

Representation of Muslims in Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract—The novel *Falling Man*, like Don DeLillo's other works, is thematically concerned with the symbolic aspect of terrorist violence as portrayed in the media. Furthermore, DeLillo's story investigates the potential of rewriting individual identity, as well as the tendency of people to establish their identities using a community mindset. This article examines the portrayal of Muslims in Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*, focusing on their difficulties during the period that saw the rise of terrorism. Although the image of Muslims in literature is becoming increasingly prevalent, their portrayals are sometimes reductive or stereotypical. The current study intends to investigate the intricate and subtle portrayals of Muslims, as well as the underlying ideas that affect these representations. A qualitative study design was used, with five passages carefully chosen from *Falling Man*. The study adopts an eclectic paradigm that examines text, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice by combining Fairclough's (2003) three-dimensional framework with Van Dijk's critical discourse analysis and manipulation method (2006). The findings show that the non-Muslim character's speech uses specific narrative and discursive tactics to obfuscate Muslims' genuine experiences, maintaining dominant preconceptions while occasionally upsetting them. The analysis reveals that the portrayal of Muslims in *Falling Man* is multifaceted and challenges popular prejudices. Finally, the novel uses discourse analysis to show the relationship between language, identity, and power, offering a critical evaluation of society's opinions of Muslims and the larger political framework in which they operate.

Index Terms—CDA, literature, stereotype, ideology, identity

I. INTRODUCTION

Falling Man is a novel that is written by American writer Don DeLillo. Published in May of 2007, his portrayal of Muslims in literature is a multifaceted one, frequently shaped by Orientalism, a Eurocentric viewpoint that critiques non-Western civilizations. This has resulted in both favorable and unfavorable stereotypes and misrepresentations of Muslims. However, contemporary literature is seeing a transformation as authors from varied backgrounds, particularly Muslims, confront these preconceptions. They provide intricate and diverse portrayals that emphasize the agency, resilience, and complexity of Muslims' experiences.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) serves as a mechanism that interrogates stereotypes and underscores the many experiences and intricacies of Muslims. Negative stereotypes frequently perpetuate Orientalist notions, depicting Muslims as docile, mute, downtrodden, or victims of patriarchal dominance. Thus, CDA has become especially pertinent in analyzing the depiction of Muslims, since they frequently encounter stereotypical and adverse representations in media and public dialogue, sustaining biases and supporting societal inequities.

Moreover, the adjective "critical" underscores the uniqueness of language in exercising socio-political power. Language serves as an essential instrument for social interactions and communication, presenting researchers with the problem of comprehending and applying Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a theoretical framework for their studies. Although it is valuable for examining power dynamics, ideologies, and social practices via language and discourse, its intricate nature and interdisciplinary roots render consistent application and comprehension difficult.

The absence of clarity and set rules for employing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a framework results in discrepancies and differences in its implementation across research. Nonetheless, CDA serves as an appropriate framework for elucidating concealed issues within discourses, especially in literary discourse, which frequently encompasses implicit concerns such as the portrayal of Muslims. This issue has been a prominent subject in literary studies; nonetheless, a deficiency persists in the literature about the portrayal of Muslims in novels through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

This study seeks to examine the stereotyped portrayal of Muslims in media and literature from the 18th to the 20th centuries. The depiction is consistent and simplistic, frequently erasing Islamic characteristics and rendering them voiceless, resulting in a detrimental representation. This misconception disregards the varied experiences, beliefs, and contributions of Muslims, along with their empowerment and inclusion in society. A discursive analysis is required to critically examine the tactics employed in the novel and to foster a more nuanced representation that honors their identities, agency, and rights.

Prior research on the representation of Muslims in literature frequently generalizes conclusions and lacks comprehensive investigation. This study seeks to address this gap by analyzing *Falling Man*, a novel by American writer Don DeLillo, to attain a more profound comprehension of the language used to portray Muslims.

Research on the representation of Muslims in literature, especially in Don DeLillo's novel *Falling Man*, has yielded substantial contributions. Nonetheless, there exist deficiencies and constraints; notably, there is an insufficient emphasis on critical discourse analysis and its related frameworks. Furthermore, prior research has not thoroughly employed critical discourse analysis to examine the portrayal of Muslims in *Falling Man*.

The study seeks to examine Don DeLillo's employment of ideologies and discursive methods in his novel *Falling Man*, particularly in the portrayal of Muslims, to fulfill its aims.

This study rigorously examines *Falling Man* to enhance literary discourse on the representation of Muslims. It highlights the difficulties posed by prejudices and power disparities, arguing for more inclusive representations. The research is crucial for educators and students of literature and linguistics, since it reveals the connection between language, representation, and social reality, promoting a more nuanced comprehension of varied societies. It enhances the ongoing discourse over the representation of Muslims in literature.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Billig (2003) asserts that language is inherently biased and perpetually shaped by ideological forces. Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), formerly referred to as Critical Language Studies, is an interdisciplinary methodology that integrates theory, practice, and analysis. The focus is on analyzing various linguistic and non-linguistic signs and meanings, with the main aim of critically evaluating and highlighting tactics that create and sustain uneven power dynamics through discourse. CDS analysts focus on the factors that influence discourse, where prevailing ideologies are either upheld or challenged, and where conflicting and contradictory ideologies coexist. Applied Linguistics, formerly referred to as Critical Language Studies, constitutes a paradigm, methodology, and analytical approach.

