



# Shattering Man's Fundamental Assumptions in Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*

Hazim Adnan Hashim

Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, University Putra Malaysia, Serdang, Malaysia

E-mail: hazim.adnan@yahoo.com

Rosli Bin Talif

Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, University Putra Malaysia, Serdang, Malaysia

E-mail: rtalif@upm.edu.my

Lina Hameed Ali

College of Arts, University of AL Mustansiriyah, Baghdad, Iraq

E-mail: linahazim8@gmail.com

Received: 04-04-2016

Accepted: 16-06-2016

Advance Access Published: July 2016

Published: 01-09-2016

doi:10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.5n.5p.85

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.5n.5p.85>

## Abstract

The present study addresses effects of traumatic events such as the September 11 attacks on victims' fundamental assumptions. These beliefs or assumptions provide individuals with expectations about the world and their sense of self-worth. Thus, they ground people's sense of security, stability, and orientation. The September 11 terrorist attacks in the U.S.A. were very tragic for Americans because this fundamentally changed their understandings about many aspects in life. The attacks led many individuals to build new kind of beliefs and assumptions about themselves and the world. Many writers have written about the human ordeals that followed this incident. Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* reflects the traumatic repercussions of this disaster on Americans' fundamental assumptions. The objective of this study is to examine the novel from the traumatic perspective that has afflicted the victims' fundamental understandings of the world and the self. Individuals' fundamental understandings could be changed or modified due to exposure to certain types of events like war, terrorism, political violence or even the sense of alienation. The Assumptive World theory of Ronnie Janoff-Bulman will be used as a framework to study the traumatic experience of the characters in *Falling Man*. The significance of the study lies in providing a new perception to the field of trauma that can help trauma victims to adopt alternative assumptions or reshape their previous ones to heal from traumatic effects.

**Keywords:** benevolence, meaningfulness, self-worthiness, trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder

## 1. Introduction

The tragedy of September 11 is seen as a changing point in Americans' lives as it has affected Americans' worldviews and beliefs about the meaning of life and their sense of self-worth. After the traumatic event of September 11, many American individuals have appeared heavily burdened with cognitive and psychological problems. According to Simpson and Cote, these attacks have brought damages to the mental world of every American citizen (Simpson and Cote 50).

The event and its aftermath have been covered and reported by newspapers, television, radio, and journalists. But the literary works are looked at as a good resource for reflecting the repercussions of the disaster on Americans' lives (Keniston and Quinn 124). The tragic effects of the September 11 attacks started to appear in literary works only a few years later. Authors have been attracted to embody the people's struggles to survive the deadly effects of the traumatic event. The tribulations caused by the event have engendered an extensive body of literature. The theme has been tackled in scholarly works, autobiographies, reminiscences, poetry, and novels. The contemporary American writer Don DeLillo belongs to a group of authors who have devoted fiction to the memory of the September 11 calamity and its impact on Americans. His novel *Falling Man* (2007) reveals his fascinating depiction of how the multifaceted and long-term effects of trauma have spoiled Americans' psychological and cognitive lives.

It is quite relevant to mention here that trauma may cause many psychological and cognitive problems that afflict victims' perceptions about themselves as worthy, life as meaningful, and people as benevolent. These problems can be further explored and explained in the light of the theory of the Assumptive World by Ronnie Janoff-Bulman. In her 1992 book *Shattered Assumptions: Towards a New Psychology of Trauma*, Janoff-Bulman presents her theory that concerns the influence of trauma on individuals' established basic assumptions. Moreover, it focuses on the ways trauma survivors can build new fundamental assumptions or modify their old ones to recover from trauma effects.

The present study takes advantage of Ronnie Janoff-Bulman's theory of the Assumptive World as a vehicle to look at Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*, intending to reach a new understanding of how victims' lives have been differently affected and rerouted by catastrophic events. Since the effects of traumatic events such as 9/11 could change individuals' assumptions and understandings of the world's benevolence, and meaningfulness, this may affect their sense of self-worth, as members of this world.

## 2. The Role of the Fundamental Assumptions in Man's Life

The assumptive world, as a concept, refers to the assumptions or beliefs which provide individuals with expectations about the world and about their sense of self-worth which ground their sense of security, stability, and orientation (Janoff-Bulman "Shattered Assumptions" 5). There are three criteria of beliefs form the assumptive world. The benevolence of the world is the first belief in which an ordinary person believes that goodness prevails over evil in the world s/he lives in, misfortune happens relatively rarely, and all people are kind, helpful and friendly (Janoff-Bulman "Shattered Assumptions" 6).

