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HEALING INVISIBLE WOUNDS: DON DELILLO'S *FALLING MAN* AND THE RECOVERY OF TRAUMA

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Abstract

9/11 has not only caused dramatic, social, and political changes in the US history but also created a literature in which many authors seek to understand the aftermath of the attacks on the World Trade Center. Literature about 9/11 focuses particularly on how white or immigrant male masculinity is shaken due to trauma as it fails to present the intricate relationship between traumatized woman and recovery. Furthermore, literary criticism on 9/11 narratives centered on the analysis of the traumatic experiences of individuals does not take the discussion further by examining the recovery process of trauma. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine Don DeLillo's Falling Man and the literary representation of the traumatized woman's recovery, a topic mostly neglected within the scholarship of 9/11 novels. Confronting trauma creates a psychological and emotional catharsis which is a vital process leading to healing and rejuvenation as well as coming into terms with the self, memory, past, and society. Through the lenses of contemporary literary trauma theory and contemporary trauma stress studies, this paper examines traumatized woman's recovery and healing to restructure, reorient, and rebuild self and life aftermath of 9/11 and its traumatic effects.

Keywords: *9/11, Recovery of trauma, Woman, Contemporary literary trauma theory, Falling Man.*

GÖRÜNMEZ YARALARI İYİLEŞTİRMEK: DON DELİLLO'NUN *FALLING MAN* ADLI ROMANI VE TRAVMANIN İYİLEŞMESİ

Öz

11 Eylül saldırıları Amerika tarihinde sadece çarpıcı sosyal ve siyasi değişiklere sebep olmamış, aynı zamanda yazarların Dünya Ticaret Merkezine yapılan saldırılar sonrasını anlamaya çalıştıkları bir edebiyat meydana getirmiştir. 11 Eylül edebiyatı, özellikle beyaz veya göçmen erkeklik olgusunun travma sonucu nasıl sarsıldığı üzerine

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odaklandığı için travma yaşamış kadın ve iyileşme arasındaki karmaşık ilişkiyi yansıtmakta yetersiz kalmıştır. Ayrıca, 11 Eylül metinleri hakkında yazılan çalışmalar iyileşme sürecini incelemeden sadece bireylerin travma deneyimleri üzerine yoğunlaşmaktadır. Dolayısı ile bu çalışmanın amacı, Don DeLillo'nun Falling Man adlı romanında tasvir edilen travma yaşamış kadının iyileşme sürecinin edebi yansımasını incelemektir. Çalışma, iyileşme ve yenilenmenin sebebinin, travma ile yüzleşme olduğunu savunur. Çünkü hayati bir süreç olan psikolojik ve duygusal boşalma, bireyin geçmişi, hafızayı, öz benliği ve toplumu kabullenmesi ile mümkündür. Çağdaş edebi travma teorisi ve çağdaş travma stres çalışmaları ışığında bu makale, 11 Eylül ve onun etkileri sonucu travma geçirmiş kadının iyileşme süreci ile kendini ve hayatı yeniden inşa etmesini incelemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *11 Eylül, Travmanın iyileşmesi, Kadın, Çağdaş edebi travma teorisi, Falling Man.*

INTRODUCTION

9/11 has not only caused dramatic, social, and political changes in the US history but also created a literature in which many authors seek to understand the aftermath of the attacks on the World Trade Center. According to Richard Gray, "The response of American writers to the crisis of 9/11 was that it reignited their interest in a paradox that lies at the heart of writing at least since the time of Romanticism: the speaking of silence, the search for verbal forms that reach beyond the condition of words, the telling of a tale that cannot yet must be told" (Gray, 2011, p. 14). The literary struggle and challenge of authors to portray the overwhelming situation is described by Jacques Derrida who states, "[w]hat is terrible about 'September 11,' what remains 'infinite' in this wound is that we do not know how to describe, identify, and even name it" (qtd. in Versluys, 2009, p. 987). However, the initial shock of indescribable experience was replaced by non-fictional and fictional writings that "allow for nuanced engagements with the subject of trauma, which is often personalized and contextualized, fictionalized and historicized, as well as psychologized and metaphorized at the same time" (Schönfelder, 2013, p. 29). Telling a tale initiates the negotiation between the paradox of untouchable, silent, and vulnerable as Kristiaan Versluys claims, "Expression counters obsession" and "language is the first healer" (Versluys, 2009, p. 14). Highlighting the role of literature as a way of expression, Irene Visser writes, "It is the domain of literature to present, re-present, and dramatize trauma in its many manifestations without making claims to precise definitions or complete exactitude" (Visser, 2015, p. 255). The function of literature is to "explain that event, extol, ethicize it, excuse it, repudiate it, name it as a significant marker of collective life-experience, as a model for future behavior" (Turner, 1987, p. 33). Expressing a traumatic catastrophe through writing is significant because "Transcending the laws of the empirical and factual and exploring the realm of the imaginary and textual, literature has the potential to elucidate the human psyche from different perspectives" (Schönfelder, 2013, p. 86). Furthermore, writing enables authors to break the silence which overwhelms the whole society and traumatized individuals.

