, the other is deliberately crafted into a discriminated entity whose enemy-like attributes are highlighted and reiterated to serve geopolitical interests in the other and justify violence against him/her. DeLillo's architected enemies will be studied through three constructs, specifically, 'difference,' 'Islamic agency' and 'clashing Islam.' The first construct, 'difference,' inspects how contrast between Muslims and non-Muslims operates within the novel's architected enmity, while 'Islamic agency' focuses on the narrative's illustration of the associations between Islam, on the one hand, and Muslims' extremist acts and radical beliefs, on the other. In the third construct, 'clashing Islam,' the role of Islam as a conflicting ideology is to be elaborated on as epitomized in the novel. Through means of difference, Muslims are rendered more enemy-like and less humane in DeLillo's novel.

Islam is viewed as the most operative factor in motivating Muslims' antagonist views and deeds against non-Muslims.

Keywords: Don DeLillo; Islam; Muslims; architectures of enmity; terrorism

Introduction

In Don DeLillo's critically acclaimed novel, *Mao II* (1991), Bill Gray, the novelist character finds a connection, a "curious knot," between novelists' and terrorists' influence on culture where they both, terrorists and writers, have the ability "to alter the inner life of the culture," furthermore, "[t]hey [terrorists] make raids on human consciousness. What writers used to do before [they] were all incorporated" (DeLillo, 1991: 41). Though written ten years before the attacks, DeLillo, in *Mao II*, seems to have, "a sixth sense" (Conte, 2011: 566), the faculty to anticipate the vital impact of terrorism on human sentience and culture. Therefore, as terrorism has its "raid" on "human consciousness" in 9/11 (41), post-9/11 literature is anticipated to have its turn in the succeeding years.

Shortly after 9/11 attacks, DeLillo (2001) provokes authors to reclaim "the world narrative." He remarks that, "[t]oday, again, the world narrative belongs to terrorists [. . .] The narrative ends in the rubble and it is left to us to create the counternarrative." This way,

"changes were demanded rather than foretold," to cope with the disastrous event (Frank & Gruber, 2012: 1). Undoubtedly, after the attacks, American authors, who find themselves moved by the catastrophe, appropriate the tragedy in their own literary productions. Hence, post-9/11 literature is mainly defined by the terrorist attacks (Keniston & Quinn, 2008); literary works are incorporated in the political and cultural circumstances as well as authors' personal affiliations and perspectives on the events.

Post-9/11 literature is more of fantasy than realism, fragments than wholes, absence than existence and doubt than faith (Wagner-Martin, 2013). Therefore, surrealism is the sanctuary for novelists like Don DeLillo in *Falling Man* to approach the greater-than-reality event (Wagner-Martin, 2013). In *Falling Man*, 9/11 hijackers occupy a narrow narrative space that is ripped of social and political particularities (Mishra, 2007). Minimal attempt is made to analyze such a historical event as with its association with political whys and wherefores (Mishra, 2007). Instead, DeLillo chooses religion rather than politics to explain 9/11 terrorism and concludes with a conception about Muslims' self-sourced wrath (Mishra, 2007).

DeLillo's 9/11 novel comprises the attacks through the character of Hammad and other hijackers. Conte (2011: 571) states that DeLillo's interpretation of Hammad's recruitment in the 9/11 terrorist plan, his complying to a fundamental "Islamic doctrine of martyrdom," offers an introduction for Americans "who regard it as alien and aberrant psychology rather than as a tenet of belief." DeLillo sees 9/11 attacks "as part of an asymmetrical warfare of cultural ideologies" (Conte, 2011: 573), where DeLillo has already emphasized in his essay, *In the Ruins of the Future,* that, "[w]e are rich, privileged and strong, but they are willing to die. This is the edge they have, the fire of aggrieved belief" (DeLillo, 2001). Hence, DeLillo's characterization of Hammad in *Falling Man* is intended to emphasize his notion of binary opposition between 'Islamic' and western cultures.

