

## **Jack Gladney's Character Games: A Study through New Media Demonstration**

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### **Abstract**

Don DeLillo is a contemporary American novelist who portrays the present world through his characters. DeLillo has been called postmodernist due to the plethora of postmodern features employed in it. DeLillo shows technology having a major role in affecting the individuals through his characters. The current paper studies, Don DeLillo's White Noise from contemporary techno-literate approach that uses internet and games to understand its protagonist Jack Gladney in a better way. Jack is not a modernist living in a postmodern world as many critics have claimed. In depth study of the character in the book White Noise has been made in order to understand it with clarity. Jack is instead a postmodern human simulacrum sampling different character types to avoid his lack of discernable self. He takes up different roles and faces failure at the end of each role. The paper asserts that Jack's character games and DeLillo's text featuring them are prescient exercises about how we similarly interact with the Internet and games in ways that complicate subjectivity through digital narrative extension by looking at the year 1984 in which DeLillo's novel was completed and using Gregory Ulmer's avatar theory.

**Keywords:** Postmodernity, Don DeLillo, White Noise, subjectivity, internet, roles.

### **Introduction:**

In this age of information capitalism, media and media theory are a topic that demands more scholarly attention than ever before. Media theorists think that studying the media is an essential topic of the day, and that "such study should be a mandatory part of every citizen's liberal education"(6). The majority of individuals are constantly surrounded by

media in their daily lives. The media have now included everything from our amusement to our information, health, knowledge, memory, identity, dreams, emotions, and even our death. It is impossible to comprehend our actions and thoughts without taking mediation into account. From language through the alphabet and the printing press to today's immediate electronic communication, media has been inextricably linked to humanity's past. "Every interpretation of anything is medially determined," (179) media are our means of comprehension, and we try to make sense of the world through them. As this paper will demonstrate, the mass media now have a huge impact on both public and private lives in Western culture; in fact, individuals as well as nations today form agendas, memories, and identities in response to values and passions that are increasingly formed through the mechanically reproduced images (213).

Writers felt they needed to establish new literary genres in the wake of post-modern world and other cultural disputes. Furthermore, technological and cultural progress posed a threat to mankind. These emotions like isolation and futility became a part of postmodern life. As a consequence, realist writers like Norman Mailer and James Jones cleared the ground for absurdist and satirical modes of storytelling to flourish. A take on the absurdity of war was written by novelists like Joseph Heller and Kurt Vonnegut. As postmodernism grew, it blurred the lines between reality and fiction, which has become a hallmark of contemporary literature. Streams like existentialism, post structuralism made it even more important.

The era of postmodernism, gave various eminent writers like Thomas Pynchon, John Barth, Kurt Vonnegut, and Don DeLillo. The study is more predictable as they represented a world that was to become dominant. There is a great distinction between modern and postmodern literature the earlier believed in keeping contact with the past, but later is only left with a feeling of nostalgia where it does not have a connection with the past. Everything has evolved greatly, from technology to livelihoods. Despite the fact that its trend is statistically parabolic, it differs significantly from the human evolution on which it was reportedly based. It's limited, targeted towards a specific group, and dispersed unevenly. As a result, rather of being a source of empowerment, progress becomes a negative force. This uneven arrangement of events forms a disorderly world with no antiquity to return to and no tomorrow to look forward to. The postmodern world is defined by this lonely existence, and it is precisely this isolation that has elevated contemporary writing to revelation.

Avatar theory in the book of Avatar Emergency by Ulmer shows how avatar (the digital prosthetic body) functions as the site of a new dimension of identity formation. Theory is not the only purpose as per Ulmer. With Electracy, avatar represents and enacts "the invention of practices forming the skill set needed by citizens to become native to electracy, as science and engineering are to the invention of technology. The "player avatar relation is associated with history of practical reason and the virtue of prudence or good judgment" (Ulmer forthcoming, 4). The history of practical reason is associated with a history of violent acts. The ontologies in Ulmer's apparatus theory concern theories of being and are represented by the concepts of totem, category, and chora. According to Ulmer:

Any apparatus supports a metaphysics, referring to the mode of (categorical) organization functioning at every level, in every mention of the life word. A context for our project is the assumption that we are working within an historical shift, fashioning a new coherent out of the dissolution of “essence” (literate metaphysics) in every sphere of experience, just as literacy fashioned a new coherence out of the dissolution to “totem” (think of Aristotle’s taxonomies). (Ulmer forthcoming, 140)

DeLillo’s protagonist undergoes a huge identity crisis that he feels the urge to take up various characters or avatars as the extended self. DeLillo’s character is situated in a postmodern world where they constantly question the self. An in-depth examination of these character games and their subsequent reactions<sup>0</sup> has been carried out in this work.