Literature about 9/11 focuses particularly on how white or immigrant male masculinity is shaken due to trauma they go through while ignoring female characters, depicted as either supporters or passive observers of their husbands or lovers. The ethnic diversity of male characters in 9/11 novels such as Pakistani Changez in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), Dutch Hans in *Netherland* (2008), and American Keith in *Falling Man* (2007) shows how the concept of 9/11 and trauma afterwards are mostly associated with male protagonists. A number of 9/11 novels, including *Falling Man* are written by white American writers, and the main concern of the novels are mostly masculine anxiety and trauma as they fail to present the intricate relationship between traumatized woman and recovery. Furthermore, literary criticism on 9/11 narratives centered on the analysis of the traumatic experiences of individuals does not take the discussion further by examining the recovery process of trauma. Therefore, this study focuses on Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* and the literary representation of the traumatized woman's recovery, a topic mostly neglected by scholars. I argue that confronting trauma creates a psychological and emotional catharsis which is a vital process, leading to healing and rejuvenation as well as coming into terms with the self, memory, past, and society. Through the lenses of contemporary literary trauma theory and contemporary trauma stress studies, this paper examines traumatized woman's recovery and healing to restructure, reorient, and rebuild self and life aftermath of 9/11 and its traumatic effects.

It is crucial to conceptualize trauma before analyzing it within contemporary literary trauma theory. Trauma in English, German, and Greek refers to "an injury inflicted on a body" (Caruth, 1996, p. 3). Sigmund Freud expands its definition in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* by describing it as a wound not only on the body but in the mind (Freud, 1961, p. 23). Contrary to the wound of the body which is healable and simple, the wound of the mind is buried in consciousness until it comes out through the nightmares and flashbacks of the survivors. It is not known at first and haunts the survivor later. American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* defines trauma as follows: "The person experienced, witnessed or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others; [and] the person's response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror" (qtd. in Eisen, 2003, p. 512). Examining the reoccurrence and repetition of the traumatic event from a psychological perspective, Dominik LaCapra states, "In acting out, tenses implode, and it is as if one were back there in the past reliving the traumatic scene" (LaCapra, 2001, p. 21). Returning to the traumatic scene is more than a pathological issue. It is an endless impact of the shock of a violent event in life because trauma "stands for destruction, excess, the ravaging of those categories which ground our selves and experiences" (Gross & Snyder-Körber, 2010, p. 378). In terms of responding to trauma, "we bear witness to the overwhelming" and "strive to overcome its effects. In other words, a drive to recovery drives trauma discourse" (Gross & Snyder-Körber, 2010, p. 378).

However, incomprehensibility is the primary challenge regarding trauma and its impact later in life.

In the early scholarship on literary trauma, Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experince: Trauma, Narrative, and History* draws a classic trauma model in terminology of Freud and Lacan. Caruth writes, "trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature—the way it is precisely *not known* in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on" (Caruth, 1996, p. 4). She emphasizes the psychological dimensions of trauma as a haunting silent ghost and restricts the variability of trauma, diverse values, and social specificity. Suggesting that trauma cannot be fully understood or verbalized, Caruth notes that "the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it" (Caruth, 1996, p. 92). This limited approach to trauma, however, is criticized by contemporary critics because it "removes agency from the survivor by disregarding a survivor's knowledge of the experience and the self, which restricts trauma's variability and ignores the diverse values that change over time" (Balaev, 2014, p. 6). This earlier approach also defines traumatic experience as "repetitious, timeless, and unspeakable, yet, it is also a literal, contagious, and mummified" (Balaev, 2008, p. 151). The "antinarrative theorizations of trauma tend to be 'anti-therapeutic'" (Schönfelder, 2013, p. 32) while verbalizing and communicating trauma through a narrative may decrease the traumatic recall. Anti-narrative stance of Caruth and early literary trauma studies towards recovery does not allow language to be employed for healing.