The second belief regards life as meaningful (purposeful). Accordingly, the events of life are explained in different ways. The first way indicates that the world is just and people's personal characteristics decide what they deserve in life. Therefore, good people are less subjected to bad events. The second way refers to individuals' ability to control their life events by being preventive, cautious, and wise. These two beliefs lead a person to recognize the meaningfulness of the world s/he lives in. The last way of explaining events depends on the random nature of the life events.

The third criterion is presented to form a good opinion about an individual's self (self-worth). This basic assumption assesses one's self as a moral, decent and positive person (Janoff-Bulman "Shattered Assumptions" 11). An individual's success in life depends on how they assess their self-worth. The more a person evaluates his/her self as worth, the more they are encouraged to do their tasks positively (Janoff-Bulman "Shattered Assumptions" 11). In general, when a person frames himself/herself within morality and responds to the principle of justice and the goodness of the world, they will not yield to negative events. On the other hand, when the individual believes in the justice of the world, but at the same time has a low sense of self-worth, s/he may put himself/herself under the influence of being more vulnerable to harm.

Each of these assumptions are subjected to challenge and they can be lost or shattered in the case of an individual facing a traumatic experience such as violent tragedy, terrorist attacks, or death (Kaufmann "Safety and the Assumptive world" 206). Fleming and Robinson argue trauma that victims soon discover that those assumptions that have preserved steadily and provided coherence to their lives are illusions, so an abrupt feeling of disappointment occurs (qtd. in Beder 258).

Actually, in cases of trauma experience, the guidelines which navigated one's self in the world are overturned when the assumptive worlds are fragmented through trauma. Traumatized individuals start to feel that life is no longer a place with safety and benevolence, peopled with kind helpful persons who have the ability of control and affect what occurs to them. Recovering from this traumatic feeling of loss may not be easy and more protracted as it becomes necessary to construct alternative assumptions or reconstruct the previous ones. Such effects of trauma on victims' fundamental assumptions are examined through the main characters in *Falling Man* as they experience the trauma of September 11.

## 3. Traumatization and Symptoms of PSDT

A severe traumatic event such as September 11 inevitably shatters the victims' basic suppositions. Janoff-Bulman ties shattering of individuals' fundamental assumptions about their world and themselves to markedly exhibit the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a result of traumatization (qtd. in Lilly 54). PTSD can be defined "a psychological reaction to experiencing an event that is outside the range of usual human experiences" (Barker 369). Many symptoms of PTSD clearly emerge in Lianne, one of the two main characters of *Falling Man*, from the first chapters of the novel. In fact, Lianne's trauma experience comes from two sources. Firstly, she becomes traumatized via T.V. coverage of the traumatic event. Secondly, she gets infected by the trauma of her ex-husband, Keith, who survives his imminent death inside the north tower and severely injured reaches Lianne's apartment. These two traumatic factors revive what could be described as an unsolved emotional issue relating to her father's suicide several years earlier.

As a traumatized person Lianne does not appear as a usual trauma victim. She was not at Ground Zero that morning, and did not directly witness the event. She was then at home watching live what was happening on T.V. Even so, distance from the site of the tragedy does not lessen the effects of trauma on her. Therefore, DeLillo presents her as a character with signs of PSTD. In this regard, Schlenger et al. (2002) states that a survey conducted two months after the attacks found that watching the coverage on T.V. affected people with the symptoms of PTSD, as well.

The role of watching T.V. coverage in traumatizing Lianne is reflected in DeLillo's narration of the first moments after Keith's arrival from the World Trade Center at Lianne's house "[Lianne] turn[s] off the TV set...protecting him from the news" (DeLillo 87). This reflects that Lianne becomes affected traumatically through watching the event live on T.V. According to a survey conducted by Silver et al. (2002) "watching the attacks live on television was associated with elevated posttraumatic stress symptoms during the six months after the attacks, although the effect was no longer significant after adjustment for coping behavior after September 11. In short, Lianne is victimized through watching the traumatic event on T.V.

