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## Title

**Self-Critique in Post 9/11 Neo- Orientalist Literature: Don Delillo's  
*Falling Man* and John Updike's *Terrorist***

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment  
For the requirements of a **Master degree in Literature and  
Civilization**

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## **Dedication**

To the people, without whom this humble work might not have been written, and to whom, I am greatly indebted.

My parents: Your presence in my life has been the best gift, and support, that I could ever ask for. Your guidance has always been the enlightening torch of my path. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for everything, you have ever offered me. I pray to Allah to bless you, and preserve you. My Life Candles.

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## **Abstract**

The present research undertakes a study of Neo- Orientalism in Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007) and John Updike's *Terrorist* ( 2006) in the light of Slavoj Zizek's Self-Critique theory. It looks into the embodiment of Zizek's Neo-Orientalist insights into 9/11 events in both narratives. One major focus of analysis in both narratives is a concern with criticism, assessment, and correction with reference to the West-East dissimilar cultural value systems and religions. The study underlines the two authors' criticism of the American expansionist policy in the Third World and its materialist culture by making references to Eastern steadfast cultural ethos and religious commitment. The two authors want to strike a blow to the West's materialist culture and engrossment in sensual pleasures and surfaces. Their attempt is a call for correcting the self by looking to the Other.

**Key Words:** *Falling Man*, *Terrorist*, Neo-Orientalism, Self-Critique, American Expansion, Western values, Self, Other.

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# General Introduction

## **General Introduction**

In his book entitled *The Clash of Civilizations* (1996), Samuel Huntington foregrounds religion as a new source of clash in the world's politics after the containment of the ideological conflict of the Cold War era. Eight years later, on September eleven 2001, with the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre, Huntington's prophesy has come true, as the events have been interpreted and looked at from a religious perspective. Scholarly discussions in Western academy and political debates following the attacks have renewed interest in Eastern cultures and emphasized, in the vanguard, the focus on religion, Islam. Western politicians, writers, academics, and philosophers, reviving the old Orientalist discourse, have associated the events with Islamic religious Fundamentalism and have further emphasized the inferiority of Eastern cultures and people. The attacks have also authorized American intervention in Eastern countries to work out authority upon them and interfere in their politics. In their article entitled "The Face of Danger Beard in the U.S Media's Representations of Arabs, Muslims, and Middle Easterners" (2011), Karen Culcasi and Mahmut Gokmen argue that "This othering of Middle Eastern Arabs, and Muslim men as 'dangerous' not only creates a homogenized and distorted image of these diverse groups of people, but also been used to justify social discrimination and US hegemony" (82).

In his *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Said defines Orientalism as a style of thought based "on epistemological distinction between the Orient and the Occident" (11). The author has leafed through Western literary scholarship, historical records, and philosophical discourses in search for Western stereotypical representations of Eastern cultures. This representation of the Orient have been revived following 9/11 events which have renewed the old struggle between the East and the West. Western political leaders and governmental officials have accused Muslims of the plot execution of the attacks and are believed to be a



threat on western civilization and modernity. Nevertheless, America has emerged as the leader who fights terror and terrorism through the 'War on Terror' policy.

An exhausting stock of fictional and nonfictional narratives has emerged to memorize the events and portray their impacts on the American society historically, economically, and socially. Within less than six years after 9/11 attacks, more than thirty texts related directly to the topic have been produced. These texts have emphasized the disparities between the East and West worlds and have capitalized the brutality of Eastern religion, Islam. Examples include Jay Mc Inerney's *The Good Life* (2006) , Ian Mc Ewan's *Saturday*, (2005), and Claire Messud's *The Emperor's Children* (2006), Slavoj Žižek's *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*(2002) and *Iraq: The Borrowed kettle* (2004), Jonathan Franzen's *Freedom* (2010) among others.

In the American context, American post 9/11 literary narratives portray the events in relation to the theme of terrorism, religious fundamentalism, and East-West binary oppositions. Major references include Frédéric Beigbeder's *Windows On The World* (2006), which allegedly sympathizes with the 9/11 victims and portrays Muslims as killers of innocent people, Joel c. Rosenberg's *The last Jihad* (2006) recounts' the terrorists refusal of American assistance to bring peace and prosperity to Tel-aviv and Gaza, Robert Ferrigno's *Prayers for the Assassin* (2006) portrays Islam as an advocator of terrorism; John Updike's *Terrorist* (2006) refers to the socio-economic and religious realities of terrorism and uses verses from the Quran to structure its arguments; Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007) portrays Muslims as violent terrorists.

DeLillo's *Falling Man* and Updike's *Terrorist* are post 9/11 narratives par excellence. Like many post 9/11 literary and philosophical accounts, *Falling Man* and *Terrorist* revive the events; the traumatic experiences lived that day, the loss felt, and the changes brought about in the aftermath. The two texts also, reminiscent of many western Orientalist scholarly texts,

perpetuate the West-East dividing differences in terms of cultural values, race, and religion. Still, the two texts provide a tempting ground for a (Western) self-critique analysis. From this perspective, Delillo and Updike show another side of their portrayal of the events, involving (Western) American policy in the Third World, and its cultural ethos. In addition to the themes of trauma, terrorism, and East-West binary oppositions, *Falling Man* and *Terrorist* strike a blow at American late capitalist culture and society's engrossment in materialism, hedonism, and surfaces.

Delillo and Updike's criticism of their nation's cultural values has many things in common with the philosophical analysis of modernity in the writing of the Slovenian cultural critic, Slavoj Žižek. Žižek's insights into Western modernity are a self-critique endeavor. Following the ideas of many Western philosophers like Frederick Nietzsche, Jean Baudrillard, Michel Foucault, and others, Žižek criticizes the Western socio-cultural belief system invented with modernity. Accordingly, the present study undertakes an analytical study of the theme of 9/11 in Don Delillo's *Falling Man* and John Updike's *Terrorist* in the light of Slavoj Žižek's self-critique theory, advanced principally in his *Welcome to The Desert of the Real* and *Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle*. The investigation aims at showing Delillo and Updike's self-criticism of (western) American modernity and culture shown through a comparison between the Western and the Eastern societies', cultures, and people. Both writers refer to positive images in the Eastern culture and associate western culture with passivity and cynicism. The two writers attempt to re-evaluate the 'Self' with references to the 'Other.'

### **Review of the Related Literature**

Since their publications, Delillo's *Falling Man* and Updike's *Terrorist* have received a wide spectrum of literary criticism and critics have studied in them different issues related to the texts' concern with 9/11 events. Written in remarkable styles, the two narratives have received two kinds of criticism; one considers them as mirroring of the American society's traumatic

effects in the aftermath of the events and the other interprets them as Neo-Orientalist narratives, that perpetuate the Orientalist discourse presented in prior 9/11 records and narratives.

In an article entitled “Exploring John Updike’s *Terrorist* as a Neo-Orientalist Narrative of the Arabo-Islamic World (2016)”, Muhamad Shahbaz Arif and Maqbool Ahmad discuss Updike’s *Terrorist* using a Neo-Orientalist interpretation of the text, as this latter the text “crea(te) and forti(fy) the so called binary of West and Islam, and portrayed them as irreconcilable entities”. Instead of trying to bridge the gap between ‘them’ and ‘us, the critic suggests “the narrative is likely to create further chasm between the two” (554) and, thus, permits the novel to be in the list of the narratives that belong to the Orientalist literature.

On the contrary, in his article entitled *Terrorism and the Critique of American Culture* (2015), Peter C. Herman treats Updike’s *Terrorist* as an exploration of the roots of terrorism in Islamic tradition. The critic interprets the text from two different perspectives; one concerns the post 9/11 discourse and the other is a critique of the American culture’s preoccupation with materialism and self- destructiveness. Herman sees *Terrorist* as an invitation for people to rethink about the “American culture” (712) and Updike’s project to understand terrorism in the post 9/11 era.

On a similar vein, in his article entitled *Islamist Critique of American Society: An Analysis of John Updike’s *Terrorist* and Mohsin Hamid’s *Reluctant Fundamentalist** (2016), Azhar Hameed and Afrah Abd al-Jabbar consider *Terrorist* as Updike’s critique of the American society and a justification for the religious fundamentalism saying: “Updike think [sic] that the devils at the start are the people of the west” The critics see the text as a criticism of the “American Materialism and consumerism, and colonialist nature of Western system of education” (10, 12). Updike’s critique of American culture, in the two critics’ view, is a way to review its policy towards the third world.

The three different reviews written on Updike's *Terrorist* are quite significant as they make references to Neo-Orientalism and Self-Critique approach. Nevertheless, the reviews seem to fall short of the ideas that will be discussed in this thesis, mainly the use of Slavoj Žižek's ideas in relation to the same theme.

In her thesis *Neo-Orientalism in Delillo's Falling Man* (2012), Chirin Achkar undertakes an analysis of *Falling Man* in relation to Delillo's essay *On The Ruins of The Future* (2001) and with references to Edward Said's *Orientalism*, and Jean Baudrillard's ideas on simulacra and simulation. The critic also refers to Slavoj Žižek's description of the attackers as "primitive barbarians" (57) in his *Desert of The Real*. Achkar says that Delillo refers to the two opposite cultures; the West and the East, providing views on both sides through characterization. She concludes that *Falling Man* shows Delillo's ideological insights into 9/11, making it another narrative in the list of the Neo-Orientalist body of literature.

Additionally, in his thesis entitled *Living in Dangerous Time: Identity and Anxiety in Don Delillo's White Noise and Falling Man* (2009), Gry Jacobsen discusses the similarities between the two narratives under analysis. Jacobsen analyses the two texts' characters uncertainties and their reactions towards the social conditions as a strategy to criticize the postmodern society "from the inside". This technique, in Gray's view, shows Delillo's novel as a pessimistic attitude toward the American identity. (50)

In her part, Kathryn Mary Elizabeth, in her study entitled *Fiction as resistance: The post 9/11 novel as an alternative to the dominant narrative* (2012), introduces a different view on Delillo's *Falling Man*. The critic emphasizes the dominance of technology in the American society as portrayed in the narrative. To sustain her opinion, she uses Delillo's accusation of American modernity saying: "It was America...that drew their fury... it was the high gloss of our modernity". The critic concludes her interpretation saying that Delillo's

novel is a call to reclaim the previous position of the US and regain “The foothold within the world” (29, 39).

Similarly, in her article *Falling Man Tropes and the New Cycle of vision in the Recent American novel* (2010), Rodica Mihaila analyses *Falling Man* with emphasis on its critique of contemporary male ethics. She, also, refers to Updike’s *Terrorist* to give credibility to her interpretation, focusing mainly on Updike’s protagonist, Ahmad’s ethics and the social conduct he acquired in the American society. The critic argues that *Falling Man* is Delillo’s vision of men falling “from the sense of security and prosperity”. She adds that the novel refers to the over-existing disconnectedness between people in the “new age of terror”. She concludes that Delillo’s novel shows the necessity of such terror for the “recognition of the face of the other” and for “the redemption of humanity”. The critic summarizes her analysis by saying that both novels criticize the self destructiveness of the “American exceptionalism” and suggest adopting an “ethical vision as an antidote” (87, 91, 92, 92, 94).

Don Delillo’s *Falling Man* and John Updike’s *Terrorist* are among the post 9/11 narratives that have received a large stock of critical analysis as they directly portray the events of September and their effects on the American society and people. Though the previous works have studied both texts from a Neo-Orientalist perspective and referred to the criticism of the American society, none of the researches conducted has reviewed the two texts in the light of Slavoj Žižek’s ideas of self-critique approach. Thus, the present research interprets Delillo’s *Falling Man* and Updike’s *Terrorist* engagement with the criticism of Western society and modernity as explored in the writings of Slavoj Žižek.

The pairing of Don Delillo’s *Falling Man* and John Updike’s *Terrorist* in a single study is not a random choice. The two novels belong to post 9/11 literature and they have many things in common in terms of theme and style. Also, the two narratives have their weight in the American literature and contribute in the scholarship on Orientalism and Neo-Orientalism.