Wodak and Meyer (2001) assert that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a social scientific methodology that investigates the influence of language on power dynamics, ideologies, and social structures. It seeks to reveal concealed power dynamics and the perpetuation of social inequity via rhetoric. CDA acknowledges discourse as a domain where power dynamics are sustained and reproduced, analyzing how language fortifies and legitimizes social inequalities. The three-dimensional approach suggested by Fairclough analyzes text, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice to comprehend the integration of language within social institutions. CDA utilizes power theories from Gramsci and Foucault to comprehend the hegemonic characteristics of discourse and the relationship between power and knowledge.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Sampling

The present study now explains the methodologies for executing a critical discourse analysis about the portrayal of Muslims in Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*. The process begins with an exhaustive reading of the work, followed by a comprehensive review of prior research pertinent to the study's focus.

B. Research Design

The study uses an exploratory research design with a qualitative method to deeply explore the insights of collected data. This type of research focuses on non-numerical data, such as case studies, interviews, discourse, or written data, and relies on meaning beyond words and expressions. Qualitative studies are actions that position the observer inside the world, enhancing their awareness of it through material and interpretive practices. The current study is qualitative, as it thoroughly examines the written text expressing the representation of Muslims in Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*.

C. Analytical Framework

What follows are the approaches to Critical Discourse Analysis used in this study.

Context-Based Analysis (CBA) is a recognized methodology for linguistic, semiotic, and discourse analysis, employing several classification techniques. Nonetheless, these techniques exhibit significant characteristics. CDA is optimally regarded as an instructional framework or institution, employing diverse methodologies from distinct perspectives. The methodologies of Fairclough (2003) and Van Dijk (2006) were selected for this study due to their congruence with the aims of assessing novel excerpts. Notwithstanding the common viewpoint, CDA is most appropriately regarded as an educational framework or institution. Consequently, CDA serves as an essential instrument for comprehending and examining diverse forms of speech.

(a). Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Approach

Kareem (2019) asserts that Fairclough's three-step method for Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides a critical framework for examining texts and dialogues. This approach, established in 1989 and improved upon in 1996, perceives language as a discourse and social activity, integrating text, social processes, and context. Fairclough's paradigm underpins CDA research and is linked to three supplementary stages, facilitating the ongoing advancement of CDA research. His model is regarded as the main concept in the discipline.

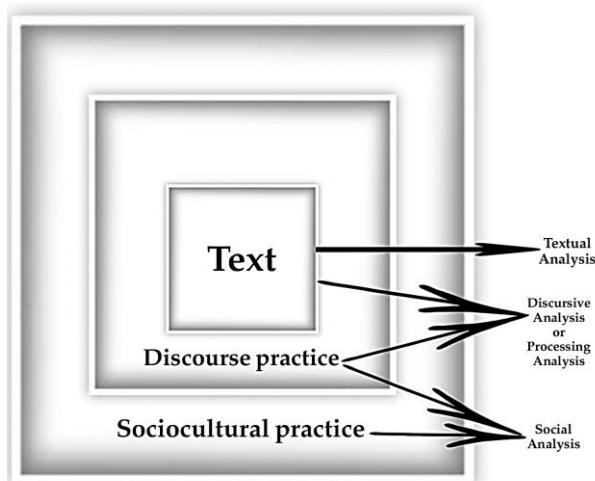


Figure 1. Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Approach of Critical Discourse Analysis

Fairclough (2001) underscores the description stage as a selected process in analyzing formal language components of texts, encompassing both visual-verbal and visual texts. This phase enables researchers to choose suitable linguistic attributes for their data. It pertains to grammatical usage within the pertinent social context and can be categorized as linguistic. The second stage examines the processes of text creation and consumption, focusing on the link between text and interaction.

The text examines the process of discourse analysis, emphasizing the situational context and intertextual backdrop. Fairclough (1995) elucidates that the interpretation stage examines meanings and understandings in language, whereas Fairclough (2001) delineates the explanation stage, the third phase, which concentrates on the concealed ideologies of “power behind discourse” that govern power dynamics and remain obscured throughout the process. The discursive choices of the participants are perceived as reactions to social constraints in a specific context.

Critical analysis seeks to comprehend the formation of sociocultural practices and ideological patterns. Contextual analysis indicates that intertextual and situational contexts are essential for interpretation. Fairclough's technique serves as a comprehensive framework to link following models, while Fairclough's three-dimensional model and Van Dijk's Model of Critical Discourse Analysis and Manipulation (2006) are utilized in this study to elucidate sociocultural practices and ideological tendencies.

