

دراسة نقدية

أمثلة للتحويلات في النسيج الثقافي الأمريكي: تحليل لتأثيرات وتداعيات أحداث 11 سبتمبر في "روايات" المتشدد المتردد" و"أبناء الإمبراطور" و"الرجل الساقط"

م.د. قتيبة صالح فنجان

قسم الصحافة/كلية الاعلام

جامعة ذي قار الناصرية / العراق

البريد الإلكتروني Email : [gutaibasalih@yahoo.com](mailto:gutaibasalih@yahoo.com)

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Review Paper On Shifting Paradigms in Cultural Fabric of America: An analysis of the impact and aftermath of 9/11 in The Reluctant Fundamentalist, The Emperor's Children, and Falling Man

## Review Paper On Shifting Paradigms in Cultural Fabric of America: An analysis of the impact and aftermath of 9/11 in The Reluctant Fundamentalist, The Emperor's Children, and Falling Man

By

**Kotaba Saleh Fenjan, Ph.D, English**

Journalism Dept,

MassMedia College, University of Thiqr,

Nassiriyah-Iraq

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### الخلاصة

شكّلت هجمات الحادي عشر من سبتمبر تجربةً غيرت حياة كل من شهدها، سواءً أكانت تجاربهم مباشرة أم غير مباشرة. كان لتسلسل الأحداث أثرٌ بالغٌ على الجوانب الدينية والثقافية والنفسية للفرد والمجتمع ككل. وقد مهّد هذا الحدث الطريق لظهور نوع أدبي جديد تناول الصدمة والمعاناة التي تكبدها المتضررون من الهجوم. تتناول هذه الورقة البحثية التحولات الثقافية المختلفة التي أعقبت التعافي النفسي لضحايا الهجوم. يهدف البحث بشكل أساسي إلى تحليل أثر أحداث الحادي عشر من سبتمبر وتداعياتها على نفسية الأفراد وعلى الصدمة الجماعية. ولتحليل هذه الجوانب، ناقشت الدراسة الأعمال التالية: رواية "المتشدد المتردد" لمحسن حامد (2007)، ورواية "أبناء الإمبراطور" لكثير ميسود (2006)، ورواية "الرجل الساقط" لدون ديليلو (2007). تخلص الورقة البحثية إلى أن هجمات 11 سبتمبر/أيلول قد أدت إلى ظهور

مجموعة من المعتقدات المعدلة تجاه المجتمع الإسلامي، وقد تم استخلاص نوعين مختلفين من التجارب من خلال التحليل. يتناول الأول معاناة البيض في المجتمع الأمريكي بعد الهجمات، أما الثاني فيتعلق بمعاناة المهاجرين المسلمين الذين تعرضوا للاضطهاد من قبل الأمريكيين البيض، بسبب رد الفعل العاطفي الذي أعقب تلك الهجمات .

### Abstract

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 were a life-changing experience for everyone who witnessed them, irrespective of they had impacted the lives of American people profoundly or less profound . The chain of events had a tremendous impact on the religious, cultural and psychological aspects of individuals, and a community as a whole. The event paved the way for the emergence of a new genre of literature that encompassed the trauma and sufferings of people affected by the attack. This paper takes into consideration the various cultural shifts followed by the emotional healing of victims of the attack. The primary aim of the study is to analyze the impact and aftermath of 9/11 on the individual psyche of people and on the collective trauma. To analyze these aspects, the paper considers the following works- Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), Claire Messud's *The Emperor's Children* (2006) and Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007). The paper concludes that the attacks of 9/11 introduced a set of modified beliefs against the Islamic community and two different kinds of experiences were drawn from the analysis. The first regards the suffering of the white people in the American society after the attacks ,and the second is about the suffering of Muslims immigrants whom persecuted by the white American ,due to the emotional reaction aftermath these attacks.

The 9/11 attack was one of the most terrifying events in American and world history. It was a chain of four terrorist attacks in the United States which were initiated by the Islamic terrorist organization Al-Qaeda (Ostwal, 2017). The attacks were a turning point both for the United States and the existing Islamic countries due to the association of religion with the attacks. These attacks set of events that left the Americans in trauma and emerged the waves of Islamphobia. The status of Islamic citizens in the United States was endangered due to the views held against them in the country, where they were labelled as 'malefactors' and 'anti-state'. The attacks had a terrible impact on the American sentiments and their sense of security which led to the resentment against the entire Islamic community and culture as they were deemed to pose a threat to other prevailing nations and cultures.



