

The Construction of Identity in Don DeLillo's *White Noise*

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ABSTRACT

The authors of Postmodernism illuminate the problems of life in a postmodern world. Identity is one of the most dominant themes for postmodern researchers, especially after the WWII. This study selects a novel of Don DeLillo's *White Noise* in America. The main purpose behind this novel is to display to the readers that the issue of construction of identity is not merely faced by the immigrants but it is also faced by the native individuals in their motherland country.

The well-known American novelist Don DeLillo deals with the construction of identity according to his perspectives. The postmodern novelist in *White Noise* claims the role of consumerism, mass media and technology in the construction of identity.

This paper displays the identity formation in multicultural society in America which determines by consumerism, technology and mass media as it is portrayed with an American citizen Jack Gladney in Don DeLillo's *White Noise*.

Besides, it interprets the extent to which the main character succeeds or fails in overwhelming the construction of identity in multicultural America. Consequently, this study displays the outcome of the main character's struggle in the formation of their identity. At the end of the novel, shows that Gladney unsuccessfully construct his personal identity as a professor because he simulated a false person, and his identity was not stable.

1. Introduction

Donald Richard DeLillo (1936), wrote fifteen novels and four plays, is one of the masters of American fiction who is well-known for his important representations of contemporary American life. He was born in an Italian-American working class family in Bronx, New York. DeLillo now lives with his wife on the outskirts of New York (Begley, 1993). After achieving a bachelor degree in communication arts, DeLillo works as a copywriter at a publicity organization for some years.

DeLillo with the publication of *White Noise* (hereafter *WN*) his eighth novel, in 1985, he became popular in academic circles. According to Bloom (2003, p. 1), *WN* regards DeLillo as a leading novelist and many critics normally associate DeLillo with William Gaddis (1922-1998), Robert Coover (1934) and Thomas Pynchon (1937). DeLillo's *WN* has won the greatest amount of critical praise as Kuiper notes “the novel portrays the anomie of America cossetted by material excess and stupefied by empty mass culture” (1995, p. 313).

Moreover, DeLillo is constantly nervous about present-day life of America, and his works display a fear for postmodern thoughts. His works involve matters of the present-day United States of America such as consumerism, mass media, identity, terrorism, paranoia, toxic spills, and the like (Lentricchia, 1999, p.1). According to Engles and Duvall eds. (2006, p.1), DeLillo's novels display “a prophetic reach”, in which DeLillo expects progress in his American society with strange precision.

DeLillo's *WN*, being narrated by Jack Gladney as the first person narrator, is set in a Blacksmith, a small town, in an unknown region of the United States in the early 1980s. *WN* describes various scenes from the Gladney family's ordinary life, including their visits to shopping malls. It describes the daily interactions between family members during their meals. It also portrays Jack's conversations with Babette, his wife, as well as with Murray Jay Siskind, his colleague, on the subjects of television, life and death (Vadivel, Sivaram, & Ahmed, 2019).

The novel is divided into three parts: the first part is entitled “Waves and Radiation”, the second is “The Airborne Toxic Event”, (hereafter ATE) and the last “Dylarama”. *WN* is a story of Jack Gladney who is a professor and the chairman of the department of Hitler studies. A discipline is created by Jack himself, at the College-on-the-Hill. Jack has married four times previously and his fifth and final one is to Babette. He lives along with several of their children from previous marriages, namely Jack’s pessimistic teenage son, Heinrich, and delicate younger daughter Steffie (both from different marriages). Also, He lives with Babette’s self-confident eleven-year-old daughter, Denise and, youngest child Wilder.

The role of society in shaping identity is the main issue in DeLillo's *WN*. Furthermore, most of the characters have experienced controlling their identities and bodies. And their reactions turn from indifference to fierceness in the novel. Therefore, the characters have been regarded as “killers” and/ or “diers”, as Murray Siskind (DeLillo, 1985, p. 290) explains:

I believe. Jack, there are two kinds of people in the world. Killers and diers. Most of us are diers. We don't have the disposition, the rage or whatever it takes to be a killer. We let death happen. We lie down and die. But think what it's like to be a killer. Think how exciting it is, in theory, to kill a person in direct confrontation. If he dies, you cannot. To kill him is to gain life-credit. The more people you kill, the more credit you store up. It explains any number of massacres, wars, executions.

DeLillo in *WN* explores the fractured sort of modern American identity in connection to social and cultural incidents. Besides, there are visions of numerous historical figures and crucial incidents from the mid-twentieth century like the Cold War and the death of President John F. Kennedy. According to Duvall (2006, p. 3), DeLillo’s critics mix art and history and they summarize a structure of both art and history, that Linda Hutcheon named this structure as “Historiographical metafiction”.