(b). *Van Dijk's Approaches*

1. *Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Approach*

Hart (2010) asserts that Teun Van Dijk is a prominent player in both the Socio-Cognitive Approach (SCA) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). SCA employs diverse theories to examine social sciences. Its principal duty is to forge connections between literary and cognitive frameworks as well as social systems. Van Dijk's SCA framework is crucial for comprehending the intellectual representations and processes of individuals. A constructive text encompasses the interplay between social structures and social cognition. Van Dijk's SCA, as an analytical tool grounded in formal text linguistics and cognitive science, examines the interplay between cognition, discourse, and society. It examines stereotypes, racial discrimination, the abuse of elite power, and the resistance of marginalized communities, emphasizing the concept of framing and conventional psychological memory models.

Van Dijk contends that discourses are socially formed and affect societal functioning via a cognitive interface, encompassing mental representations of language users as both individuals and social entities. Discourse is shaped by individuals' cognitive processes, collective knowledge, and personal experiences, serving as both a manifestation and conveyance of social cognition and a means of social interaction. Local and global social structures influence speech via ideologies, collective knowledge, and the personal mental frameworks of social members, who interpret communicative occurrences as context models in their subjective manners (Van Dijk, 2015a).

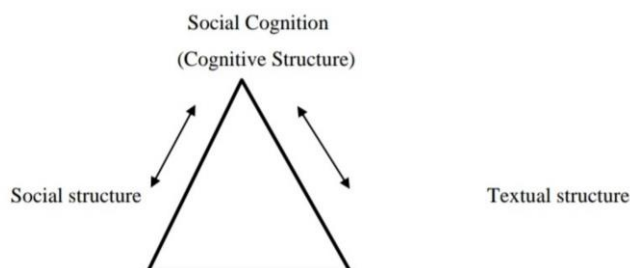


Figure 2. Triangle of SCA (Adopted From Hart, 2010, p. 15)

According to Hart (2010), the triangle representing textual and social structures in social cognition elucidates the connection between these two structures. Van Dijk's research delineates three categories of memory: short-term, long-term, and semantic. It is inappropriate to consider the components of Social Cognitive Analysis (SCA) in isolation, as they are interconnected. Van Dijk distinguishes between episodic memory, which retains personal memories, and social and semantic memory, which encompass broad knowledge and facts.

2. *Van Dijk's Ideological Square Approach*

Van Dijk (2000a) used critical discourse analysis to elucidate the social dynamics between power and ideologies inside discourse. He contended that news texts are governed by the dominant power and that ideologies can influence any spoken or written expression. A group wields social power when it can affect the beliefs and behaviors of other groups. Van Dijk differentiated between coercive power, which depends on force, and persuasive power, which is founded on knowledge, information, or authority.

Van Dijk's "ideological square" comprises four fundamental principles for the analysis of ideology: accentuating positive attributes of ourselves, stressing negative aspects of others, downplaying negative traits of ourselves, and minimizing positive qualities of others. This ideological framework facilitates a favorable representation of in-groups while adversely portraying out-groups through polarization.

3. *Van Dijk's Discourse and Manipulation Approach*

Van Dijk's 2006 book, *Discourse and Manipulation*, scrutinizes the ideological assumptions inherent in news coverage of Muslim women, focusing on techniques of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. Manipulation is the act of mentally influencing the views of readers and listeners, characterized as discursive, unlawful domination within society, and cognitive control. In discourse, manipulation underscores both advantageous and detrimental characteristics, whereas in society, it reinforces social disparity. Mind control impairs cognitive processes and generates distorted mental perceptions of social reality. Van Dijk perceives manipulation as a consequence of power exploitation within a society characterized by interactions among various social groups. He proposes methodologies for the analysis of research data across all linguistic tiers. The strategies are as follows:

(1). *Actor Description*

The semantic method entails utilizing the ideals of speakers to characterize actors, frequently depicting out-group members in a bad light, while in-group individuals are represented neutrally. This diminishes favorable characterizations of group members while accentuating unfavorable ones. The description also encompasses details regarding the individual's role, status, and relationships (Van Dijk, 2006; Van Dijk, 2000).

(2). *Authority*

Speakers employ a pragmatic approach to substantiate their arguments by referencing authority, which may pertain to individual or national sovereignty, a legitimate assertion of political power. Authority can be reinforced by factors like official organizations, institutions, public leaders, and social media, according to Van Dijk (2006).

(3). *Burden*

The syntactic strategy is defined by self-evident and assumed premises, exemplified by the statement, "It is unfair that ratepayers in the London area should bear an excessive portion of the financial burden created by those individuals." This form of argument offers adequate support for the conclusion.

(4). *Categorization*

This semantic approach classifies persons into distinct categories, including immigrants, workers, and citizens, particularly when phrases related to class or position are utilized, as seen by the example "There are sellers in Britain, but many of them are not opportunity seekers".

(5). *Comparison*

The in-group is shown favorably, but the out-group is depicted unfavorably using a semantic technique, as demonstrated in Van Dijk's 2006 study, which straightforwardly compares individuals slain in Iraq to those in other nations.

(6). *Consensus*

This semantic technique is employed when a society faces threats, such as during war, immigration, or terrorism, exemplified by the assertion "It is crucial to address the influx of immigrants".