DeLillo's characterization of Hammad, the 9/11 hijacker in *Falling Man*, makes overt the tensions between the West and a geo-political Islam (Aldalala'a, 2013). Hammad functions as a manifestation of a nihilistic Islam (Aldalala'a, 2013). Keith, the 9/11 survivor in the novel, and Hammad are represented with their articulated differences in culture and their appropriations and understandings of their roles in life (Aldalala'a, 2013). For DeLillo, Islamic countries are the source of the assaults on the West and Muslims are the long-lasting danger looming on Americans' lives (Aldalala'a, 2013). Nevertheless, Nirjharini Tripathy (2015) argues that DeLillo gives Hammad "humane qualities" and avails his readers "the unusual perspective" to have access to the mindset of a fundamentalist who is going to murder massive number of Americans (Tripathy, 2015: p.70). *Falling Man* provides more insight into the terrorist attacks and offers a twofold perception of both, the victims, represented in Keith, his wife and mother-in-law, and the perpetrators, represented in Hammad and Amir (Tripathy, 2015). There arises the need to situate the novelist's depiction of Islam and Muslims within due geopolitical implications.

Architectures of Enmity

In the aftermath of September 2001 catastrophe, Americans begin to make inquiries about what may lead people to mass-murder innocent civilians and die in that same massacre (Esposito & Mogahed, 2007). There is a fervent quest after an unidentified enemy that take the full responsibility. The emergence of the Muslim enemy only seems inevitable given the vast coverage of terrorism executed by Muslim extremists (Lean, 2017). Hence, an imaginative enemy is restructured to quench the thirst for a recognizable foe (Gregory, 2004; Khan & Ahmad 2014). The Muslim Other is accordingly reproduced through architectures of enmity (Gregory, 2004; Khan & Ahmad, 2014). "This is

about a quest to paralyze the rational impulses of the human mind and inject into it a numbing dose of horror so intensely addictive that the fearful cannot help but beg for more" (Lean, 2017: 18). Through concerted effort, fear is manufactured for the advancement of apocalyptic worldviews (Lean, 2017). Assuming that Muslims are all one way or another responsible for terrorism creates a world in which attacking Muslims is acceptable (Patel, 2018).

9/11 attacks are conceived in line with Huntington's hypothesis on the clash of civilization and that paves the way for the manufacturing of the Muslim other as the enemy of the West (Gregory, 2004; Said, 2004). Huntington (1993) claims that conflicts in the future would be culturally stimulated and that interaction with other civilizations would heighten feelings of difference inside every civilization. He further accentuates the centrality of religion in establishing cultural identity and that religious beliefs would be the most influential and differentiating factor. The 'us' versus 'them' binary opposition would play a significant role in defining their religious and ethnic identity (Huntington, 1993). Consequently, Muslims would be viewed in the aftermath of 9/11 as immoral and incapable of reaching an accommodation with the modern world (Gregory, 2004: 58). Gregory (2004) contends that the advanced West was set against a fixed Islam, the breeding-ground of barbarians. Such binary opposition between Islam and the West is meant to diabolize the Muslim other and present him/her as the enemy and perpetrator of 9/11 attacks (Gilroy, 2003; Gregory, 2004; Said, 2004; Khan & Ahmad, 2014).

In America's post-9/11 war on terror the Muslim enemy is depicted as the antithesis of all that is human and benign (Barnett, 2002). He/she is disfranchised his humane qualities in order to assert his enemy-like attributes and, consequently, declare war on that immoral enemy. To fight an enemy, people "envelop the effort in a mythology-often a "religious" mythology-that puts distance between [them]

and the enemy" (Armstrong, 2015: 11). They exaggerate the differences of that foe, be they religious, racial, or ideological (Armstrong, 2015). Accordingly, narratives are developed to convince the populace that the opponent is not certainly human but monstrous, "the antithesis of order and goodness" (11).

Orientalism is as a system of Western knowledge about the Orient and a style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient (Said, 2003). It plays an indispensable role in enhancing post-9/11 American architectures of enmity (Gregory, 2004). It serves as the establishment for presenting the Muslim other as America's enemy. Though more than three centuries old, Orientalism still seems to dominate Western perceptions of the Oriental (Little, 2002; Said, 2003; Gregory, 2004; Smith, 2006; Kumar, 2012). Today, Orientalism is reproduced with an amplified fear of the Orient and a definitive link with terrorism and Muslims (Kumar, 2012). Gregory (2004) adds, "Orientalism is abroad again, revivified and hideously emboldened - because the citationary structure that is authorized by these accretions is also in some substantial sense performative" (18). The Oriental is still shaped by Western perceptions of "the practices of those who draw upon it," and actively create its object, the Orient (18). Images of the Oriental are revitalized and invigorated after 9/11 to elucidate the enemy and make him more visible.

