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OPTION: LITERATURE CIVILIZATION

**THE BY-PRODUCT OF CONSUMERISM :THE
FALSE SENSE OF FREEDOM IN DON DELILLO's
*WHITE NOISE***

Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in partial fulfilment of the
Requirements of the Master's Degree

Candidates:

Mrs. Zahia Bensalah

Ms. Sarra Bensalah

Panel of Examiners

Mr MOHAMMED DJEMOUI SABER	UNIVERSITY OF MSILA	CHAIRPERSON
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Mr Bachir SAHED	UNIVERSITY OF MSILA	EXAMINER

2020

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated :

To the soul of my brother **Ahmed** who passed away

To my Parents

To my Sisters and Brothers

To nieces and nephews **Sirine. Sarra. Ilyas . Bssem. Amira**

To my youngest sister **Hounaida**

To Nems **Mouhamed Khatim**

Sarra

Dedication

This final project is dedicated to :

*My husband **Mohamed Khatim***

*To my children **Sarah & Amira***

*To my **Parents** with my gratitude for their support, tolerance and inspiration throughout my study, I also dedicated this work to my sisters **Samia. Naima. Sarra. Zahra. Hounaida** & my brothers **Salim. Moustafa***

This thesis is dedicated to the people who have supported me throughout me education

Thanks for making me see this adventure through to the end

Zahia

ABSTRACT

This thesis tries to analyze consumerism impact on Don DeLillo's novel *White Noise*, through the lens of Postmodern Theories, focusing on Jean Baudrillard's notion of *Consumer Society*. The novel depicts different aspects of consumerism and the effect it has on a postmodern family it invades. This study should prove how Baudrillard's theories are manifested literally by Don DeLillo as he depicts an imaginary society affected by excessive consumption. In this simulation society characters are no longer the owners of the objects but, are slaves to them. Consumerism has become the myth of satisfaction of characters' need and has entered into their most private thoughts and dreams. This thesis will argue that DeLillo portrayal of consumerism presents the characters with a false sense of freedom. In addition to that this work explores the role of media as a necessary tool of consumerism and how it reshapes peoples understanding and interaction with reality.

Key Words : Consumerism, Postmodernism, False needs, Media, Simulation, Illusion of Freedom.

ملخص

تهدف هذه الأطروحة الى دراسة تأثير النزعة الاستهلاكية في رواية «ضوضاء بيضاء» للكاتب دون ديلو من خلال بعض نظريات ما بعد الحداثة بالاعتماد على فكرة جان بودريار عن المجتمع الاستهلاكي. حيث تصور هاته الرواية جوانب مختلفة من النزعة الاستهلاكية و تأثيرها على مجتمعات ما بعد الحداثة. و تسعى هاته الدراسة الى ابراز كيفية تجلي نظريات بودريار حرفيا في رواية الكاتب ديلو حيث يصور تأثير المجتمع الوهمي بالاستهلاك المفرط. في مجتمع المحاكاة هذا لم تعد الشخصيات مالكة للأشياء , بل أصبحت عبيدا لها. من هذا الصرح , أصبحت النزعة الاستهلاكية تعتبر اسطورة اشباع حاجة و رغبات الشخصيات لدرجة انها غزت افكارهم واحلامهم. علاوة على ذلك تهدف هاته الأطروحة الى اثبات محاولة الكاتب دون ديلو في ابراز النزعة الاستهلاكية مما ادى الى ظهور احساس زائفة بالحرية. إضافة الى ذلك تحاول هاته الدراسة الى استكشاف الدور الاساسي للإعلام في نشر وايصال فكرة الاستهلاك في المجتمعات .

الكلمات المفتاحية : النزعة الاستهلاكية , ما بعد الحداثة , الحاجات الزائفة , الاعلام , المحاكاة , وهم الحرية.

Introduction

... From freedom. We lose our freedom if we live it merely as reality. The miracle of gaming is to make us live our freedom not as reality but as illusion- a higher illusion, an aristocratic challenge to reality.

Jorge Borges: *lottery in Babylon.*

The Post-War era was marked by the inevitable period of prosperity. America, least struck by the hardship of war, started to develop a particular consumer life which became the role model for those countries still recovering from the devastating results of World War II. By the 1950's, consumerism was deeply interwoven in the fabric of American society.