### **Literature Review:**

Jiann-Guang Lin (2001) writes in an article titled ‘Technology, Postmodernism and Don DeLillo’s White Noise’ the role of technology in the novel. It talks about the world that is presented in the novel is postmodern in which technology hides the difference between real and model. He studies the novel in the context of science fiction and then talks about the identity and body crisis.

Hossein Pirnajmuddin (2018) in his article ‘The nostalgic sublime in Don DeLillo’s White Noise and Cosmopolis’ talks about nostalgia for transcendence and “lost assurances,” he has become associated with modernism as well. Living in an increasingly secular, image-conscious society, DeLillo’s characters look for comfort and reassurance in the good old days, hence the reemergence of a more traditional mode of sublimity—the modernist’s “nostalgic sublime”—in his works. The recurring moments of spirituality, mystery, and communion show the yearning for meaning beyond the white noise of consumption.

As per Dr. Neelam Bhardwaj (2016) in ‘Don DeLillo’s White Noise: A Postmodern Techno-Scientific Novel’, Don DeLillo’s White Noise has been a post-modernist work and as such it reveals the hectic life of the commercialized America. The mechanism has entered the social life so deeply that no one is free from its effect which is leading a life towards nothing. The novel White Noise is based on the use of modern technology and the novelist has pointed out a very important aspect in this regard that it is both useful and dangerous.

Nabila Ahsan & Md. Abdul Momen Sarker (2019) in ‘Don DeLillo’s White Noise: A Falling Man’s Tale of Human Darkness’ talks about woven culture. It brings out Jack Gladney’s journey to a postmodern estrangement and shows how we subconsciously become part of his falling self.

Anne Howell (2013) in ‘The oscillating subject in Don DeLillo’s White Noise’ talks about how the protagonist of Don DeLillo’s White Noise, Jack Gladney, is depicted as reacting to the pressures of these ‘wars’ and how his “maneuvering for advantage” leads to his oscillation between subject positions associated with cultural canonical modernism and postmodernism. In order to determine Gladney’s characterisation in relation to modernist and

postmodernist notions of the subject, I draw on key properties established by a range of fictional authors and theorists who have written on what typifies artistic modernism and postmodernism.

### **Proposed Methodology:**

The present study is based on the qualitative research. The content analysis would be the most suitable methodology in which I would analyze the works of Don DeLillo in the light of new media dimension. An interpretative study will be conducted to analyse the media effect on characters. DeLillo's characters undergo huge media effect inside the postmodern environment in which he casts them. Throughout his major works, DeLillo constructs his own world, where each character is on a journey. In order to understand one, we must first understand the other aspects that control them. DeLillo's writing is filled with events that have lasting impact on their lives, while others are only a temporary distraction from the enormous array of random happenings that comprise theirs.

In-depth study of these occurrences and their subsequent actions and repercussions has been carried out in this work. In DeLillo's works, the characters being in the grip of postmodern media, is a fundamental issue. There are many writers who have attempted to grapple with the set of media and technology, and he is not the only one who has done so in the setting of the twenty-first century. For DeLillo, it's a matter of following in the footsteps of previous authors and expressing his own thoughts on the matter. In his stories, his protagonists confront an enormously difficult job that may take them a long time to achieve, or they may fail totally and succumb to despair or death. The search for one own true self and not take up various characters or avatars is at the core of this plan. The protagonists in DeLillo's novels relentlessly challenge their own subjective realities in order to develop a foundation for their own sense of self.