In this paper, the geopolitical implications of DeLillo's portrayal of Islam and Muslims in *Falling Man* will be examined within three constructs, specifically, 'difference,' 'Islamic agency' and 'clashing Islam,' which are derived from Said (2003) and Gregory's (2004) conceptualizing of Orientalism and architectures of enmity. 'Difference,' as a construct, illustrates how difference operates within the novel's portrayal of Muslims. 'Islamic agency' inspects the narrative's illustration of the associations between Islam, on the one hand, and Muslims' extremist acts and radical beliefs, on the other. In the third construct, 'clashing Islam,' the role

of Islam as a conflicting ideology is elaborated on as epitomized in the novel.

Architected Enemies

Falling Man recounts the story of Keith Neudecker, a 9/11 survivor, and his alienated wife, Lianne Glenn. The novel opens with the immediate aftermath of 9/11 terrorist attacks. Keith, covered with dust and blood, unconsciously leads his way from World Trade Centre, where he works, towards his long-abandoned wife's house. Though highly concerned with the traumatic repercussions of 9/11 on the lives of the main American characters, Keith and Lianne, the narrative is also about Hammad, one of 9/11 hijackers. The story of Hammad and the other 9/11 hijackers is incorporated in sporadic flashbacks throughout the novel. The association between Islam, Muslims and antagonism is illustrated and exemplified through assailants and the other main characters. This section sets out to examine the narrative's representation of Islam and Muslims within due context through three constructs, namely, 'difference,' 'Islamic agency' and 'clashing Islam.'

Difference

Over the course of the histories of Western countries, perceptions on non-westerners have been framed within an arch of prejudice and anti-Other discrimination (Lean, 2017). Muslims are perceived as different in terms of their values and culture among other things (Lean, 2017). In that respect, Falling Man is more of a contrastive illustration of those who celebrate life and those who renounce it, those who build and those who destroy. In one of his conversations with Lianne and her mother, Nina, Martin states that, "[o]ne side has the capital, the labor, the technology, the armies, the agencies, the cities, the laws, the police and the prisons. The other side has a few men willing to die" and Nina asserts that "God is great" (DeLillo, 2007: 46-47). Both Martin and Nina stress the differences between Muslims and Americans which are viewed as those between divergent civilizations. While Americans own the advanced means of life, Muslims possess the will to die as martyrs. Since martyrdom is basically a religious term, Muslims are whereby passively influenced by Islam's ideology of martyrdom.

American congressman Steve King insists that Muslims belong to "a different culture, a different civilization, and that culture and civilization [. . .] rejects the [American] culture" (Quoted in Lean, 2017: 9). Such difference is also highlighted by Nina, the retired Professor of art; "It's not the history of Western interference that pulls down these societies. It's *their own history*, their *mentality*. They *live* in a *closed world*, of *choice*, of necessity. They haven't advanced because they haven't wanted to or tried to" [Emphasis added] (DeLillo, 2007: 47). Accordingly, Muslim countries are pulled "down," that is, in a lower level when compared to the West. Under the influence of Islamic history along with Muslims' mentality, Muslims are backward. They live in regressive states that are isolated from the advanced Western world by their own choice since they do not have the will to change or advance. By diverse means, Nina relates Muslims' backward status to their own history and mentality, that is, to their dissimilarity to the West. Nina's views can be traced to Orientalism where Muslims are primarily viewed as backward and inferior because of Islamic history and their own mentality (Said, 2003).

Ignorance prevails Americans information of the religion of Islam (Barlas, 2003; Smith, 2013). Islam is mainly perceived as radically different from Christianity and Judaism or a deviation of them (Barlas, 2003). Even with regard to Gods, Americans and Muslims seem to have dissimilar Gods in DeLillo's novel. Days after 9/11 attacks, Keith visits Florence, another 9/11 survivor, and brings her a briefcase she has lost during 9/11 attacks. While discussing the horrible day of the attacks, Florence declares, "[t]hose men who did this thing [9/11 attacks]. *They*'re anti

everything *we stand for.* But they believe in God" [Emphasis added] (DeLillo, 2007: 90). America is basically attacked for its difference from others. The attacks are presented as being executed to undermine the very American ideals. Florence's "[b]ut" implies her different perception of God from that of Muslims' since her God could not accept these acts (90).