Expanding the limitations of the classic model that considered trauma as "an unpresentable event," pluralistic approach suggests that language does not fail to represent trauma and highlights "the ranging values and representations of trauma in literature and society" (Balaev, 2014, p. 6). Michelle Balaev argues that by focusing on "Rhetorical, semiotic, and social implications of trauma" in literary trauma theory, contemporary criticism moves away from the early psychoanalytic research and develops neoLacanian and neoFreudian approaches. The new approach underlines the social and cultural context of the traumatic experience within an interdisciplinary framework and diverse methodologies (Balaev, 2014, p. 3). Norman Saad Nikro remarks, "As a research paradigm, trauma cannot be stabilized according to a predetermined field of theory, but is both embedded in and traverses relational accommodations between disciplines, geographies, histories, implicating flows of material and imaginary resources and the institutions directing their distribution and access" (Nikro, 2014, p. 1). Rhetorical components of trauma are studied within psychoanalytic, semiotic, and postcolonial theories or cultural studies. The pluralistic approach allows the critics to study the function of trauma in literature by juxtaposing the relationship between language, psyche, and behavior rather than focusing on the classical definitions of trauma as a universal pathological disorder or a clinical case. Contrary to the classic Eurocentric, monolithic, and event-based conception of trauma and its deconstructionist and

psychoanalytical orientations, the diversified contemporary concept of trauma in literature emphasizes the multidimensionality of experiences in personal and public spaces and connects self, memory, and society. By moving away from its orientation on Freudian psychoanalysis, the contemporary literary trauma theory allows us to study the function of trauma represented in literary works within a larger conceptual framework that opens a range of alternative models and representational possibilities without considering it as a pathological dislocation and silence. This interdisciplinary approach allows us to redefine trauma as a multidimensional human experience reconciling literary and theoretical trajectories.

FROM MELANCHOLY AND STASIS TO HEALING AND SELF-GROWTH

Don DeLillo's initial anger in his essay, "In the Ruins of the Future" where he writes, "the power of American culture to penetrate every wall, home, life and mind that drew the terrorists fury" (2001, par. 2), transforms into mourning and melancholy in *Falling Man,* concerning masculinity, studied by various scholars. Mary J. Parish, for instance, examines the failure of masculinity "as a counternarrative to terrorism" in the narrative (Parish, 2012, p. 185). Similarly, Noemi Abe argues that the novel is a representation of "sentimental heroic male narrative" whose melancholic tone "prolonged male adolescence of the American hero" (Abe, 2011, p. 67). Taking a different approach, Hamza Karam Ally analyzes the symbolic images and representations in the novel (Ally, 2019, p. 352) while Hamilton Carroll relevantly discusses the relationship between 9/11 and its representation (Carroll, 2013, p. 108). Trauma and melancholy in the novel are discussed by Sonia Baelo-Allué who argues that *Falling Man* is a "psychic—rather than cultural—trauma novel" and examines the shortcoming of psychic trauma novels, representing the enormity of 9/11 (Baelo-Allué, 2012, p. 63). The scholarship about *Falling Man*—the name of the novel too suggests—examines particularly the male reaction to 9/11. My focus in this paper, however, is female reaction to 9/11 and its traumatic aftermath.

In the record of 9/11, the "choiceless choice," a term used by Lawrence Langer to describe the position of victims, "is embodied in an affectively and ethically charged visual icon: the falling man" (Langer, 1982, p. 375). Richard Drew took the photo of a falling man who jumped from the Twin Towers instead of dying within them, and this image was briefly circulated before it turned to a divisive and controversial debate about morality. The falling figures are part of the visual memory of 9/11 and "the image of the falling figure has defined the limits of post-9/11 remembrance" (Gross & Snyder-Körber, 2010, p. 376). Discussing the impact of this image, Joel Eisen states:

> *We posit that someone who personally watched a body falling from a burning tower must be more at risk for symptoms of post-traumatic stress*

> *than someone who watched that same event on television, but beyond such comparison it gets difficult to say who is affected and by how much. The element of surprise inherent in terrorist attacks could increase the likelihood that even those watching on television were seriously affected.* (Eisen, 2003, p. 525)

Stressing the collective dimensions of trauma, E. Ann Kaplan claims "the reader or viewer of stories or films about traumatic situations may be constituted through vicarious or secondary trauma" (Kaplan, 2005, 39). Furthermore, Kaplan notes that "most people encounter trauma through the media, which is why focusing on so-called mediatized trauma is important" (Kaplan, 2005, p. 2). Although the numbers are unreliable, "According to published reports, about 10% of those in the cities that were attacked will develop PTSD after 9/11. The few empirical studies completed in the past year tend to show that adults and children in New York and Washington are still affected" (Eisen, 2003, p. 522). Secondary trauma or vicarious trauma is "postulated to be the product of interactions between exposure to traumatic stimuli and each individual's existing cognitive schemas, it has been suggested that the experience of vicarious trauma is unique for each individual" (Kadambi & Ennis, 2004, p. 4). Kaplan emphasizes "the power of visual media to trigger symptoms of vicarious trauma" (Kaplan, 2005, p. 89). Individuals who watch the attacks on TV and engage emphatically with trauma survivors are considered as potential sufferers from vicarious trauma like Lianne and her son, Justine, depicted in *Falling Man*.