DeLillo's characters undergo huge character or avatar crisis concerns inside the postmodern environment in which he portrays them. Throughout his major works, DeLillo constructs his own world, where each character is on a journey to know themselves and to understand the secrets of their life. In order to understand one, we must first understand the other. An in-depth examination of these occurrences and their subsequent actions and repercussions has been carried out in this work.

### **Analysis:**

In this paper, I attempt to study Don DeLillo's *White Noise* through a contemporary techno-literate lens that uses the Internet and game studies to understand in depth, its protagonist, Jack Gladney, and to reevaluate the novel's critical legacy. Critics like John Duvall, Mark Osteen, and Wilcox made the statement that the novel is ruled by simulacra that records the active and fruitless avoidance of the 'real'. The main purpose of the study is Jack Gladney the protagonist of *White Noise* whom critics has recognized as a modern soul in the postmodern timeline. Jack hardly impresses anyone by staying real to his modernist self. Rather, he follows the pattern of archetypal character, that seems to lash him that how quickly he tries to avoid his real/true self. His capacity to put on robes of different role like a

professor, disaster victim, husband, parent, detective- shows he is less of a character rather a character type.

The popular novel *White Noise*, is not just a narrative that is reacting to the simulacra of mediation, but related to the simulacra of human that creates various versions of self, leaving no true self. In each role that he takes up, he is faced by the failure. The American Book of the Dead- talks about the faulty framework of Jack's unadoptable narrative that comes from the refusal of the true self. The 'true' here means our existence as it is out of the screen. This essay studies, it through technological perspective. The technological perspective of the internet in 1984 shows how the concept of avatar established, creating Jack's games and DeLillo's text predictive.

Laura Barrett comments that this shifting nature of the novel as a whole makes it "a generic hybrid, a nexus of types of fiction—the domestic drama, the college satire, the apocalyptic melodrama, the crimenovel, the social satire" (97). She continues that this collage effect is intentional, for "That trespassing of boundaries which is typical of Postmodern fiction reminds us that we are the product of myriad representations" (98). The opening of the novel shows Jack, who is seen switching to different identities from one character to another. The understanding of character will shift, but the meaning will remain same. Lenard Wilcox on the contrary is of the idea that "Jack Gladney, the narrator of *White Noise*, is a modernist displaced in a postmodern world" (348). He also states that, "often succumbs to the Baudrillardian condition, floating 'ecstatically' in a delirium of networks," (348). The other critics who support the statement of Wilcox also believe that, Jack is a true Jack, who is seeking his real subjectivity in a mediated world surrounding him. But the fragmentation in the story tells clearly that Jack is more keen on playing different roles in *White Noise* than becoming true to self. There is no sign of the true self of Jack, his personality by taking up different roles shows him as a postmodern mediator than a modern man in wrong timeline. It is better to examine Jack through representations rather than presented by the techno - literate case as what digital approach tells Jack and his character games. *White Noise* by Don DeLillo stands out as the author's extension of his character's fixation with past narratives and exhausted mediums, while also foreshadowing the consequences of what happens when, as Greg Ulmer argues, avatar becomes a new form of identity through digital technologies, speaking years ahead to digital frontiers that have further mediated our "real." As a result, this new perspective on DeLillo's novel, which incorporates avatar theories as manifested in Internet and game studies, will provide us with both an updated cultural lens through which to better understand Jack Gladney and a new appreciation for the prophetic impact of Jack's "game playing" and DeLillo's narrative orchestrating.

During 1984, when DeLillo completed by the book that year in technology was heralded by even the most iconic Super Bowl commercial of all time, Apple's "1984". This commercial, directed by Ridley Scott, showcases a woman dressed in bright red and white against a cold and grey future who shatters the screen on which a "Big Brother"-like authority captivates a uniformly gloomy crowd of sad men with shaven heads. As the emotive scenario comes to a close, Apple adds an exciting slogan to the commercial's advertising pitch: "On January 24th, Apple Computer will debut Macintosh." And you'll

understand why 1984 isn't going to be the same as '1984' ('1984'). Apple subtly compares then-reigning IBM's grip on the computer business to a fate as horrible as Big Brother's ideological supremacy, using George Orwell's dystopian classic 1984 as its background. Apple is the hammer-wielding, chain-freeing woman in this comparison. The Macintosh is proudly proclaimed as the solution for the free -thinking person to save civilization from a fate worse than faceless dystopia. In the computing world of 1984, Apple emerged as a one-of-a-kind hero, defying all odds.