By dint of Americans' distorted knowledge of Islam, they become increasingly hostile to Islam over time (Smith, 2013). While Keith and Lianne are watching a replay of the 9/11 attacks, the narrator declares that, "[e]very helpless desperation set against the sky, human voices crying to God and how awful to imagine this, God's name on the tongues of killers and victims both" (DeLillo, 2007: 134). Though some Americans believe in God, their faith does not guide them to kill innocents, while Muslims murder guiltless Americans under the influence of Islam (DeLillo, 2007). Muslim's God is presented as that who preaches 'murder,' while Americans' is illustrated as that who preaches peace.

There is a widespread perception of Islam as an irrational set of beliefs in the West (Walbridge, 2011). DeLillo pinpoints the difference between Americans and Muslims in terms of critical thinking and rational reasoning. Under the sway of the Quran, Muslims are turned into blind followers. Among other American characters in the novel, Lianne tries to find answers to her numerous questions in the aftermath of 9/11 from the Quran. She recites,

the first line of the Koran in his office. "This Book is not to be doubted." She [Lianne] doubted things, she had her doubts. (DeLillo, 2007: 231).

In fact, the recited verse is not from the first line of the Quran, but through authorial manipulation, the verse is quoted to suggest the absence of critical thinking in Islam as well as its prohibited status. While Americans are taking their positive part in studying Islam to reach their own conclusions, the Quran asks people not to doubt it. Yet, Lianne's doubts confirm her right to doubt. Nevertheless, John Walbridge (2011) contends that rational methods have characterized Islamic law, philosophy, theology, and education since the medieval period. Through the lens of difference, Muslim characters are more likely to be perceived as ruthless enemies in DeLillo's novel.

Islamic Agency

In the American context, Islam is reduced to a set of beliefs that promote violence (Green, 2015). Such inaccurate knowledge draws on the same stereotypes that have existed since the Middle Ages (Green, 2015). Islam, as a religion, is employed in Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* to exemplify the Muslim characters in the context of 9/11 attacks. By demonstrating the influence of the Quran and other religious resources on Muslims, 9/11 terrorist assaults are expounded within a religious framework. While in Germany, the hijackers are reported to, "read the *sword verses* of the Koran", to stay "strong-willed" [Emphasis Added] (DeLillo, 2007: 83). The hijackers are narrated to read these "sword verses" to strengthen their will for their future plot (83). In point of fact, the meaning and intent of some Quranic verses, i.e. sword verses, is distorted by both polemical critics of Islam and Muslim terrorists alike (Esposito, 2015). These verses are cited to demonstrate that the religion of Islam is a violent religion (Esposito, 2015). Muslim extremists also use these verses to justify unconditional warfare against all non-Muslims (Esposito, 2015). The Quran, the holiest Islamic resource, is assigned a magnified degree of antipathy by indicating its influence on the aggressors.

Despite efforts to distinguish between terrorist acts of Muslims and the quintessential nature of Islam, these attempts are overwhelmed by a counternarrative that utilizes realistic fears and characterizes Islam as a ferocious threat to American values and the future of America itself (Lean, 2017). Islam's negative influence

on Muslims' deeds is discussed in a conversation between Lianne, the estranged wife of a 9/11 survivor, Nina, her mother and a retired professor of arts in addition to Martin, a leftist ex-terrorist and an art dealer from Germany, Nina insists that,

we can't forget God. They [Muslims] invoke God constantly. This is their oldest source, their oldest word. Yes, there's something else but it's not history or economics. It's what men feel. It's the thing that happens among men, the blood that happens when an idea begins to travel, whatever's behind it, whatever blind force or blunt force or violent need. How convenient it is to find a system of belief that justifies these feelings and these killings (DeLillo, 2007: 112).