In terms of structure, the present work is divided into a general introduction, three separated chapters, and a conclusion. The introduction reviews the theme of 9/11 in Western political discourses and literary field, putting a particular focus on Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* and John Updike's *Terrorist*. The first chapter entitled "Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* and John Updike's *Terrorist*: Text in Context" leafs through the historical background of the two texts under analysis, the literary techniques they deploy, and the plot summary of both novels and the biographies of their authors. The second chapter entitled "Neo-Orientalism: Slavoj Žižek's Neo-Orientalist Interpretation of 9/11 Events" is an introduction to Slavoj Žižek's self-critique theory advanced in his two works *Welcome to The Desert of the Real and Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle*. This chapter is a record of Žižek's views on the 9/11 attacks with reference to the American hegemonic foreign policy and criticism of its cultural values. The third chapter is a study of DeLillo and Updike's novels in the light of Žižek's Self-Critique approach. The chapter reviews the theme of 9/11 in both novels and then provides a Žižekian interpretation of *Falling Man* and *Terrorist*. The conclusion sums up the major ideas discussed in the work

## **Chapter One**

# **Don Delillo's *Falling Man* and John Updike's *Terrorist*: Text in Context**

## Chapter I

### Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* and John Updike's *Terrorist*: Texts in context

#### Introduction

9/11 attacks on US have provoked a diverse rubric of critical framework for they were a starting point of a new period in the American history and literature. Immediately after the attacks, the reading public expected fiction writers to give objective interpretations of the attacks. First responses to the events were reports and journal commentaries, providing eyewitnesses and evidences about the trauma of the day. The produced literary accounts were far from objectivity and gave importance to the psychological and emotional impact of the attacks, emphasizing themes like trauma, shock, and disillusionment. However, some other writers, such as Don DeLillo and John Updike focused on the Neo-Orientalist discourse and treated the West-East binaries. *Falling Man* and *Terrorist* were studied from a Neo-Orientalist perspective aiming at criticizing the American culture, beliefs, and especially its hegemonic foreign policy. As the title of this chapter suggests, it tends to give a historical and literary contextualization of DeLillo's *Falling Man* and Updike's *Terrorist*. The chapter spots light on the historical events that the novel is aware of and provides a clarification of the literary techniques used in both narratives.

#### I. Plot summaries of *Falling Man* and *Terrorist*

##### I. 1. *Falling Man*

DeLillo's *Falling Man* is about Keith Neudecker, a survivor of the 9/11 attacks. Keith is a 39-year-old lawyer who works in the World Trade Centre and escapes from the building after the crash. He goes unconsciously to his former apartment that he used to share with his wife, Lianne, and his only son, Justin. The trauma he experiences brings him with his family again after a long separation. The chattering events also get him into a romantic affair with another



survivor named Florence. His wife, Lianne leads a therapy group of Alzheimer patients and dedicates some of her time to take care of her mother Nina, who is a retired intellectual. Lianne is the kind of a person who has paranoiac obsession with terrorism, and, dislikes everything related to the Orient. However, her mother's boyfriend, Martin, is the only family member who dislikes the American beliefs and culture. After the attacks, Keith travels around the world playing professional poker as a strategy to recall his poker mates, who died in the 9/11 attacks. The Falling Man in the novel refers to an artist, who performs all kinds of tricks upside down. The rest of the novel tells the story of a middle Eastern Muslim called Hammad, who takes flight lessons on the gulf coast to execute the 9/11 attacks. The narrative reveals that Hammad is one of the hijackers who brought the World Trade Centre down. DeLillo makes of his novel a series of episodes lacking chronological order, with flash backs to the earlier periods in the lives of the characters, then goes back to the beginning of his narrative leaving the reader in front of an open end.

## ***I. 2. Terrorist***

*Terrorist* is about a main character called Ahmad Ashmawy Mulloy, who is an American born Muslim from an Egyptian father and a catholic Irish mother. Ahmad is a high school student, raised with the guidance of his monitor sheikh Rashid, who is an Imam. Ahmad sticks to his beliefs and tries to make his own understanding of the holy Quran. Ahmad finds himself in a country that seems to have lost its moral compass and is drifting toward self-destruction, a country where people remember their individual rights, but have little sense of their social responsibilities.

Ahmad's mother's religious infidelity makes her open towards sexuality and relationships with men, which is the main reason of Ahmad's dislike of her. At the same time, Ahmad has an idolized image of his Egyptian father, who left him and his mother when he was only three years old. The high school counselor named Jack Levy plays the role of a guide to Ahmad,

advising him to build a good career, for he notices Ahmad's intelligence and uniqueness. Unfortunately, Ahmad follows Sheikh Rashid's advice to be a truck driver. Sheikh Rashid sees that studies will not be beneficial for Ahmad as it will benefit the American government. After getting his job as a truck driver in a furnishing company that belongs to a family called the chehabs, Ahmad gets voluntarily involved in terrorism. In a terrorist suicide mission, Ahmad is supposed to blow himself in his work truck in Lincoln tunnel. On his way to execute the intended mission, Jack Levy intervenes and tries to convince Ahmad to abandon the plan and go back to his normal life. Levy informs Ahmad that his imam and the Chehabs are part of an Islamist cell planning to launch major attacks on New York City. When approaching the location of the bombing, Ahmad rethinks about the interpretation of the verses of the Quran he has internalized, and realizes that Islam never asks people to kill those of different religions.

## **II Short biographies of Don DeLillo and John Updike**

### **II. 1. Don DeLillo**

Donald Richard DeLillo, an American postmodernist novelist, playwright, and essayist, was born in November, 1936 in New York. His works deal with serious subjects like nuclear war, cold war, digital age, global terrorism, and politics. His attendance of Fordham University in New York has exposed him to experimental arts, jazz, and cinema, which marked their influence on his early works. DeLillo's early novels are *Americana* (1971) and *End Zone* (1972). DeLillo lived for a while in Greece, where he wrote his *White Noise* (1985). Upon his return to America, DeLillo added *Libra* (1988) and *Mao II* (1991). DeLillo's *Underworld* (1998) entered him into the world of celebrity, for its concern with consumerism and modern lifestyle. After his big success with *Underworld*, DeLillo produced less famous works *The Body Artist* (2003). He returned to celebrity with *Falling Man* (2007), which treats 9/11

events. Some readers find DeLillo's writings cold and abstract for his dark sense of humor, but he is one of the most awarded fiction writers in the contemporary era. In 2012 he received the Carl Sandburg Literary Award for his contribution to the literary world, followed by the Medal for his distinguished contribution to American letters in 2015. Currently, DeLillo lives in Westchester County in New York.

## **II. 2. John Updike**

The only child of his parents, born on March 18, 1932 in Pennsylvania, John Hoyer Updike is the son of Wesley Updike, a junior high school math teacher. Updike had a lifelong interest in arts and reading. As a child, drawing had always been his passion, but writing was his own manner of drawing, in which he was much more successful. John Updike wrote twenty-three novels that depict the American social history. He achieved fame with his sequels including *Rabbit, Run* (1960), *Rabbit is Rich* (1981), and *Rabbit at Rest* (1990), each chronicled middle class American life under the social upheaval of the 1960's. Updike was known for his critical approach towards the American beliefs and modernity, especially in his *Terrorist* (2006). For Updike, a good theme is the one that describes the death of religious belief as replaced by sex, movies, sports, cars, and family obligation. In his novel *In Beauty of the Lilies* (1996), Updike depicts the death of the American religion and its substitution by material life. In 1963, John Updike received the National Book Award for his novel *The Centaur* (1963). The next year at the age of 32, he became the youngest person ever to be elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters. Updike wrote over 60 books, including novels, collections of short stories, poems, art criticisms, memoirs, dramas, essays, and literary criticisms. His awards include the Rosenthal Award, the Howells Medal, and the Signet Society Medal for Achievement in the Arts, the Edward McDowell Medal for Literature, and the 1998 National Book Foundation Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters. His last novel was *The Widows of*

*Eastwick* (2008). Updike died of lung cancer in January 2009. *My Father's Tears* (2009) are his final collection of short stories, published the year he died.

### **III Historical and Literary Context**

#### **III. 1 Historical Context**

##### **III.1.1 9/11 Clash**

Few events in the U.S history have had the same impact on the American society as the events of 9/11. As the world super power, America considered that it had no real enemies that would threaten its power and hegemony, especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, 9/11 shattered America's confidence in its power. On September 11, 2001, four jet planes targeted the US; two of the planes hit New York's Twin Towers, another crashed in Washington DC, and the fourth plane crashed into a field outside the city. About three thousand people were killed that day, most were in the buildings that the hijacked jet hit (Faradin 7). According to the U.S government, the hijackers were a group of terrorists executing a suicide mission plotted by a terrorist organization named Al-Qaida.

The conflict between Muslims and Christians goes back to the crusades which created bitter feelings between Muslims and Christians. After World War II, Israel was created as a refuge for the wandering Jewish who survived the war. They settled in Palestine, taking the lands of thousands of Palestinians, who were, in return, driven off their homes. This also created bitter feeling between Jewish and Muslims. The Israel settlement in Palestine was encouraged by the US who has supported its military slaughters in Palestine. For this reason, Muslim fundamentalists began to target the US too as a defending strategy on the holy land.

##### **III. 1.2 America's War on Terror**

The 9/11 attacks took place after nine months of the election of George Bush as the US president. Shortly after the events, Bush, in a series of his speeches, explained the enterprise of his doctrine, which dictated that the US had the right to use military forces against any state

that tries to own weapons of mass destruction. Bush's policy emphasized the strategy of pre-emption. This strategy is what America calls the right of self-defence or the engagement with pre-emptive attacks on potential enemies, by attacking them before they could launch a strike on the US. The immediate application of Bush's administration was the invasion of Afghanistan in early October, 2001, for its refusal to extradite Osama Ben Laden to the American authorities without America giving evidence that he was responsible for the 9/11 attacks on the pentagon. This refusal was considered by the US as a justification for the invasion. The same policy was applied also in Bush's doctrine as a justification for the Iraqi war in 2003. The US accused Saddam Housein of owning Weapons of Mass Destruction and of being involved in the attacks despite the lack of any evidence that Iraq had any relationship with Al-Qaeda (Atkins 94-6). Consequently, a massive investment in security and surveillance rose an anti- Islamic sentiment with a general mood of paranoia. Bush's administration was described as not different from that of Ben Laden and Islamic fundamentalists, for its establishment of a binary apposition between Good and Evil, civilization and barbarism. By trying to legitimate the pre-emptive strike policy, Bush was seen as the most hated president of the contemporary era. He was unable to make an objective reaction against terror and this appeared in his declaration of war on Iraq in 2003, to appear as the nationalist American leader. (Kellner "9/11, Spectacles" 14)

### **III. 1. 3 The Media Spectacle**

The image of the twin towers, being hit by the hijacked planes, was repeatedly broadcast on American television channels as a way to expose it as a highly traumatic event in the history of America. The US television and mass media created war hysteria, by privileging the "clash of civilization" model, instead of providing logical accounts of what really happened and occurred. In his article *9/11 Spectacles of Terror, and Media Manipulation: A critique of Jihadists and Bush Media Politics*, Douglas Kellner argues that September 11 terror attacks in

New York are “the most documented event in history” and believes that the media’s association of the events with Islamic terrorism promoted “war fever” (5), and asked for military solution to the global terrorism. Mass media spread fear through an excessive broadcast of murder and violent scenes, advertising a wide threat coming from foreign enemies. Television networks warned about a coming war against terrorism and the necessity of a military response to the 9/11. Even Radio talk spread hatred and hysteria, calling for violence against Arab Muslims. These excessive reports on the 9/11 played the opposite role after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. Contrary to all what the world media showed, the US media reported the invasion as an act of patriotism and rarely showed the civilians who were killed by the American military force.