Lianne manifests the PTSD symptoms as she talks to Nina about the way she felt at the moment of watching the towers collapse: "But when the towers fell... I thought he was dead... So many watching... Thinking he's dead, she's dead" (DeLillo 11). It is clear that Lianne loses control emotionally. She begins to show the symptoms of trauma more and

more. Lianne has continuing anxiety and agitation. She also has a sense that she is different: “[she] wake[s] up at some point every night. Mind running non-stop. Can’t stop it” (DeLillo 124). Lianne, who is engaged on that tragic day, suffers from a sleep disorder and cannot stop herself from thinking about that day because, as Freud explained, “the traumatic experience is constantly forcing itself upon the patient even in his sleep is a proof of the strength of that experience: the patient is, as one might say, fixated to his trauma” (qtd. in Caruth “Unclaimed Experience” 61). In fact, Lianne becomes obsessed with the traumatic images of the attacks as she continues to read and watch anything related to the event till the end of the novel because “The victims of trauma suffer from continuous repetition of their traumatic experiences through dreams or simply in their heads and they are unable to get over the experience to move forward” (Noor, Babae, and Termizi 246).

### 3.1 *The Benevolence of the World*

Generally, every person has a positive attitude towards the world and the people and events that revolve around him or her. S/he usually looks at the events of life as a collection of positive interconnected parts of behaviors and attitudes because the world itself and all connected to it are benevolent (Janoff-Bulman, “Shattered Assumptions” 17). Koltko-Rivera argues that a person’s worldview is composed by his/her spiritual or religious beliefs, among others (qtd. in Poulin and Roxane 13). Thus, the positivity of one’s overview on the benevolence of people is closely associated with his/her spirituality. Against this backdrop, Lianne’s assumption of goodness in life and people stems from her spiritual view about religion. She seems, ostensibly, to give priority to sciences over religion, but her positive perception about religion was instilled in her cognitive system when she was young. Her father was Catholic, and she was brought up to understand “the purpose of religion, to return people to a childlike state” (DeLillo 62).

Under the traumatic effects of September 11, Lianne loses her belief about the world as good. Consequently, she becomes directionless and struggles to understand her new life, which seems false to her and looks like “a scene in a movie when a character tries to understand what is going on in her life” (DeLillo 47). In fact, Lianne’s suffering is engendered from her losing the navigations, she uses in her life because victims who experience trauma believe “The world is no longer a safe, benevolent place, peopled with good caring individuals who have a modicum of control and impact over what happens to them (Kauffman “Safety and the assumptive world” 206).

Resorting to spirituality or religion is discussed by Ai and Park as a way to face the effects of trauma (Lilly 59). Therefore, Lianne resorts to religion to reconstruct her shattered assumption about the world as being benevolent. She tried to stay away from this belief as she thinks “God would be a presence that remained unimaginable. She wanted this only to snuff out the pulse of the shaky faith she’d held for much of her life” (DeLillo 65). After she experiences trauma, she becomes involved in religion because “religion could be a good source of emotional support for victims against trauma that menaces their sense of a world as benevolent and meaningful” (Lilly 59).

Thus, Liann’s turning to spirituality and religion may reflect her attempt to find stability and construct her assumptions about meaning and benevolence in the world. She is no longer restricted only to science because “she knew there was no conflict between science and God” (DeLillo 65). In fact, she persists to believe deeply in God. Yet, “[s]he wanted to trust in the forces and processes of the natural world, this only, perceptible reality and scientific endeavor, men and women alone on earth” (DeLillo 65). Lianne looks at herself before the trauma as an educated and modern person; however, the final chapters reveal that her going to church is a way to rebuild her view of life as still good.

### 3.2 *The Meaningfulness of Life*

The induced-trauma cognitive changes clearly afflict Lianne’s view for the meaning of life. Pre-trauma, she used to be an optimistic character, holding positive assumptions about all the people and things around her. As an average person, she “thinks that the world around [her] is characterized by predominance of good things over evil, misfortunes happen to relatively rare and that people are basically good, gentle, helpful and caring” (Janoff-Bulman, “Shattered Assumptions” 6-7). At first glance, her watching the sight of people dying change her negatively a lot. She becomes in shift in terms of her sense and attitudes as she finds

Everything seemed to mean something. Their lives were in transition and she looked for signs. Even when she was barely aware of an incident it came to mind later, with meaning attached, in sleepless episodes that lasted minutes or hours, she wasn’t sure (DeLillo 67).