The literature post-9/11 were highly influenced by the experiences and sentiments of the writers along with the social and psychological conditions encompassing them. The individual experiences of the writers affected their approach towards the specific issue as well as the narrative styles and techniques that they used to describe the particular events. The writings by American writers provided the rest of the world an insight into the experiences, internal feelings and cultural environment of an individual who had undergone the horrors of 9/11. It was a crucial time not only for the writers and artists but also for the civilians who protested and conducted campaigns to express their frustration and distrust against the government of the United States whom they considered to have failed the country in protecting their citizens.

The vicious acts of terror on 9/11 traumatized the Americans as well as the Muslims and Islamic countries, especially Pakistan as it was used as a base for the organization of the attack and as a residence for the perpetrators of the terrorist attack. Thus, the Pakistanis were the outsiders, in the context of the 9/11 attack, and the immigrant Muslim families had to encounter the ordeal of belonging to the wrong religion at the time of these fatal events. The sufferings and trauma of the Muslim immigrants were neglected and not acknowledged as they were being labelled as the public enemy. The existing literature showcases the different points of views held by the writers of America and Pakistan, where it was observed that both the nations' writers propagated the view that the sufferings of individuals were universally the same. It has been asserted that the level of creativity and expression of writer is visible through their works and their ability to vividly portray their feelings and experiences through the characters of their works. It should be noted that it is extremely critical to understand that ingenious artists and writers depict the space and events in a way which transforms the space and events into real fictional characters in their works. In the context of literature on the 9/11 attacks, the events possess a significant place in the works of American and Pakistani writers.

## 2. Aims and Objectives

This research study analyzes the trauma and horrors of 9/11 attacks on the twin towers of the United States and to review the literature based on these events. The primary aim of this review paper is to find traces, from the existing works of literature, of the cultural shift that took place in the United States in the context of this event. To attain the aim, the following objectives have been taken into consideration:

- 1.To analyze the impact and aftermath of 9/11
- 2.To explore the shifting paradigm in the cultural fabric of America



3.To study the trauma through the selected works *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, *The Emperor's Children* and *Falling Man*

### 3. Literature Review

The horrific events of 9/11 had left the United States and the rest of world in shredded fragments and a pure sense of fear. There have been several theories and counter-theories regarding the attacks but the sentiments of the individuals remain the same across the nation where they found themselves in a state of confusion and fear deeming the event as 'unbelievable' (Frank, 2017). The series of events inspired and motivated several writers to address the trauma and shock encountered by the civilians of the nation and have endlessly strived to represent their experiences through their writings.

#### 3.1 Interpretation of Traumatic 9/11 Event

The impact of 9/11 was felt not only in individual lives but across the country's politics, society, and collective conscience. However, the many interpretations that emerged often distorted the event's causes and diluted the overwhelming sense of its tragedy. It was claimed that the loss of humanity is not restricted within the limits of the battlefield but is exposed to and within the reach of the civilians who were equally affected by the horrors of the attacks, a perspective supported by scholarly analysis of modern terrorism, which argues that such violence deliberately erases the distinction between soldier and citizen (Reuveny 127). The consequences of the attack were especially difficult for the Muslim women as they were deprived of the luxury to describe their story (Anecellin, 2009). They wanted to express their sentiments related to this event without choosing sides.

The themes of post-9/11 novels were typically based on personal loss and trauma but this took a major turning point with the publication of Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) where he depicts the life of a young Pakistani whose fate takes an unfortunate turn after the 9/11 attack as he is no longer looked at as a "transnational subject" but as an "anti-American" instigator (Morey, 2011). Hamid's novel attempted to highlight the pain and sufferings of 'others', that is, the Muslim community. In Claire Messud's *The Emperor's Children* (2006), there is a high proportion of satire which depicts the life after the attacks of 9/11 and its everlasting impact. The text builds on the component of dialogue where the characters usually speak for themselves. The use of satire and the depiction of sympathy towards the 'foolish' characters of the novel can be attributed to the silent cries of rage and suffering towards the





incapacity of the larger population in acknowledging the changes that occurred in society at a time after the horrific event of 9/11 (Keeble, 2011). It is considerably evident that the narrative styles and techniques and the character portrayals presented in the novels emerge from the background of 9/11.