### **III. 1. 4 New World Order**

A term often used to refer to new periods in history that witnessed fundamental changes in the world politics or in the balance of power. The first uses of this concept were around World War I, and World War II. It has also been used to refer to the new order advanced after the WWII. The recent use of the term is associated with the end of the Cold War. It refers to the post Cold War era (Heinz Duthel 140).

During the 1990s, the rules that governed America before were out of date, especially after the collapse of the Berlin wall. This era was marked by the appearance of two philosophical responses; one that is considered as optimistic, represented by Frances Fukuyama, who saw this stage as the “End of History”, as capitalism has triumphed. The other was pessimistic presented by Samuel Huntington who predicted the opposite by considering the world to be in a “Civilizational war” waged by the West and the East. However, the American new political philosophy considered the world as getting safer and started promoting human rights and democracy abroad (Applebaun 2). This policy was

disapproved by everyone, for its contradiction with what U.S seems to practice. In a call for the so-called democracy, U.S complained about the Anti-democratic policy in Kenya, but did not do the same with Saudi Arabia. It also ordered sanctions on India and Pakistan for possessing nuclear weapons and not on Israel.

Before the occurrence of 9/11 events in America, Bush's administration was more interested in self-defense. By September 2001, Bush already started promoting this policy in public. After the collapse, U.S had Russia and China and other countries as new allies. This incident, also, intensified some old relation with old allies like Israel. Bush's administration oscillated between defending the American security from future attacks and leading what was called the War against terror. Surprisingly, the failure of the US promotion of democracy was confirmed by the 9/11 attacks. In the immediate aftermath of 9/11 attacks, Bush placed Yasser Arafat among the terrorist group whom U.S must destroy (Applebaun 17).

### **III. 2 Literary background: Don DeLillo and John Updike's literary techniques**

#### **III. 2. 1 Postmodernism in *Falling Man* and *Terrorist***

*Falling Man* (2007) and *Terrorist* (2006) are recent postmodern works. In their two narratives DeLillo and Updike reflect Postmodernism in terms of themes and form. The novels reflect the loss of truth in the American context as a major characteristic of the postmodern thought. In *Falling Man*, the characters are depicted as being lost and seem unable to find the way to reality. At the same time, they are confused about who is the guilty and who is the real victim in September events. Lianne, Martin, and Nina are confused and lost as they have no fixed opinion about Islam. Besides, the media provides them with more confusing facts and theories about the events. Updike also reports the theme of the loss of truth and reality characteristic of postmodernism. He shows his protagonist Ahmad oscillating between belief and disbelief, between his own analysis of the events and others' insights into them, mainly his mentor.

Further, *Falling Man* and *Terrorist* treat the theme of paranoia. The major characters in both novels are obsessed about Easterners as being terrorists and a source of danger.

In terms of techniques, the narratives are full of postmodern techniques such as pastiche, intertextuality, Historiographic Metafiction, and flashbacks. The two novels can be considered as pastiches, for they form a hotchpotch of history, religion, and political concerns. Furthermore, *Falling Man* and *Terrorist* can be referred to as Historiographic Metafiction<sup>1</sup>, because both are fictional stories set in the middle of a real historical period in US. This makes the two novels a mixture of fiction told with the use of flashbacks about historical events that have already occurred before and after the fall of the twin towers. Also, the two texts under study are intertexted with other earlier literary texts. These include references to Kierkegaard in *Falling Man* and direct quotations from the Quran in *Terrorist*. Still, the two texts are open ended narratives; they do not give a clear vision of the future of the characters, which is symbolic to the unknown future of the US people.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has framed the historical background of Delillo's *Falling Man* and Updike's *Terrorist* and the plot summaries of both novels. It has also provided short biographies of the two authors. Through the literary background discussed above, the chapter has proved that *Falling Man* and *Terrorist* are postmodern texts due to their use of techniques of postmodern literature in their discussion of September Eleven attacks .



## **Chapter Two**

# **Neo- Orientalism: Slavoj Zizek's Neo-Orientalist interpretation of 9/11 events**

## Chapter II

### Neo-Orientalism: Slavoj Žižek's Neo-Orientalist Interpretation of 9/11 Events

#### Introduction

The present chapter explores the theory of Neo-Orientalism as advanced in some writings of the Slovenian cultural critic/philosopher, Slavoj Žižek. The chapter opens with an insight into old Orientalism, highlighting its beginning, basic features, and weight in contemporary postcolonial theory and , then, leafs through Slavoj Žižek's interpretation of 9/11 terrorist attacks as explained in his *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* and *Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle*. The Neo-Orientalist perspective advanced in Žižek's writing, as will be shown in this chapter, is an act of self-criticism and self-revaluation; he criticizes the West and eulogizes the East. Žižek's major sources of influence and references include Western modernity and culture, technology, and American War Terror.

#### 1. Orientalism

Orientalism is a discourse in post-colonial criticism, developed in the second half of the twentieth century by the Palestinian cultural critic Edward Said. As its title suggests, Orientalism is concerned with the Orient or the East, the part of the world that includes the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia. In his famous book *Orientalism* (1978), Said examines some major Western constructions and interpretations of Oriental people, cultures, languages, history, and religions, framed in subjective and stereotypical images/ representations. Said suggests that Western subjective accounts of Oriental people and their culture give birth to an academic thought that sets up differences between two worlds; the East and the West. He writes that Orientalism "is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of time) 'the Occident'" (10). In their writings, a great deal of Western travelers, writers, philosophers, and artists make references

to subjective images and stereotypical patterns recurring in Oriental cultures. They depict these cultures as being backward, homogenous, tyrannical, and static. Orientalism, Said Adds, theorizes and endorses these subjective portrayals of the East to legitimately exercise authority and power over them. Thus, following Foucault's theory of discourse described in his *The Archeology of Knowledge* (1969), Said writes that "Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient- dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it...a Western style for dominating restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (11).

## **2. Neo-Orientalism**

A term used, in contemporary critical theory writings, to refer to modern interpretation of Orientalist thinking that marginalizes Muslims and Orients. From this perspective, one may say that Neo- Orientalism is Orientalism in a new name. Neo- Orientalism, following this understanding, has many things in common with old Orientalism. In an article entitled "From Orientalism to neo-Orientalism: Early and Contemporary Constructions of Islam and the Muslim world," (2016) Karboua Salim defines Neo- Orientalism as:

A body of knowledge, news, analyses, and current affairs comments, created and propagated by a loose coalition of intellectuals, pundits, opinion makers, and to a lesser extent political figures of Western public life and enjoy a special and affective relationship with Israel... In this sense, it is ideologically motivated (22).

In this understanding, Neo-Orientalism carries on many of the themes and concerns of old Orientalism in its focus on essentialist representations of the Orient. Yet, these Orientalist representations have been widely intensified following 9/11 terrorist attacks on the world trade center in September 2001. The US government accused Eastern Muslims to be involved

in the plot execution of the attacks. The attacks have been justified with reference to Oriental religious fundamentalism. The Western world viewed the East, and especially Muslims, as a political threat and a source of terror for Western civilization and modernity. Following this line of thought, the notions of Fundamentalism and terrorism become the focus of Neo-Orientalism.

### **3. Slavoj Žižek and Neo-Orientalism**

Žižek is a Slovenian philosopher, critic, and academic writer whose works are a mix of philosophical theory and political ideas. In a unique humorous style, full of anecdotes, Žižek tries a hand on a variety of topics and issues, resolutely discussed from different angles. His major themes include Western modernity, democracy, Terrorism, 9/11 attacks, the War on Terror, religion, and others. The theorist draws on three main areas of influence; philosophy, politics, and psychoanalysis. Thus, a large part of his ideas are inspired by the writings of George Hegel in philosophy, Karl Marx in politics, and Jacques Lacan in Psychoanalysis. He enriches contemporary thought and philosophy with a number of books, including, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*(2002), *Iraq: The Borrowed kettle* (2004), *The Fragile Absolute, or Why the Christian Legacy is Worth Fighting For* (2000), *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (1999), *The Spectre is Still Roaming Around* (2000), and others. As a postmodernist writer and critic theorist, Žižek draws lot of his ideas and arguments from earlier writers like Fredrick Nietzsche, and also contemporary critics such as Baudrillard. The Nietzschean influence on Žižek is remarkably noticed in his intertextual references to his works in his essays and books. Also, Jean Baudrillard's thought are present in Žižek's works, especially in his treatment of the 9/11 events and US policy. Almost all of Baudrillard's works show a self critique approach, mainly in his critique of the consumer society, in his *Simulacra and Simulation* (1994) and *The Spirit of Terrorism: And Requiem for the Twin Towers* (2002), which treat the events of 9/11 in a relation to the western hegemonic policy.

Žižek is interested in the East-West binary oppositions. In *The New Orientalists* (2007), Ian Almond, a British author, interprets Žižek's *Welcome to The Desert of the Real* and *Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle* as Neo-Orientalist works. The Neo-Orientalist vision of Žižek consists in praising Eastern cultures and criticizing the west to attempt a self critique. In his portrayal of Eastern culture, Žižek's books associate characteristics of courage, adventure, and sacrifice with the East and describe American cultures as being immersed in pleasures, hedonism, and materialism. Almond remarks what Žižek says about the Palestinian suicide bombers as being more alive and in contact with the real world compared to the citizens of New York, who are immersed in life pleasures. Almond sees this praising of Islam and Muslims does show a remarkable contradiction between the former and the later statements of Žižek. For him, this praising is a traditional critic of Islam. Furthermore, Almond considers Žižek's strong objection about European hegemony over developing countries as "too obvious", and "spring from the same sense of frustration" (182). Almond suggests that Žižek perpetuates a traditional Orientalist representation of Eastern cultures and religions. It is Orientalism in a new form and a new name. In his main line of argument, Almond refers to the fact that Žižek takes much of his references from Hegel's philosophy on religion. He claims that Hegel's "description of Islam as an abstract, transcendental, sublime and fanatical faith throws an interesting light on Žižek's own response to the Muslim world in texts such as *The Borrowed Kettle* and *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*" (178). Therefore, Almond considers Žižek and Hegel's "vision of Islam" to be analogous, writing: Hegel and Žižek's reference to Islam, placed alongside one another, do bear some uncanny points of similarity" (178). Hegel's "religious philosophy advanced in his *Lectures On Religion* (1824) and *The Philosophy of History* (1830), as Almond argues, portrays Islam as an "essentially fanatical religion" (179).

#### **4. Žižek as a postmodernist writer**

Slavoj Žižek is an idiosyncratic Postmodernist writer and his works have many things in common with the writings and ideas advanced in the postmodern movement of the sixties. The starting point of Žižek's analysis of postmodernity is the theory of the 'Risk society' advanced by the German sociologist Ulrich Beck in his book *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* (1992). Risk society capitalizes on the various threats underway in the postmodern society, such as global warming, modifications of plants and animal genes, terrorism, and references to arms of mass destruction. Therefore, part of Žižek's work focuses on the analysis of contemporary phenomena, events, and experiences, drawing illustrations and arguments from popular culture and cinema. Also, following postmodernism's distrust of authoritative meta-narratives and despotic ethos, Žižek's works challenge many of today's assumptions of liberal academy including totalitarianism and Otherness. Still, his works are structured in a humorous style that holds a patented disrespect for the modernist distinction between high and low styles and also praises three postmodern premises; the freedom of deconstruction, doubt, and self-criticism. In *Welcome to The Desert of the Realand Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle* Žižek deconstructs Western stereotypical analysis of the events, grounded in traditional West-East binary oppositions; the West as the victim and the East as the terrorist, to stress, in return, doubt and self-criticism.