Over time, Lianne becomes engaged in discussing the new reality that emerged from the trauma of September 11. She believes that she was victimized by an action that is described as nonsensical cruelty, a cruelty that takes people to nowhere. She comes to be confused because trauma victims are stunned to recognize that their previous assumptions of the world are but illusions. Obviously, Lianne is serious in her attempt to find a way to grasp what is going on with her. When trauma victims become able to “retain a sense of meaning in their experiences, they get the most likely to survive the horrifying conditions, and the search for meaning is a primary human motivation that enables individuals to retain hope in the face of adversity” (Amanat 14).

Thus, Lianne’s journey to reconstruct her assumptions about life starts by her being occupied with finding a meaning for the attacks, then a new meaning of life since “in the context of trauma, it has been argued that these challenges to people’s assumptive worlds arise a search for meaning” (Kauffman, “Loss of the Assumptive World” 135). In fact, searching for meaning implies a victim’s attempt to find answers to questions such as “Why does this happen to him/her?” In this regard, like many Americans, Lianne seeks to know reasons for the attacks that may help her to build a new perception for the meaning of life.

Lianne has the feeling of “time pressing in” (DeLillo 67). She is pushed to find specific meaning, and begins to “read everything they wrote about the attacks” (DeLillo 67). Yet, the meaning has gone too general and too non-concentrated and “whatever that means. Everything seemed to mean something. Their lives were in transition and she looked for signs” (DeLillo 67). In the group of Alzheimer’s people, Lianne spends a lot of time. She listens to these patients trying to get everything about what happened. In fact, her attending the discussions with the Alzheimer group can also reduce the stress which is resulted from the trauma experience. Tafreshi and Yahya argue that “Social ties act as a buffer for stress” (122). Therefore, Lianne “wanted to tell them but did not. Tell them everything, say everything. She needed them to listen” (DeLillo 128). Social ties act as a buffer for stress

In fact, she wants to tell her story to the patients hoping they could give an explanation of the attacks. To demand that the others talk about their traumas reflects to what extent Lianne has been affected by 9/11. Lianne takes every opportunity to know reasons for the event as she may find an answer to “Why did this event happen to her?” Therefore, “She tried to follow the sequence of events ... The words came fast. She recalled things she didn’t know she’d absorbed” (DeLillo 126). For her, she knows her beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors are no longer as they were pre-trauma of September 11.

It is clear that Lianne feeling in a distressed mood is a result of shattering her essential suppositions that help her to explain her life events. According to Janoff-Bulman “what makes traumatic events so distressing is that they violate many of the basic assumptions people have about themselves and the world (Janoff-Bulman, “Shattered Assumptions” 53). Therefore, she expresses to Keith her inability to understand her ideas as “[she] can’t identify thoughts [she] can’t claim as [hers]” (DeLillo 125). However; her failure to make sense of people and things around her gives a sign that her fundamental assumptions are deeply afflicted by trauma effects.

Lianne still tries and tries to understand why the attacks happened to them. In the last chapter she starts to go church. In a relevant sense, Pyszczynski suggests return to religion as one of the reactions to 9/11 is considered an intensifying pursuit for meaning and value (100).

### 3.3 *Self-Worth*

People, in general, evaluate self-esteem to a relatively high level. They operate under the supposition that they are worthy and decent individuals. The assumption of self-worth provides an individual with an expectation of receiving outcomes that are in line with his/her behavior (Janoff-Bulman, “Shattered Assumptions” 11-12). These outcomes, whether or not negative, depend on how the concerned person behaves. In other words, there is a relational connection between the events of life, on one hand, and human behaviors and attitudes, on the other hand. The event of September 11 is unanimously described as a negative one. Lianne listens to Martin, Nina’s friend, as he explains the event as a negative outcome to the negative attitudes and behaviors of Western countries, in general, and the United States, in particular, towards Middle-East countries and their people. Martin argues that “These are matters of history. This is politics and economies. All the things that shape lives, millions of people, dispossessed their lives, their consciousness” (DeLillo 47).