(7). *Counterfactual*

Syntactic methods, such as "If they didn't run, they might die," illustrate probable consequences in specific scenarios, enabling humans to present absurd results while contemplating alternatives (Van Dijk, 2006; Van Dijk, 2000).

(8). *Disclaimers*

Syntactic techniques, as articulated by Van Dijk (2000), entail portraying oneself and others in an ideologically equitable fashion, accentuating the favorable attributes of one group while minimizing the unfavorable characteristics of the other, thus averting attitudinal ambiguity and preserving a positive image.

(9). *Euphemism*

Rhetorical figures can alleviate the effects of harsh language by circumventing unfavorable judgments and impressions of the positive in-group. This semantic mitigation method is frequently rationalized by considerations of

politeness or ideological motives. For instance, a writer may employ “very muted” rather than more severe terminology to characterize oppressive regimes, as Enright contended in 1986.

(10). *Evidentiality*

Evidentiality is a technique employed by speakers to bolster the veracity of their assertions by supplying requisite evidence or proof. This can be accomplished through alternative types of evidentiality or by referencing an authoritative source. This morning, the prime minister announced, exemplifying the application of evidentiality in communication (Van Dijk, 2000).

(11). *Example/Illustration*

The semantic technique in discourse enhances the likelihood of an assertion, hence increasing its persuasiveness. The statement, “The New York Times reports a girl who could remain in Russia without a passport,” exemplifies a particular concept (Van Dijk, 2000).

(12). *Generalization*

This semantic strategy generalizes characteristics such as the benefits and drawbacks of in-group membership, including immigration, by abstracting public traits. This aids in deriving general principles from particular instances, exemplified by the assertion “The majority of immigrants seek asylum” (Van Dijk, 2000).

(13). *Hyperbole*

Hyperbolic assertions serve as a rhetorical device to amplify semantic significance by emphasizing the attributes of others while minimizing our own. Exaggeration occurs when an inflated term is employed to characterize an extraordinary event, such as the Holocaust, or when a government representative describes a truce as a perilous risk (Van Dijk, 1995a).

(14). *Implication*

Speakers frequently refrain from overtly articulating thoughts or beliefs for pragmatic or contextual purposes, enabling audiences to infer implicit information from common knowledge. This method enables listeners to deduce absent information, such as “impoverished individuals” signifying a requirement for assistance. Van Dijk (2006) and Van Dijk (2000) provide additional evidence for this assertion.

(15). *Irony*

The term “unexpected discovery” serves as a rhetorical tactic to critique a situation when the reality diverges from the professed assertion. It is comically attributed to refugees who were already aware of their intention to stay in a country, emphasizing that the two are distinct (Colebrook, 2004).

(16). *Metaphor*

Metaphor is a rhetorical device that renders abstract and unfamiliar concepts comprehensible and tangible. It entails juxtaposing abstract notions such as immigration threats with refugees and floods or characterizing asylum seekers as “parasites.” The analysis of metaphors examines the relationship between these meanings and cultural means of expression, ensuring that the metaphor accurately communicates the desired message (Hussein & Abdullah, 2016).

(17). *National Self-Glorification*

The speaker’s pragmatic approach entails highlighting the favorable attributes of their nation, advocating for its traditions and beliefs, and fostering a congenial atmosphere. This method, termed national self-glorification, is exemplified by the assertion “Britain has always had the best tourism in the world,” perceived as a means to promote the speaker’s national interests (Malesevic, 2019).

(18). *Norm Expression*

The syntactic approach entails the objective and systematic elucidation of a subject, as articulated in Van Dijk’s 2006 assertion, highlighting the significance of an impartial perspective on asylum seekers.

(19). *Number Game*

News articles employ numerical data to establish objectivity and trustworthiness, as evidenced by Van Dijk’s 2000 study. This method is frequently employed to characterize terrorist acts, as shown by a bombing resulting in 30 fatalities and several injuries.

(20). *Polarization: Us-Them Categorization*

Syntactic strategies denote the cognitive mechanisms employed to differentiate between two disparate categories, exemplified as the assertion “The good people who contributed to the country should not be exploited by the bad people” (Van Dijk, 2006).

(21). *Populism*

Populism is a leader-follower relationship in which a leader promotes the views, needs, and objectives of their followers. This interdependence is apparent when a spokesman declares that individuals must cover their bills. Populism includes several political positions that highlight the moral integrity of the populace (Madrid, 2012).

(22). *Presupposition*

A pragmatic strategy is speakers assuming the veracity of a statement when it is not explicitly articulated, exemplified as the inquiry, “Where is your car?” This indicates the presence of the car. A presupposition is the assumption made by a speaker when uttering a sentence, distinct from the actual assertion, or a prerequisite that must be fulfilled for a specific state of events to occur.

(23). *Vagueness*

Ambiguity is a practical tactic employed to express doubt in communication. It entails employing ambiguous formulations with indistinct referents or imprecise sets, such as “Numerous terrorist attacks were executed in various cities in Iraq,” together with hazy quantifiers, nouns, and adverbs. This strategy is frequently employed by individuals to evade failure and to circumvent providing vague answers (Van Dijk, 2000).