#### **5. 9/11 Terrorist Attacks on the World Trade Centre in Žižek's *Welcome to the Desert of the Realand Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle***

9/11 events have been an important subject in many of Slavoj Žižek's works, but deeply discussed in his *Welcome to the Desert of the Realand The Borrowed kettle*. Away from the clash of civilization thesis, West –East binary oppositions, and also trauma theory, *Welcome to The Desert of the Real* provides a breathtaking analysis of the events in relation to Western modernity, late capitalism, and consumer ideology. Attempting self-criticism, Žižek interprets

9/11 attacks as the apotheosis of Western modernity and late capitalism, rather than simply a fundamentalist terrorist act. In his analysis of the subject, Žižek uses Jack Lacan's psychoanalytical concepts of the 'Symbolic,' and the 'Real' to compare Eastern fundamentalism and Western hedonism; he associates the East with the 'Real' and considers the Western world to stand for the 'Symbolic' realm. The real is ambiguous and refers to both material reality and that which cannot be symbolized and which is experienced as traumatic, while the symbolic refers to symbolic structures which provide a subjective position from which a sense of identity can be found in relation to others. In this sense, Muslims are the Real that cannot be symbolized by language or any other mediator. The Symbolic is the West who structures its identity and finds it through its critique of Muslims 'Other'.

Žižek's view on the 9/11 attacks, expressed in his *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* and *Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle*, are most originated from Baudrillard's thought on the same subject. Baudrillard has discussed his self-critique approach in many of his books, especially in his discussion of postmodernist society and context. He refers to it as the simulation theory in his book *Simulacra and Simulation* (2004). According to both theorists, 9/11 attacks on New York and the Pentagon are results of the US hegemonic policy.

Žižek's self-critique approach involves criticism of Western new technologies. He argues, in his *Desert of the Real*, that these technologies present a real global threat. The enemies of humanity will not be some terrorist fundamentalists, but the new viruses and diseases developed from the use of technological devices saying "We are entering a new era of paranoiac warfare in which the greatest task will be to identify the enemy and his weapons. In this new warfare, the agents assume their acts less and less publicly" (37).

In the opening of his *Desert of the Real*, Žižek compares 9/11 attacks to the 1970s terrorism in Germany. In accordance with the series of protest movements that prevailed in the 60 all over the world, a group of German students broke the fight with the German Red

army to protest dictatorship, old archaic system, and support the war in Vietnam. Yet, the revolt was a failure. The German army engaged in acts of vandalism in the city and bombed the supermarkets. The destruction and the bombing of the supermarkets, in Žižek's understanding, have been purposeful and decisive, meant to awaken the German people from their ideological numbness and "apolitical consumerist stance". Drawing on 1970s German terrorism, Žižek justifies 9/11 terrorist attacks in America in reference to consumerism, asking an ironic question "and does the same not hold on a different level, for today's fundamental terror?"(9). Here then, 9/11 events in Žižek's understanding, are justified by reference to American consumerism. Žižek shares Frederic Jameson and François Lyotard's vision of postmodernist society which is characterised by depthlessness, lavish materialism, and unconditional consumerism..

Continuing the discussion on the characteristics of postmodern society, Žižek harks back or evokes Jean Baudrillard's notion of 'hyper-reality' and Guy Debois's 'society of spectacle.' He describes Western cultures with excessive consumerism, lavish materialism, and high technological development. For Americans, this hyper-real world, Žižek explains, has no alternative and the more they are engaged in it, the more they embrace it; it secures them satisfaction, serenity, and endless newness. This hyper reality for Žižek is the cause for the paranoiac obsession of the West. The westerners, in Žižek's view, are not aware of the unreality of life they lead; the sense of satisfaction and pleasures it provides creates a sense of fear and suspicion to lose it. Consequently, they live a kind of paranoiac life, where the most they are immersed in it, the higher their fear is to lose it.

Drawing some divergent differences between American and Muslim peoples, Žižek describes Muslims as being life affirmers and risk takers, while Westerners as being passive and non-indulgent. The Muslims give up and sacrifice their lives for what they believe is right, while the westerners cannot even imagine a cause for which they would risk their lives. The



difference, Žižek argues, reveals an ideological antagonism between Western consumerist life and Muslim radicalism. Žižek also interprets this antagonism in a Hegelian perspective, referring to the master-slave relationship, reversing the Western essentialist binary opposition, placing the West in the position of the servant as they cling to life and its pleasures, whereas the Muslims become the masters who embrace life challenges and risks. Still, following Fredrick Nietzsche's, Žižek describes the Western man as the "Last Man" saying: "We in the West are Nietzschean Last Men, immersed in stupid daily pleasures, while the Muslim radicals are ready to risk everything" ("Welcome" 40). In an ironic manner, Žižek satirizes the Western culture's immersion in simulation, hedonism, and material pleasures. His strategy is to strike a blow to the stark differences between Muslims and Christians, comparing Palestinian suicide bombers and the New York citizens and American soldier. Then he says that the suicide bombers by blowing themselves are "more alive" than the "New York yuppies jogging along the Hudson River in order to keep their bodies in shape". These two opposite kinds of life are, according to Žižek, the key difference between life and death adding that what makes life worth living is the awareness that there is something for which to die, what he calls "honour, freedom, dignity" (88). Following this comparison, Žižek sees the attacks as a result of socio-political conditions and not planned by Muslims. Besides, Žižek considers the attacks far from being a fundamentalist terrorist deed, but rather as the result of global economic interest. In this comparison shaped in a self critique, Žižek invites the West to see into their wrong deeds and put an end to the life of pleasures and "desire life like water and yet drink death like wine" (90).

## **6. Christianity, Islam, and the Western Church in Žižek's Understanding**

The Western Christian church gets due attention in Žižek's criticism. The theorist points out the hypocritical practices and religious transgressions worked out by the church fathers whom he calls, in his *Desert of the Real*, "the infamous opus Dei, the church's own white mafia".

Major References, here, include absolute papal laws, secret sexual perversion, romantic adventures, and cases of paedophilia-which are justified and interpreted as internal problems within the church structure rather than transgressions. Žižek confirms these transgressions to be “An inherent product of (the church) very institutional symbolic organization, not just a series of particular criminal cases” (29). Žižek’s thought is explained by juxtaposing Christianity and Islam; the theorist cites Islam to have achieved the best human record in terms of tolerance toward other religions saying: “human right record of Islam ...is much better than of Christianity” (41). Reintroducing Baudrillard’s view that considers the attacks as not a result of a death drive, but “The increase in the power of power heightens the will to destroy it. And it was party to its own destruction” (Baudrillard 7). Žižek denounces the attribution of terrorism to Islam and Muslims saying: “we are dealing not with a feature inscribed into Islam as such but with outcomes of modern socio-political conditions” (41).

Žižek considers cruelty and fundamentalism as major characteristics of the West, which they attribute to the Third World countries. He sustains his opinion by referring to the two million populist Christian fundamentalists drawn by their false comprehension and practice of Christianity saying: “The Catholic Church itself relies on...two levels of ...unwritten rules...first...Opus Dei...sexual abuse of children by priests” (“Welcome” 29). Žižek then reminds us of the existing fundamentalism in Christianity and says that if the west associates the East with fundamentalism, they should start by reviewing the Christian practices that they have been supporting. Just like , in his work *The Spirit of Terrorism* Jean Baudrillard describes Terrorism to be present in all western countries (5).

Still, Žižek refers to a number of terrorist cases America is believed to be involved in. America pretends to be a meditating agent of peace in the war against terrorism, providing humanitarian aids to the local populations, but one can never be sure , as Žižek argues, of what American planes flying above Afghanistan drop; bombs or food parcels. Also to sustain

the above argument, Žižek draws attention to the American human right laws America pretends to support. After the 9/11 attacks, America legitimized the use of all kinds of torture on the so called terrorists. This practice, as it is believed, would save hundreds of others. Nevertheless, the real reason behind the use of torture, according to Žižek, is to punish and break down the enemy psychologically.

Žižek uses “the true catastrophe” to refer not to the 9/11 events, but to describe the American hypocrisy as it calls itself the global terror fighter, while on an American TV channel a public statement was made about the inhuman treatments of Arab prisoners. The statement has called for torturing them in all brutal ways because, in the American view, they are not considered as human beings. Žižek supposes if an Arab country does the same on an American prisoner, Americans would see the torture as inhuman, but since America does the act, it is perceived as a legitimized procedure in their so- called war on terror. Referring to other people by non-humans shows the depth of the US non humanity and self-centeredness, considering its people as superior to other ethnic groups. In the American view, this feeling of superiority gives them the privilege and the right to treat other ethnic groups in a less human manner.

Žižek deduces that the new US politics in its new structure is the “political equivalent to catholic paedophilia” (*Iraq* 55) in terms of ethics. Žižek also speaks about the West’s privileging the WTC catastrophe over other catastrophes that took place in the third world, like the mass bombing and gas-poisoning of Kurds in Iraq in the early 1990s—slaughters that are not elevated by the media.

## **7. The American war on Iraq (2003)**

Following postmodern thought, Žižek questions the Western passivity and submission to authoritative ideologies. Western people owe obedience to the American authoritative

discourses. In the opening of his *Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle*, Žižek discusses American attacks on Iraq in 2003 as justified by the American government, giving three unreasonable justifications; the first concerns Iraq's ownership of weapons of Mass Destruction, considered as a global threat on the West, but the CIA<sup>2</sup> proved the opposite; the second justification concerns the involvement of Saddam Hussein in 9/11 attacks, as a head of the terrorist organization (Al-Qaida)<sup>3</sup>, yet having no evidence for Saddam's indictment in the affair, America ends up in another justification, which is Saddam's dictatorial regime.

By exposing the three paradoxical unreasonable justifications of the American war on Iraq, the theorist argues that the adopted reasons fulfill one purpose; to serve the American interests in the Middle East. "Ideological belief in Western democracy- Bush's 'democracy is God's gift to humanity'; the assertion of US hegemony in the New World Order; and economic interests" (4). From this perspective, the Iraq war, as Žižek's suggests, "is so clearly about more than Iraq. It is about more even than the future of the Middle East and the war on terror. It is about what sort of role the United States intends to play in the twenty first century" (5). Žižek deduces that America is sure that Iraq does not possess the weapons of mass destruction simply because it would never risk entering the Iraqi territory knowing the presence of the arms in the country. Instead, America attacked Iraq because it believed it would be a future threat for the US power. From this perspective, America, in Žižek's terms, "relies on violent assertion of the paranoid logic of total control over future threats" (14).

As a confirmation of what Žižek referred to as the true reason of the attacks which is economic interests, he asked a question on why America attacked Iraq and not North Korea, despite the fact that the latter already possessed WMD (Weapons of Mass Destruction). The answer he gives is that the US' desire for the Iraqi oil led to the construction of its policy based on what Žižek calls, the one that acts 'Globally' and thinks 'locally' (20). In this sense,

America does not care about the damage it is doing to the rest of the world but what matters is how to reach its local benefits.

## **Conclusion**

The chapter has leafed through Žižek's interpretation of the 9/11 terrorist attacks as advanced in his *Welcome to Desert of the Real* and *Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle*. Žižek's interpretation of the events is a critical assessment of Western socio-cultural values, American foreign policy, and the War on Terror. Žižek makes an appeal for US and westerners to reconsider all the mentioned facts, because they are fighting "false battles" (19). For him, they should focus on what kind of society is emerging in their countries and what political order is resulting from what is called 'the war on terror'. In his trial to confirm that his critique is not another perpetuation of the old Orientalist discourse, he says in his book *Welcome to The Desert of the Real* "the terrorists betray the true spirit of Islam, they do not express the interests and hopes of the poor Arab masses" (38)

## **Chapter Three**

**Self- Critique in Delillo's *Falling Man* and John Updike's  
*Terrorist***

## Chapter III

### Self-critique in Don Delillo's *Falling Man* and John Updike's *Terrorist*

“The fact that we have dreamed of this everyone without exception has dreamt of it\_\_ because none can avoid dreaming of the destruction of any power that has become hegemonic to this degree\_ is unacceptable to the western moral conscience. Yet it is a fact, and one which indeed can be measured by the emotive of all that has been said and written in the effort to dispel it (Baudrillard, *The Spirit Of Terrorism*, 2003) (05)

#### Introduction

The present chapter studies self-criticism in Don Delillo's *Falling Man* and John Updike's *Terrorist* in the light of Slavoj Žižek's self critique theory advanced in his *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* (2002) and *Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle* (2004). It leafs through Žižek's major ideas presented in both narratives. These include, in the vanguard, his interpretation of American intervention in the Third World through the War on Terror, his criticism of western materialism and artificial life, and ultimately, his anxiety about Western high technological development.