Moreover, DeLillo forms the human experience through his characters, every ordinary life in details. “DeLillo presents a world mired in simulation, hyper reality,

consumerism, and often meaningless information and theory” (Wiese, 2012, p. 3). The reader may be pulled from the tension of the story by this type of exposition in other novels, but in DeLillo’s, it acts as the main focus of his message. DeLillo brings the story to the life by bringing up activities and conversations that relate to everyday suburban life. He shows us “a place we can all recognize, and yet nowhere specific, in which characters can self-consciously develop and storied events can occur” (Wiese, 2012, p. 4). The characters are so intricately designed to mimic everyday life that they seem to push themselves through the story. This leads to the assumption that the characters depend on DeLillo’s narration to give them life. Without inserting of witty or mockery remarks throughout the novel, a better sense of the characters cannot be grasped. The best example of this is through Jack, the main character who also acts as the narrator of the events.

In addition to centering on how the society forms identity in postmodern American society, the novel also focuses on Jack and his wife’s horror of death and how they make plans to escape from that horror. More importantly, in his novel, DeLillo attempts to show the modern-day of American society in which they become artificial and exploited by media, particularly by, radio and TV.

2. The Construction of Jack Gladney ‘s Identity as a Professor in *WN*

DeLillo in, his novel, *WN*, clarifies how the society affects and constructs identity in a consumer world. He criticizes the postmodern society through his “terrific comedy” (Lentricchia, 1991, p. 1). DeLillo records the loss of reality and authenticity as the defining feature of the postmodern America, as Gray (2004, p. 617) believes that DeLillo sets out to discover “what place there is, if any, for the concept of the individual or the authentic”.

Unquestionably, “most of DeLillo’s characters . . . seem like simulations of characters rather than human individuals, and nowhere are more noticeable than in *WN*, particularly in the characterization of the protagonist Jack Gladney” (Douglas, 2002, p. 105). Jack, as the discoverer of the department of Hitler studies, enjoys high professional names and international reputation. As a Hitler scholar, he is damaged

with uncertainty and self-doubt because, as stated by Bloom, Jack is highly aware of that his successful academic career is based on “the construction of a false persona” (2003, p. 29). In other words, he has created his identity on a fake image as a professor. In the beginning, Jack as a professor fails to meet even the most basic requirements for being as a Hitler scholar. Despite his failure being closely related to German history, he cannot speak German and he cautiously hides this secret from his colleagues. Jack secretly begins to take German lessons which are, unfortunately, not much of a help when he knows that a Hitler conference will take place at the College-on-the-Hill. Finally, he has no choice but to keep his opening speech restricts to the words that are the same, or nearly the same, in both English and German as a result his comments are automatically fragmented and odd as he (DeLillo, 1985, p. 274) explains:

I spoke in German, from notes, for five minutes. I talked mainly about Hitler's mother, brother and dog. His dog's name was Wolf. This word is the same in English and German. Most of the words I used in my address were the same or nearly the same in both languages. I'd spent days with the dictionary, compiling lists of such words. . . . Of course, there was Hitler himself. I spoke the name often, hoping it would overpower my insecure sentence structure. The rest of the time I tried to avoid the Germans in the group.

Moreover, Jack attempts to reject his German-speaking colleagues as much as he can. For Duvall, “Jack’s academic identity is revealed as simply a moment of the hyperreal in which the model . . . produces the real” (2006, p. 121). In the beginning of the novel, Jack explains how he is invented an academic identity for himself by accepting a respectable name and a remarkable image to go with it:

. . . The chancellor had advised me . . . to do something about my name and appearance if I wanted to be taken seriously as a Hitler innovator. Jack Gladney would not do, he said and asked me what other names I might have at my disposal. We finally agreed that I should invent an extra initial and call myself J. A. K. Gladney. . . The chancellor warned against what he called my

tendency to make a feeble presentation of self. He strongly suggested I gain weight. He wanted me to "grow out" into Hitler. He himself was tall, paunchy, ruddy, jowly, big-footed and dull (DeLillo, 1985, pp. 16-17).

Jack's constructed identity is more emphasized by the important antique robe which the head of the department obligates Jack to wear on in the campus. Jack welcomes the robe which adds a further touch to his academic aura, he utters: "I like clearing my arm from the folds of the garment to look at my watch; the simple act of checking the time is transformed by this flourish" (DeLillo, 1985, p. 9). Jack is keenly aware that his status as a prominent scholar is entirely depended on his aura as demonstrates in his comment, "we all had an aura to maintain" (Ibid., p. 74). Obviously, it is not only Jack who attempts to manage his mood and to construct an image, but the same holds true for Jack's colleagues as well; for instance, Murray Jay Siskind, who attempts to cultivate a specific aura that will impact women. As Jack portrays it, "Murray is trying to develop a vulnerability that women will find it attractive. He works at it consciously, like a man in a gym with weights and a mirror. But his efforts so far have produced only this half sneaky look, sheepish and wheedling" (DeLillo, 1985, p. 21).