The novel presents a similar clash between the two groups, individual and the group. Tom LeClair quoted DeLillo as "systems novelist"... who analyze[s] the effects of institutions on the individual" (Osteen xii). The term 'institution' can be considered as an umbrella term that refers to public. The scene that White Noise shows, as ordinary like being in a supermarket, or deadly as the outbreak of "The Airborne Toxic Event." Stacey Olster's take on the text posits that, "The characters in White Noise can only locate themselves collectively within the crowd and by way of those places that facilitate congregation" (82). Jack is not a type of character who prefers getting merged with the crowd. Rather than accepting a 'collective identity' he prefers to take up a distinct identity. Jack would rather choose to be that red haired girl with a hammer in advertisement than being a part of the crowd. Most crucially, we'll see how Jack uses a rotating ensemble of larger-than-life personalities to hide his lack of authenticity. All of these examples, however, involve a struggle to become a character, rather than a search for a fully developed identity. The faceless throng may thus be the perfect place for Jack to lose his authentic self, which is why he uses it as a jumping-off point for his creations. Similarly, the expanded expanses of new computer technology provide people with a direction to flee to.

It seemed as if Jack was online in real life, he adapted himself as per the situation that kept him away from showing his true self or even realizing his authentic nature or persona. Jack narrates the story and about himself too. His narration and characterization seems like real, but it is important to learn how his persona shows Gregory Ulmer's concept of an avatar. In our own Internet-indebted time, Ulmer writes of the self-extending practice of becoming one's avatar, to understand and inhabit one's online identity as something not just "oneself" but another character entirely, for "Avatar is not mimetic of one's ego, but a probe beyond one's ownness" ("Avatar Emergency"). The term avatar means descent. Our descent is an online self as visible in the protagonist Jack. Ulmer quotes, "You need to meet avatar, that part of you inhabiting cyberspace" ("Avatar Emergency"). Jack 'character' can be understood as an avatar, and no true self to acknowledge. Through his characters he plays his game.

Jack is considered majorly as a composition of the characters with little self that is true to him. Ulmer's 'probe beyond oneness' talks about the need for one real identity upon which various extensions can be created. This identity game still happens, but within a boundary as all the games take place. The character may change into the term avatar when electric shifts identification away from a literate modernist self toward something more diffused, yet both operate as extensions beyond identity still bound by identity. If the subject's subjectivity is still required by the game, meeting avatar, as Ulmer sees it, lets us realize that while our online characters may not be us, they are made up of our wishes to be

them. The prophecy provided here by White Noise is how it shows a rising technological logic entwined inside our impulses to appropriate media in order to become an avatar. We would play avatars the same way Jack plays characters, and both are exposed within identity by what they seek out of it. As a result, while we may not know who Jack is, we do know who he aspires to be, for better or worse.

The year 1984 was a year with a little introduction to technology's role in the play of identities. The Atari had just plummeted under the video game crash of 1983 because "no one," in the large economic sense, was playing it. Even though the Nintendo Entertainment System was exponentially gaining reputation in Japan, it would not reach North America until the fall of 1985. There is no mention of video games in DeLillo's novel. The creation of the avatar video game takes place as the first person and a third person player. DeLillo's first novel, *Americana* talks about this concept, subject of television, when protagonist David Bell rehearses lines with a man playing his father, who reads,

“[Television] moves [man] from first person consciousness to third person. In this country there is a universal third person, the man we all want to be...Advertising is the suggestion that the dream of entering the third person singular might possibly be fulfilled” (270-271).