Epochal events, terrorist attacks, threatening of the American freedom—all are comments and interpretations given by politicians, commentators, and journalists about the September eleven catastrophe. Considered as a turning point in the American history, the events have received a global attention. They are discussed in the American academy, in literary and philosophical circles, and by mass media. A plethora of 9/11 narratives have emerged shortly in the aftermath of the attacks like Richard Grey's *Open Doors, Closed Minds: American Prose Writing at a Time of Crisis* (2008), Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud And Incredibly Close* (2005), Amy Waldman's *The Submission* (2003), Nicholas

Rinaldi's *Between Two Rivers*, (2004) , David Llewellyn's *Eleven* (2006), Jay Mc Inerney's *The Good Life* (2006) and others. Post 9/11 narratives portray and sustain some stereotypical representations and assumptions of the Muslim world. Like in the old Orientalist narratives, *Falling Man* and *Terrorist* emphasize the disparities that separate the Eastern and Western worlds in terms of culture, traditions, and beliefs.

When discussing well- known post 9/11 narratives, which directly revive the trauma of the day and treat their effects on the American society, Don Delillo's *Falling Man* and John Updike's *Terrorist* come to the fore. In the view of many scholars, these novels provide a fertile ground of analysis on multiple subjects, including trauma, religion, global capitalism, terrorism, among other things. These narratives are "a step toward beginning a new kind of writing that does not easily conform to Orientalist conventions and simply perpetuate existing traditions. It is a writing that challenges these conventions and traditions that are informed by the familiar oppositions between "them" and "us", East and West, and the pre-modern and modern" (Gamal 51). They encourage critical responses to the description of Muslims presented in their texts. Unsurprisingly, they are much taken as Neo-Orientalist as they perpetuate the Neo- Orientalist representative disparities established between the Western and the Eastern worlds, already detailed in Western scholarship, records, and philosophy.

Don Delillo literary work tries a hand on a variety of subject matters and themes, including nuclear war, "violent and paranoid plots of American history like the Kennedy assassination and the Cold War, the machinations of capitalism, international terrorism, and postmodern media culture" (Frost online). Delillo's first novel *Americana* published in 1971 to his *Zero K* (2016), the theme of terrorism looms largely, but deeply explored in post 9/11 novel, *Falling Man*. In this novel, Delillo considers the theme of terrorism in US context in relation to American politics and culture. He also uses the East as his reference to attempt his critique of Western modernity, in general, and American culture, in particular. From this



perspective, the author sees into the events critically, engaging both western and Islamic worlds. Delillo establishes an interactive relation between the West and the East, shown through a critique of the later in reference to the former.

*Falling Man* is about a group of people who survive the 9/11 attacks and the experiences they undergo in its aftermath. The text's narrative plot follows events in the life of one of the American survivors of 9/11, Keith Neudecker. Intersected with the main story are a series of other stories or episodes in the life of some American and Eastern people, including Lianne, Keith's wife, Nina, Lianne's mother, Florence, Keith's girl friend, Martin, Nina's boyfriend and the two Muslim Easterners Hammad and Amir. Keith witnesses the attacks and, therefore, his life shatters in the aftermath; he no longer feels at ease with Lianne and keeps searching for a kind of comfort he does not find until he meets the very day of the collapse Florence; another survivor of the attacks. Feeling that she can understand him and share with him the moments they have experienced when the attacks took place, Keith enters into a romantic relation with her. Lianne also no longer live the same life she used to live before the attacks, as she becomes obsessed with the attacks and starts to suspect everything around as threatening her life. As a way to re-establish her comfort, she occupies herself by organizing therapy sessions for people who have trouble with memory. Nina and her boyfriend Martin are two other important characters in the novel. Martin is an example of the European man, who criticizes the American society, beliefs, and system. Martin normalizes the attacks and considers them as a retaliation for the America's crimes in the Third World.

The narrative also tells the story of two Muslims; Hammad and Amir, who receive special training to accomplish the mission of bombing the World Trade Centre on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September 2001 to avenge American modernity. When executing the plot, Hammad is described tasting the last moments of his life passionately. The bombing of the towers does not appear clearly in the novel, but the narrative's last chapter puts more emphasis on the last

moments of Hammad's life and Keith's first moments with trauma. Hammad dies in the explosion and Keith's story with disillusionment begins following the fall.

John Hoyer Updike is known for his discussion of issues related to middle class struggles, religion, and marriage among others. About his fiction them, Updike says: "My subject is the American Protestant small-town middle class. I like middles" (McTavish 170). Much of his books have been rewarded many times, such as *Rabbit Redux* (1971), *Rabbit at Rest* (1990), and *Pigeon Feathers* (1962). The theme of terrorism does not surface in Updike's works until the collapse of the World Trade Centre in the terrorist attacks of September 2003. The author finds in the events a material for his *Terrorist*, released in 2006. As in *Falling Man*, *Terrorist* is obsessed with West-East binary oppositions and cultural disparities. The texts also concern the Western cultural value system and the high technological development to be involved in the collapse. Like Delillo, Updike strikes a blow to the Western modernity and American cultural practices. He critically reads Western modernity in comparison with Eastern culture and values.

*Terrorist* narrates the story of a Muslim character, named Ahmad Ashmawy Mulloy, who is a high school teenager, from an Egyptian father and an Irish American mother called Teresa. The plot showcases episodes in the life of Ahmad, including his family relationships, days at school, his dealing with the school counsellor, Jack Levy, and the Quranic mentor, sheikh Rashid, his involvement with terrorism, and his plot to explode the Lincoln Tunnel by a truck. Ahmad's faith gives him the power to resist his attraction to his school mate Joryleen. His mentor sheikh Rashid plays an important role in the events and Ahmad's life; he manipulates Ahmad in a way that he comes to hate all that is related to America. Consequently, he convinces Ahmad to execute a suicidal mission to bomb the Lincoln tunnel by his truck in the anniversary day of the 9/11 attacks. On his way to the location of the

mission levy reminds Ahmad of his duty towards humanity and finally Ahmad abandons the intended mission.

Delillo's *Falling Man* and Updike's *Terrorist* associate the events of September 2001 with Islam. Both narratives show Muslims as the plot executors of the attacks and consider them as future threats on American civilisation and culture. They keep up subjective claims and stereotypical representations of the Eastern world, culture, people, and religion. Nevertheless, the very world that provides them with substance for the discussion of the events of September is also a source of influence for meaning, self-criticism, and reevaluation. As such, Delillo and Updike use the Eastern culture as a reference to criticize Western culture and modernity as whole by comparing the moral characteristics the religious commitment present in the Eastern people to the religious emptiness and material concerns of the Western masses.

In his two books entitled *Welcome to The Desert of the Real* and *Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle*, Slavoj Žižek criticizes the American hegemony, beliefs, and attitudes towards Third World Countries in relation to one of the major events in the history of America, September eleven attacks of 2001. Žižek is critical of a whole Western tradition of materialism, hedonism, and high technological development advanced with modernity and is also sceptical of American expansion ideologies in the Middle East and in the world as a whole. Žižek draws his views from Baudrillard's insights into western hegemony and its role in the attacks of 9/11. Baudrillard's idea is that the west has always dreamed of the day of 9/11 to come.

Žižek focuses on the US policy of 'war on Terror' issued by the US president in the aftermath of the events to work out dominion and authority on the East for economic interests. In his *The Desert of the Real*, Žižek suggests to see into the events critically, leaving aside Arab extremism, the justification of the events with reference to Muslim religious extremism, and instead, consider America in the whole affair. His major argument concerns the

contradiction apparent in the American foreign policy. America pretends to be innocent, but its policy is the driving force of all the attacks that take place in the world saying:

If we simply, only and unconditionally condemn it, we simply appear to endorse the blatantly ideological position of American innocence under attack by third world evil; if we draw attention to the deeper socio-political causes of Arab extremism, we simply appear to blame the victim which ultimately got what it deserved...the victim are innocent, the act was an abominable crime, this very innocence, however, is not innocent. (50)

In this quote, Žižek reveals the image that America tries to show to the world; an innocent victim, terrorised by the Muslim religious extremists. Žižek recalls/makes references to the American crimes committed in Third World Countries, which, for him, equals , or may be exceed in degree, the 9/11 attacks, writing “the point is, rather, that the two sides are not really opposed; that they belong to the same field” (50). Here then, Žižek puts US and the terrorists in the same position, deconstructing, first, the oppositional binary of US victim and Muslim terrorist and suggests that the terrorists might be Americans themselves. In this sense, for Žižek, there is no difference between America, who attacks the masses under the cover of terror, thinking that these justifications would show it an innocent and a mediator against terror, and the terrorist, who attack the masses in public. By reminding America of what it has been carrying out for decades in other parts of the world, Žižek legitimizes and justifies the attacks, seeing them as an application of justice.

Following Žižek, Delillo and Updike, as shown in their texts, account for the attacks by involving America. In one instance in Delillo’s text, *Falling Man*, Martin, Nina’s boy friend, argues that the attacks target American dominance and hegemony, because of its interference in world’s countries’ politics and economics. He puts himself in the attackers’ shoes and tries to explain what drives them to do such a thing and explains that by saying:

“Because they think the world is a disease. This world, this society, ours. A disease that’s spreading, they strike a blow to this country’s dominance. They achieve this, to show how a great power can be vulnerable. A power that interferes, that occupies (46)”<sup>4</sup>. Delillo through the character of Martin justifies the attacks by showing the attacker’s view towards the American ideology. Martin describes the American expansion as a contaminating phenomenon. In his view, it spreads bad beliefs in the world. That is why the other societies are afraid of it. In other words, the quote legitimizes the attacks and says that America deserved to be triggered for its dominance and hegemony.

In the same manner, Updike’s *Terrorist* seems to account for the attacks and even legitimizes them as shown in the view of the characters that populate the novel. Some of Updike’s characters consider the American policy in the world to be at the heart of the attacks. They agree that America deserves to be triggered as a retaliation for the crimes and illegal practices it carries out worldwide. In one instance in the novel, in a conversation between Charlie and Ahmad about the trauma of the events and the dead souls sacrificed that day, Charlie spares sympathy and compassion for them because, for him, they work for the American government and, thus, are involved in the crimes it conducts in the worldwide. He says: “those people worked in finance, furthering the interests of the American empire, the empire that sustains Israel and inflicts death every day on Palestinians and Chechnyans, Afghans and Iraqis” (184)<sup>5</sup>. Charlie legitimizes the attacks because of the American exterminatory policy in third world countries.

In *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, Žižek criticizes the American obsessive belief in being triggered, threatened, and tracked by outside enemies. Žižek relates this Western paranoid anticipation of a permanent outside menace to blow their power to the material and artificial life they lead. Žižek writes “it is the awareness that we live in an insulated artificial universe which generates the notion that some ominous agent is threatening us all the time

with total destruction” (9). For Žižek, Westerners are aware that they are so immersed in an artificial life and fairly driven away from the realm of the real, but they cannot get out of it, because of the sense of satisfaction it procures. Therefore, they live in a state of paranoia, expecting some outside force to shatter their stability and blow their power. Žižek’s confession means that these paranoid attitudes are wrong and the Americans create it as a result of their own misleading lifestyle.

The same feelings of paranoia, suspicion, and obsession with threat, terror, and menace are represented in DeLillo’s and Updike’s texts. In *Falling Man*, Lianne best exemplifies the notion of paranoia explained above. She suspects all the events taking place in her life as threats. Shortly after the opening of the novel, three days after the collapse, Lianne receives a post-card from a friend. Surprisingly, the card is entitled ‘Revolt of Islam’. Lianne wonders whether “It was a matter of coincidence, or not so simple, that a card might arrive at this particular time bearing the title of that specific book” (8). In the beginning Lianne is shown uncomfortable about the card and its title, but then she starts to question the events that followed the attacks, entering into a state of obsession about being threatened all the time. She confesses that “The whole of existence frightens [her]...[she] saw [herself] in this sentence...made [her] feel that (her) thrust into the world was not the slender melodrama [I]sometimes thought it was” (119).

