.Research Article

Delillo's White Noise: Postmodern Effects of Cyber Culture on Youths

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Abstract:

This research paper is focused on how DeLillo's novel White Noise posits the effects of Cyber culture over the youths because of their all-embracing engagement. The Fiction is about the admixture of the media and popular culture. Different aspects of consumer culture are presented throughout the novel. None of the characters likes to develop passion for true knowledge. They no longer like to take the trouble to know the reality. Individuals are taken as fragile units. In the lives of Gladney, Barbette, Bee and other children of Murray, digitally produced reality count a lot. To come out of his barren mercantile practices like digital mode of communication and encoding business codes, the main character develops fantasies. As a qualitative research, the researcher has used library and internet as the sources for it. The concept of postmodernism along with cyber culture has been used as the tool to interpret and analyze the fiction

Key words: Cyber Culture, Postmodernism, Consumer, Capitalism, Youths.

Introduction :

This paper examines the shocking effects of Cyber Culture on Don DeLillo's White Noise. The narrator of this novel is consuming things that are available in the supermarket. The narrator has the mania with death, and mortality. He competes with others in the race to consume fresh and latest commodities. He regularly visits to pub, bar, restaurant, movie hall, concert hall. He, his kids and wife are fascinated to television programs. He didn't like to be loyal to only one wife. He has more than four wives. His friend Murray chooses to lead a life of mobility and rush. Affected from the capitalist mode of living lives, Babette, Murray and Gladney are fearful of death. Babette and Gladney quarrel regarding who would die first. Fear of death and the desire for death coexist in them.The protagonist of the novel has limitless passion for latest fashion, consumerism, popular culture and cybernetic practice; which puts his life in risk. Gladney and his wife, Babette, had the obsession with death.

Their expectation to lead a meaningful and glamorous life at the cost of established norms make them fearful of death. Their naive dependence on technological comfort makes them too primitive to treat chemical leakage lightly, as they are affected badly by toxic leakage. The desire for cyber culture is questioned in DeLillo's White Noise. Characters like Gladney, Babette and Murray develop dreadful obsession with death. Due to their ardor for consumerism, and sedative effect of cyber culture, they get fail and weakened. So they are affected by the fatal effect of toxic leakage. It creates the disintegration of an individual's role in society. Don DeLillo has written his major works in late twentieth century. His early novels are focused on illness and sickness faced by people who are trapped in the postmodern society. He raises postmodern genre to the peak of sophistication and art ability. He then writes mainly on some of the latest trends and fashions. He captures the ethos and shifting trend of present society which is exposed to

countless ills and difficult like creation of society and obsession with death.Postmodernism is an umbrella term that is used in different ways by different speakers. Postmodernism is used to explore the complex relationships of power, knowledge, and discourse created in the struggle between social groups. It is also mixed with several other perspectives that challenge the normative and socially approved conduct. Postmodernism is an object of celebration and scorn, both in intellectual discourse and in cultural dialects. Through repeated use and enduring controversy, it has been as a cultural cliché. The vagueness of this term stems partly from the vast work that we ask it do. That work involves adequately conceptualizing and engaging the phenomena of post modernity. The disastrous effects of postmodern thinking are unimaginable and unthinkable. The dread and danger of clinging to the tenet of postmodernism is generative of the unfavorable consequences. The fundamental feature of postmodernism is that there is no dividing line between the real and its representation. What is represented is not completely different from what exists. The disciples of postmodernism tend to believe in the constructed or simulated reality. What comes to the domain of screen, digital screen or the sphere of representation is true for the modern time. People are so inclined to believe in the nature of constructed reality that they are almost ignorant about the fact that the real or the transcendentally crucial essence exists. In this research, the researcher has created the delimitation as the text White Noise to interpret the text from the postmodern concept of Cyber Culture. This research is based on the library research; primarily the secondary sources of data are taken for the analysis.