As illustrated through the character of Nina, since Muslims "invoke" God persistently, their violent deeds are to be interpreted within His influence (112). Through its God, Islam is illustrated as the most operative influence on Muslims' acts of violence. Nina also tries to accentuate the absence of any economical or historical backgrounds behind these acts. Instead, she reiterates the Islamic ideological aspect for justifying the killing of innocent people. However, Martin retorts, "[b]ut the system doesn't justify this. Islam renounces this" (112). Although DeLillo presents an opposing view with regard to Islam's accountability for Muslims' violence, Martin's claims are not to be considered seriously since Martin, himself, is an ex-"terrorist" (195). An ex-terrorist is employed in the novel to challenge Nina's notion about Islam's agency, while simultaneously presenting the opposite view by a retired university professor, Nina, to debunk the very basis of such argument and to reemphasize Islam's responsibility. In addition, conveying positive views on Islam by an ex-terrorist also repudiates the status of those who present such views and refute their very argument. Thus, to assert Islam's agency behind Muslims' terrorist acts, opposite views of Islamic agency are presented through an untrustworthy character, Martin, the ex-terrorist, on the one hand. On the other

hand, the opposite view is presented by Nina, the rational retired arts professor.

When it comes to Islam and Muslims, terrorism pervades in media stories (Green, 2015). Such stories of Muslim terrorism still dominate news coverage and reinforce the connection between Islam and violence (Green, 2015). Al-Hajj, one of the five basic pillars in Islam, is introduced in association with martyrdom in *Falling Man*. The narrator relates how Amir, another 9/11 hijacker, performs al-Hajj, Muslims' pilgrimage to Mecca, "fulfilling the duty" (DeLillo, 2007: 175). Nevertheless, Hammad does not feel underprivileged because he has not performed that worship before since he and his colleagues are "soon to perform another kind of duty, unwritten, all of them, martyrs, together (175). Al-Hajj is related to martyrdom in order to accentuate its importance in Islam, and therefore, reemphasize Islam's agency with regard to Muslims' terrorist acts.

Even though terrorism is basically and inherently political, even when other religious motives are involved, some are determined to regard such terrible acts of violence as senseless (Armstrong, 2015). They find religion to be the vital cause (Armstrong, 2015). While in the United States, the hijackers are recounted to have the feeling of being together,

[. . .] in the midst of unbelief, in the bloodstream of the kufr. They felt things together [. . .] They felt the magnetic effect of plot. Plot drew them together more tightly than ever [. . .] There was the claim of fate, that they were born to this [9/11 attacks]. There was the claim of being chosen, out there, in the wind and sky of Islam. There was the statement that death made, the strongest claim of all, the highest jihad (DeLillo, 2007: 174).

As illustrated above, what links the hijackers together is not a positive human element but rather their plot to execute the attacks and "kill Americans" (171). Thus, while living in the United States between non-Muslims,

the hijackers feel more attached to each other and, concurrently, distanced from Americans. The hijackers' antagonism towards Americans is ascribed a religious standing. Accordingly, Americans are primarily viewed as non-Muslims. Moreover, to accentuate the religious-based incentive of the hijackers, they are exemplified as Islam's "chosen" ones through their act of "jihad" (174). As shown, under the influence of Islam, terrorists believe that they are born to implement such an errand as the highest degree of 'jihad.' They believe that they are chosen, and honored, to kill and destroy the lives of thousands of Americans. Though jihad, as an Islamic concept, is primarily concerned with one's struggle against internal and external limitations and temptations for individual and/or collective welfare (Warkum & SH, 2015). For Hammad and his friends, wish of death for Americans, in particular, and westerners, in general, links them together more than any aspect of life. Islam is whereby the source of Muslims' antagonism towards non-Muslims.

Some would argue that only religion can lead to man's executing mass murder of civilians (Dawkins, 2007), a claim Armstrong (2015) describes as a dangerous oversimplification which results from a misunderstanding of both religion and terrorism. As Hammad wonders if man is obliged "to kill himself to count for something, be someone, find the way?" (DeLillo, 2007: 175). Through this valid and reasonable question, the narrative problematizes the rationale behind suicide terrorism. Consequently, Amir, the clever and rigid terrorist who thinks "clearly, in straight lines, direct and systematic" (175), is evoked to illustrate the point. For Amir, "[t]he end of our life is *predetermined*. *We are carried* toward that day from the minute we are born. There is *no sacred law against* what we are going to do" [Emphasis added] (175). To dismiss any personal responsibility, fate is reclaimed. As shown in Amir's illustration, fate is not the positive factor that helps people to accept what is not in one's hands, it is rather the negative factor that disclaims the individual's agency and

responsibility. Amir adds that suicide terrorism "is not suicide in any meaning or interpretation of the word. It is only *something long written*. We are finding the way already chosen for us" [Emphasis added] (175). Muslims are disowned their free will under the sway of Islam. The Muslim becomes the passive obedient and submissive fellow who is predominantly led by his religion, Islam.