Retrieving the notoriously disturbing image of falling man, Don DeLillo names his novel *Falling Man*, a reference to the psychological and emotional "falling" of the survivor Keith Neudecker; however, besides Keith, Lianne Glenn experiences "vicarious" and "mediatized" trauma. Lianne watches the collapse of the towers on TV:

> *[e]very time she saw a videotape of the planes she moved a finger toward the power button on the remote. Then she kept on watching. The second plane coming out of that ice blue sky, this was the footage that entered the body, that seemed to run beneath her skin, the fleeting sprint that carried lives and histories, theirs and hers, everyone's into some other distance, out beyond the towers.* (DeLillo, 2007, p. 35).

Lianne witnesses 9/11 through televisual images which become an embodied experience and account for the memories of her. She watches the footage over and over again—though she prevents Justine to watch the news—and experiences it in her body. The destructive images not only possess her psyche but also symbolically damage her body. Engraved in the memory, this experience disrupts the concept of time and space of Lianne, haunted with the disruptive memory as a source of trauma. Her individual experience becomes a collective shared experience through broadcasting. Beyond the individualistic level of trauma, the passage accentuates how the communal bonds are ruptured due to a mass-scale catastrophe, implying

the account of a collective/national trauma. Exposed to the televised graphic images of the attacks, Lianne is vicariously traumatized. Although Lianne is a "fictional figure [who] magnifies a historical event in which thousands or millions of people have suffered a similar violence" (Balaev, 2008, p. 155), the micro-level literary representation of trauma allows the intersection of private and public, and personal and political archetypes that carry trauma beyond a merely pathological and neurobiological paradigm.

Aftermath of the catastrophic event, individuals search ways of coming to terms with the traumatic situation on personal, communal, and intellectual levels. Taking action to seek treatment empowers the traumatized individual, and the empowerment of her and repairing the self are some of the key stages for recovery. At the essence of recovery is "to restore power and control to the survivor" and "The recovery process is all about the development of a new self, different in fundamental ways from the old" (Eisen, 2003, pp. 518, 533). The process of recovery, however, is not linear, and "can occur sporadically and over a lengthy period" (Eisen, 2003, p. 520). Despite the elements of the past that haunt the present, change is essential and necessary for the "Survivors [who] have come to appreciate capabilities they developed during the process (for example, mental skills that allowed for better processing of unpleasant memories) and features of their renewed connections with society (such as new support network" (Eisen, 2003, p. 533). The meaning-making process "create[s] an impetus for developing deeper relationships, increased personal strength, and changed priorities" (Tresis, 2013, p. 8). Self-integration is one of the rudiments of the healing process and "Recovery involves restoration of the ability consciously to claim one's whole self (world)" (Krystal, 1988, p. 87). According to Judith Herman, recovery has three stages: "establishment of safety," "remembrance and mourning," and "reconnection with ordinary life" (Herman, 1992, p. 155). Changing the world around them to secure a safe environment, adapting a new personal agenda, confronting with the past and memories, and developing interpersonal relationship with others are crucial for the recovery of the traumatized individuals like Lianne, depicted in the narrative.

As the first step of recovery, Lianne establishes physical and emotional safety for both herself and her divided family through reconciliation with her estranged husband, Keith. Although including Keith, who walks away from the collapsed towers, representing Western materialism and multinational consumerist capitalism, in her life initially becomes a challenge, Lianne concludes the necessity of being together by "keep[ing] the family going" three of them, "long term under the same roof, not every day of the year or every month but with the idea that we're permanent" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 214). Lianne emphasizes the importance of support between couples in hard times saying, "times like these, the family is necessary" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 214). The intimate relationship between Lianne and Keith in the bedroom demonstrates that Lianne celebrates Keith's existence. They share the