(24). *Victimization*

In communication, speakers and writers employ a semantic strategy termed “positive in-group description” and “negative out-group description” to provoke animosity towards a particular organization or elicit sympathy for victims, exemplified by phrases such as “ISIS killed numerous innocent individuals and motorists in the Iraqi deserts”.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The extracts below are from Don DeLillo’s *Falling Man* that can be analyzed according to Fairclough’s (2003) three-dimensional model and Van Dijk’s model of CDA and manipulation (2006). These extracts are rich for critical discourse analysis, providing a foundation to explore how the novel constructs and represents Muslim identities, terrorism, and Western cultural hegemony.

1. *“There was a woman behind it, facing him, with police tape wrapped around her head and face, yellow caution tape that marks the limits of a crime scene.”*

This extract refers to Keith Neudecker, the protagonist, who survives the World Trade Center collapse. Keith’s disoriented state and fragmented interactions throughout the novel signify the broader theme of post-trauma detachment.

The textual analysis dimension in Fairclough’s three-dimensional model focuses on the language, word choices, and imagery within the text. There are many terms and phrases that help to see how the author represents Muslims, such as “police tape wrapped around her head and face,” which suggests a metaphorical “marking” of identity, linking the woman to criminalization and control. The “yellow caution tape” symbolizes suspicion and danger, commonly associated with crime scenes. “Crime scene” connotes culpability or investigation, reinforcing a sense of scrutiny and marginalization. “Facing him” implies a direct interaction, yet the visual obstruction “tape” introduces a sense of distance or alienation. Thus, the language constructs the woman as a visual representation of societal fear and suspicion. The use of the metaphorical markers “police tape” and “crime scene” embeds meanings of surveillance and restriction, consistent with post-9/11 Islamophobic narratives. The word choice isolates the woman as both a victim “wrapped in tape” and a suspect who is linked to a crime scene.

The discursive practice dimension examines how the text draws on or reproduces existing discourses and ideologies. Post-9/11 surveillance and criminalization are reflected in the image of the woman wrapped in caution tape and reflect broader cultural narratives that criminalized Muslims, especially women, after 9/11. Stereotypes of Muslim women in that imagery echo cultural profiling, where Muslim women are seen as hyper-visible symbols of threat or oppression.

To this end, the scene reproduces societal fears tied to race, religion, and gender, particularly the racialized association of Muslim identities with crime or terrorism. It also engages with the gendered framing of Muslim women as either oppressed victims or complicit in cultural threats, a recurring trope in post-9/11 media and political rhetoric. The fragmented interaction mirrors the disconnection between Western perspectives and Muslim identities, emphasizing how narratives of “othering” are sustained.

The social practice dimension analyzes how the text connects to broader societal ideologies and power structures. Islamophobia reflects the pervasive suspicion directed at Muslims in the aftermath of 9/11, with Muslim women symbolizing both cultural difference and perceived danger. Cultural profiling is seen in the metaphor of the police tape, which reinforces how Muslim identities were socially “marked” as objects of fear and control.

Thus, the image of the woman trapped by caution tape parallels how Muslim women were socially constrained by stereotypes, such as being viewed solely through their religious or cultural affiliations. It reflects the power dynamics of post-9/11 societies where state surveillance and public suspicion disproportionately targeted Muslims, reinforcing cultural hierarchies. The broader narrative serves as a critique of these social practices, presenting the caution tape as a metaphor for systemic marginalization.

The text employs the following manipulative strategies that align with Van Dijk’s CDA on manipulation:

1. **Symbolism:** the police tape functions as a manipulative symbol that connects the woman to crime and suspicion, embedding societal prejudices within the reader’s subconscious.
2. **Foregrounding and Obscuring:** These are found in that the woman is presented as central, “facing him,” with her identity obscured (“wrapped in tape”), reflecting the dual processes of hyper-visibility and erasure experienced by Muslim women in the public sphere.
3. **Emotional Appeal:** Emotional appeal is in the imagery that evokes a sense of discomfort and alienation, manipulating the reader’s emotional response to mirror societal anxieties.
4. **Stereotype Reinforcement:** This is found in the metaphor of the crime scene that reinforces racialized stereotypes about Muslim women, manipulating perceptions through association.
5. **Caution and Criminalization of Identity:** These can be found in that the woman in this extract is marked by police tape, signifying that she is within a crime scene, which metaphorically relates to how Muslim women were criminalized in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. Again, the yellow caution tape is a symbolic marker of

suspicion and restriction, illustrating how Muslim women, often perceived as threatening or dangerous, were seen through a lens of fear and control.

6. **Hypervisibility:** The police tape around the woman's face also suggests a hypervisibility that is forced upon Muslim women, where their identities are scrutinized and marked in the public sphere. This is consistent with post-9/11 narratives, where Muslim women were subjected to intense public attention and cultural profiling, often portrayed as either victims of their own culture or as subjects of suspicion due to their religious and cultural affiliations. The image of a woman "wrapped" in caution tape visually echoes the limiting perceptions of Muslim women during this period, often trapped between stereotypes of oppression and racialized fear.