Martin holds the belief that the government of the United States is responsible for the terrorist attacks. The long history of purely negative treatment of the people of those countries has led to “lost land, failed states, foreign intervention...” (DeLillo 113) The vision presented by Martin is in line with the idea of “social laws.” Janoff-Bulman suggests that the world is meaningful place, events in the world make sense, these events, therefore; can be explained in accordance with accepted “social laws” (“The Aftermath of Victimization” 21). According to Lerner, such social laws become a source of rules of justice and control. Then, justice is invoked when there is a belief that people get what they deserve and they deserve what they get (Lerner 11). In this sense, terrorist activity can be seen as a reaction to negative behavior represented by the atrocities committed by American exploitation and intervention. Lianne contemplates what Martin poses.

On the other hand, these attacks would not have happened if there preventive action was taken by Americans. As Lianne says, “Eight years ago they planted a bomb in one of the towers. Nobody said what’s next. This was next” (DeLillo 10) Lianne’s statement reflects the assumption that “an individual believes that he can engage in relevant, preventive actions resulting from thinking about what might happen to him, believing that life events can be predicted and he can protect from them” (Janoff-Bulman, “Shattered Assumptions” 10). As mentioned earlier, a good behavior can be used to take control over events a person faces. Preventing a disaster becomes possible when an individual adopts protective behavior.

However, the affliction of Lianne’s basic belief of invulnerability that provides one with a sense of self-worth is increased due to her listening to Martin’s perceptions as he is arguing with Nina about the reasons for the attacks. He disagrees that the attacks have religious motives since “the system doesn’t justify this. Islam renounces this (DeLillo 112). He embraces the belief in “an action-outcome contingency” (Janoff-Bulman, “Shattered Assumptions” 10) that means people get what they deserve based on their behavior. Martin is convinced that the attacks have historical roots and these traumatic events would not have occurred if there were no negative acts done by America because “if [people] engage in appropriate positive behaviors, good things will happen to them” (Janoff-Bulman, “Shattered Assumptions” 10).

These arguments reveal the prevailing sense of invulnerability becomes an issue for all the characters. Shattering the sense of vulnerability engenders the low sense of self-worth inside Lianne because it gives her a sense of vulnerable. Lianne, like many Americans, feels defenseless since a trauma “victim finds it hard to continue seeing the world as safe

and fair and seeing the self as worthy and deserving. Such experience disproves the view of the world as benevolent and of the self as invulnerable (Baumeister 234). The attacks challenged fundamental assumptions of all Americans in terms of national and personal invulnerability although the majority of them were not directly exposed to the attacks. Silver et al. states that the symptoms of posttraumatic stress were accompanied by substantial fears of additional terrorist attacks, as more than half of Americans expressed concerns for the safety of themselves and their loved ones (qtd. in Silver and John 248).

For Amanat, any overestimation of the ability of human beings to control unpredictable events sustains the feeling of being invulnerable (80). Such feelings of invulnerability reflect logical outcomes of an individual's main assumptions. This will be reflected in the individual's ability to resurrect their feelings of fear that the traumatic event may happen again and again. This is what happens with Lianne and most Americans. The vision of their security being severely undermined raises such a sense of vulnerability. The tragic event that gives the Americans the potential to see that thousands of persons could die immediately delivers an important message to all Americans. The potential attack is reflected through the unfamiliar sight Lianne sees:

She was not accustomed to the sight of police and state troopers in tight clusters or guardsmen with dogs. Other places, she thought, other worlds, dusty terminals, major intersections, this is routine and always will be. This was not a considered reflection so much as a flutter, a downdraft of memory, cities she'd seen, crowds and heat (DeLillo 32)

Now, the Americans understand that they are vulnerable to aggressive attacks of death and destruction like any other people in the world. In fact, the terrorist attacks bring to an end the Americans' false sense of security. The feeling of inviolability is shown nothing than an illusion. It was decisively shaken. Like many of those Americans who have been traumatized by the September 11 attacks, Lianne's sense of vulnerability and distress gets stronger and stronger inside every citizen of the United States. Janoff-Bulman concludes that the traumatic events are distressing because they afflict and destroy the fundamental assumptions of people in their society ("Shattered Assumptions" 96).

Thus, that Lianne's attitudes and behaviors are different means her basic assumptions of the things in the world have been afflicted by 9/11's tragic events. According to Janoff-Bulman and Schwartzberg, any change in the behavior of traumatized people reflects a change in their fundamental assumptions (489). This change of behavior seems clear in Lianne's aggressive reaction to Elena. Lianne's violent attitude towards anything related to the Middle East indicates not only how vulnerable she feels but also the reconstructing her perceptions about Middle Eastern people and their cultures. Janoff-Bulman mentions that people rebuild biographies of persons whom they know and interpret the behaviors and thoughts of the others in order to be consistent with the assumptions they already hold for these people ("Shattered Assumptions 30).