In the American Media, Muslim terrorists were frequently labelled as irritated extremists who are primarily motivated, if not solely, by religion (Green, 2015). Though religion is frequently implicated in terrorism, but it is much easier to make it a scapegoat rather than trying to see the political roots of the phenomenon (Armstrong, 2015). Hence, while in Germany with the other 9/11 hijackers, Hammad thinks that with the "[b]omb vest and black hood" they are different;

We are willing to die, they [non-Muslims] are not. This is our strength, to love death, to feel the claim of armed martyrdom.

[. . .] There were slabs of plastique high on his chest. This was not the method he and his brothers would one day employ but it was the same vision of heaven and hell, revenge and devastation.

They stood and listened to the recorded announcement, calling them to prayer (DeLillo, 2007: 178).

What Hammad considers to be Muslim advantage is their willingness to die and their love for death. Similar to those in Dubus' *The Garden of Last Days*, the hijackers are proud, even arrogant, for their inclination to die in an attempt to attain a better life in Paradise (Alosman et. Al, 2018). Contrast between Muslims and non-Muslims is further emphasized by Hammad's religiously-based perception of hell and heaven. He perceives death as Muslims' path to heaven as well as non-Muslims' path to hell. The words "revenge" and "devastation" are used to produce the total ultimate effect, to create the hateful

enemy who aims to devastate Americans' lives to attain heaven and take revenge on non-Muslims (DeLillo, 2007: 178). The narrator concludes his argument with the call for prayer to accentuate the religious background and the agency of Islam behind Hammad's antagonism.

In contemporary America, there is the often-unspoken conviction that Muslims as a whole must be presumed guilty, that they are implicitly complicit in the crimes committed by other Muslims (Green, 2018). Islam in DeLillo's novel is in a defensive position. It is more of a convicted ideology than a suspected one. Years after 9/11 terrorist attacks, the narrator recounts how hundreds of thousands march in the United States to protest "the war, the president, the policies" (DeLillo, 2007: 181). In DeLillo's counter-narrative, America in the aftermath of the attacks is the democratic country that is able overcome the trauma and begin to reclaim its normal democratic life. Though Lianne is not interested in the march, she comes to accompany her ten-year-old son; "[s]he was here for the kid [her son, Justin], to allow him to walk amid dissent, to see and feel the argument against war and misrule. She wanted, herself, to be away from it all" (181). However, what is deliberated in the narrative's illustration of the protest is not the war or its atrocities but, instead, "*Islam*" [Author's emphasis] (183). Justin receives a leaflet from a woman in black headscarf who "avoid[s] eye contact" (181). The leaflet seems to explain Islam and its pillars rather than anything related to war or politics. By avoiding eye contact with others, the Muslim woman is depicted as guilt-trodden, as if all Muslims oversee 9/11. Even though the march is mainly intended to protest against the war, what is illustrated in the march is Islam, its pillars and Muslims' felt guilt.

Terrorism executed in the name of Islam "in recent decades is a product of historical and political factors, not simply religion or a militant Islamic theology/ideology" (Esposito, 2015: 1079). Within the limited space assigned to the Muslim characters in *Falling Man*, special stress is laid on the role played by Islam, as a religion, in formulating and advancing Muslims' radical views. In the last pages of *Falling Man*, Hammad's last minutes are recounted, retrospectively, through an interior monologue. He recollects how the "pious ancestors" have "*named the way*" [Emphasis added] (DeLillo, 2007: 239). Then, he wonders "[h]ow could any death be better? Every sin of your life is forgiven in the seconds to come. There is nothing between you and eternal life in the seconds to come" (239). By identifying connections between Islamic history, "pious ancestors" (239), and 9/11 attacks, the narrative ignores the geopolitical factors of the attacks and assign them a space of invisibility, while, simultaneously, it assigns the religious historic ones a space of visibility. The novel concludes with Hammad's final thoughts, before the catastrophe, with an emphasis on the religious background of the attacks. Accordingly, Islam, as a religion, is at the helm of September 2001 attacks.