same bed "because she could not tell him to use the sofa and because she liked having him here next to her" and "liked the spaces he made" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 18). Without voicing their feelings and thoughts, both of them are willing to go through the critical process together. Lianne "wanted him here, nearby, but felt no edge of self-contradiction or self-denial" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 35). She knows "the matter needed time" and "wanted contact so did he" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 35). Lianne "listened to what he said and let him know she was listening mind and body, because listening is what would save them this time, keep them from falling into distortion and rancor" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 104). The desire for building a deeper relationship with her ex-husband is a significant process of healing. Despite her fears, Lianne's anxiety and safety concerns gradually vanish as she witnesses how Keith involves in their lives. Lianne is surprised "see[ing] a man she'd never known before" because Keith engages with his son by "spend[ing] time with Justin, taking him to school and picking him up, advising on homework.… tak[ing] the kid to the park to play catch" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 59). The unexpected unity after the attacks brings the family closer and provides a safe zone for the wounded individuals. Keith embraces a new role as a husband and father which he had neglected in his marriage. The therapeutic alliance between Lianne and Keith is a way of coping with anxiety and the effects of trauma. Restoring power and control over her life through repairing interpersonal relations within the nuclear family structure plays a therapeutic role in Lianne's life. Establishing a safe environment becomes a shelter and refuge for the survivor who seeks the support of the family members. Such environment fosters recovery by establishing a sense of safety.

To maintain the new established safe environment, Lianne and Keith collaborate to help Justin understand the new micro and macro changes at home and in the country. They cooperate to convince Justin about the collapse of the towers by "talk[ing] to him" and "try[ing] to make gentle sense" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 102). Justin tries to make sense out of 9/11 with a group of children and ironically shares his parents' paranoia by watching the skyline for the return of "Bill Lawton," Americanized name of "Bin Laden" he misheard (DeLillo, 2007, p. 73). Henry Krystal claims that "Identification with the parents and imitation of their way of dealing with their emotions become the most important determinants of the patterns the child will develop for himself" (Krystal, 1988, p. 32). Confronting with a traumatic experience by himself is a self-shooting method of Justin who identifies with his parents' emotions. On his visits to siblings, his playmates in the neighborhood, Justin takes binoculars which "are part of the whole hush-hush syndrome these kids are engulfed in" (DeLillo, 2007, 37). Together they either search the sky to see more planes or "[are] waiting for it to happen again" since Justin thinks that the planes hit the towers, but they did not collapse. Worried due to children's disturbing imagination, Lianne asks the kids "to stop searching the skies" and "to stop talking about the man," Bin Laden (DeLillo, 2007, 153). Symbolization and fantasy-making through playing is a creative verbalization and soothing activity to deal with the conflict for the children although their

imaginative response concerns the parents, particularly Lianne. Through parental supervision and intervention, Lianne undertakes the responsibility of establishing safety not only for herself but also for Justin.

Lianne internalizes the task of securing a safe environment by making major changes in her life and displaying aggression to likely threads that disrupt her sense of safety and new order in both the domestic and public spheres. One of the changes is jettisoning conflicts with Keith and "everyday friction" because they "don't need this anymore" and "can live without it" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 75). Keith agrees, saying, "We're ready to sink into our little lives" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 75). Besides the therapeutic alliance and new domestic rule, they have a "foreign" policy about potential intruders like Lianne's Greek neighbor Elena, who listens to music defined as "Islamic" and later "noise" by Lianne. However, "[T]he music wasn't Greek. She was hearing another set of traditions, Middle Eastern, North African, Bedouin songs perhaps or Sufi dances, music located in Islamic tradition" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 67). Lianne associates unfamiliar music with terror(ists) and conservatively complains about the music, but Keith "kicked the door when they were walking past," and then "they looked at each other and laughed, hard and loud, husband and wife, walking down the stairs" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 96). She gets aggressive, yet Keith confronts "the other," or "a potential terrorist," indicating how Keith shares Lianne's ethnic and racial stereotypical thoughts and negative perception about the East and eastern. The intolerant reaction of Lianne and Keith ironically mirrors to the growing xenophobic and Islamophobic discourse in the US aftermath of the attacks. However, she does not have the same reaction to her mother's partner, Martin Ridnour (née Ernst Hechinger), a former political radical and shady art dealer, according to whom the towers present "fantasies of wealth and power that would one day become fantasies of destruction" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 116). Lianne thinks, "Maybe he was a terrorist but he was one of ours" and "the thought chilled her, shamed her—one of ours, which meant godless, Western, white" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 195). Lianne's superficial classification of who is a terrorist and who is not is a reflection of anxiety and paranoia of the American nation. Hate and anger suppressed due to traumatic event are defined as forms of pain, and "its appearance can be marked as soon as safety is re-established" (Krystal, 1988, p. 165). Externalization of aggression and frustration to a constructed potential danger shows Lianne's repressed traumatic feelings. Getting out her anger, Lianne directs her vindictive rage to a neighbor she identifies with the attackers. By doing so, she hopes to protect her safety against possible intrusions.