Baumeister suggests when an individual experiences trauma and becomes vulnerable, s/he starts to feel fearful and powerless. This new feeling goes in contradiction with the trauma victim's fundamental assumptions that they have had before trauma events (234). As a result, the victims suffer from a sense of negative self-worth. For Lianne, she becomes haunted by this sense of herself. Moreover, she gets frightened, uncertain and upset. She feels that she does not have the ability to go through her new life easily. She informs Keith that "[she] wake[s] up at some point every night. Mind running non-stop. Can't stop it" (DeLillo 124). She cannot sleep comfortably, and she cannot stop thinking of what happened. In spite of all that, she still struggles to rebuild her previous perceptions to recover from these induced-trauma negative effects.

Lianne's belief in God plays a significant role in her attempting to validate the benevolence of life. At the same time, it supports her seeking meaning from events and life, thus it helps her reconstruct her old assumptions. Lianne's reaction reflects the vital relation between a trauma victim's spiritual and religious aspect, on one side, and the facility of his/her ability to rebuild broken assumptions, on the other side. Lianne becomes gradually able to control her traumatic life as she holds the new worldview that people are benevolent and helpful and life controllable, but not absolutely. This demonstrates that there is some increase of hope and spirituality in Americans' basic assumptions after September 11 attacks. Both these characteristics demonstrate their contributions in lowering the levels of PTSD symptoms.

In the wake of violation of fundamental assumptions by a subversive event such as September 11, there remains the hard task of rebuilding these assumptions about life, people, and the self. Life requires constructing an accurate balance between avoiding and facing trauma-related images, thoughts, and feelings. Since earlier assumptions become no longer usable in describing the world or not convenient and functioning within it, it is necessary to reshape them or hold new worldviews that are viable and in harmony with new possibilities. Lianne seems involved in protecting her new reconstructed assumptions as she takes part in an anti-war protest.

In 2004, Lianne accompanies Justin, her son, to anti-war protest and peace-promoting march in New York City. Eight years before the September 11 attacks, the terrorists "planted a bomb in one of the towers. Nobody said what's next (DeLillo10). Now Lianne and the other protesters try to take preventative action against the possibility of the occurrence of more attacks as a reaction towards the war on Iraq. She takes Justin there "to allow him to walk in the midst of dissent, to feel and see the argument against misrule" (DeLillo 182). This reflects a lived scene that manifests the heightened degree of positive energy Lianne has. She strives to inculcate in his cognitive system assumptions about the reality of life because "In our daily actions and interactions, we typically understand events and outcomes in terms of efficient causality" (Janoff-Bulman, "Shattered Assumptions 133).

The anti-war attitude presented by Lianne and the other protesters stand for a live occasion with Americans' desire to protect their fundamental assumptions about their self-worth and the benevolence of people. Justin works together with the protests. He seems an active member as he manages to talk to the other anti-war members, or discusses leaflets about Islam with Muslims. In depth, the scene implies looking for the reasons for such traumatic events. For a trauma victim, this represents the meaning of the traumatic event that defines which assumptions are influenced and how the event is grasped. These new assumptions have been imposed upon the victim by circumstances. Moreover, they are determined by the adaptive quality of each person that is deeply examined under these circumstances.

At the end of *Falling Man*, DeLillo creates a kind of hope by including Lianne and Justin in the anti-war demonstration. He makes the beginning of novel and its end have two very different views on life and different portrayals of New York City. DeLillo devotes this scene of optimism in looking forward to the next American generations' adoption of a realistic strong set of assumptions about life, people, and their perceptions of themselves. By doing this, DeLillo attempts to present a way to uproot the effects of the trauma of September 11 from the Americans' collective consciousness because "Traumatic historical events are deeply rooted in people's collective consciousness (Khodadadegan, Kaur, and Babae 65).