A video game a present technology with great screen time gives chance to become something completely different or to take up character totally out of self. One does not realize a new subjectivity, but becomes something else entirely: one's avatar. There was a video game Mario Bros a culturally known game. When a player plays a Mario game, he or she is both Mario and not Mario. One is oneself, one plays via Mario, and one is Mario in a sequence of identical extension. When we can construct our own avatars rather than just interacting with pre-made characters, this link becomes even more direct. Similarly, Jack creates his own character and hides his self in the best possible ways. Just as gamers plan their role in the same way Jack would do take up the character that is beyond his perfection. As a result, the games appear to indirectly reward those who stick to the original concept, while players like Jack who want to construct themselves in their own image are left with lower returns. This section will look at how these diminishing returns play out in the novel itself, as it examines each of Jack's character parts and his failure to master them as he fails at the games he plays.

As the novel opens Jack comes to spotlight as a high regard college professor. The character here Jack plays majors of a founder of the Hitler Studies at The College on the Hill. Since he inhabits the great position being a founder, he feels the urge to become a man of that position looks like. He aims to “ ‘grow out’ into Hitler” (DeLillo17) on his chancellor's advice. He first starts with his name creating it J.A.K. Gladney he assumes names with initials are more classy. He grows in size, he like Hitler wants to command physical respect being “tall, paunchy, ruddy, jowly, big-footed and dull. A formidable combination”(17). He adds his layer of mystery by putting “glasses with thick black heavy frames and dark lenses” and a black academic “sleeveless tunic puckered at the shoulders”, he calls his “medieval robe” (17, 9). This embellished image grooming is what turns Jack into “the false character that follows the name around” (17). Jack's exaggeration on the dressing part and enlarging

the reputation talks more about Jack the performer and not truer to self Jack. Jack fails to play the game he started. He doesn't have hold over the character or avatar he has created. When a discussion erupts over the plot on the death of Hitler, Jack just gives a general statement. After pontificating that "all plots tend to move deathward," his narrated thoughts second-guess the "professor's" point, frantically wondering, "Is this true? Why did I say it? What does it mean?" (DeLillo 26). Jack doesn't understand what the J.A.K. Gladney has said. Jack who is the founder of Hitler studies doesn't know German either, "as the most prominent figure in Hitler studies in North America," this shortcoming is his dirty little secret (31). Since his fellows are fluent and even his students will take a year, he considers himself a liar, "I was living, in short, on the edge of a landscape of vast shame" (31). The performer Jack has overshadowed the real Jack he also confesses:

Because I'd achieved high professional standing, because my lectures were well attended and my articles printed in the major journals, because I wore an academic gown and dark glasses day and night whenever I was on campus, because I carried two hundred and thirty pounds on a six-foot three-inch frame and had big hands and big feet, I knew my German lessons would have to be secret. (31-32)

Jack takes up the step to learn German at the conference being held by The College on the Hill, before anyone else gets any further with it. Jack is totally into the character of J.A.K that he is totally ignoring his true self. He laments, "Something happened between the back of my tongue and the roof of my mouth that made a mockery of my attempts to sound German words" (31). His inability to get command over the language makes him treat his German professor so mystically "He was only demonstrating certain basic pronunciation patterns but the transformation in his face and voice made me think he was making a passage between levels of being" (32). Jack's own passage hampered by shortcomings in his character is what leaves him fleeing from type to type. If German is unavailable to him for use "as a charm, a protective device," (31) he should look for some other character qualities to hide self or the full character of Hitler.

Hitler is not just a historical figure, but a part of Jack's personality through which he becomes a professor. Jack hacks his reality with Hitler as gamers would do. He is convinced that he is not just any professor, but creates a whole new major as it is done in gaming.

You've established a wonderful thing here with Hitler. You created it, you nurtured it, you made it your own. Nobody on the faculty of any college or university in this part of the country can so much as utter the word Hitler without a nod in your direction, literally or metaphorically. This is the



center, the unquestioned source. He is your Hitler, Gladney's Hitler. (11)

Jack's ill repute as the founder of Hitler studies at The College on the Hill is like a game with similar titles that offers him to attach his character to great backstory, a move made by "helpless and fearful people [who] are drawn to magical figures, mythic figures, epic men who intimidate and darkly loom" according to his colleague Murray Siskind (DeLillo 287). Barrett writes, "Jack's wistful longing for narratives... is understandable in light of their promises of personal integration in the face of fragmentation, of transcendental meaning in the face of misprision, of cosmic order in the moment of chaos"(99), depicts the understanding to survival. Murray rebukes Jack for his strive to become an important figure via the historical persona of Hitler, "On one level you wanted to conceal yourself in Hitler and his works. On another level you wanted to use him to grow in significance and strength. I sense a confusion of means" (288).