Neil H. Reeve (2006, p. 137) indicates that the characters "change their appearances or adapt their behaviour to suit the images, they wish to plan and hide behind", the characters' identities are inauthentic and simulated. In Duvall's view, Jack "uses such props as his dark glasses and academic robes in order to simulate" a successful Hitler scholar (2006, p. 122). Therefore, for Young (2006, p. 41), through the "simulacra logic of Jack's existence", DeLillo demonstrates how the self is reduced to mere simulacra, in the postmodern American society. This confirms Baudrillard's claim that "we are simulators, we are simulacra" (Kellner, 1989, p. 61). When Jack states "I am the false character that follows the name around" (DeLillo, 1985, p. 17), this proves he is aware he is empty inside; he is always haunted by feelings of barrenness and inauthenticity (DeLillo, 1985, p. 17). In his powerlessness, Jack seeks a sense of empowerment through Hitler, who is responsible for the death of millions of people. While he builds his career upon the evil figure of Hitler, Jack feels "secure in his professional aura of power, madness and death" (DeLillo, 1985, p.72). Additionally, Jack does not mention



the Holocaust at all in his lectures, or conversations about Hitler, instead he stays on insignificant autobiographical details (DeLillo, 1985, p. 274).

Being in a capitalistic society encourages Gladney to create a false character. In capital society, knowledge and skills become changed into commodities, but they lose market value if there is no demand for them. It confirms Baudrillard's theory "you never consume objects in it, its use value, you are always manipulating objects as signs which distinguishes you" (1998, p. 39). In other words, he believes all people are defined according to their objects. Gladney, therefore, forms an identity which answers to the market demand, and he himself becomes a commodity that has to be sold under the existing market conditions if he financially wants to support himself and his family. In his analysis of the novel, Eid points out "it is desirable to teach about Hitler's personal life, without ideological references to Nazism, as part of mass culture to keep pace with market demands" (Eid, H. 2012, pp.3-5). "It is expected from postmodern intellectuals to "legitimate and institutionalize mass culture, equalizing it with high culture, in order to justify their choice to teach it by using the market logic whatever the market decides goes" (2012, p.4). For this reason, the leader directly grasps the potential of the Hitler Studies Department, for instance it will bring the profit (ibid). For Baudrillard "contemporary companies have become stages for competition between employees, who are searching recognition and approval of their bosses, rather than showing popular solidarity in the effort to create a better society, like they did in the past" (1998, p. 128).

Gladney states his creativeness in building Hitler studies and the corresponding personal appearance. Alike, his German language learning represents an attempt to increase his skills to be successful on the market. It follows that one should adjust by creating and recreating one's identity according to market demands in order to endure in the labor market. What Jack Gladney does is exactly that he invents Hitler studies because of the market demand for legitimizing mass culture, and he changes his appearance to create an image that will be taken seriously in his field as a professor. This allows him to hide his real identity behind his professional image, compromising his identity in the process.



It can be observed that all the characters in *WN* do not struggle with their identity as Jack does. Winnie Richards, Heinrich Gladney, and Murray Jay Siskind, in a huge system of influences, agree to their assimilation. Murray, similar to Jack, has created his identity as a professor. Additionally, he dresses corduroy all over the place and takes up smoking a tube in order to look like a professor. He is using an image for fitting his wishes; he believes that the image's power is proven through his clothes and his pipes as well. Thus, it can be seen in a conversation between Murray and Jack when they maintain: "You're smoking a pipe," I said. Murray smiled sneakily. 'It looks good. I like it. It works'" (DeLillo, 1985, p. 282). This, once again, approves Baudrillard's theory "we are simulators, we are simulacra" (Kellner, 1989, p.61).

The identity of Jack Gladney depends on the relationship between him and his wife, Babette. Gladney considers love as an essential identity that is trustful enough as he states "love helps us develop an identity secure enough to allow it to be placed in another's care and protection" (DeLillo, 1985, 29). Clearly, it is vital to Jack that there is no secret between him and his wife, Babette. He believes they share everything together. He thinks he knows everything about Babette and this makes him feel secure about his wife. In her full trust, he can find a safety life and a connection to reality in his wife that he cannot find in himself. Teresa Heffernan comments that "although Jack is plagued by doubt, he needs to read Babette as true, transparent, exposed wife" (1995, p. 78). It is disconcerting for him to discover that she has opaque, hidden areas in her life. For his identity to be secure, he needs her to conform to the comforting image of the solid, dependable wife. Babette takes the drug, Dylar, to control her fear of death. Thus, she hides this secret throughout her life; she sleeps with Willie Mink in exchange for Dylar. Jack feels confused because he could not discover Babette's betrayal with his close friend.