Clashing Islam

For years, the stories told about Muslims have formed ghost images of the evil enemy Other, the Muslim (Shaheen, 2017). These hateful imageries are dominated by narratives of terrorism, and fear of Arabs and Muslims have become entrenched in the minds of Americans and are indistinguishable from reality (Shaheen, 2017).

The Muslim bogy represents the latest part in America's long history of monster stories (Lean, 2017). In DeLillo's novel, 9/11 terrorist attacks are portrayed as an Islamic holy war on America, in particular, and on the West, in general, while geopolitical circumstances of the attacks are repudiated and disclaimed. Three days after 9/11 attacks, Lianne receives a postcard that is sent one or two weeks before 9/11. The card "was a reproduction of the cover of Shelley's poem in twelve cantos, first edition, called Revolt of Islam" (DeLillo, 2007: 8). Lianne ponders, "Revolt of Islam [. . .] It was a

matter of simple coincidence, or not so simple, that a card might arrive at this particular time bearing the title of that specific book" [Author's emphasis] (8). DeLillo employs the title of an Orientalist poem, Revolt of Islam by Percy Bysshe Shelley (1817) (Haddad, 2002), as a foreshadowing for 9/11 attacks. Utilizing such a title at the first pages of the novel implies the possibility or even the validity of the notion that the attacks are executed by means of an Islamic revolt. The card is sent from "Rome," the heart of Catholic Christianity, at least a week before 9/11 attacks which may allude to a Christian prophesy of the terrorist attacks. Islam is whereby accountable for 9/11. It is more of a clash hypothesis between 'Islam' and 'Christian America.'

Even though Al-Qaeda's rhetoric is predominantly religious, political objectives are certainly uppermost in their agenda (Armstrong, 2015). Nonetheless, these political claims dismissed in *Falling Man*. In a conversation with Martin and her daughter Lianne, Nina asserts, "[t]here are no goals they can hope to achieve. They're not liberating a people or casting out a dictator. Kill the innocent, only that" (DeLillo, 2007: 46). Nina renounces the validity and existence of any political claims by the terrorists. She presents the attacks as if they are only meant to celebrate the murder innocent Americans for killing's sake. By disclaiming terrorists' geopolitical claims, Nina accentuates America's innocence of any geopolitical involvement or engagement in the Middle East.

It is much easier to accuse Islam of violence committed by Muslims than considering the core political matters and grievances that echo in much of the Muslim countries (Esposito, 2017). 9/11 attacks in *Falling Man* are defined as an Islamic Holy War on America where religion, in this case Islam, is the vigorous perpetrator. In the same conversation with Martin and Lianne, Nina states, "[d]ead wars, holy wars. God could appear in the sky tomorrow [. . .] He's back in the desert now" (DeLillo, 2007: 46). By

illustrating the return of religious power in the "desert," Arabia, Islam is portrayed as playing an influential role in propagating an Islamic holy against the West (46). However, Martin, the leftist ex-terrorist, explains the situation as that, "[t]hey [Muslim terrorists] think the world is a disease. This world, this society, ours. A disease that's spreading" (46). Although Martin disclaims the agency of religion in 9/11 attacks, he still advocates the clashing nature of the encounter between the West and 'Islamic' terrorism, however, from a secular perspective. Martin also emphasizes the collective nature of the attacks, that the entire West is the target. The entire West is to be challenged and stopped. Islam, as the enemy of the West, is identified as hostile, violent, and aggressive (Green, 2015). Since Islam is a religion of conquest, there is an inevitable clash of civilizations between Islam and the West (Green, 2015).

DeLillo comprises the political, historical and economical in the same situation. As Nina deliberates, "God is great," Martin retorts, "[f] orget God. These are matters of history. This is politics and economics. All the things that shape lives, millions of people, dispossessed, their lives, their consciousness [. . .] They use the language of religion, okay, but this is not what drives them" (DeLillo, 2007: 47). Martin regards the attacks as being chiefly political and economic. Yet, being an ex-terrorist and an art dealer debunks Martin's rationale. Reiterating these views by the same person disclaims the validity of these interpretations. The opinions of these two characters, Nina and Martin, are to be related to their standings, the professor of arts versus an ex-terrorist.