Besides establishing self-protection and safety, Lianne experiences the second stage of the recovery process, the remembrance and mourning, through the encounters of a performance artist and contemplations over her father's death. Herman describes the transitions between stages as "gradual, occurring in fits and starts" (Herman, 1992, p. 174). The traumatized person gains some sort of control

over her life and little by little, she transitions to the next stage of recovery by facing the past. It is a work of uncovering the horrors of the past and demands the courage of the traumatized individual who should reconstruct the traumatic imagery. Lianne faces the past through the reenactment of the "falling man," a performance artist whose "falls were headfirst, none announced in advance" and they were "not designed to be recorded by a photographer" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 220). She sees "A man was dangling there, above the street, upside down. He wore a business suit, one leg bent, arms at his sides. A safety harness was barely visible, emerging from his trousers at the straightened leg and fastened to the decorative rail of the viaduct" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 33). The performance artist "brought it back, of course, those stark moments in the burning towers when people fell or were forced to jump" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 33). On the other hand, his performance functions like an exposure therapy which "is based on the idea that (repeated) confrontation with the trauma is vital to recovery" (Schönfelder, 2013, p. 82). Lianne questions the performance artist, Falling Man's provocative acts that recall the traumatic experience. However, emphasizing the importance of visual stimuli, LaCapra states:

> *Trauma brings about a dissociation of affect and representation: one disorientingly feels what one cannot represent; one numbingly represents what one cannot feel. Working through trauma involves the effort to articulate or rearticulate affect and representation in a manner that may never transcend, but may to some viable extent counteract, a reenactment, or acting out, of that disabling association*. (LaCapra, 2001, p. 42)

Lianne watches the reenactment of one of the controversial images of 9/11, and her experience is revisited, revised, and rearranged. This performance is the representation of a traumatic experience because:

> *There were people shouting up at him, outraged at the spectacle, the puppetry of human desperation, a body's last feet breath and what it held. It held the gaze of the world, she thought. There was the awful openness of it, something we'd not seen, the single falling figure that trails a collective dread, body come down among us all. And now, she thought, this little theater piece, disturbing enough to stop the traffic and send her back into the terminal*. (DeLillo, 2007, p. 33)

This art performance symbolizes the unnamed falling bodies. With people on the street, Lianne watches how the Falling Man jumps as if watching the attacks and collapse of towers on TV. The reenactment creates a sense of connection and solidarity, and like her, another man tries to "see it correctly, [and] find a crack in the world where it might fit" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 168). The performance takes the people to the day of the attacks and brings back the memories:

> *But the fall was not the worst of it. The jolting end of the fall left him upside down, secured to the harness, twenty feet above the pavement. The jolt, the*

> *sort of midair impact and bounce, the recoil, and now the stillness, arms at his sides, one leg bent at the knee. There was something awful about the stylized pose, body and limbs, his signature stroke.* (DeLillo, 2007, p. 168)

As a response to art, Lianne is disturbed and traumatized and leaves the scene due to stress of fear and helplessness. Lianne's experience during the performance functions as exposure therapy which includes "a return to the site of trauma or exposure to closely related situations and objects" (Schönfelder, 2013, p. 82). Martin Randall states that "The performance of the 'Falling Man' causes Lianne and the other witnesses to relive the trauma of the attacks" because "His 'art' re-enacts the cognitive and ontological shock of seeing real events that cannot successfully be recalibrated back into language" (Randall, 2011, p. 126). Through visual confrontation, Lianne re-experiences the past traumatic event in the present. Janiak's performance has endless interpretations, one of which is how he creates a visual language and medium to articulate trauma. Lianne later learns that Janiak naturally dies due to heart ailment through an obituary in the newspaper while trying to make sense of the symbols and signs she sees. The provocative re-enactment and shocking art of Falling Man disrupts the everyday routine, ordinary perceptions, and the conventional thought system. It triggers the images of people who jumped from the Towers, preserved in Lianne's psyche. People who are watching the performances are compelled to make a meaning and interpretations with the power and words of art. The aesthetic vocabulary and style open new ways of thought in the observers' minds about the traumatic event.