The attacks have their weight and effect on Lianne more than she thought they would have. In the beginning she interprets them as ‘slender melodrama’ easy to get through, only to fall into terror and fear. The feeling of paranoia felt by Lianne increases and overwhelms her to the point that she suspects Martin, her mother’s boyfriend, to be a terrorist. Lianne believes Martin to “be a terrorist” even though, he is “one of ours, she thought” (194). Her confession about Martin shows her deep obsession with terrorism and the possibility of being triggered all the time, which leads her to suspect even her close relatives.

Likewise, John Updike's *Terrorist* also reports this American obsession with the feeling of non-security and fear all the time. Updike's secretary of security in New Jersey and his undersecretary (Hermione) reflect on the security issues in New Jersey upon the arrival of the 9/11 anniversary. The secretary is burdened by security issues and the threats that would lurk the city's instability. Indeed, "the clashing claims of privacy and security, convenience and safety, are his daily diet" (44). As a precaution procedure, everything is suspicious; "women's purses were sink-holes of confusion and sedimented treasure in whose depth any number of compact terrorist weapons retractable box- cutters, exploding sarin pellets, lipstick- shaped stun guns could be secreted"(42-3). The secretary's thoughts and points of suspicion about terrorist's new methods of transporting weapons and explosions include even aesthetic products. In his narrative, Updike refers purposefully to the secretary as obsessed with safety and security to show him as an example of the US security services that regards everything as a possible source of danger and seeks danger elimination. Then in another discussion between the secretary and his assistant, Updike goes further in reporting the suspicion of the secretary saying "Financial centers, sport arenas, bridges, tunnels, subways nothing is safe" (41). Here then, the author stresses on this notion of paranoia and obsession in order to show his self- critique approach in reflecting the fear of the American people of everything around, especially public places as possible sources of threat.

In the opening of *Iraq: the Borrowed Kettle*, Žižek uses a quote by Herman Goering, to describe American masses' belief in and total submission to governmental conception of reality. His argument revolves around America's policy's which drags American masses to believe that they are permanently attacked and that their nation is under threat. He writes:

Of course the people don't want war...But after all, it is the leaders of the country who determine the policy, and it's always a simple matter to drag the people along...All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and

denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in any country. (5)

Žižek's self-critical approach concentrates on the American masses' passivity and their lack of critical insights into the nature of the attacks; they fail to see the government's decisions and claims in a critical manner and rule out possibilities of being tricked and misled. In this manner, stereotypical representations of the East are easily believed, grasped, and absorbed by the Western mind. Furthermore, as Žižek clarifies, the American masses turn into tools that back up governmental claims and spread its ideas.

Regarding this idea, Žižek shares Baudrillard's belief that "postmodern universe is one of *hyperreality* in which entertainment, information, and communication technologies provide experiences more intense and involving than the scenes of banal everyday life" (Kellner) Žižek looks into the role of the media representation of the attacks through the photographs they show on TV, newspapers, and other information communication technologies. He argues that the pictures shown sustain the image of America being victimized. He says: "the representation is so powerful that it demolishes all other understandings" (46). He further adds that "September 11 is already being appropriated for ideological causes: from the claims in all the mass media that antiglobalization<sup>6</sup> is now out...their lack of contact with 'real life'" (48).

Žižek's argument is not so different from Baudrillard's that "'masses' are 'bathed in a media massage'" (48). This is to say that media misleads the masses through their representation of what has happened. Žižek, then, adds that the media uses images like the one of "tiny individuals jumping from the burning WTC tower to certain death" (46) as a "device which enabled the hegemonic American ideology to 'go back to its basics'" (47). In both cases; the masses, in Žižek's view, are manipulated by the media and the government to



gain their sympathy and support. Following the same line of thought, Žižek goes further in his doubts and questions the actual occurrence of the whole incident saying: “What if, precisely, nothing epochal happened on September 11?” (46). Žižek’s question interprets his doubt of everything presented by the media. The theorist, here, appeals people’s consciousness and critical judgment and reminds them of the manipulation practiced on them.

This idea is discussed by Don DeLillo in his novel *Falling Man*. *Falling Man* appeals to reconsider this submissiveness to the government’s claims and calls for the use of the individual critical judgement to interpret what really happens in the political arena. In a discussion with Nina (Lianne’s mother), Martin reveals his critical insights into the events of 9/11. Martin does not consider what happened as a simple terrorist attack, which should be solely interrelated and looked at from one perspective or angle, mainly the sole accusation of the East, but advises Nina to rethink about these events in her own way, far from what is known worldwide and heard in media saying: “there is another approach, which is to study the matter. Stand apart and think about the elements... coldly, clearly if you’re able to. Do not let it tear you down. See it, measure it. There’s the event, there’s the individual. Measure it. Let it teach you something. See it. Make yourself equal to it” (42). Indeed, Martin believes that there is always an alternative approach to see into the matter in a different way, and this alternative will show up when she stands apart from what is being said, to leave the events themselves to teach something, considering it from a different point of view, not from the metanarratives view point. In this sense, the individual can see how his own vision and interpretation will make a difference and how he is able to think for himself, instead of letting the government think for him. By depending on the government in these cases, they lose their role and turn into passive tools to reach political goals.

Similarly, Updike’s narrative pinpoints people’s lack of critical insight into the understanding of the events and showcases American governmental policy as being

exploitative of people and irrespective of their views. In a conversation with Joryleen, a friend of Ahmad and a student in Central high school, Ahmad gives his opinion about this policy saying “they all want Americans to be selfish and materialistic, to play their part in consumerism” (70). In this understanding, the government wants the American masses to concentrate on material satisfaction. From the view of political governors, the masses are consumerist tools deployed to sustain its position in the world of consumerism. Updike’s self-critique targets the American government policy bent on consumerism and material practices. In another similar example in the novel, Charlie, one of Ahmad’s work mates, explains the way the media work out the power of seduction to drug people to consume things they are not in need of, turning them into ideology consumers and sources for profit making. Charlie is conscious that the aim is not only to spread information, but to sell thought as well. This means that much of what is spread by the media is no more than an advertisement for a certain ideology that can drive economic profits. For him “The commies just wanted to brainwash you. The new powers that be, the international corporations, want to wash your brains away...to turn you into machines for consuming” (170).

Besides critical insights into American foreign policy and Western masses’ passivity and numbness, Žižek’s *The Desert of the Real* considers the East-West binary oppositions, their value systems, and the cultural mindsets that set them apart. The author unearths the dividing disparities between Eastern Muslims and Western Christians, comparing the two sides in terms of life’s purpose, religious zeal, and cultural practices. He considers the Palestinian suicide bombers as representatives of the East and takes the American yuppies as an example for the West. He writes:

What if the Palestinian suicide bomber on the point of blowing him- or herself (and others) up is, in an emphatic sense, ‘more alive’ than the American soldier engaged in a war in front of a computer screen against an enemy hundreds of

miles away, or a New York yuppie jogging along the Hudson river in order to keep his body in shape? (88)

In the above quotation, Žižek pins down the disparities between the East and the west through his characterisation of the Eastern suicide bombers and the American Yuppies. Žižek argues that the Palestinian suicide bombers have a goal in life, though this goal drives them to bomb, while the American yuppies lead senseless and purposeless lives. For Žižek, the Palestinian suicide bombers experience and embrace real life through a sense of purpose, sacrifice, and even death for that purpose, while the American yuppies lead an artificial life, bent on superficial appearances and simulations.

The suicide bombers, in Žižek understanding, stand for Lacan's 'The Real' and the American yuppies live in Lacan's 'The Symbolic' realm. The Real, in Lacan's understanding refer to the areas of life that cannot be known without the mediation of language. Therefore, the real is the world before it is covered by language. This means that the Muslim experience the real without meditations. The Symbolic refers to the mediators the people create to refer to the real, such as language and law. Žižek relates this concept to the westerners' life because they use all kinds of mediators that make of their life symbolic and not real. Žižek believes that what makes life worth living "is the very excess of life: the awareness that there is something for which one is ready to risk one's life (we may call this excess 'freedom', 'honour', 'dignity', 'autonomy', etc). Only when we are ready to take this risk are we really alive" (89). He reminds the Westerners of the real meaning of life that they have lost in the middle of luxury, materiality, and pleasure-based identification. He suggests that the Americans should find a goal in life, just like the Muslim people do; a goal for which they can be ready to give up their lives. And once this happens, they can refer to themselves as being alive.

In *Falling Man*, Delillo makes a comparison between the attackers and the American army to draw affinities and divergences. He shows the West in a powerful position, in command of technology, army, and capital, while East dispose of few volunteers willing to die for the sake of religion. He writes that “One side has the capital, the labour, the technology, the armies, the agencies, the cities, the laws, the police and the prisons. The other side has a few men willing to die” (46). To put the suicide bombers in the position of the strong and controllers of their lives, Delillo describes the life pleasures and materialism of the West and capitalises the East’s purposeful lives. In the last part of his narrative, Delillo describes Hammad’s thoughts on self-sacrifice saying: “There was the statement that death made, the strongest claim of all, the highest jihad”<sup>7</sup> (174).

In the same manner, *Terrorist* deconstructs the old Orientalist divisions that invest meaning, action, and positivity in the West only. Ahmad’s strong attachment to his religion and fidelity to his faith is described by Updike as “God is ever with him. As it says in the ninth sura<sup>8</sup>...God is another person close beside him” (37). Updike emphasizes Ahmad’s faith in the narrative. In his way to bomb the Lincoln tunnel, Ahmad thinks about the deed itself and the prospects it would bring about in the aftermath. The operation becomes a sacrifice upon which life gets meaning and purpose in Ahmad’s understanding. Updike describes “His self-sacrifice: it is becoming a part of him, a live” (232). As time passes and the moment of the sacrifice approaches, Ahmad enjoys these last moments as if he starts to taste real life; “his whole existence has become enraptured as perhaps the prophet’s was in accepting Gabriel’s dictation of the divine suras. Ahmad’s very minute has taken on the intimate doubleness of prayer, the self-release of turning aside and addressing a self... Being as close as the vein of his neck” (248). This passage describes Ahmad’s last moments of joy and satisfaction as he undertakes the operation. His joy is compared to that of the prophet Mohammad upon receiving the revelation from Gabriel.

To strengthen his self-critique approach, Updike describes the pathetic life New Jersey school students lead reporting the thought of the school counsellor, Jack Levy. Jack Levy is fed up of the student's immoral behaviour at school and their involvement in troublemaking and trivial practices. Levy, as Updike suggests, "would come home depressed because of all the problems he couldn't solve, the poor lives lived in New Prospect to no purpose...and now being passed on to the children...they don't give a fuck. They never knew structure. They can't imagine a life that goes beyond the next fix, the next binge, the next scrap" (133). Updike describes Jack's agony and anger because of the students conduct. Americans, in Levy's point of view, lead an empty life, without a fixed goal to reach. Being stuck in such a purposeless life, the westerners in Updike's view cannot imagine another lifestyle that can give them a new sense of life.

Still, in another example in the text, in a conversation with Joryleen, Ahmad explains his thoughts as a Muslim about the Americans who, in his view, live for their instincts saying: "Not hate your body...but not be a slave to it either. I look around me, and I see slaves slaves to drugs, slaves to fads, slaves to television, slaves to sports heroes that don't they exist, slaves to the unholy, meaningless opinions of others" (71). Following on a Neo-Orientalist perspective, Updike engages in his self-critique trying to denounce the hedonistic way of life of the Americans, as it keeps them in a state of simulation and unreality.

In *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, Žižek refers to an earlier event that took place in the seventies in Germany, where the red army attacked the masses and bombed supermarkets, justifying the act with reference to the masses' immersion in consumerist stance saying: "the masses were so deeply immersed in their...consumerist state (9). Žižek's insertion of such event emphasises the West's engagement in consumerism and enslavement to commodity.