Review Of Related Literature:
Many critics and reviewers have focused their study of the Novel from its release from different perspectives. It means both good and bad elements are discussed in White Noise. There are also other elements which give a glimpse of superficial tendency of contemporary society. The most puzzling thing about this novel is that DeLillo points out how unpredictably desire changes into source of unknown fear. Weekes (1971) comments on the disposition of Gladeny.

He takes Gladney as the most complex character, and comments: "Our shopping may be temporarily confused, but it continues; we work our way up and down the aisles and toward the culminating registers (16). The idea of the disagreement with death and mortality is the most thrilling idea inherent in the novel, White Noise. Tough the society offers different possibilities to individuals; they are haunted by their own sense of guilt and unconscious fear. The unnecessary fear is the most puzzling issue of this fiction. Rettberg (2006) talks about Babette's obsession with death, an intense, over-mastering passion. Such chronic sense of fear is fulfilled at the expense of every just and generous principle. Her exposure to television culture and its calm effect on her mindset are taken as the root cause of unexpected troubles. Rettberg says: 'DeLillo's characters face angst of the most contemporary varieties. Although Don DeLillo is not a conventional realist or naturalist in any sense of the word, He is a postmodernist author" (Rettberg, 2006, p.10). Despite his innovative quality, DeLillo is content to work in forms and genres that are long established. Yet the work of DeLillo is distinctly post-modern. It presents the stories of characters that face life in a post-modern, postindustrial, television culture. Osteen (1984) analyzes White Noise in the light of characters' increasing obsession. Growing obsession of the characters reveal heightens the possibility of committing crimes. Osteen posits: White Noise thus brings together many of DeLillo's obsessions: the deleterious effects of capitalism, the power of electronic images, the tyrannical authority and dangerous byproducts of science, the unholy alliance of consumerism and violence, and the quest for sacredness in a secularized world. Like all of his fiction, it displays his virtuoso command of language and, particularly, his ventriloquist capacity to mimic the argots of various cultural forms. In it he amplifies the noises around us and permits us to hear again how these sounds shape our own voices and beliefs. (Osteen, 1984, p.5) Seidler (2004) says that White Noise displays how masculinity is shaped by academic pursuits. Concentrating on this aspect of reasoning, Victor states:Don DeLillo's 1986 novel White Noise provides a narrative which critiques the educational reproduction of masculinities. The

lecturers in his, School of American Environments, are portrayed as shallow and insecure, desperate to outdo each other in feats of masculinity which resemble rites of passage rather than pedagogic experiences. In the Western world manliness has come to be closely aligned with reasonable behavior. (Seilder, 2004, p.2)

The writer's portrayal of the power of media is one of the most striking aspects of the novel. The miracle of visual technology is also reproduced in the novel. The portrayal of power is carefully planned and maneuvered. DeLillo leads reads to make the inevitable extension to it. Bizzini (2002) ststes, "White Noise does not aim to tell a story that is centered on the spectacle of terrorism and terror, even though it retains most of DeLillo's fictional themes and theoretical nodal points such as the analysis of postmodern society or his interest in the power of images, in language, and in cultural history". (3) The text starts with a third-person narrator. The sensation of chaos and loss of understanding are twin problems that are dramatized in the novel. The afro-mentioned critics have analyzed the novel, White Noise from different perspectives. None of them examines it with cybernetic practices and culture. Fascination with death and confusion resulting from the difference between simulated reality and actual reality grow dramatically. So the researcher has focused the study about the effect of cyber culture on youths.