Overall, the extract is tied to the research on the representation of Muslim women. It delves into the criminalization and marginalization of Muslim women. These themes are key in analyzing how Muslim women were depicted in the wake of 9/11—either as victims of oppressive regimes or as threats to Western security. As well as the woman's depiction in this scene—offering help but still distant and being marked by caution tape—can be analyzed through the lens of gendered vulnerability and stereotyping, concepts central to both CDA and your research focus.

2. *"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."*

This statement is narrated by the omniscient narrator and occurs in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks early on in the novel. It is situated in the narrative when Keith is trying to navigate his disoriented state, return to normalcy, and process the trauma of surviving the World Trade Center collapse.

From a three-dimensional perspective, the phrase "simple coincidence, or not so simple" reflects a subtle tension, suggesting an interplay of chance and significance. That mention of "that particular book," which refers to *The Revolt of Islam*, an 1818 poem written by Percy Bysshe Shelley, at such a pivotal moment—three days after the planes were flown into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon—evokes a deliberate connection between the cultural discourse surrounding Islam and the trauma of 9/11. *The Revolt of Islam* itself, as a literary work, carries symbolic weight. Though Shelley's poem is not directly about Islam, its title juxtaposes Islam with concepts of rebellion, a framing that resonates with the post-9/11 ideological association of Islam with resistance or insurgency.

The act of including this reference shows how literary and cultural texts contribute to shaping perceptions of Islam. Postcards, as forms of communication, seem innocuous but can carry ideological underpinnings—in this case, the juxtaposition of Islamic references with chaos and trauma reinforces broader cultural discourses that associate Islam with unrest. The timing of "three days after the planes" foregrounds Islam in the cultural consciousness, highlighting how public and private narratives interweave after traumatic events to create cultural stereotypes.

On a societal level, this scene reflects how cultural products (e.g., Shelley's poem) can be reinterpreted or mobilized to reinforce Islamophobic narratives in the post-9/11 context. The arrival of this postcard ties into a larger ideological framework, where Islam becomes a symbolic marker of danger or rebellion in Western discourse.

From Van Dijk's Model of CDA and Manipulation (2006), there are various discursive strategies, including:

1. **Presupposition and Implication:** These are found in the whole statement, suggesting that the arrival of the postcard might not be coincidental. This subtle implication prompts the reader to question the neutrality of Islam's mention, potentially reinforcing the idea of Islam as inherently linked to chaos.
2. **Framing:** Found in the postcard's arrival and juxtaposed with "three days after the planes," which frames Islam in a context of recent trauma, manipulating readers to perceive the two as interconnected.
3. **Polarization:** This extract subtly polarizes the discourse, positioning Islam as "other," while evoking themes of rebellion and unrest through Shelley's title.
4. **Symbolism:** The postcard becomes a symbol of the intrusion of Islamic imagery into Western consciousness, reinforcing narratives of incompatibility or threat.
5. **Contextual Anchoring:** By situating the postcard in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, the text anchors Islam within a framework of global insecurity. This reinforces manipulative ideologies where Islamic identities are viewed as antithetical to Western stability.

Overall, this extract is highly relevant as it ties Islamic representation to post-9/11 trauma. It reflects the discursive strategies employed in *Falling Man* to show how Islamic references, even when innocuous or literary, are reframed in the light of suspicion, fear, and manipulation. Analyzing this passage with Fairclough and Van Dijk's models highlights the subtle ways Western texts construct Islam, contributing to the broader discourse that your paper investigates. By linking *The Revolt of Islam* to this pivotal moment, DeLillo critiques how Western narratives of trauma and terrorism manipulate perceptions of Islam, reinforcing its association with rebellion and chaos.

3. *"If God let this happen, with the planes, then did God make me cut my finger when I was slicing bread this morning?"*

This extract is spoken by Lianne Neudecker, wife of protagonist Keith Neudecker. It occurs during a post-9/11 conversation when Lianne is reflecting on the tragic events of the attacks and questioning divine will. The setting is intimate, within a domestic or contemplative space, emphasizing personal reflection amid the societal upheaval caused by the attacks.

From the textual analysis, the phrase "If God let this happen" introduces divine agency and responsibility for tragedy, reflecting religious and existential questioning. Furthermore, the phrase "with the planes" shows a metonym for the 9/11

attacks, emphasizing how planes became symbols of terror in Western consciousness. The question “did God make me cut my finger” reflects the juxtaposition of a personal, mundane event with a catastrophic global tragedy, which creates irony and dissonance. Moreover, “slicing bread this morning” symbolizes everyday normalcy, contrasting sharply with the extraordinary scale of the 9/11 attacks.

To this end, the text uses a rhetorical question to frame Lianne’s internal conflict, making the reader ponder the logic behind assigning divine causality. The juxtaposition of the planes and cutting bread creates an absurd comparison, subtly critiquing deterministic religious narratives that attribute all events to God. The tone conveys confusion and irony, reflecting the disorientation and existential crisis many felt post-9/11.