Delillo devotes some passages to discuss Keith's obsession with material excess and surfaces before and in the aftermath of the fall. Keith engages in Poker game, which becomes, as Delillo reports, Keith's "uncomplicated interval of his week, his month" (27). Keith's immersion in this game enlarges the distance between him and his family. Intending to engage in self-critique, Delillo shows the fragile life Keith leads, and how he becomes indifferent toward his family in favour of his occupation with the game that drives him to the consumerism drugs and alcohol and cigarettes. Americans are involved in the same lifestyle; they abandon their selves and their families to engage in other trivial substitutions and even they become stuck in the middle of this fake world that colonizes them.

Similarly, in *Terrorist*, Updike well criticises Western preoccupations with consumerism and material excess. Updike uses the character of Sheikh Rashid to self-criticise the hedonistic lives the Americans cling to, the cultural value system they support, and the moral ethos they preach. Sheikh Rashid portrays Americans being trapped in sensual pleasures, hedonistic lifestyles, and material spending, saying "the world, in its, American portion, emits a stench of waste and greed, of sensuality and futility, of the despair and lassitude" (229).

Ahmad's work mate, Charlie, believes that materialism spoil the life of the Americans. He gives an example of professional athletes who are surrounded by luxury and money. To back up his argument he says: "The money has ruined the professional leagues...when already they can't count the money they have" (170). He continues criticising the dangerous outcomes and effects of consumerism on the American society saying: "look at Madrid. Look at Tokyo a few years ago. Capitalism has been so open...We can never be happy again we Americans" (129). In this sense, consumerism is the cause of the unhappy life of the Americans, because it takes a fundamental part in their society. This state is described by Updike as: "America is paved solid with fat and tar, a coast-to-coast...where we're all stack.

Even our vaunted freedom is nothing much to be proud of” (25). Updike criticises all the postmodern lifestyle bent on prolific making and sensual pleasures. He attempts, like Žižek, to push the American review and look at the hedonistic lives they lead.

In his *Borrowed kettle*, Žižek mentions economic interests is the driving force of the American- Iraqi war. He admits that “oil was the true motive” (5) to protect American “vital economic interests” (emphasis Added) (6) in the region. Assuring political dominance in the world and especially in the Third World countries, as Žižek argues, has its share in the American war on Iraq. He believes that Iraq “swims on a sea of oil. And it seems obvious that the key factor was ...using Iraq as a pretext or an exemplary case to...assert the USA’s right to... elevate its status into that of the only global policemen” (5). Žižek’s argument, here, strikes a blow to the American ‘War on Terror’ in Third World Countries. He believes that America’s series of interventions in some Third World Countries to bring democracy and settle peace is only a pretext to make inlets into the regions to control them. From Žižek’s words, it can be deduced that US was in a desperate need for its intervention in Iraq to strengthen its economy and political hegemony.

Delillo’s *Falling Man* shows that the reasons behind the 9/11 attacks as well as the other wars in which America is involved in are , in fact, driven by economic greed. Martin accounts for the attacks with reference to American expansion policy bent on the exhaustion of Third World economics and riches, saying: “This is politics and economics. All the things that sha(pe) lives, millions of people, dispossessed, their lives, their consciousness” (47). In this understanding, Western economy and wealth are the result of the exploitation of Third World riches, leaving these countries trapped in poverty, misery, and dispossession.

In *Terrorist*, Updike provides a similar criticism on the issue from the viewpoint of Ahmad. In a conversation with his school mate, Joryleen, Ahmad explains the way the US

policy sucks its people's money. In Ahmad's understanding, the American policy is driven by the accumulation of wealth and large amounts of money regardless of the means deployed and the results issued to reach the purpose. He suggests that "All America wants from its citizens...to buy to spend money we cannot afford and thus propel the economy forward for himself and other rich men" (70). In this statement, Ahmad puts the American economy as the main concern of its leaders and uses its people to reach best outcomes.

Žižek equates the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Centre with the terrorist crimes committed by the US in some parts of the world. For him, American intervention in Third World Countries and its War on Terror are more threatening than the events of September 2001. He argues that "the true long-term threat is further acts of mass terror in comparison with which the memory of the WTC collapse....acts that are less spectacular, but much more horrifying. "What about the bacteriological warfare, what about the use of lethal gas, what about the prospect of DNA terrorism?" (36). America pays no heed to these various threats underway in the world. It neglects the catastrophes taking place in the world and over-estimates the events that take place in the US context. This leads us to the conclusion that the West accepts death for other people, but they react to it when it takes place at home.

Similarly the same issue is treated in DeLillo's *Falling Man*. DeLillo, through Florence's and Keith's thoughts on death, reveals America's attitude toward the death of others. Keith, DeLillo's protagonist, interprets the attacks on the World trade centre horrifically, stressing the toll it registers and the losses it brings about. In the viewpoint of another character in the novel, Florence, a 9/11 survivor, death is a normal phenomenon. She believes that death is everywhere in the world and accepts it as a normal phenomenon. This is clearly shown in the following conversation between Florence and Keith: "I say to myself dying is ordinary". (Florence) "Not when it's you. Not when it's someone you know" (Keith) (89).



This short part of the conversation is of paramount importance, for it reports the opinion of the majority of the Americans towards death. Furthermore, it looks into the way the American perceives what happens to the other people in the world, especially the countries that encounter death as part of their daily life. Florence's untroubled spirit about death amounts to the nonchalance and indifference of US to the spirits killed daily in other parts of the world. This is Delillo's portrayal of western hypocrisy and self-centredness. The author's self-critique approach targets American self-centredness and hypocrisy; how life is precious for them, but never troubled about other people's life.

In the same manner, Updike's narrative is conscious about the Western/American indifference about death in other parts of the world but engrosses about death at home. In one instance in the novel, Updike refers to the articles published in *The New York Times* or *The New Prospect Perspective*, which barely touch upon the murder of hundreds of people in the world, describing them as ordinary events saying: "and as if this is not enough of Bush and Iraq and domestic murders...murders even of children" (17). Yet, in other instances in the novel, Updike shows American's concern with the toll, death rates, and murders sacrificed in the 9/11 attacks in the American context. In the words of the security secretary, Delillo shows the reaction of the American to the events saying, "those people out there...why do they want to do these horrible things? Why do they hate us? What's to hate?"(45). In this understanding, Updike, by adopting a self-critique approach criticises the American self-centredness and hypocrisy and spots light on the American indifference and unconcern with the lives of others.

In his *The Desert of the Real*, Žižek refers to the procedures taken by the US government to avenge the so-called terrorists after 9/11 events. Žižek capitalises on America calling itself a defender of human rights against terror, but questions its anti-human torture inflicted on the Arab prisoners, those accused of the plot execution of the 9/11 events. While America pretends to fight terror, it practices more than terror on the Eastern prisoners. "On

fox TV, a commentator claimed that one is allowed to do whatever one wishes with this prisoner not only deprive him of sleep, but break his fingers, and so forth because he is 'a piece of human garbage with no rights whatsoever' (53). Through these practices of torture and breaking down the prisoners physically and psychologically, the White take their being white as a privilege to put the rest of the world under their command.

In his narrative, Delillo describes a march organised by thousands of American people against war, and Lianne is shown to accompany her son Justin to attend this event. In the middle of the crowds, she remembers another similar event that she attended twenty years earlier in Cairo (Egypt). Delillo describes her thought as follow:

She became her face and features, her skin color, a white person, white her fundamental meaning, her state of being. This is who she was, not really but at the same time yes, exactly, why not. She was privileged, detached, self-involved, white. It was there in her face, educated, unknowing...These were a white man's thoughts. (184-5)

In this quote, Delillo adopts self-criticism; he reads and analyses his character's thoughts and says that these thoughts are shared by all Americans. By this, Delillo explains how Lianne perceives her state being a white person among the population in Cairo. She feels privileged and detached from them in the middle of their country, which makes her arrogant and over-estimating herself, just because she belongs to the American people. Through exposing Lianne's thoughts, Delillo criticizes this arrogance and self-centeredness in the American people, who call for Human rights and, equality, but paradoxically, they consider themselves as the superior race over other ethnic groups, especially Muslims.

Criticising the same notion of human rights in the American context, Updike refers to the earlier situation of the blacks living in America; describing their miserable lives under

American racist and unequal polices. In a situation where Charlie explains this to Ahmad, he says that: “The *zanj* weren’t given any rights; they had to fight for them. They were being lynched and not allowed in restaurants, they even had separate drinking fountains, they had to go to the supreme court to be considered human beings” (144). In this passage, Updike reminds us of the past of the black people in the American society and how they are treated in a racist non-human manner. This period of racism is one of the darkest periods in the American history; the blacks are tortured, punished, and, even, lynched for being blacks. The whites have given themselves the right to treat them the way they have wished, and have practiced on them all kinds of exploitation. Then he continues saying that the Americans “have too many rights and not enough duties” (257). For him, their weak point is that they have too many privileges which make them indifferent towards other people’s lives or duties. In his critique of the American racist attitudes towards the blacks, the author wants to show that the white’s weak point is their conviction of being superior to other ethnic groups and that they have more rights than duties. This is to say that Americans are being irresponsible and indifferent towards everything except themselves.

Again, in his *Desert of the Real*, Žižek criticizes the American hypocrisy. He says that America carries out inhuman practices in the world for the sake of economic interests, but shows itself to the world as a terror fighter through the war on terror series. Žižek suggests:

America’s ‘holiday from history’ was a fake: America’s peace was bought by the catastrophes going on elsewhere. These days the predominant point of view is that of an innocent gaze confronting unspeakable Evil which struck from the outside and again, apropos of this gaze, we should summon up the strength to apply to it Hegel’s well known dictum that evil resides (also) in the innocent gaze itself which perceives Evil all around. (56)

In Žižek's understanding, US do not show its real image to the other countries and to the American masses so as to keep its idealistic image. America pretends to be a terror fighter; it has intervened in many Third World Countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Kurd on the basis of fighting terror in these countries and to bring democratic ideals to them. Nevertheless, these American expansion policies in the Third World are triggered by a propulsion of its economic interests. In this understanding, the terror that US perpetuate about the terrorists and Muslim radicals is fake because, as Žižek argues, the real terror comes from the inside of America not from the outside of it. This hypocrisy, according to Žižek, introduces another character of the American policy, which is Terrorism being part of its very institution. He writes that "every feature attributed to the other is already present in the very heart of America" (43). America provokes terror and accuses innocent people of it, so as to appear as a victim and at the same time calls for the fight of terror. Žižek sustains his claim by introducing a statement by G.W. Bush that says:

most probable perpetrators of the anthrax attacks were not Muslim terrorists but America's own extreme Right Christian fundamentalists      again, does not the fact that acts first attributed to an external enemy may turn out to be acts perpetrated at the very heart of *l'Amérique profonde* provide an unexpected confirmation of the thesis that the true clash is the clash within each civilization. (44)

Žižek confirms that America causes the world trouble. Žižek uses Bush's statement to reveal that the real threat does not come from the Muslim world or external enemies, but from the Christian fundamentalists.

Following the same stream of thought, in the last parts of his narrative, Delillo predicts the collapse of the US hegemony. This is mainly revealed in Martin's thought. In a conversation between him and Nina and some of her friends, Martin says:

We're sick of America and Americans. The subject nauseates us...For all the careless power of this country, let me say this, for all the danger it makes in the world, America is going to become irrelevant. We are all beginning to have this thought, of American irrelevance. It's a little telepathy. Soon the day is coming when nobody has to think about America except for the danger it brings. It is losing the center. It becomes the center of its own shit. This is the only center it occupies (191).

In his discourse, Martin confesses the danger America represents for the world. Because of its careless use of power against the Third World Countries, all westerns see this danger and begin to expect it to vanish. They believe that the same careless power used in destroying other countries will eventually cause the destruction of the American hegemony. In a self-critical manner, Delillo spots the light on the American policy that, in his view, will cause its own destruction. He says that its use of power and hegemony against Third World Countries, thinking that it occupies the centre, will drive it away off this position.