Theoretical Framework:

Postmodernism is used as the major issue to conduct this research. There are several of postmodern concepts and insights to interpret life, text and social situations. In the beginning, postmodernism has liberated human beings from the bondage of absolute dogma, restrictive pretension of universal notions. The postmodern brought the wider range of thoughts to see the world. Derrida has brought the concept of multiplicity of meaning, whereas Neo-Marxists talk about the mass culture. Postmodernism is an umbrella term that is used in different ways by different theorists. They talk about the complex relationships of power, knowledge, and discourse created in the struggle between social groups. It is mixed with several other perspectives that challenge the normative and socially approved conduct. According to Tarnas (2007),

"Postmodernism is an object of celebration and scorn, both in intellectual discourse and in cultural vernacular. Through repeated use and enduring controversy, it has assumed several forms, including a powerful theoretical resource, a political lightning rod and a cultural cliché" (247). The ambiguity of this term stems partly from the enormous work that we ask it do.One of the major supporters of postmodernism was Baudrillard (2005) who takes the postmodern trend sets the stage for simulation. To suggest is more than to pretend to have what one does not have. Pretension is also one of core component of postmodern simulation. But simulation is more than pretending to have what one does not have. The shifting notion of knowledge is an entry to understanding some of the important tenet of postmodernism. Knowledge has become informational commodity in the wake of postmodern scenario. Manufacturing commodities are replaced by the digitalized or computerized form of knowledge. Bertens (2003) elaborates thus: The scenario in which information replaces the manufacture of material goods as a central concern in the most advanced economies. This computerization of society will affect the nature of our knowledge. It is not very clear how exactly our knowledge will change, but Lyotard offers the prediction that the direction of new research will be dictated by the possibility of its eventual results being translatable into computer language. (Bertens, 2003, p.119).Here he talks about the conviction that metanarrataives. It was replaced by a great number of language games. These language games range from models of discourse, various forms of utterance-denotative, performative, and prescriptive. Narrative language games can accommodate elements such as deontic statements prescribing what should be done with respect to kinship, the difference between the sexes, children, neighbors, and foreigner. Narrative language games have only limited social and historical validity. Lyotard's perspective on post modernity and Hutcheon (2007) opinions on postmodern practice including cyber culture give rise to the theoretical framework of this research. Lyotard says that science and technology has become the tool of exploitation and deception in the emerging world of post-modernity. Because the prospect of human beings has decreased, the perspective of

ethical humanism will be used to conduct the research. Lyotard (2007) defines postmodernism in a somewhat different way. His version of postmodernism differs substantially from other postmodernists. To Lyotard, postmodernism is the collapse of grand narrative. Science as a grand narrative appeared to be the means of domination. In his famous book The Postmodern Condition, Lyotard presents postmodernism as the stepping stone for modernism. Lyotard portrays scientific and technological innovation as a form of domination. Consumers are simply cheated and exploited by the ongoing advancement and innovation in science and technology.