More importantly, Gladney and his wife always talk about who is going to die first? (DeLillo, 1985, p.30). However, their closeness is an illusion. In DeLillo's view, all closeness is an illusion in the postmodern world, which alienates and isolates. Although they both long for connection, to each other and to reality, their fear of death separates them, as will death itself. This fear of death starts agency panic; death



is the ultimate loss of control. Jack wonders if death might be hearing white noise forever, which is like a boundary-transgressing dispersal of the self (DeLillo, 1985, p 198). Fear of death characterizes and shapes the identity of both Babette and Jack, but they handle their fear in different ways. Babette's deception comes as a result of her attempts to deal with her fear of death. Babette tries medication, secretly acquiring an experimental drug that influences the part of the brain where fear of death is located. She involves herself with a shadowy Mr. Grey and even agrees to sleep with him in exchange for Dylar. Her addiction to Dylar leaves her with the side-effect of memory loss. Memory has conventionally been viewed to be of great importance in the formation of identity; the liberal humanist assumption is that identity is the product of a "protected inner core of beliefs, desires and memories" (Melley, 2000, p. 14). Memory loss threatens this concept of individuality, demonstrating a self that is not insulated and protected from influence. Thus, Babette's memory loss might be one reason that Jack complains that she is not the Babette he married. Jack sees Babette's identity shifting and she no longer conforms to his image of her. One of Jack's strategies designed to insulate himself from his fear of death is his field of scholarly research, Hitler studies. DeLillo stated in an interview: "Gladney finds a perverse form of protection. The damage caused by Hitler was so enormous that Gladney feels he can disappear inside it and that his own puny dread will be overwhelmed by the vastness, the monstrosity of Hitler himself" (DeCurtis, 1991, p.63). Murray's comments echoes DeLillo when he utters "Some people are larger than life. Hitler is larger than death. You thought he would protect you. I understand completely" (DeLillo, 1985, p. 287).

Jack Gladney acts out of his fear through violence toward the end of *WN*. Jack's "death sentence" ends when he decides to murder Mink as a revenge for Mink's betrayal with Babette, which is another plan to isolate himself from his fear of death (DeLillo, 1985, p. 251). And his uncertainty about his identity is increased by Babette's betrayal. In Murray's view "violence is a form of rebirth" (DeLillo, 1985, p. 290), in which a person gathers power in fierceness and this magical thinking strengthens Jack. In a conspiracy to murder Mink, Jack attempts to protect himself from his



unstable suspicion. Additionally, Jack attempts to be a murderer rather than a dead, to cancel his death sentence by imposing it on another one.

DeLillo, characteristically, refuses to give clear answers to the questions raised in the book. In the end, Jack finds no clear resolution to his anxieties, neither do the other characters. Lastly, after facing many difficulties and struggling with them, Jack successfully has created his identity as a professor which was based on a false academic image (DeLillo, 1985, p. 326).

3. Gladney's Identity as a Consumer in DeLillo's *WN*

Consumerism can be seen as the practice of associating personal happiness with the purchasing of material possessions and consumption. The act of consuming materials in excess of the basic needs is not a new practice by any means; it occurred since the first civilization. However, in the twentieth century consumerism becomes increasingly widespread, especially in the recent decades. Generally, consumerism is used to describe the tendency of people to identify with products, commercial brand names, or services that they consume. Any society which is dominated by consumerism can be referred as a consumer society. In the postmodern world, more precisely in postmodern American society, the effect of consumerism can be sensed expansively. The concept of consumerism is widely spread in the postmodern families which are an ordinary slave of technology. As a postmodern author, DeLillo, focuses on the effects of consumerism on the individuals in his most popular novel, *WN*. He portrays a family that is accidentally intertwined in the governing of technology and consumerism in his novel.

Like many contemporary people, Gladney spends much time in a supermarket, tries to find the meaning of life in it. He forgets that supermarkets are nothing more than buildings in which one can buy goods. Gladney sees the experience of buying as transcendental, describing it as a practice that brings “the sense of replenishment”, “well-being”, as well as “security and contentment” (DeLillo, 1985, p. 20). He goes so far as to say that Babette and he seemed to have “achieved a fullness of being that is not known to people who need less, expect less, who plan their lives around lonely

walks in the evening” (ibid). On the contrary, consumerism drives people away from ‘a fullness of being’ and affects their identities in a distinctly negative way, diverting them from themselves and others. When Gladney is faced with confusion, shopping provides him great comfort, which corresponds to Baudrillard’s idea when he says “all persons are defined according to their objects” (2001, p. 23). Jack goes to the supermarket immediately after the ATE, concludes that “everything was fine, would continue to be fine, would eventually get even better as long as the supermarket did not slip” (DeLillo, 1985, p. 170).