As the last stage, reconnection with ordinary life helps Lianne recover from the effects of trauma. Lianne goes to church to find solace from her paranoia and leads a writing group of Alzheimer patients who create narratives to recover their memories while Keith begins physical therapy and plays poker. These repeated activities "provide Keith and Lianne with some structure in their chaotic thoughts" (Baelo-Allué, 2012, p. 71). The connection between the patients and Lianne is her father, Jack Glenn, who was in in the early staged of Alzheimer and committed suicide because he "did not want to submit to the long course of senile dementia" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 40). Through storyline sessions in East Harlem in a community center, Lianne and the members in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease "handed out lined pads and ballpoint pens and suggested a topic they might write about or asked them to choose one" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 29).

> *They wrote for roughly twenty minutes and then each, in turn, read aloud what he or she had written. Sometimes it scared her, the first signs of halting response, the losses and failings, the grim prefigurings that issued now and then from a mind beginning to slide away from the adhesive friction that makes an individual possible. It was in the language, the inverted letters, the lost word at the end of a struggling sentence. It was in the handwriting that might melt into runoff. But there were a thousand high times the members experienced, given a chance to encounter the crossing points of insight and*

> *memory that the act of writing allows. They laughed loud and often. They worked into themselves, finding narratives that rolled and tumbled, and how natural it seemed to do this, tell stories about themselves*. (DeLillo, 2007, p. 30)

The gathering of the members functions like a "flooding session," a behavioral therapy where the patient is exposed to relieve her experience through written scripts (Herman, 1992, p. 182). The extensive details of the traumatic experience in the written testimonies function as a confession. In addition, "Writing can help trauma victims regain a sense of control over their lives" (Schönfelder, 2013, p. 84). During these sessions, "Members wrote about hard times, happy memories, daughters becoming mothers (DeLillo, 2007, p. 31). Lianne asks them to write about the attacks. The patients "wrote about the planes. They wrote about where they were when it happened. They wrote about people they knew who were in the towers, or nearby, and they wrote about God" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 60). Writing the traumatic experience is "not merely a documentation of this process, but a potential means of personal recovery" (Gross & Snyder-Körber, 2010, p. 378). As a form of expression, writing is an aesthetic response to trauma. After writing, they "read what they'd written, each in turn, and there were remarks and then exchanges and then monologues" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 61). Emphasizing the importance of narrative, Christa Schönfelder claims, "Trauma memory needs to be transformed into narrative memory so that the specters of the past can be tamed and become part of the individual's life-story" (Schönfelder, 2013, p. 83). Lianne encourages them to speak and argue. Each story may revoke remembrance and mourning in listeners; however, she "wanted to hear everything, the things everybody said, ordinary things, and the naked statements of belief, and the depth of feeling, the passion that saturated the room" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 61). Feeling a part of the patients' community, Lianne concludes that "She needed these people. It was possible that the group meant more to her than it did to the members. There was something precious here, something that seeps and bleeds. These people were the living breath of the thing that killed her father" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 62). Meetings represent the interpersonal and social dimensions of her recovery. Reconstruction of a trauma narrative is a way of uncovering the memories and desensitization process within the context of the relational aspect of trauma while the collaboration with members fosters the sense of safety and provides a relieving experience.

Lianne faces her trauma and works through it by helping others write their trauma stories. Victims of trauma suffer to verbalize their feelings and experience although telling the unspeakable is the prerequisite for the healing of the sufferer. Schönfelder states, "[T]he medium of writing allows for the creation of more concretely visible and tangible forms of narrative than oral speech" (Schönfelder, 2013, p. 84). In addition, "The elements of ordering, contextualization, and integration probably play, due to the inherent characteristics of written discourse, a more prominent role in writing about trauma than in speaking about it" (Schönfelder, 2013, p. 84). Learning to tell the story of trauma turns their

traumatic memory into a narrative memory. It helps them rebuild their lives in the present and has a crucial importance in the process of recovery. During the delivery rituals, Lianne overcomes isolation and builds a connection with the outside world.