From discursive practices, there is an examination of how the statement draws from and contributes to larger cultural narratives. The statement critiques simplistic religious explanations for suffering, questioning whether Divine Will governs all events. Furthermore, the reference to “planes” situates the statement within the cultural discourse of 9/11, where Islam and divine justification for terrorism became highly contentious topics. The mention of “slicing” bread highlights the persistence of mundane routines even in the face of unimaginable tragedy, a recurring theme in post-9/11 literature. So, the discourse challenges deterministic religious narratives, suggesting that not all suffering has a divine purpose.

Social Practices connects the statement to broader societal and ideological frameworks. Islamophobia and post-9/11 narratives are shown in which the planes indirectly evoke Islam, tying the religious discourse to broader stereotypes and ideological associations prevalent after the attacks. Moreover, the existential crisis reflects the societal struggle to find meaning in random events, a common response to large-scale tragedies. Challenges the tendency to ascribe universal causality to divine will, reflecting secular or critical perspectives on religion.

Thus, the extract critiques how religious frameworks were used to explain or justify 9/11, calling attention to the societal tendency to oversimplify complex events. It highlights the dissonance between personal suffering and collective trauma, reflecting the broader societal struggle to reconcile the two.

Van Dijk’s Manipulation (2006) perspective shows that this rhetorical question could demonstrate manipulation through normalization—linking the profound tragedy of 9/11 to mundane personal events, thereby trivializing or reshaping perceptions of the event. The discursive strategies identified are:

1. **Irony:** This can be found in the trivial comparison between the catastrophic 9/11 attacks “with the planes” and the mundane “cut my finger,” which adds an ironic tone. This strategy diminishes the seriousness of divine intervention, questioning the logic of attributing events to God’s will and challenging the religious interpretations of tragedy.
2. **Implication:** can also be found in the reference to planes, which indirectly evokes 9/11, subtly associating the event with the broader ideological and political discourse surrounding the attacks, which often involved Muslims. Such strategies allow readers to infer larger religious and political implications without explicitly stating them, making the discourse open to interpretation.
3. **Rhetorical Question:** The use of a rhetorical question draws attention to the perceived randomness of Divine Will and encourages the audience to reflect on the logic behind attributing blame or causality to God. Moreover, it provides critiques, determines religious narratives, and invites the reader to question ideological justifications for suffering.
4. **Juxtaposition:** Found in the mundane contrasts to the catastrophic, emphasizing the randomness of suffering and challenging proportional explanations for tragedy.

Overall, these strategies manipulate the reader’s perspective, prompting critical engagement with societal and religious ideologies. The extract encapsulates the tension between personal experiences and broader cultural narratives, making it a vital piece for analysis in your research.

4. *“What about the people God saved? Are they better people than the ones who died?”*

This extract is said by Lianne Neudecker, exposing her internal struggle to make sense of the 9/11 tragedy and her own doubts about Divine Will and moral hierarchies.

This extract illustrates a critical social issue—the moral hierarchy often implied in post-tragedy narratives. Through a discourse lens, it interrogates societal judgments and the ideological framing of victims and survivors. From a textual analysis perspective, “God saved” implies divine intervention, embedding a deterministic worldview that suggests God actively decides who lives and dies. “Better people” reflects a moral judgment, suggesting that survival could be tied to worthiness, introducing an implicit moral hierarchy. “The ones who died” refers to the victims of the 9/11 attacks, highlighting their vulnerability and situating them as part of the broader discourse of tragedy. Thus, this criticizes the deterministic worldview that assigns divine purpose to survival or death. The rhetorical structure challenges readers to reflect on the fairness and logic of such beliefs.

In discursive practice, the extract engages with cultural and religious narratives that seek to explain tragedy through divine intervention, questioning whether survival implies moral superiority. The line reflects the existential struggles faced by survivors and society at large, grappling with the randomness of death and the morality of divine justice. Furthermore, moral hierarchies are shown by suggesting that survival might imply moral superiority, so the text critiques societal tendencies to impose value judgments on victims and survivors.

In social practice analysis, the extract reflects societal struggles to find meaning in the randomness of death and survival, particularly in the context of 9/11, where the scale of loss challenged traditional religious and cultural narratives. It critiques the tendency to moralize tragedy, questioning whether divine justice can or should be used to explain survival. Power dynamics are also found by questioning divine justice, so the statement challenges religious authority and deterministic worldviews, reflecting a broader societal shift toward secular or critical perspectives on tragedy. The extract also reflects post-9/11 cultural anxieties, where the randomness of survival and death disrupted traditional narratives of morality, justice, and divine intervention.

From Van Dijk's point of view, the excerpted question might reflect ideological manipulation by suggesting a moral dichotomy in divine actions, which could perpetuate certain biases when analyzed in other contexts of the novel.

1. **Polarization:** This is the first strategy found in the extract. The question introduces a division between those who "survived" and those who "died," potentially reflecting a deeper ideological judgment on morality and worthiness. Polarization underscores societal tendencies to assign moral superiority to survivors or victimize those who perished, reflecting post-9/11 discourses on the value of human life.
2. **Presupposition:** Presupposition can be identified since the question presupposes that God actively chose who to save and who to let die, reinforcing a deterministic view of divine intervention. By embedding this presupposition, the narrative engages the audience in a moral debate, inviting them to reflect on religious interpretations of such events.
3. **Generalization:** This is the third strategy used. The framing suggests that divine favor might play a role in survival, generalizing beliefs about religious determinism and its impact on society. This strategy reflects the complexities and inconsistencies in theological explanations for tragedies. The author criticizes this generalization, highlighting its ethical and logical inconsistencies.