Updike, in his turn, through Ahmad's voice, admits the fake innocence that America spreads to gain people's support. He sees that US people also considers themselves as victims within, what the government call, 'War on Terror'. He goes further in his critique to emphasize on G.W Bush's administration that calls for terror fighting and, at the same time, exploits Third World economy. He puts it this way: "They see themselves as innocent, absorbed in their private lives. Everyone is innocent they are innocent, the people jumping from the towers were innocent, George W. Bush is innocent...Yet out of all this innocence,

somehow evil emerges. The Western powers steal our oil, they take our land” (185). Then in another part of the narrative, Updike expects this policy to end up causing its own destruction, writing: “all this will some day cease... The screen in his head will go totally blank... down breaking” (26). In this sense, the American hegemonic power, in Updike’s view, is on its way to vanish by its own policy. Then the author compares the American policy and modern lifestyle to the myth of Sisyphus to emphasise on how much people of the modern life suffer from its consequences more than they enjoy it.

Žižek includes Western information communication technologies in his self-critique analysis. He criticises these technologies’ effects on the western society and people’s lives in the long term. The new technological threat, in Žižek’s view, is invisible and spreads among people and between nations silently; “What awaits us is something much more uncanny: the spectre of an ‘immaterial’ war where the attacks is invisible viruses, poisons, which can be anywhere and nowhere. On the level of visible material reality, nothing happens... yet the known universe starts to collapse, life disintegration” (36-7). People believe these technologies to better life and improve social conditions, but they end up controlling much of their freedom. Furthermore, these technologies, in Žižek’s expectations, are the main cause of incurable diseases and viruses. This invisible threat, according to Žižek, is the one that people should be aware of and take precautions to cope with it, not some imaginary terrorist threat.

In his essay *In The Ruins of the Future* (2001), Delillo criticises the American high technological development. In his opinion, the technologies that America advances, instead of strengthening it and be a source of its protection make it an easy target of attack and a source of danger. The terrorists who executed the attacks have been trained in American planes, taking support lessons in aviation on the American land: “It is America that drew their fury. It is the high gloss of our modernity. It is the thrust of our technology...It is the blunt force of our foreign policy”. (34). Here, Delillo refers to the bad effects of the American technological

advancement on its security. Delillo suggests that America is threatened by the technologies it possesses. These technologies, in Delillo's passage, are what make America an open country. Consequently, this openness is no more a force, but a threat.

In order to show the effects of the control of new technologies on the world, Updike uses a set of arguments to sustain the idea of the West dependence on these technologies, which are not doing the world any good. Instead they contribute in shattering its stability and normal balance and make the society more fragile. "All it takes is a little bomb, a few guns. An open society is so defenceless. Everything the modern free world has achieved is so fragile" (130). This fragility is caused by the dominance of all new kinds of technologies in all domains.

In Updike's *Terrorist*, the secretary discusses with his assistant the new technologies both the West and the terrorists possess. These expected terrorists, in Updike's words have access to all "Financial centers, sports arenas, bridges, tunnels, subways...the television, the camera, which is like gun-colored, lens-covered...special buffer zones...robust screening"(41). This puts the West in the position of the weak that is easy to be shattered. Due to these technologies that become useful to the terrorists and useless to guarantee the west's protection. Likewise, in a conversation with Elizabeth (Jack Levy's wife), her sister Hermione (the secretary's assistant), describes all the possible sources of threat that the terrorists can use to attack the American society again. Hermione, in her argument, sees that the new technologies spread in the world, as the new source of threat that aids the terrorist facilitate and invade all domains and give them the capacity to cause set damage and trouble. "They've penetrated and paralysed everything...but everything freezing, the power grids, the hospitals, the internet itself, can you imagine? The worms would be programmed to spread and spread" (130). Here, Updike suspects the coming results of the technologies if they are used against US. He reports how in spite of all the technologies mentioned in Hermione's discourse, the

US still can be easily attacked in all ways, due to these same technologies, that are also possessed by the terrorists. Still, these technologies play a major role in the spread of suspicion in the American context, because, with the help of these technologies, the so called terrorists' attempt to shatter the American society will be much easier over time.

One of Žižek's critical concerns, in his *Borrowed Kettle*, is the Christian fundamental practices. He suggests that fundamentalism and essentialism are characteristic traits of Christianity. He highlights the way some priests use religion to reach personal purposes. These Christians take advantage of their status as religious men to seduce and, sexually, abuse people. He says: "The seduction technique employs religion. Always some sort of prayer has been used as foreplay...so religion is not invoked in order to provide a frisson of the forbidden...that is to heighten the pleasure by making sex an act of transgression" (53-4). To back up his critical insight on Western Christian practices, Žižek puts forward the American hypocritical nature and unethical practices. America interprets Muslim Fundamentalism as a crime, but pays no heed to the wrongdoings of the Christian church fathers.

Drawing on this contradiction, Slavoj Žižek uses a sustaining argument that employs religion as a transcendental motif, for which one cannot be judged. He writes: "According to some conservative US lawyers, an act done out of religious conviction cannot by definition be insane, since religion stands for the highest spiritual dimension of humanity. How then are we to categorize the Palestinian suicide bombers? Is their religion authentic or not? If not, can the same insanity label be applied to homegrown American Christian terrorists?" (44). Following Žižek's argument, the Palestinian suicide bombers cannot be accused of insanity because, in his opinion, they carry out high spiritual acts done for the sake of religion.

The same confession is made by Delillo on the power of religious belief in controlling one's decisions and behaviours. Delillo considers that the Americans who neglect religion



find disbelief as a solution to keep their thoughts free from the control of religion. He writes: “There was religion, then there was God... Disbelief was the line of travel that led to clarity of thought and purposes” (64-5). Later on in another instance in his narrative, Delillo justifies this by referring to Lianne’s reason of disbelief in God saying: “God would consume her. God would de-create her and she was too small and tame to resist. That’s why she was resisting now. Because think about it. Because once you believe such a thing, God is, then how can you escape, how survive the power of it, is and was and ever shall be” (235).

Like *Falling Man, Terrorist* foregrounds the pitfalls within the Christian faith. Updike’s Ahmad describes the brutality and unethical behaviours of the Christians by referring to their deeds in the former decades. He writes: “It has no God, it is obsessed with sex and luxury goods. Look at television...always using sex to tell you things you don’t need. Look how Christianity committed genocide on the Native Americans and undermined Asia and Africa and coming after Islam” (36). Here Updike makes references to the fundamentalism that existed in the Christian religion, as an argument, to justify what the west call Muslim essentialism. Then in a more profound critique, he adds about the Christian fundamentalism and contradiction saying that Christians pretend to worship God but believe he died. Further, he highlights the Priests, who use their status to abuse children saying: “the priests, all they want is to bugger the kids” (203). To emphasise Ahmad’s belief as the driving force behind all that he does, Updike describes his God and faith as being ever close to him and taking the major part of his life. In the following quote we find that Ahmad is not described as being crazy about his religion, but being so faithful to his principles, because, his religion is what gives sense to his life. Updike writes: “God is ever with him. As it says in the ninth sura, *Ye have no patron or helper save God. God is another person beside him*” (37).

In their critique of the Christian belief and attitudes, both Delillo and Updike, make similar justification that Žižek gives about religion. According to both narratives religion is a

high spiritual state that overwhelms people. Both authors in their discourse justify Muslim fundamentalism in reference to the Christian harshness and brutality shown in their abuses and wrong deeds.

## **Conclusion**

The chapter has studied self-critique in Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* and John Updike's *Terrorist*. As shown in the chapter, self-critique is a dominant theme in many post 9/11 Western philosophical and literary narratives and attempt a criticism of the American society, people, and culture. The chapter has leafed through the major Neo-Orientalist issues common in both texts with reference to Žižek's ideas expanded in his *Welcome to the Desert of the Real and Iraq: the Borrowed Kettle*. Important references for analysis has included Western intervention in the Third World Countries through its War of Terror, consumerism, American Cultural value system, technological development, and, ultimately, Christian ethos.

# General Conclusion

## General Conclusion

Don Delillo and John Updike are well known American writers of the contemporary era. They are postmodern authors who have succeeded to reflect the postmodern themes and concerns in unique writing styles. In their two famous novels *Falling Man* and *Terrorist*, the two authors discuss the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre. They mainly look, at and describe the issue from an Orientalist perspective. Indeed, the two authors' novels make reference to stereotypical assumption about Eastern culture and people. Attempting Self-Criticism, the two authors criticize the Western culture and beliefs and praise the Muslim commitment and cultural values.

This thesis has tackled *Falling Man* and *Terrorist* as two post 9/11 Neo- Orientalist texts. The novels have been seen as works that revive an interest in Orientalism. The work has interpreted Delillo's and Updike's narratives in the light of the self-critique approach advanced by Slavoj Žižek in his *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* and *Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle*. Žižek criticizes American cultural values and technological domination. He goes further in his critique of the West, by referring to fundamentalist principles that dominate Christian religion. The theorist embarks on a comparison between features attributed to radical Muslim fundamentalists and the American Christian fathers. Per contra to the negative characteristics typical of western culture and religion, Žižek points out positive features in Islamic culture and religious beliefs. Through his critical approach, he employs what can be referred to as a self- assessment. Put differently, he criticizes the West by comparing it to the East.

This work is divided into a general introduction, three chapters, and a conclusion. The introduction has provided a general overview of the theme of 9/11 in American literature, and has examined some earlier researches related to the topic. The first chapter entitled "Don

Delillo's *Falling Man* and John Updike's *Terrorist: Text in Context*", has dealt with the plot summaries of the two novels, and the short biographies of both authors. The chapter also traced the historical and literary background of *Falling Man* and *Terrorist*. The historical section has contextualized the outbreak of 9/11 events and its representation in the mass media. Yet, it has underlined the American feedback on the attacks through the War on Terror policy. The literary section has studied the two novels as postmodern works and has looked into the literary techniques associated with this literary movement. The second chapter entitled "Neo-Orientalism: Slavoj Žižek's Neo-Orientalist Interpretation of 9/11 Events" has examined Orientalism and Neo-Orientalism as two related concepts. The chapter, also, has looked into Slavoj Žižek's self-critique motif, held in his Neo-Orientalist discourse. It has shown Žižek's critique of the Western belief, culture, and politics, in his description of 9/11 events. The third chapter is a display of Žižek's self-critique theory in Delillo's *Falling Man* and Updike's *Terrorist*.

The thesis has confirmed the embodiment of Slavoj Žižek's self-critique theory in Delillo's and Updike's narratives. It has suggested another interpretation of the Neo-Orientalist discourse held in *Falling Man* and *Terrorist* in the light of Slavoj Žižek's ideas on modernity and 9/11 events. This interpretation is the use of East-West binary to criticize the West by comparing it to the East.

# Endnotes

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Is a term coined by Canadian literary theorist Linda Hutcheon in the late 1980s. The term is usually used to refer to works of fiction which combine the literary devices of metafiction with historical fiction.

<sup>2</sup> The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) is a civilian foreign intelligence service of the United States federal government, tasked with gathering, processing, and analyzing national security information from around the world, primarily through the use of human intelligence.

<sup>3</sup> /ælk i d /; Arabic: *Al-Qaeda*, translation: "The Base", is a militant Sunni Islamist multinational organization founded in 1988 by Osama bin Laden

<sup>4</sup> Delillo, Don. *Falling Man* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007). All the subsequent references to the text will be cited parenthetically.

<sup>5</sup> Updike, John. *Terrorist* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2006). All the subsequent references to the text will be cited parenthetically.

<sup>6</sup> An umbrella organisation for several hundred groups of people with different aims such as preservation of natural resources, anti-exploitation of native peoples.

<sup>7</sup> An Arabic word that means striving, or struggling for a praiseworthy cause holy war

<sup>8</sup> /s r / /su:r / Chapter or section of the Koran/ Quran

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