In addition to meetings, spiritual and physical activities as mediums of connecting inner and outer worlds reduce the effects of trauma and support Lianne's recovery. Contrary to people who "read poetry to ease the shock and pain, give them a kind of space, something beautiful in language," Lianne says, "To bring comfort or composure. I don't read poems. I read newspapers. I put my head in the pages and get angry and crazy" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 42). Besides, "Others were reading the Koran, she was going to church" two or three times a week (DeLillo, 2007, p. 233). As church brings people together, it bridges the past and present, dead and alive, and human and architectural edifice. Lianne psychologically and physically prepares herself for church visits:

> *She went early, before mass began, to be alone for a while, to feel the calm that marks a presence outside the nonstop riffs of the waking mind. It was not something godlike she felt but only a sense of others. Others bring us closer. Church brings us closer…. She felt the dead in the walls, over decades and centuries. There was no dispiriting chill in this. It was a comfort, feeling their presence, the dead she'd loved and all the faceless others who'd filled a thousand churches. They brought intimacy and ease, the human ruins that lie in crypts and vaults or buried in churchyard plots.* (DeLillo, 2007, pp. 233-234)

The sense of community in the church parallels to the meetings of Alzheimer patients. Lianne searches for spirituality and finds solace among a religious community. About the search of a communal support, Herman states, "The survivor seeks assistance not only from those closest to her but also from the wider community" (Herman, 1992, p. 70). Church becomes a comforting space for Lianne and desperate loners. After 9/11 in the US, M. A. Schuster notes, "Turning to religion (prayer, religion or spiritual feelings) was the second most common way of coping (90%), after talking with others (98%)" (qtd. in Peres et al., 2007, p. 344). Lianne's religious longing pushes her to search for God to find answers for her questions about her father's death and the death of the people due to the attacks. Attending rituals helps her to establish new relationships with community of faith. Explaining the impact of spirituality on recovery of traumatic experience, J. F. P Peres claims, "Religious beliefs and practices may reduce loss of control and helplessness, provide a cognitive framework that can decrease suffering, and strengthen one's purpose and meaning in the face of trauma" (Peres et al., 2007, p. 348). Collective social and spiritual gatherings ease "the nonstop riffs of the waking mind" and give hope and motivation to Lianne (DeLillo, 2007, p. 233). Spiritual and theological encounter of Lianne reintegrates her with a society of people who might have similar wounds like her. Spirituality provides the "irresistible dimensions of the human experience, such as faith, awe, and

transcendence, which may infuse the mundane with a richness of experience" (Ratti, 2013, p. 17). Lianne defies the spiritual emptiness and secularism of the West by seeking comfort in the church where she searches ways of recovery to rectify her destabilized identity and memory.

Not only church, but also a long distance running plan for the next year's marathon becomes a "spiritual effort" for her (DeLillo, 2007, p. 233). Krystal claims, "Any type of activity during the traumatic situation tended to minimize the severity of the aftereffects" (Krystal, 1988, p. 232). These activities bring self-discipline to Lianne's life as well as engagement with outer world. Rather than the past, she focuses on the present and future. LaCapra explains this process with the term, "working through"—a process of gaining distance from the trauma by engaging with present and future rather than the past, possessed by flashbacks, nightmares, intrusive images—a passive process defined as "acting out" (LaCapra, 2001, 141-53). Runners forms a community like church mass and writing group through which Lianne finds new avenues outside of home to moderate anxiety and trauma.

CONCLUSION

In the US history, the 9/11 attacks caused political, cultural, emotional, and psychological destruction in individuals' psychology and relationships and disrupted their minds, memories, and identities. Violence against the landscape and architecture mirrors the violence against the self, memory, and body and fragments reality, memory, and the sense of self. The disruption in a particular place like New York City parallels with the mental and emotional disruption of the individuals, particularly Lianne Glenn depicted in Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*. Through establishing safety for herself and close family members, mourning and confronting trauma, and building relations with people help Lianne mitigate the effects of traumatic experience. In order to establish safety, Lianne restores the damaged relationship with her estranged husband and desires to protect her son, Justin. The reenactment of the performance artist allows Lianne to reconstruct a visual narrative and meaning of the disturbing images of the attacks buried in her shattered and fragmented psyche. Through Alzheimer patients' writing group, church visits, and running as a physical activity, Lianne builds a sense community through restoring interpersonal relations.

Developing a new sense of self, new relationships, and a new environment lead the traumatized individual to engage actively in the world. Against the isolating effects of trauma, community provides ventilation, catharsis, collective belonging, experience of universality, and enhancing interaction. Although resolution of trauma is never complete, Lianne initiates a process of resolving conflicts between self, close family, and community and reconnects her past, present, and future by facing the past and building a new future. Restoring human connection and entrenching mutual relationships has a therapeutic role reminding her that she belongs to a wider world where she feels the sense of belonging and

being a part of human commonality. She fights against the feelings of helplessness and isolation, and new organized self emerges out of the negotiation of internal world with the external. Lianne's healing journey in *Falling Man* demonstrates that literature engages with the scientific discourse particularly the contemporary trauma studies since they have similar concerns and can mutually illuminate each other.

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