5. *"This is the purpose of religion, to return people to a childlike state. 'Awe and submission', her mother said."*

Said by Nina, Lianne's mother, the excerpt reflects her intellectual critique of religion during a conversation. Nina is a character who frequently voices skepticism and progressive views about societal and cultural constructs, including religion.

Focusing on textual analysis, "purpose of religion" frames religion as functional, suggesting it has a deliberate and singular aim. "Return people to a childlike state" reflects the use of metaphor to emphasize dependency, naivety, and vulnerability, portraying religion as regressive. "Awe and submission" are strong emotional and behavioral terms that depict religion as promoting passivity and reverence without critical engagement. Therefore, this extract critiques religion's role in fostering dependency and compliance, particularly in contexts where such traits could lead to societal control or ideological manipulation.

From the discursive practice analysis, religious criticism resonates with post-9/11 cultural anxieties about religious fundamentalism, where Islam was often portrayed as requiring "submission." Moreover, Nina's perspective reflects a broader cultural critique of institutional and ideological authority, positioning religion as a tool for control. To this end, this discourse aligns with broader societal critiques of religion's role in promoting compliance, reflecting anxieties about its influence in shaping ideologies and behaviors.

In the social practice analysis, the extract critiques the role of religion in societal control, reflecting post-9/11 anxieties about religious ideologies, particularly those found in Islam. It indirectly challenges deterministic religious narratives, questioning the relationship between faith, agency, and societal values. Furthermore, by framing religion as a tool for control, the statement critiques the power structures that use faith to foster compliance and dependency, resonating with broader cultural fears about the misuse of religious authority. The critique reflects a shift toward secular, intellectual perspectives that question the role of religion in shaping societal norms and individual behaviors, particularly in the context of post-9/11 cultural trauma.

There is also an interpretation of the possible benefits of the discursive strategies within the narrative and their contribution that shapes the representation of religion, tragedy, or groups such as Muslims.

1. **Authority:** The statement is framed as the opinion of the narrator's mother, invoking her authority to critique religion. Leveraging an authoritative voice lends credibility to the critique of religion's role in fostering submission and compliance.
2. **Legitimization:** Religion is portrayed as a tool for control, legitimizing this critique by appealing to the social consequences of religious practice (e.g., "awe and submission"). It challenges readers to question the societal function of religion, particularly in the context of events like 9/11.
3. **Exaggeration/Minimization:** The description of religion reducing people to a "childlike state" exaggerates its controlling aspects, minimizing its potential benefits or complexities. This strategy reinforces the narrative's critique of religion as simplistic and regressive.

Using these strategies, the main ideas of the novel can be summarized in three points. First, contextual relevance: while the text does not explicitly mention Muslims, these strategies create an ideological framework that resonates with post-9/11 discourses, where Islam and Muslims were frequently positioned as central to debates about religion, violence, and societal values. Second, in critiquing determinism, the strategies collectively question deterministic religious narratives that attribute events like 9/11 to divine will, indirectly challenging ideologies often linked to Islamic fundamentalism in public discourse. Third, engaging readers by using implication, rhetorical questions, and

presuppositions, the text invites readers to critically engage with religious and ideological assumptions without overtly stating them, making the critique more subtle and thought-provoking.

V. CONCLUSION

In Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*, the representation of Muslims can be reflected through a discourse analysis perspective. This is done by examining how language, power dynamics, and cultural narratives are used to shape the identities and experiences of the characters, focusing on Muslims, who are the core of this study. The study shows the importance of CDA in literature to reveal or uncover underlying power relations and ideologies in order to demonstrate its effectiveness in studying and analyzing the way in which the marginalized groups are presented in literary works. CDA clarifies how these negative stereotypes, images, and misrepresentations of Muslims serve specific ideological purposes. These images are drawn to portray Muslim societies as ignorant. This portrayal shows that Muslims need Western countries, and their intervention is a necessity to modify these images.

Depending on the model adopted, the language of the novel reflected in the extracts clarifies how the novel represents ideological structures and power dynamics and their influence on Muslims. The language reflected in *Falling Man* plays a vital role in drawing the images of Muslims with multifaceted and nuanced identities. Muslim characters dealt with cultural expectations, societal pressures, and personal aspirations that reflect and illustrate the complexity and the suffering of their identities that were drawn and engraved by both their heritage and previous stereotypes. Dialogues within the work reveal internal and external suffering and conflicts. Underlying tensions between contemporary realities and traditional values are reflected by the interaction of characters.

Don DeLillo's novel actively challenges the deep images or stereotypes about Muslims because, according to these images, they are either passive people or are presented as bad people. The novel's core underscores the intersectionality of gender, religion, and politics in presenting and shaping the lives of Muslims.

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