Textual Analysis:
In the novel, a visiting lecturer, named Murray Jay Siskind is in dilemma. The temptations of cyber culture or to pursue and maintain the dignity make him in ambivalent condition. He wants to keep his professional ethics and dignity intact. But he is influenced by the cyber culture, social networking, consumer culture and the cult of developing obsessive passion for trendy things. So he is in dilemma as to which side he should favor. Murray is engaged in the task of intellectual development. But he likes the taste of reading comic books, trendy things. He visits to movie halls and developing obsessive passion for music. On the face of commercial and consumer-oriented music industry, Murray involves in that musical rubbish uncritically. There are other professors too in this place who read nothing but cereal boxes. Murray is a typical example for the passion of professors. Murray is new to the Hill College. His very appearance is as a stoop-shouldered man with little round glasses and an Amish beard. He is the chaser of popular cultural trend. He persistently conforms to the requirements and rigors of cyber culture. Murray appreciates Gladney, another character of the novel, for inventing the separate department of Hitler Studies. As claimed by Murray, Gladney deserves the whole credit of bringing this new department into establishment at Hill College. Goaded by the Murray, Gladney could not resist the temptation to curb his hankering to see photographed barn. The narrator, who is Gladney himself, admits that his passion for recent hubs and hangouts of digital appeal is ignited by Murray.Murray is not interested in seeing delightfully natural objects of beauty, rural landscape and bucolic scene. He is tempted by the beauty of simulated objects which intend to evoke a glimpse of reality. Casting aside the natural appeal and charm of objects which are beautiful per se, they near a grove of trees and watch the photographers. Murray maintains a prolonged silence. He tries to draw an analogical parity between object that is animated digitally and object that is naturally beautiful. Babette, the wife of Gladney, has exotic and mysterious interest. She lies down on her bed and goes through classics on erotic. She plans ski trip to the wonder of the narrator. She gets easily excited to Gladney's alarm. He does not understand why she behaves the way she behaves. She pretends to talk to pet dog and cat. The narrator presents, "She runs she shovels snow; she caulks the tub and sink. She plays word games with Wilder and reads erotic classics aloud in bed at night. What do I do? I twirl the garbage bags and twist -tie them, swim laps in the college pool" (13). Babette talks to dogs and cats. Babette is obsessed with death. She is frightened by death if death is on the point of threatening in her life or not. All of a sudden, she asks question with her husband who will die first. It is unclear to fix and finalize if she is fearful of the looming prospect of death. The following extract. There is no ground to feel frightened by death. But Babette and her husband are afflicted with the chronic and obsessive preoccupation with death. Babette's exposure to violence and death ridden television programs and her fervent passion for pornographic sites filled with sexual violence underpins her obsession with death. Besides, there are other factors that are equally liable for the inception of fear psychology in Babette and her husband. The societies they live in are characterized by the pervasive nature of risks. Babette further says "Sometimes I think our love is inexperienced. The question of dying becomes a wise reminder. It cures us of our innocence of the future. Simple things are doomed, or is that a superstition? We watched the girls come round again" (13). Sedative effect of television is another factor that contributes to the fear of death which haunts Babette and Gladney occasionally. Gladney narrates that he watches television with all of his children. But he is acutely aware of how Babette is badly harmed by the sedative effect of

television. Gladney reports "That night, a Friday, we ordered Chinese food and watched television together, the six of us. Babette had made it a rule. She seemed to think that if kids watched television one night a week with parents or stepparents. The effect would be to de-glamorize the medium in their eyes" (14). Babette makes it wholesome domestic sport. The narcotic effect of television is presented as below: Its narcotic undertow and eerie diseased brain-sucking power would be gradually reduced. I felt vaguely slighted by this reasoning. The evening in fact was a subtle form of punishment for us all. Heinrich sat silent over his egg rolls. Steffie became upset every time something shameful or humiliating seemed about to happen to someone on the screen. She had a vast capacity for being embarrassed on other people's behalf. (14) Gladney's children have peculiar habits and taste of each. They are often fascinated to television. They act neglectful of the consequences. Without any fault of their own, they feel vague and vacuous. They are fond of watching violence-ridden programs. Any television program that tends to moralize bothers Gladney's children. They prefer to enjoy watching new fashion, new objects and commodities launched in the supermarket, automobile and the thrill brought forth by its use for escapist adventure, reckless and disordered life which mocks strict and disciplined life. Fascination and seductions of Supermarkets tease characters like Murray, Gladney, Babette and others. The narrator confesses that supermarket is a great revelation to him. Gladney goes on to say that "supermarkets, large and clean and modern, are a revelation to me. I spent my life in small steamy delicatessens with slanted display cabinets full of trays that hold soft wet lumpy matter in pale colors. High enough cabinets so you had to stand on tiptoes to give your order" (23). The crowd of consumers, shifting consumption pattern, rowdy and unruly consumers getting easily excited with new commodities are the part and parcel of daily life. The temptation to buy goods and refresh consumption pattern are accompanied by the growing fear of death on the part of those consumers. In this regard, both Gladney and his wife, Babette, typify the case in point. The following extract describes the condition: In cities no one notices specific dying and it is a quality of