The term consumerism first appeared to describe efforts to support consumer's interests regarding the well-informed consumption of goods. as consequences of over-consumption became more transparent, the term took a completely different meaning during the 1960s and 1970s to denote a social and economic order and ideology that promotes the acquisition of goods and services in the ever-increasing amount. The promise of a good life in terms of happiness, well-being and success of an individual presumed that we have to have more stuff. In terms of economics, the emphasis was placed on the consumption in order to produce a constant economic growth, under this presumption ,the consumer demand is constantly simulated as it is a key motor of the reproduction of capital. The citizen was redefined as a consumer whose democratic choices are best exercised by buying and selling of goods. As consumerism seemingly emphasized the individuals' freedom of choice, people's democratic rights and broader were undermined. People were encouraged to express their individuality by

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individualism was especially emphasized during the reign of Margret Thatcher and Ronald Regan during the 1980s.

The impact and influence of consumerism is expressly investigated through writings of various ages. Writers from contemporary age took this issue of consumerism as the fundamental connection of their works. Don DeLillo is one of the famous postmodern American writers who paid a comprehensive attention to the issue of consumerism in his eighth novel, *White Noise* , like most of his novels depicts a family that was unintentionally engaged in the ruling of consumerism.

This thesis id a depiction of postmodern consumer society as portrayed in Don DeLillo's novel *White Noise* . It provides an analysis of consumerism as dominant ideology and its effects on the characters of the novel in the light of Jean Baudrillard's *Consumer Society*.

White Noise is the eighth novel by Don DeLillo, published by Viking Press in 1985, it won the U.S. National Award for Fiction. It stands out as an insightful analysis of late – twentieth century American society. The novel explores some important issues, such as consumerism, mass media, the effects of technology on people's lives. Unavoidably, in *White Noise*, the consumerist environment and the logic of consumerism penetrates all places, white noise is everywhere and in everything, manipulating peoples' mind and behaviors.

As part of postmodern culture, invaded by the spirit of consumerism, in *White Noise* the activity of shopping consumes a surprisingly large portion of the narrative itself. These shopping trips are central to DeLillo's representation of postmodern consumer world showcasing the effects these spaces have on everyday consumer practice, experience and behavior.

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White Noise depicts the central role television has on a postmodern family. Tv is one of the most influential technological devices in the contemporary life of the Gladney's family.

Furthermore, critics and scholars have shown interest toward Don DeLillo's *White Noise* which can be considered as a masterpiece constructs a criticism of consumerism in postmodern America, such researchers have carried out numerous studies for the comprehension of the world depicted in the novel. Those works present ideas related to our topic.

Besides, many researchers tried to examine the consumer society effects. Leonard Wilcox in his work " Baudrillard , DeLillo's *White Noise* , and the end of heroic narrative" *White Noise* presents a view of life in contemporary America that is similar to that depicted by Jean Baudrillard, characterized by the "loss of the real" in black hole of simulation and the play and exchange of signs. *White Noise* is also bathed in the eerie glow of television.

David Kaloustian in his essay " Media representation of Disaster in Don DeLillo's *White Noise*" points out that DeLillo's characters succumb to a false consciousness by using consumerism in order to mediate desires and validate lives.

In " Consumerism and Great American Novel" (2007). Holly Hassel examines how American writers from the early to the late twentieth century address the issue of consumerism. Hassel argues that Don DeLillo is an American writer who criticizes consumerism and portray it as destructive, alienating, and depressing. Explicitly *White Noise* attacks the consumer culture and the advertising- saturated American society. And Don DeLillo is an author who is concerned with negative aspects of consumerism.

Those works presented some ideas related to this subject and their findings and suggestions are reviewed here under the aim of identifying different effects of consumerism on the characters of the novel.

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Consumerism is seen as a vehicle for personal freedom and happiness, paradoxical in its expression and glorification on this freedom it simultaneously demands the enslavement and exploitation of true personal freedom. The only freedom offered in consumer society is merely freedom to consume and to choose between objects within structured frameworks, consequently, this freedom is illusory.