Don DeLillo, in *The Falling Man* (2007), presents the theme of 'heightened sexuality' which has sprouted from the mundane in the context of time after 9/11 (Keeble, 2011). It is also evident that the dynamics and narratives of relationships has altered after the advent of 9/11, and it carries a certain amount of consciousness and certainty among the characters and their surroundings. The immediate need to become intimate between characters is observed when the character 'Keith' emerges from the burning flames of the towers and reunites with the character 'Lianne', where the intimate contact between the characters is considered not as spontaneous but as inevitable. The major theme that appeared in the narrations was that of 'marriage' and 'relationships', which gained a new meaning and value in the lives of the characters as the traumatic event of 9/11 had restored their belief in the institution of marriage and relationships.

### 3.2 Illustration of distress associated with 9/11

The social conditions that followed the terror of 9/11 were observed to have made modifications in the cultural and religious beliefs of the civilians. The religious perspectives of individuals began to change where they adopted new religious beliefs such as 'New Atheism' which condemns the Bible and questions the existence of God (Bradley, & Tate, 2010). In the concept of New Atheism, the Islamic religion and community were associated with the notions of "irrationality, immorality, and violence of religion" (Bradley, & Tate, 2010). After the ingression of this event, critics and writers attempted to explore the political, cultural and social aspects of the United States and all the other nations across the globe, meanwhile, the body of literature and fictional narratives focused on the impact and traumatic effect of the horrific event.

The stereotypes associated with the Islamic state were prevalent from time immemorial, and it only accelerated with the 9/11 which led to the identification of that certain religion as "hostile, inferior and a strange culture" (Haolai, 2015). Hamid, himself being a Muslim immigrant, defined the conflicting relationship between America and the Islamic world. In lieu of focusing on the trauma of the individuals affected by 9/11, he demonstrates the impact it had on the Muslim community, which was considered as the 'other'. The novel shifts its conventional focus

from the tragedies of the Whites to the miseries and struggles of the Muslims following 9/11. He further asserts that the misrepresentation and the hostile treatment of the Muslim community left the writer and many other Muslims with a strengthened identity.

In *Falling Man* (2007), DeLillo shifts the focus towards a more personal and intimate surrounding instead of a public setting. He affirms the fact that the event had a similar traumatic effect on the psyche of individuals and their relationships with others as it had on the cultural and social conditions of the nation that destroyed their sense of identity and security (Baelo-Allué, 2012). It has also been observed that the trauma inflicted upon those who had a firsthand experience with the event was different from the impact it had on individuals who witnessed it through the television, which stems from the difference between personal and collective trauma. Messud, in *The Emperor's Children* (2006), depicts the distress of the individuals in their personal as well as social lives. The attacks as depicted in the novel begin towards the end of the novel as it uncovers the temperaments and self-possession of the characters, which is believed to be a fictional image of the real world (Keeble, 2011). Through the sudden portrayal of the attack of 9/11, Messud attempted to display the upheaval in the personal lives of her characters and the degree to which it altered their beliefs and perceptions. At the end of the novel, there is still a blurred sense and chaos of emotions as it is complicated to understand the kind of impact it had on the lives of individuals and also in a global context.

### 3.3 Analysis of the Impact and Aftermath of 9/11 from the inside of selected works

The consequences of 9/11 terror attacks were vividly present in the perceptions of the civilians of America, their altered religious and cultural views and their personal and intimate relationships. The 9/11 attacks had life-long traumatic psychological effects on the individuals who were present inside the twin towers or its surroundings; also, its impact was extended to those who witnessed it through media and digital media and had an indirect experience as passive spectators (Gauthier, 2015). The trauma was experienced by groups of communities, known as collective trauma, which included the personal concerns and individual experiences of people. At a point of time, it was no longer deemed as the loss of one community, the Americans, but also the misrepresentation and loss of identity of another community, the Muslims. With the passage of time, the world acknowledged the traumatic experiences of the Muslims as well and allowed them to express their opinions and stories regarding the



attack. It was evident that people across the globe were coming together for the acceptance of the community.