Also, when his colleague sees him in a mall, he remarks that Gladney is a totally different person without his gown and dark glasses. He says that Gladney looks like “[a] big, harmless, aging, indistinct sort of guy” (DeLillo, 1985, p. 83). His colleague’s comment nevertheless hurts him because he is aware that his costume creates a false image of him, which puts him “in the mood to shop” (ibid), so he finds his family, and their shopping desire is in eight-floor stores. He occupies his time with foolishly actions. For example, when he wants to purchase a shirt between two shirts he can’t choose one, he purchases both of the shirts. Even when he asks his children to choose the gifts of the Christmas day, he describes shopping act as a satisfying experience:

My family gloried in the event. I was one of them, shopping, at last. . . . I shopped for immediate needs and distant contingencies. I shopped for its own sake, looking and touching, inspecting merchandise I had no intention of buying, then buying it. . . . I began to grow in value and self-regard. I filled myself out, found new aspects of myself, located a person I’d forgotten existed. . . . The more money I spent, the less important it seemed. I was bigger than these sums. (ibid, pp.83-84)

Gladney, several times, throws things away. The things accumulated through time represent a burden for him, they “dragged [him] down, made escape impossible” (DeLillo, 1985, p. 294). In America, as Baudrillard observes consumers constantly and obsessively experiment with products that can be used to construct their identities. It takes only money to buy the desired gear for the transformation of one’s identity



(1998, pp. 81, 84). Frequently, people purchase objects to create identities, which are again replaced with new things and corresponding identities, over and over again. However, Baudrillard warns that replacing things is mistakenly believed to bring about a change in one's life because a person's essence does not change in the same way as his/ her appearance or hobbies (1998, p. 43). According to Baudrillard's belief, "Tell me what you throw away and I'll tell you who you are" (1998, p. 43). It shows that Gladney attempts to throw away the burden of the amassed old identities (objects). However, "[t]he more things [he] threw away, the more [he] found" (DeLillo, 1985, p. 262). Since he sees mortality in things, he tries to get control of his life by throwing things away in order to feel at ease. It seems that he finally realizes the absurdity of consumerism, which cannot bring a sense of life. However, in the last chapter, observing the supermarket in fascination, Gladney returns to consumerism, embracing it again as a substitute for religion, unaware that it cannot help him define his identity and overcome alienation.

Both media and consumerism as consumerist practices persuade individuals to think that their identities are unstable and unsettle by consumerism's production. Therefore, consumers in the postmodern world own an alienated identity. This confirms Lyotard's theory "the dehumanizing impact of capitalist techno-science" (Malps, 2006, pp. 90-91), in which the human beings are reduced into a technical product.

Mink, for instance, focuses on the screen of TV without hearing the sound. The manner, in which Mink unintentionally acts because of what Jack says, is discovery of the manner in which customers accept what the media instructs them. When Jack shouts, "hail of bullets", "fusillade", in return Mink acts as if he is killed, as DeLillo describes him, "He hit the floor, began crawling toward the bathroom . . . showing real terror . . . He tried to wriggle behind the bowl . . . his legs tight together" (DeLillo, 1985, p. 311). At this instant, Mink ignores his logic and his own wisdom, and he believes in what others say instead. Similarly, the dull consumers rely on the inaccurate media more than their personal awareness. In the consumer society, in which there is no place for reality, the media is preserved as the most important



perspective as a form of simulation. Moreover, the impact of the media is powerful to the point that individuals overlook their own faculties, they do not think about their principal sources, such as their wisdom and mind, but they think whatever the media provide them is true. Steffie, for example, with her schizophrenic suggestion, demands “we have to boil our water, just because, it is said on the radio” (DeLillo, 1985, p. 34). Indeed, what the TV. or radio says does not mean true, Steffie who likes to sit in front of the TV, and, she listens to the radio which she depends on what the media broadcasts. It can be noted that Babette, as a schizophrenic lady, follows the instructions that she hears on the radio or sees on TV. Therefore, they (Steffie and Babette) cannot recognize the signified from signifier, as a result it turns to the changing and worthless signifiers in a mass media. Despite the media provides such information in which worthless signifier and meaningless, still the consumers trust it. For instance, Willie Mink trusts Jack’s words that he learns on TV.

Moreover, people refuse death and attempt to escape from it by consuming goods, in the consumerist society. They cannot admit death easily because death for them is not normal. When Jack (DeLillo, 1985, p. 283) utters “There’s something artificial about my death. It’s shallow. . . I don’t belong to the earth or sky”, he believes his death is non-natural since he has been unprotected to human-made poisonous features. Obviously, death is frightful in the consumerist society because the consumers think that it is early for them to die. In America, for example, individuals are mentally adapted to trust that their presence and joy depend on consumer products. As a result, they assume that they can avoid death by purchasing products. It is clear that after a deadly event, when someone is affected by a break of a Nyodene D tank, at once, the Gladneys quickly go shopping and leave their school. Consequently, Gladney’s family attempt to understand the feeling of safety, satisfaction and refreshing, through consumerism. Jack’s consideration of his industrial consumption explains (DeLillo, 1985, p. 20):

It seemed to me that Babette and I, in the mass and variety of our purchases . . . the weight and size and number, the familiar package designs and vivid lettering, the giant sizes, the family bargain packs with Day-Glo sale stickers,

in the sense of replenishment . . . who plan their lives around lonely walks in the evening.