The notion of the clash between Islam and the West reduces September attacks to something inherent and fixed within Islam (Green, 2015). Accordingly, the irrational anger of Muslims toward the West leads some of them to commit terrorist attacks (Green, 2015). The clash's explanation is further illustrated by one of 9/11 hijackers in the novel, Hammad. For him, "the West corrupt of mind and body, determined to

shiver Islam down to bread crumbs for birds" (DeLillo, 2007: 79). The hijackers, "knew that Islam was under attack" (83). Nina's previous argument on the clash's hypothesis is further echoed by the Muslim characters. The narrative reiterates 9/11 attacks as mainly motivated by Muslims' beliefs of Western conspiracy to extinguish Islam and end Muslims. An Islamic clash with the West is stressed with the purpose of disclaiming any geopolitical aspects of the attacks.

Under the influence of the lost-history-complex, Muslims try to find their way through current history, however, by means of terrorism as exemplified in 9/11 attacks. The hijackers in the novel feel estranged in the United States. "There was the feeling of lost history. They were too long in isolation. This is what they talked about, being crowded out by other cultures, other futures, the all-enfolding will of capital markets and foreign policies" (DeLillo, 2007: 80). Muslims, in the Orientalist tradition, live the complex of their lost history which makes them envious of other advanced civilizations (Said, 2003). Terrorist attacks are perceived as an attempt to regain Muslims' lost history through means of terrorism.

In post-9/11 America, the religion of Islam is often regarded as the source rather than the context for radicalism and terrorism (Esposito, 2017). There is a vacuum of ignorance in the West regarding the religion of Islam. However, many Americans have robust and negative views on Islam and Muslims (Green, 2015). What they know about Islam is molded principally through the media which dominates the narrative on Islam (Green, 2015). Muslim characters in DeLillo's novel share some of these shallow ideas with respect to Islam. Hammad wonders about other "lives," the suicide bomber would take "with him" (DeLillo, 2007: 176). Amir, another hijacker, is "impatient" to hear such a question as he thinks that these issues are discussed "in the *mosque* and in the flat" [Emphasis added] (176).

Amir said simply there are no others. The others exist only to the degree that they fill the role we have designed for them. This is their function as others. Those who will die have no claim to their lives outside the useful fact of their dying (176).

Hammad is "impressed" by Amir's argument (176); "It sounded like philosophy" (176). Amir refutes any significance of the lives of non-Muslims. He further rejects the validity of non-Muslims' claims for their own lives. They have no significance at all for Muslims. By means of assigning Amir's extremely radical perception of non-Muslims a highlighted visible space, his enmity is more exposed. The Muslim characters are otherized by Amir's otherizing argument. The geopolitical backgrounds of 9/11 attacks are assigned a space of invisibility by means of magnifying the characters' radical believes within a religious context, the mosque. The Muslim characters in *Falling Man* seem to have robust Islamic believes that guide them to commit atrocities toward innocent non-Muslims. Islam is perceived as the most influential actor on the mind-set of these radicals and the perpetrator of their antagonist views on the West.

Conclusion

Though the Muslim other is assigned little narrative space in *Falling Man*, it is evident that Islamic antagonism is a major component in DeLillo's portrayal of the Muslim characters and a cornerstone in his architectures of enmity. Through means of difference, Muslims are rendered more enemy-like and less humane. Islam is viewed as the most operative factor in motivating Muslims' antagonist views and deeds against non-Muslims. Islam is made answerable for an 'ongoing' clash between 'Muslim' and Western countries as well. The 9/11 attacks are elucidated within the clash between Islam and the West's outline.

This paper has implications to diverse cultural

manifestations of the other. They are the products of specific historical and political moments. Since these representations are immersed in specific geopolitical circumstances, they are to be inspected within these settings to better understand them and comprehend their historical backgrounds.

Amid a growing populist discourse in the United States and Europe, negative views on Islam and Muslims pervade the scene. The architectures of enmity disclose the facets of Western prejudices. Western cultural works are abundant with representations of both Islam and Muslims. Hence, more serious attempts to address these representations and to challenge and deconstruct their argument are crucial for a less biased views on Islam and Muslims. Situating these inaccuracies, either they are literary or non-literary, within their geopolitical contexts provides a more objective understanding of such works.

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