Messud, through *The Emperor's Children*, deviates from the representation and portrayal of his own experiences of the event and highlights the process of his healing and recovery (Keeble, 2011). DeLillo presents a different form of concern, through the character of Keith, following the event of 9/11 which is the component of masculinity. He asserts that the attacks emasculated Keith and America as a whole (Randall, 2011). This is showcased through the separation of Keith from his wife and family, and results in the emotional detachment from everything. The core theme of *Falling Man* is to showcase the ambiguity encompassing the nature of being, identity and terminology. DeLillo hints at a little 'slippage' at describing characters and their attributes; this is done to highlight the confusion in decoding and inheriting the signs and symbols. Thus, it is observed that the attack had a great psychological impact on people and it resulted in certain kinds of confusion.

#### 4. Findings and Discussions

The review paper delves into the various aspects associated with the chain of events of 9/11 that shocked the entire world, especially the United States. It attempts to showcase the trauma and agony of the individuals affected through the 9/11 attacks, and how it altered the lives and psychological behavior of the people. The existing body of literature was analyzed to find the traces of the political, social, religious, cultural and psychological alterations that were witnessed after 9/11. It was observed that the attack of 9/11 agitated the public and created a negative and misinterpreted identity of the Islamic community which led to the horrible treatment of their community and religion. After the advent with these attacks, the concept of internal and external experiences emerged. The internal experiences were those of the White Americans who were considered to be devastated by the 9/11 attacks, and external experiences were associated with the "others", that is, the Islamic communities.

Two distinct types of literature emerged as the outcomes of the 9/11 attacks, one was concerned with the internal pain and sufferings of the White community whose sense of identity and security was shattered as they could not feel safe anymore, the other being the external pain of the Islamic community whose pain was concealed in the ill-treatment of their people, religion and culture. They were victims of abominable stereotypes and were labelled as "anti-state" and "instigators" of war; also, their religion was viewed as 'violent' and people regarded them and their religious beliefs to be a threat to other nations and their cultures.

Thus, it is observed that the 9/11 attacks, where the increasing of hostility against Muslims community in the United States, the Islamic community had its battle the other half without any support. But, this phase of trauma faded away as intellectuals around the world began to address the discrimination against Muslims and writers depicted their suffering through their narrations. The attack of 9/11 did leave a scar on the world and its people, irrespective of community and religion, but, it soon disappeared with the healing and recovery of individuals.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The effects of the 9/11 attack influenced and facilitated the alteration of thoughts and perceptions of individuals and resulted in the emergence of a new body of literature. The conventional narrative styles and techniques of this literature were aimed at presenting the suffering of White community of the United States. This pattern of writing was dismissed by Mohsin Hamid, a Muslim immigrant writer, who did not hesitate to depict the sufferings of the Muslims who were horribly persecuted during the social and cultural unrest that followed the 9/11 attack. He further went on to assert that the attack had a similar impact on the sentiments of both the communities and, thus, the struggles and strife of Muslims need to be addressed.

The broader styles and techniques of narration used in the novel dealt with the personal, intimate and sentimental aspects of an individual and had the focus on the impact of the attack on their personal relationships. This narrative technique is evident in Claire Messud's *The Emperor's Children* which showcases the impact of 9/11 attacks on the marriage and personal relationships of the characters. The novel uses the literary technique of satire to depict the frustration and disappointment of the individuals who are unable to establish firm personal and intimate relationships due to the impact of the attack on their psychological constructions. The novel also highlights the author's own process of healing instead of the representation of her experiences in regards to the attack.

In Don DeLillo's *The Falling Man*, the sudden need and desire for intimacy is portrayed. The separation of the characters of Keith and Lianne is showcased before the advent of the attack on the twin towers; however, they are united when Lianne witnesses Keith emerging from the burning ashes of the twin towers. This shows the urgency of contact with the loved ones of individuals and there is a surge of emotions in their psychological behavior. Thus, it is concluded that the attacks of 9/11 had



a huge impact on the social, cultural and psychological aspects of individuals, and this led to the cultural shift in America.

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