In fact, Jack and his family are never firm in any feelings that everything is well with the world. Those "who require less, expect less, who design their lives around forlorn strolls at night" (DeLillo, 1985, p. 20) are probably going to have a superior round about a great happiness. Correspondingly, in Nigel Watson's (2005, p. 37) view, consumerism causes disunities of personality, which means it removes individuals from their authentic identity. The mass media disorders the postmodern individuals powerfully, in which their identities become reliant on the image of the goods that they purchase. Accordingly, Jack goes for shopping so as to satisfy himself with attractive images of the goods. When Jack maintains "I began to grow in value and self-regard . . . found new aspects of myself, located a person I forgotten existed . . . Our images appeared on mirrored columns, in glassware and chrome, on TV monitors in security rooms" (DeLillo, 1985, p. 84). Moreover, Jack needs to purchase goods for the images which he desires to be, so as to discover his identity because he feels that he has no real identity. In *WN*, to achieve an identity is to purchase products and show them as an illustration of one's image in a consumerist society. As in his essay "*Postmodernism and Lifestyles*" Nigel Watson (2005, p. 37) states:

People actively wish to join in and actively desire the opportunities for self-expression and display which are provided by the choices of the pink shopping malls . . . We like to identify with the style that best represents the way that we wish to be seen.

The above depiction matches exactly with Jack's desire, who tries to form his power by consuming goods, improve his assurance and change his appearance. As a result, Jack (DeLillo, 1985, p. 17) confesses, "I am the false character that follows the name around".

At the end, the novel describes postmodern consumers. Both Gladney and his wife, Babette, choose to celebrate in a consumer world. They both believe that although they are illusive and meaningless, but consumerism gives them a sense of life and

hope. The products of consumerism offer illusive hopes for the consumers that everything is fine.

4.The Impact of Technology on the Individuals in DeLillo’s *WN*

Technology is given numerous definitions, as Lentricchia (1999, p. 11) states that technology consists of two essential parts. The first part is the physical part that consists of materials like products, tools, and equipment. The second part is the information component that consists of expertise in management, marketing, production, and functional areas. Furthermore, modern technology has advantages and disadvantages as well.

DeLillo’s *WN* illuminates the effect of technology on postmodern society, more precisely in the United States. TV. and radio are selected symbols that use to replace the natural representation of what is real over the technology. Therefore, the technical procedure is turned reality into hyperreality. As a result, people start to explore their identity and feeling which is separated from the real, and they look for reality in a simulated world. This proves Baudrillard’s theory, who claims the hyperreality replaces reality in a postmodern world as he remarks “the electronic media through which the hyperreal replaces the real” (Bertens, 1996, p. 150). In addition, the mass media, such as TV and radio, contributes to a consumer culture. Because of the massive shopping malls which attract the individuals, most of the society feels alienated from reality. When the protagonist of *WN*, Jack, is returning from a supermarket utters “we went to our respective rooms, wishing to be alone. A little later I watched Steffie in front of the TV set. She moved her lips, attempting to match the words as they (the people on TV.) were spoken” (DeLillo, 1985, p. 84). In a consumer society, the individuals distinguish the feeling of pleasure and joy which are produced by technology and these feelings are momentary, they only feel joy through the illusion of TV, the supermarket, the cinema. But when they return to the reality, they are disappointed because it is unpleasant for them.

The characters in *WN* have a common belief that the events which are happened on TV. and computer screen are more real than what they perceive in real life. Such an

impact can be seen through an argument in which the protagonist, Jack, and his son, Heinrich, (DeLillo, 1985, pp. 22-23) are involved, concerning the nature of the truth in the media and human perceptions:

"It's going to rain tonight"

"It's raining now," I said.

"The radio said tonight."

"Look at the windshield," I said, "Is that rain isn't it?"

"Just because it's on the radio doesn't mean we have to suspend belief in the evidence of our senses". . . .

"Our senses? Our senses are wrong a lot more often than they are right . . ."

"Is it raining," I said, "or isn't it?"

"I wouldn't want to have to say".

Essentially, Heinrich finds more truth in what the radio expresses him that it is going to rain. Then, he recognizes that it is really raining around him. To Heinrich, the objective of mass media seems more real and reliable. He believes that human perceptions are subjective and unreliable. Again, Baudrillard's theory "the electronic media through which the hyperreal is managed to replace the real" can be applied here.