#### 4. Conclusion

This study concludes that traumatic experiences such as the September 11 attacks affect the victims' fundamental assumptions, thus, their attitudes and behaviors. This interprets why these victims exhibited symptoms of being less confident or convinced about their abilities to understand what and why this happened to them. It also gives an explanation for increasing aggressive behaviors of some of these victims in the case of September 11 trauma, particularly against Middle Easterners. The trauma victims also have felt they are not able to have meaningful control over the real connection between what they had done and what they received. Consequently, this has expectedly led them to be haunted with security fears and procedures trying to restore such control and to regain a sense of predictability in their conduct and behavior of daily life. Lianne becomes gradually able to control her traumatic life as she holds new worldviews towards people are benevolent and helpful and life controllable, but not absolutely. Against this background, in the wake of an unforgettable traumatic experience, the victims' range of basic beliefs must be modified to agree with new possibilities. This means that the shattered assumptive worlds are adjusted and developed progressively in accord with daily lived experience. Furthermore, this study also proves that there is some increase of hope and spirituality in Americans' basic assumptions after the September 11 attacks. Both these characteristics demonstrate their contribution in lowering the levels of PTSD symptoms. When traumatized persons' attempt to make sense of what has happened, as they reshape their shattered assumptions, it is likely that they see purpose in the trauma as a strategy for that. Understanding the traumatic event is considered as the most significant intergradient for the process of recovery from a trauma's effects. Finally, it is not absolutely necessary to believe that so long as an individual acts as s/he should, nothing unfavorable will happen.

#### References

- Amanat, Ebrahim. *The Age of Terror*. Lulu. com, 2001.
- Barker, Robert L. *The social work dictionary*. NASW press, 1991.
- Baumeister, Roy F. *Meanings of life*. Guilford Press, 1991.
- Beder, Joan. "Loss of the assumptive world—How we deal with death and loss." *OMEGA-Journal of Death and Dying* 50.4 (2005): 255-265.
- Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed experience: Trauma, narrative and history*. JHU Press, 1996.
- DeLillo, Don. *Falling man*. Simon and Schuster, 2007.
- Janoff-Bulman, Ronnie, and Steven S. Schwartzberg. "Toward a general model of personal change." 1991.
- Janoff-Bulman, R. "Shattered assumptions: towards a new psychology of trauma." *SimonandSchuster. com*. 1992.
- Janoff-Bulman, Ronnie. "The aftermath of victimization: Rebuilding shattered assumptions." *Trauma and its wake* 1 (1985): 15-35.
- Kaufman, G. "Safety and the assumptive world." *Loss of the assumptive world*. New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2002.
- Kauffman, Jeffrey, ed. *Loss of the assumptive world: A theory of traumatic loss*. Routledge, 2013.
- Keniston, Ann, and Jeanne Follansbee Quinn. *Literature After 9/11*. Vol. 1. Routledge, 2013.
- Khodadadegan, Neda, Hardev Kaur, and Ruzbeh Babae. "Postmodern Apocalypse in White Noise and London Fields." *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature* 5.4 (2016): 65-71.
- Lerner, Melvin J. *The belief in a just world*. Springer US, 1980.
- Lilly, Michelle Marie. *Shattered assumptions, coping and religiosity in intimate partner violence survivors: a partial explanation for variation in PTSD symptoms?*. ProQuest, 2008.
- Noor', Nurul Soleha Mohd, Ruzbeh Babae, and Arbaayah Ali Termizi. "Effects of Ttrauma in Don DeLillo's Point Omega." *Language & Communication* 2.2 (2015): 243-258.

Poulin, Michael, and Roxane Cohen Silver. "World benevolence beliefs and well-being across the life span." *Psychology and aging* 23.1 (2008): 13.

Pyszczynski, Tom, et al. "Why do people need self-esteem? A theoretical and empirical review." *Psychological bulletin* 130.3 (2004): 435.

Schlenger, William E., et al. "Psychological reactions to terrorist attacks: findings from the National Study of Americans' Reactions to September 11." *Jama* 288.5 (2002): 581-588.

Silver, Roxane Cohen, and John A. Updegraff. *Searching for and finding meaning following personal and collective traumas*. na, 2013.

Simpson, Roger, and William Edward Coté. *Covering violence: a guide to ethical reporting about victims & trauma*. Columbia University Press, 2013.

Tafreshi, Leila, and Wan Roselezam Wan Yahya. "Migration, Trauma, PTSD: A Gender Study of Morrison's Jazz." *Advances in Language and Literary Studies* 5.3 (2014): 120-125.