To comprehend deeply the concept of false sense of freedom in the novel, it is necessary to refer to some critics who discussed the issue of freedom in relation to consumerism. Tony Blackshaw in his book " Zygmunt Bauman " reflects the idea that it is a time when freedom depends on one's ability to consume.

The importance of this thesis is that DeLillo's works can be seen as a means of epitomizing the way out from the depressing situation and also as an attempt to free himself and his readers from the dominant manipulation of consumerism, the insights resulting from this research will contribute to a better understanding of the novel and the different factors that have affected the characters and also it is helpful for readers to avoid consumerisms influence.

The study aims at examining the most important features of consumer society from postmodern view and how these features affect the characters behavior, consciousness and their personal freedom. the study will shed lights on Jean Baudrillard description in his theoretical writings on consumerism and media that have gripped the mind and shape the novel of Don DeLillo's *White Noise* and this consumer world is both common to Baudrillard and DeLillo.

Baudrillard's critical attention in which he focuses on three points that postmodern society is a consumer society influenced by Media, based on simulation and the freedom in the consumer society is illusory and a part of dominant consumerism ideology.

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Theoretically it is difficult to define consumerism due to its complicated and complex nature, the ongoing process of consumerism will be analyzed within the framework of postmodern approaches mainly Jean Baudrillard's theories of consumer society, these are the major sources of ideas in this thesis.

By going through this research, there are a set of objectives to be achieved. Firstly, *White Noise* is a consumerism satire work. Secondly, to examine the impact of consumerism on characters and on the concept of freedom. Thirdly, to prove that DeLillo's *White Noise* world and Baudrillard's consumer society are common.

The main question of this research is : what effect does consumerism as a dominant ideology have on the characters of Don DeLillo's *White Noise* ?

To further develop the problematic, the following sub-questions need to be answered :

- 1- what are the common features of consumer society ?
- 2- what role does Media play as a necessary tool of consumerism ?
- 3- how does consumerism create the illusion of freedom ?

This thesis is divided into two chapters; the first chapter starts by Don DeLillo and Jean Baudrillard's biographies and intellectual orientation . Secondly, defining the concept of Postmodernism and Consumerism , then explaining Postmodern Consumerism , then it moves to theorizing Jean Baudrillard's consumer society and its most important features and the relation between Media and consumerism . Finally, defining the illusion of freedom in Consumerism.

The second chapter begins with examining the consumerism in the novel *White Noise* and exploring the Gladney's family as consumers . Secondly, discussing the supermarket as the

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meeting point of the characters to consume and the role of media as a necessary tool of the loss of the real. Finally examining the False sense of Freedom in the novel.

1. Don DeLillo and Jean Baudrillard Biographies and Intellectual orientation

1.1 Don DeLillo

Don DeLillo, born November 20, 1936, New York, U.S, American novelist whose postmodernist works portray the anomie of an America cosseted by material excess and stupefied by empty mass culture and politics.

After his graduation from Fordham University, New York City (1958), DeLillo worked for several years as a copywriter at an advertising agency. His first novel, *Americana* (1971), is the story of a network television executive in search of the “real” America. It was followed by *End Zone* (1972) and *Great Jones Street* (1973). *Ratner’s Star* (1976) attracted critical attention with its baroque comic sense and verbal facility.

Don DeLillo's novels since (1985) have turned their attention to the paradoxes and contradictions of postmodern culture. DeLillo's is the terrain of shopping malls and supermarkets, the temples of the new consumerist creed, of a market organized entirely around consumer demand, of the detritus and waste of consumerism produced by that insatiable demand. His is a world in which the mode of production associated with modernism has given way to the postmodern mode of information in which television shapes perceptions and creates its own self-referential world. As he moved into the (1990s) we see that his novels become concerned with what might be called the "global postmodern," the point at which media spectacle itself becomes a world-wide phenomenon, the point at which every interstice of the international world is saturated in capital. His is a global landscape traversed by the indeterminate circulation of signs, by messages of resurgent nationalisms and religious fundamentalism, as well as the violence of international terrorism.