Moreover, technology takes the shape of an ATM machine. Jack finds a sign of his identity one morning when he is walking to the bank to use the ATM machine. In this context, he remarks, "I inserted my card; entered my secret code; tapped out my request" (DeLillo, 1985, p. 46). This communication offers a chance to Jack to reclaim his own idea about his identity indirectly; the act of receiving his balance assures his subjectivity, as Jack is asserting:

Waves of relief and gratitude flowed over me. The system had blessed my life. I felt its support and approval. The system hardware, the mainframe sitting in a locked room in some distant city. What a pleasing interaction. I sensed that something of deep personal value, but not money, not that at all, had been authenticated and confirmed . . . But we were in accord, at least for now. The networks, the circuits, the streams, the harmonies (ibid).

The machine succeeds in achieving what he needs most and it helps him to recognize his lost self. Thus, he feels that his sense of self existence is fascinated in technological recognition. Once Jack gets off the campus and puts off his professor identity, he looks "so harmless. A big harmless ageing, indistinct sort of guy" (DeLillo, 1985, p. 83). Immediately, he realizes that "the encounter puts him in the mood to shop" (ibid). This habitual of shopping has the same form to his 'self' that he finds at the ATM machine. Here, Jack states "The more money I spent, the less important it seemed. I was bigger than these sums. These sums poured off my skin like so much rain. These sums, in fact, came back to me in the form of existential credits" (DeLillo, 1985, p. 84).

Another interaction with technology is Jack's experience to the chemical, Nyodene D, which results from the ATE. His report to the technician of the SIMUVAC, an abbreviation for Simulate Evacuation, who can evaluate the effects of the chemical on a person, indicates that the technological reality is more real than human perception. The technician enters Jack's "name, age, medical history and so on" into a computer screen, immediately locates the damage of the toxic on his body (DeLillo, 1985, p. 128). Jack constantly argues about the way he is affected by the toxic when he only goes outside for a few seconds. In this regard, the technician replies "It is just you were out there so many seconds. It is your whole data profile. I tapped into your history. The computer clearly shows Jack's level of danger". The technician admits that by uttering "I didn't say it. The computer did . . . It just means that you are the sum total of your data. No men escape that" (DeLillo, 1985, pp. 140-141).

The technician only tells Jack what the computer can process. As a result, Jack finds his analysis is the disease itself. His experience causes him a condition that is outside



his own body but he controls, instead, in the computer's data. The data consists of irrelevant codes, or it is a computer-generated body. Jack apprehends that his own death is not a physical but a technological one. He expresses this when he claims:

When death is rendered graphically, is televised so to speak, that you sense an eerie separation between your condition and yourself. A network of symbols has been introduced, an entire awesome technology wrestled from the gods. It makes you feel like a stranger in your own dying (DeLillo, 1985, p. 142).

Jack's technological death is objective; therefore, he doesn't understand his death is not a natural one. This leads him to fail to see his morality in a subjective way. The person whom Jack trusts and interprets Jack's death is his doctor, more precisely, his doctor's computer. He believes that if he can convince the doctor that he does not have the chemical in his system, perhaps the doctor's analysis can inform that Jack is not affected by the chemical.

According to Hummer, a postmodern man is "a modernist which is exiled in a postmodern world". Besides, a postmodern man is presented with a wall which is made of stone to climb over, yet he reaches infinity into a God-less sky and already too far gone to find the ground where he comes from (2013, pp. 3-4). The cultural and the social scenery of *WN* are located in a postmodern town of 'Blacksmith'; which is a place between modern and postmodern world. Like Blacksmith, Jack, exists between two different cultures, modernism and postmodernism. He is involved by the object rather than by the subject, when Jack and Babette's youngest son, Wilder, suddenly stops crying, Jack states "It was as though he'd just returned from a period of wandering in some remote and holy place where things are said, sights are seen of the most sublime and difficult dimensions" (DeLillo, 1985, p. 79). Here, Jack is admitting the existence of the ghostly personal reality, as an indicator of his modern tendencies. The certain fact is that, one essential feature of modernism is the power that gives the individuals to recreate or reshape their environment.



In *WN*, DeLillo presents a society which depends on technology much like today's new technological era. He describes how the public depend on the media for answers to their everyday problems. In the novel, technology is very universal that Jack often thinks about it almost every day and even his children, in *WN*, though there is no account of computer and internet. In Gladney's home, television or radio presents a hint to the coming of technological innovations. Technology is considered as a custom in *WN* in which it makes effective points that stand true to today's society in America. Technology is very responsive of people to the extent that everyone has the same memories base on the media. DeLillo brilliantly paints a portrait of a society that is brainwashed by modern technology in which everyone questions everything unless it is broadcasted on TV or decides through the news; it also questions the society's value. All in all, technology has affected the lives of the society in which human nature is transformed into an artificial performance and this, artificial performance, is now being performed as postmodern society.