the air. It's everywhere and nowhere. Men shout as they die, to be noticed, remembered for a second or two. To die in an apartment instead of a house can depress the soul, I would imagine, for several lives to come. In a town there are houses, plants in bay windows. The dead have faces, automobiles. (23) In it the habit of frequent visit to supermarket coexists with the chronic fear of death. Consumption is associated with life, and it is related to the survival of human beings. Characters that are incorporated in this novel have access and strength to consumption. They are able financially to buy any latest goods. They are additional access to the latest fashion and current trend of maximizing the principle of life. But in such situation, the question of death is no longer supposed to come. Contrary to the expectation of Gladney and Babette, the fear of death has weakened them dreadfully. The sole concern of their life is how to get rid of the mounting fear of death and dissolution. The idea of violence is reiterated again and again for them. They talk about how deranged and frenetic youths commit violence. The sort of freedom which youths in their teens get offers leverage to the possibility of violence. Youths'exposure to video games, simulated version of computer games, violence based television programs goad them to take entire aspect of life casually. That is why the possibility of violence rises by leaps and bounds. In the open society where consumerism and cybernetic practices gain upper hand, the possibility of the death and crimes increase rampantly. The following extract conveys this sort of problematical matter concerning cyber culture: We send notes sometimes. Who did he kill? He was under pressure. And what happened? It kept building and building. So he went out and shot someone. Who did he shoot? Some people in Iron City. How many? Five. Five people. Not counting the state trooper, which was later. Six people. Did he care for his weapons obsessively? (25) Modern electronic items of taking money from bank account facilitate daily pattern of consumptions, shopping and daily transactional activities. Master cards, credit cards and various other forms of electronic means are applied to draw money so that individual life can be incredibly better. In addition to the bright side of the life, there is another dark side too. Many thugs and hackers decode the secret pin numbers

of master cards. There is the possibility of robbing money by hacking the pin code. Not only daily life is enhanced but it is affected badly by the burgeoning robbery of money deposited in bank.The narrator goes on to account for how he happens to witness the robbery of bank deposit. He narrates "In the morning I walked to the bank. I went to the automated teller machine to check my balance. I inserted my card, entered my secret code, tapped out my request" (26). The figure on the screen roughly corresponds to independent estimate. The narrator goes on to say "Waves of relief and gratitude flowed over me. The system had blessed my life. I felt its support and approval". The narrator's friend, Murray, is critical of the effect of television on his children. He says that his children learn without television. If his children tend to learn without television, Gladney's children are glued to Television. Murray himself says "The boy is growing up without television," I said, "which may make him worth talking to, Murray, as a sort of wild child, a savage plucked from the bush, intelligent and literate but deprived of the deeper codes and messages that mark his species as unique" (28). In the conversation regarding how television obstructs the growth of children's creativity, the following extract illustrates the point a bit further: TV is a problem only if you've forgotten how to look and listen, Murray said. My students and I discuss this all the time. They're beginning to feel they ought to turn against the medium, exactly as an earlier generation turned against their parents and their country. I tell them they have to learn to look as children again. (28) Murray says that he and his students discuss about television. He also indicates that his students are opposed to the effect of unrestrained attraction to television. They ridicule television by calling it a junk mail. Murray does not fully agree with his students' lamentation to the sedative effect of television. If Murray is skeptical of TV programs, the narrator, Gladney, is tempted by the seductive charm of TV. He narrates how he happened to surf television channels while brooding on his mother's death in a melancholic way. He sees a man speaking about weather forecast in his reportage. Having seen his skill and precision of knowledge, Gladney begins to like TV and various programs that are telecasted through it. Unlike Murray, Gladney is glued to TV. He takes