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Beginning with *Players* (1977), DeLillo's vision turned darker, and his characters became more willful in their destructiveness and ignorance. Critics found little to like in the novel's protagonists but much to admire in DeLillo's elliptical prose. The thrillers *Running Dog* (1978) and *The Names* (1982), which was set mostly in Greece, followed. *White Noise* (1985), which won the National Book Award for fiction, tells of a professor of Hitler studies who is exposed to an "airborne toxic event"; he discovers that his wife is taking an experimental substance said to combat the fear of death, and he vows to obtain the drug for himself at any cost. In *Libra* (1988) DeLillo presented a fictional portrayal of Lee Harvey Oswald, the assassin of Pres. John F. Kennedy. *Mao II* (1991) opens with a mass wedding officiated by cult leader Sun Myung Moon and tells the story of a reclusive writer who becomes enmeshed in a world of political violence..

DeLillo received significant acclaim for the sprawling novel *Underworld* (1997), which provides a commentary on American history and culture in the Cold War era, in part by tracing the imagined journeys of the baseball that New York Giants outfielder Bobby Thomson hit for a pennant-winning home run in 1951. DeLillo's subsequent works of fiction include *The Body Artist* (2001), about the supernatural experiences of a recent widow; *Cosmopolis* (2003; film 2012), set largely in a billionaire's limousine as it moves across Manhattan; *Falling Man* (2007), which tells the story of a survivor of the September 11 attacks in 2001; *Point Omega* (2010), a meditation on time; and *Zero K* (2016), an investigation of cryogenics and human immortality.

In addition to his novels, DeLillo wrote several plays, the screenplay to the independent film *Game 6* (2005), and the short-story collection *The Angel Esmeralda: Nine Stories* (2011). He received the Library of Congress Prize for American Fiction in 2013 and the National Book Awards Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters in 2015.

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1.2 Jean Baudrillard

Jean Baudrillard, born July 29, 1929, Reims, France—died March 6, 2007, Paris, French, a cultural critic and media intellectual, claims that the contemporary culture is postmodern. It is marked by plurality, diversion, intense fragmentation, and indirection. He discovers that it is mass media that create demands and seduction of objects and ultimately make the contemporary society a powerful consumer society. Media have shaken the very foundation of postmodern culture, giving a new direction to reality. Baudrillard describes that the relationship between the real and simulacra has undergone a sea change in the contemporary society. Now the very concept of a true copy is thrown into the wind. Models and simulacra have become reality. In the postmodern media and consumer society, everything becomes an image, a sign, a spectacle, a transaesthetic, transpolitical, and transsexual.

Baudrillard finds Marx's economic philosophy incapable of explaining life in the late capitalist societies, because they are based on consumer. Throughout his life, Marx lays emphasis on the mode of production so much that the other aspect of capitalism i.e. consumer and culture slips from his mind. Baudrillard, by the way supplements it by consumer, the focal point of his discussion. Now there is a shift from production to consumerism. This idea—the analysis of society through consumer and culture—occurs to his mind during his so jury in America and writes a travelogue America in the lifestyle of the Americans. He declares America the greatest consumer society and model for the rest of the world.

After studying German at the Sorbonne, Baudrillard taught German literature in secondary schools (1956–66), translated German literary and philosophical works, and published essays in the literary review *Les Temps Moderns*. At the same time, he attended the University of Paris X at Nanterre, where in 1968 he completed a dissertation in sociology, *The System of Objects*,

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under the direction of Marxist historian Henri Lefebvre. Baudrillard taught (1966–68) in the sociology department at Nanterre, which was one of the centers of the May 1968 student revolts, with which he was in sympathy. He then moved to the University of Paris IX (now the University of Paris at Dauphine), from which he retired in 1987.

Baudrillard's early work—including *The System of Objects*, 1970 *The Consumer Society*, and in 1972; *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*—combines Marxist political economy and a semiotics (theory of signs) influenced by Roland Barthes in a critique of everyday life in consumer society, in which, according to Baudrillard, things have symbolic value in addition to values derived from Marxian use and exchange. In 1973; *The Mirror of Production* and in 1976; *Symbolic Exchange and Death*. Baudrillard broke with Marxism to develop an account of postmodern society in which consumer and electronic images have become more real (hyperreal) than physical reality and in which simulations of reality (simulacra) have displaced their originals, leaving only “the desert of the real.” This phrase was quoted in the popular American science-fiction film *The Matrix* (1999), whose hero hides contraband in a copy of Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation* (originally published as *Simulacres et simulation*, 1981). An accomplished photographer, Baudrillard asserted that "every photographed object is merely the trace left behind by the disappearance of all the rest".