4. Conclusion:

In *WN*, DeLillo clarifies the issue of the construction of identity from the view point of a native American citizen, who lived in a multicultural society. Jack Gladney, as the protagonist, struggled to construct a professional identity in a society which is dominated by consumerism, media and technology. He faced many difficulties while he constructed his identity because "his identity is based on a false persona". In other words, his identity is based on an image of his purchased goods in which he simulated an image of a professor who worked in Hitler Studies. This asserts Baudrillard's theory "we are simulacra, we are simulators" (Baudrillard, J., 1998, 208). It means the postmodern citizens, especially in America, depend on consumerism and technology in their life rather than their personal awareness in a consumer society, and there is no place for reality. Instead, media is preserved as the central perspective as a form of simulation. The end of the novel, showed that Gladney unsuccessfully construct his personal identity as a professor because he simulated a false person, and his identity was not stable.



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دروستبوونی ناسنامه له وایت نۆیزی دهن دیلۆ

پوخته

نووسه رانی سه رده می بزوتنه وهی پۆست مۆدیرنیزم باس له گرفته کانی ژبانی جیهانی ئەم سه رده مه ده کهن. ناسنامه یه کیکه له بابه ته سه ره کیه کانی نووسه رانی پۆست مۆدیرنیزم، فمتایبه تی له دوایی جهنگی جیهانی دووهم. ئەم توێژینه وهیه رۆمانیکی ئەمه ریکی هه لده بژیرئ به ناوی (وایت نۆیزی) دهن دیلۆ. ئامانجی سه ره کی نووسینی ئەم رۆمانه ئەوهیه که نووسه ر دهیه وئ ئاماژه به وه بکات که کیشه ی دروستبوونی ناسنامه ته نیا دوو چاری کۆچه ران نابیته وه، به لکو دوو چاری خه لکی ره سه نی ئەمه ریکاش ده بیته وه له ولاتی ره سه نی خۆیان.

ناسراوترین رۆماننووسی ئەمه ریکی دهن دیلۆ له روانگهی خۆیه وه باس له کیشه ی دروستبوونی ناسنامه ده کات. رۆماننووسی نه مه ریکی سه رده می پۆست مۆدیرن له رۆمانی (وایت نۆیزی) باسی رۆلی به کاربه ر و میدیا و ته کنالۆژیا ده کات له دروستبوونی ناسنامه.

ئهو توێژینه وهیه دروستبوونی ناسنامه نیشان ده دات له کۆمه لگایه کی فره نه ته وه له ئەمه ریکا که به کاربه ر و میدیا و ته کنه لۆژیا بالا ده سه ته. ئەمه باسکراوه له گه ل رۆلی جاک گلا دنی له رۆمانی وایت نۆیزی دهن دیلۆ، له هه مان کات ئەم توێژینه وهیه باس له وه ده کا تا چه ند کاراکته ری سه ره کی له رۆمانه که له دروو سه ربوونی ناسنامه دا سه رده که وئ یان نا له زالبوون به سه ر دروو سه بوونی ناسنامه له

كۆمه‌لگایه‌کی فرهنه‌ته‌وه‌ی ئەمریکا. له‌ کۆتاییدا ئەم توێژینه‌وه‌یه‌ ئەنجامی مەلەلانیی کەسایه‌تی سه‌ره‌کی رۆمانه‌که‌ ده‌خاته‌روو .

تكوين الهوية في (وايت نويز) للكاتب دون ديليلو

المخلص

تفسير الجنسية في مختصر تكوين الهوية في (وايت نويز) للكاتب دون ديليلو , الكتاب يظهر مشاكل الحياة في عالم تكوين الهوية .الهوية(الجنسية) هي من اكثر الموضوعات الشائعة لباحثين تكوين الهوية , خصوصا بعد الحرب العالمية الثانية. هذه الدراسة اختارت رواية (وايت نويز) للكاتب دون ديليلو في امريكا. الهدف الرئيسي وراء هذه الرواية هي لتوضيح للقراء ان مشكلة بناء الهوية لا يواجه المهاجرين فقط بل انما الافراد الاصليين في بلدانهم الاصلية.

الروائي الامريكي المشهور دون ديليلو يتعامل مع بناء الهوية (التجنس) بناءً على تقديره. الروائي في (وايت نويز) يتقصد دور النزعة الاستهلاكية, الاعلام الفوضوي و التكنولوجيا في بناء الهوية. هذا البحث يُظهر شكل الهوية في امريكا المتعددة الثقافات في مجتمع يسيطر عليه الاستهلاكية و التكنولوجيا و الاعلام الفوضوي كما تم تصويره (ظهر في دور) المواطن الامريكي جاك جلادني في (وايت نويز) لدون ديليلو. مع ذلك يفسر مدى نجاح او فشل الشخصية الرئيسية في تغلب او تمكن في بناء الهوية في امريكا المتعددة الثقافات. بناءً على ذلك هذا البحث يوضح نتيجة صراع.