He leads Jack like one of his students and makes him learn that, "confusion of means" was that he "stood out on the one hand and tried to hide on the other" (288). Jack is tied in a character game, while he is trying to conceive a character he is already caught in a previous character role. Jack is unable to justify his true self and fails to hide his flaws behind Hitler.

As the story develops it is visible that Jack's idea of safety is disturbed. There is an outbreak of disaster "The Airborne Toxic Event". Jack is now the victim and not the viewer.

There is another thing that is to be noticed that is television glow that shows his every moment. This visual of television has already been studied by critics like Wilcox and Duvall. This screen can be nicely compared to video games or windows screen. Within screen the other is to be found. This 'other' does not refer to other group of people but the mediated reality that exists in the screen. In the frightening predictive events of, *White Noise* as it talks about "feathery plume" turning into a "black billowing cloud"(111, 113), Jack acting as an outsider who is just viewing the events that are taking place. The unfortunate event "Airborne Toxic Event" when completely breaks out, there is still a role that is played by Jack.

In the mediated world there is a need for 'other', Jack takes up the role of viewer to view disaster or to understand himself. Jean Paul Sartre states in *Being and Nothingness* that, "I can know myself only through the mediation of the Other" (51). The statement by Sartre talks about the selfishness that is inhabited by the self through the idea of 'Other'. Jack in a moment with Murray is seen lamenting "I'd like to lose interest in myself... Is there any chance of that happening?" (DeLillo 152). Murray clearly replies, "None. Better men have tried" (152). He is too absorbed in the self, and his other approves it. The selfishness in Jack pigeonholes apocalypse and makes himself feels superior by chanting the lines, bad things only happen to other people. This is visible when he assures his son Heinrich that clouds "won't come this way" and states facts of his own to weigh his statement,

"I'm a college professor. Did you ever see a college professor rowing a boat down his own street in one of those TV floods? We live in a neat and pleasant town near a college with a quaint name. These things don't happen in places like Blacksmith" (114).

Jack certainly has not lost interest in himself as he gives explicit voice to the ‘othering’ effect the media have on their viewers, he feels secure with the character he has created. He feels the threat when he hears about the clouds, coming ‘this way’ and adopts the idea of becoming someone else. The media statement that bad things happen only to ‘other’ brings to light the concept of Derrida “centre”. Derrida explains, “The function of this centre was... to orient, balance, and organize the structure—one cannot in fact conceive of an unorganized structure” (278). The structure of the play is an altering effect, at the center is disaster victim, coming to Derrida’s idea “classical thought concerning structure could say that the center is, paradoxically within the structure and outside it” (278). At the time of dinner when Jack and his family sit to eat at the sound of sirens warning about the spill, that’s what ‘rupture’ occurs, what Derrida calls it because “when the structurality of structure had to begin to be thought, that is to say repeated” this center is now decentred (280). Disaster that falls upon Jack makes him realize that is just another common man. As per Olster’s criticism of *White Noise*, “a college professor forced to realize that he is just every man in any city” (79). In this part there is a scene where Jack and his family pass a bloody traffic accident site as they are moving to an evacuation area; this gives him a little sense of superiority over a large sense of worrisome activities. Jack utters, “The scene of injured people, medics, smoking steel, all washed in a strong and eerie light, took on the eloquence of a formal composition. We passed silently by, feeling curiously reverent, even uplifted by the sight of the heaped cars and fallen people” (DeLillo 120). Jack’s utterance is troubling as it describes an actual accident in front of his eyes like a filmed reality and people are like characters. This scene is a fine example of what Pierre Bourdieu calls, “symbolic violence” it is explained as “violence wielded with tactics complicity between its victims and its agents, insofar as both remain unconscious of submitting to or wielding it” (246). Of course, “violation” shares its etymology with “violation,” and what Bourdieu claims are violated, even if only symbolically, by the “sensational news” of “blood, sex, melodrama, and crime,” is the sensibilities of both those who construct media and those who consume media: the tragic reality that these disasters befall people is deadened as those they film are othered (247). Jack here takes up the role of a viewer of the tragedy and he does not want to be at the center of decentred reality. Jack when faced with reality chooses hyperreality. Jack on the way away from the changing wind of Nyodene D. doesn’t realize how much he longs for stardom until when he speaks,