TV programs as source of solace and consolation.Dwelling upon the pervasive effect of television, Murray laments about the pervading effect of cyber culture. He says "It's entered the food chain. Maybe it's the gum I chew. Is that too farfetched? Maybe it's something else. What do you mean? You're taking something besides chewing gum. Where did you get that idea?" (29). As a result of growing forgetfulness, many youths and middle aged people from decent profession have become critical of unrestrained reliance on cybernetic medium of communication and digital forms of entertainment. Cyber culture, reliance on technology, carefree life and various other shifting norms give shove to authority. When a plane loses power in all of its three engines, passengers react and scream as though they are trapped mouth of death. In the name of seeking comfort, people have to face plenty of hazards. The society dominated by the norms and protocol of cyber culture is risk society. The following extract is reflective of the attribute of risk society: The plane had lost power in all three engines, dropped from thirty-four thousand feet to twelve thousand feet. Something like four miles. When the steep glide began, people rose, fell, collided, and swam in their seats. Then the serious screaming and moaning began. Almost immediately a voice from the flight deck was heard on the intercom: We're falling out of the sky! (44-45) Here, a plane sidetracks from its trajectory, people scream uproariously. They have to face such situation due to the misinformation and wrong facts that are in circulation. It is customary for people to fear the impending disaster. They could not help getting shocked and confounded due to their naïve belief in the power of communication constituted by many digitally developed techniques and devices. In this regard, it can be said that foundational norms of cyber culture are called into question. In the novel, the character named Bee who is exposed to tour, travel, wanderlust and various other forms of entertainment. Assuming that her exposure to tour and adventure makes her mature, she is sent by her parents on travel. When she returns after yearlong tour and travel, even her parents are afraid of her bizarre appearance. The way she turns to be strange creature exemplifies Mr. Murray's view concerning how an individual has become a fragile unit surrounded by hostile fact.

Instead of getting the highest grade of maturity, Bee happens to develop fragility. The following extract presents how Murray's commentary on the position of an individual is justified by the increasing fragility of Bee:Bee was quietly disdainful of wisecracks, sarcasm and other family business. A year older than Denise, she was taller, thinner, paler, both worldly and ethereal, as though in her heart she was not a travel writer at all, as her mother had said she wished to be, but simply a traveler, the purer form, someone who collects impressions, dense anatomies of feeling, but does not care to record them. (46) Here, the effect of popular culture and temptation of cyber culture render individual as helpless being. Bee is goaded to pursue adventure so that she could develop certain degree of maturity. But contrary to the expectation, she happens to develop fragility. What she gets is not the strengthening of her vitality and spirit but collection of fact. From her adventurous pursuit, she takes just a bundle of information and not the real creative thrust. She is self-possessed and thoughtful. She had brought her relatives hand-carved gifts from the jungles. She takes taxis to school and dance class, spoke a little Chinese. Except shallowness, she gets nothing which is enough to conclude how dreadful indulgence in practice of cyber culture can be. Children want to live in their own ways. In this situation, it is not bad if parents are lonely. Babette is beset with plenty of hassles and horror resulting from disorder and deviation. Gladney unknowingly comes to ponder on the sequence of death of people who have hardly crossed the prime of their youth. He enumerates a list of death. He goes on to say "Mr. Treadwell's sister died. Her first name was Gladys. The doctor said she died of lingering dread, a result of the four days and nights she and her brother had spent in the Mid-Village Mall, lost and confused" (48).Thus, it can be concluded that unrestrained immersion in practice of cyber culture yields unexpected dreadful consequence. A crass marketing term becomes transformed into something mystical and beautiful, despite the genuine expectation of people. Individuals are likely to degenerate into a fragile unit beset with hostile facts. No access to true knowledge is found. Only the flood of arid facts and boring information circulate.

Conclusion:
In conclusion, the cyber culture produces various effects on youths who recklessly become passionate towards it. DeLillo's White Noise shows how human dignity and creativity are badly affected by youths' excessive indulgence cyber culture. This novel presents dramatically the worst effects caused by the practice of cyber culture like digital mode of communication, simulated reality and artificial means of entertainment. So, to conclude, DeLillo's White Noise displays the unexpected effects which can arise from youth's excessive engagement in cyber culture. It has severely affected the psyche of youths and they become the victim of machine. They have lost the humanitarian values and culture.

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