“I wanted them to pay attention to the toxic event. I wanted to be appreciated for my efforts in getting us to the parkway. I thought of telling them about the computer tally, the time-factored death I carried in my chromosomes and blood. Self-pity oozed through my soul. I tried to relax and enjoy it” (159).

He very conveniently changes his role from being a victim to now a hero who wants to save masses. He continues to demonstrate how much he has absorbed his identity as the Other in a staged disaster scene, unaware to himself. Interestingly, Jack claims victimhood before he even understands he has embraced his own othering, giving himself more credit than the faceless unfortunate of televised tragedy, or perhaps even worse, the vehicle accident on their route to the sanctuary. He allows himself self-pity, but he permits others that much

less, since, as Murray puts it, "better him than me" (169). Even one's own othering others is necessary for an uneven playing field, not that Jack would concede that in the thick of a crisis. One's tragedy is regarded as more significant than that of others. As evacuees huddle in fear, a man melodramatically carries a blank television set and incites the crowd with indignant questions:

Shouldn't the streets be crawling with cameramen and soundmen and reporters? Shouldn't we be yelling out the window at them, 'Leave us alone, we've been through enough, get out of here with your vile 27 instruments of intrusion.' Do they have to have two hundred dead, rare disaster footage, before they come flocking to a given site in their helicopters and network limos? What exactly has to happen before they stick microphones in our faces and hound us to the doorsteps of our homes, camping out on our lawns, creating the usual media circus? Haven't we earned the right to despise their idiot questions? (162)

This man's ire hints at what the crowd secretly desires in their lowest moment of fear: to have it televised. If one is to accept one's status as disaster victim and become someone else's Other, then this shift requires media coverage to complete the othering effect. The game has to be created for anyone to finish playing it. Now that othering has been accepted as inevitable, Jack Gladney aims to embody this new avatar available.

As the desire for recognition takes birth in Jack Gladney, he takes up various roles that make sure he is visible and acknowledged by the people. He takes up the responsibility to show himself as a tough man and ending his personality of being just Jack. The Dylarama effect is the most talked part of the novel. Jack discovers that his wife Babette is consuming the drug Dylar, which hinders fear of death. Mr. Gray, who is the supplier of drugs to Babette, within whom she has been sleeping with in order to get the supply of drug Dylar.

Jack rather embraces hyperreality, than the reality in which husband seeks the revenge. Jack's mission is to kill Willie Mink- in order to get all his Dylar. Jack plays this part, indulging in what Wilcox calls "B-movie heroics" (354) to relieve himself of self. While Wilcox claims that Jack's quest for heroism is for "an epiphany of identity," I would argue that he is looking for the exact reverse, to transform into something else and achieve "the evacuation of the self" (357) that Wilcox fears. He doesn't want anything to do with his "self," which is why he jumps from role to character with greater escapist impulses. Jack's role as a gunman shows various roles he plays. Once he arrives at the place where Mink waits he displays various personalities. His colder, more terse prose resembles "the voice-over style of the Raymond Chandler hero," according to Wilcox (354), or maybe the culprit Marlowe is looking to convict, as he lays out his plan: "Drive past the scene several times, park some distance from the scene, go back on foot, locate Mr. Gray under his real name or an alias, shoot him three times in the viscera for maximum pain, clear the weapon of prints, place the weapon in the victim's staticky hand..." (DeLillo 304). Jack the narrator is aware of the roles he has taken up, he gets carried away by the violence and is drunk in his own language, "I knew the precise nature of events. I was moving closer to things in their actual state as I approached a violence, a smashing intensity. Water fell in drops, surfaces gleamed"

(305).The literalistic effect of Jack's narrative produces the game in which he plays the persona of this wordy gunman, similar to Willie Mink not differentiating words from the things they represent and ducking for cover when Jack simply says, "Plunging planes" or "Hail of bullets" (DeLillo 309, 311). When Jack takes advantage of Mink's Dylar-induced literalism, he even hacks the way others should behave to him. "Fusillade," (311) he says, and Mink ducks and runs for the restroom, almost as if Jack had asked for a pistol and internet had provided him with one. The second chance Jack receives when Mink blacks out is a less abstract method Jack hacks the firefight. He has no recollection of the confrontation. Jack steps into another character as Mink moans:

"Who shot me?" he said.

"You did."

"Who shot you?"

"You did. The gun is in your hand."

"What was the point I was trying to make?"

"You were out of control. You weren't responsible. I forgive you." (314-315)

Jack is unfortunate in his plan of killing Mink, but Mink takes the chance of shooting Jack on his right hand. Jack topples from his out-of-body pedestal of character privilege and crashes into his failed plan here: "The world collapsed inward, all those vivid textures and connections buried in mounds of ordinary stuff... What had happened to the higher plane of energy in which I'd carried out my scheme?" (313). Jack is left to react to reality rather than the hyper-reality simulation. "With the restoration of the natural order of matter and feeling, I thought I was seeing [Mink] for the first time as a person," he realises numbly. The old human muddles and eccentricities were brought back to life. Mercy, repentance, and compassion" He goes utterly against character and undoes his earlier plot to assassinate Willie Mink now that those ideals are back in play. He transports him to a medical facility.

At the conclusion of the novel, Jack and Willie are in hospital, where Jack realizes his failure by ignoring his true self. There comes a screen surprise when Babette is seen on television:

The face on the screen was Babette's... I'd seen her just an hour ago, eating eggs, but her appearance on the screen made me think of her as some distant figure from the past, some ex-wife and absentee mother, a walker in the mists of the dead... It was but wasn't her... I tried to tell myself it was only television whatever that was, however it worked—and not some journey out of life or death, not some mysterious separation. (104-105)

Babette, Jack observes, appears to be both more real and mythical at the same time. If, as George Berkeley famously remarked (quoted in Bourdieu 245), "to be is to be perceived," then Jack's wife genuinely exists for him and his family all over again—not only

as the Babette they thought they knew, but as that character on the television set. This is what happens when "pictures, signs, and codes envelop objective reality; signs become more real than reality and stand in for the world they erase," according to Wilcox (346-347).

In the hospital, Jack expects clashes against the glitch reality that serves him. He asks the German nun, seeing to his bandages about church doctrine, she flatly states she does not actually believe any of it. Jack insists that she has to believe, but she cuts through his insistence and right to the core of his narrative maneuvering: "The nonbelievers need the believers... We surrender our lives to make your nonbelief possible... There is no truth without fools" (319). Nurse exposes another aspect of Jack's ordering that is selfish: expecting others to do what he should not have to do. However, since there is no truth without fools, then Jack's scrambling from character to character merely shows his several versions of idiots who are forced to confront the truth of his lack of true self. Jack has no way of determining the fixity of others, just as he has no way of determining his own. His game is intrinsically faulty since there are too many avatars to play at once.

### **Conclusion:**

The paper focuses on DeLillo's book *White Noise* in order to understand the characters adopted by Jack through the lens of the media. The protagonist fight to recreate his character as per the requirement of the scenario. DeLillo argues in this book that societal factors are not necessary to generate alienation, since it may be brought about by unexpected, random, unpredictable, and irrevocable occurrences that may be beyond an individual's control. Jack constantly looks out to match his position of being a founder then from being a victim, he wants to be a hero who saves masses, and in the end a source of enlightenment to others. He had no choice but to find another way to go on in his life. Jack plays multiple roles and lives the life of various characters like video game gives a chance to the players. These characters are not the real Jack, but his extended version that plays their desired part. In the age of technology, media started then and now those new media culturally dominate now, we now have a new way to read Jack, his character games, and why their failure matters to the story he tells in *White Noise*. The paper studies his character games and the failure Jack faces at being false with self.

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