Among Baudrillard's other major works are in 1977; *Forget Foucault*; (1986; *America*), based on a trip to the United States; in 1991; *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*; *Jean Baudrillard: Photographies 1985–1998* (1999), a collection of his images and related essays; in (2002; *The Spirit of Terrorism: And Requiem for the Twin Towers*). The first issue of *The International Journal of Baudrillard Studies* appeared in early 2004.

2. Postmodernism and Consumerism

2.1 Postmodernism

Postmodernism refers to the intellectual mood and cultural expression that are becoming increasingly dominant in contemporary society. Postmodernism in turn, refers to the era in which we are living , the time when the postmodern outlook increasingly shapes our society. The adjectives postmodern, then, refers to the mind- set and its products:

"Postmodernity is the era in which postmodern ideas , attitudes, and values reign- when the mood of postmodernism is modeling culture. This is the era of the postmodern society". (Grenz 1996)

The term Postmodernism also refers to the emergence of new behavior , patterns and cultural products that can collectively change the lives of individuals in society, and it also indicates the separation from the past and the orientation towards a future that we have never seen before or are those ideas that are based on the breach and rejection of the boundaries based on skepticism and challenged the notion that there are universal certainties or truths. This is what makes postmodern questions focus on all the postulate of modernity, including some question after the modernist about the merits of the present over the past, and speech over the pre-modern, and refuses to prefer modernism, and thus the post-modernists are reconsidering what is usual, what is sacred and what is private:

Postmodernism in large is a reaction to the assumed certainty of scientific, or objectives, efforts to explain reality. In essence, it stems from a recognition that reality is not simply mirrored in human understanding of it , but rather , is constructed as the mind tries to understand its own particular and personal reality for this reason, postmodernism is highly skeptical of explanations which claim to be valid for all groups, cultures, traditions, or races, and

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instead focuses on the relative truths of each person. In the postmodern understanding, interpretation is everything; reality only comes into being through our interpretations of what the world means to us individually. Postmodernism relies on concrete experience over abstract principles, knowing always that the outcome of one's own experience will necessarily be fallible and relative, rather than certain and universal. (J.L.Lemke 1994)

As the moderns attempt to totalize human society, postmodernism does just the opposite.

"Insofar as the function of reason was defined in the thought of both the ancients and the moderns as a drive toward the totalization and unification of human experience, the stance of postmodernity becomes that of other than reason". As Lyotard mentions, "scientific knowledge does not represent the totality of knowledge". This can also be translated in the social and cultural arena because one culture or one being does not represent the totality of societies. However, although no voice is privileged, consciousness or being is still important.

Postmodernism, which became an area of academic study in the mid-eighties, (Klages) is a term used to designate the era beyond modernity. In review, the Premodern 2000 : " medieval age was called the age of faith and superstition, followed by modern age, the age of empiricism and science. The postmodern age of relativity and, recently, the newest, reason from postmodernism, the age of holism and interdependence, followed. Respectively, the guiding metaphors are the created organism, the machine, the text, and the self-organizing system .(Quincy 2002)

Kellner (2003) suggests that we are in an interregnum period (a time between periods when something was dominant or powerful but now there is no reigning power) between an aging modern and emerging postmodern era. He says we are in a period of transition in the borderlands between two epochs or periods of time marked by great influence, with each time frame

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characterized by the prevalence of similar conditions on the earth . Along the same line of thinking , some claim that postmodernism is actually the late stage of modernity.(Eckersley1999)

Burke as cited in Wallace, (2003). Others claim that there is no such thing as postmodernism and still others claim that postmodernism is a set of ideas that has run its course and as a project is morphine into the emerging project of globalization. What once began as an economic concept is now becoming a new category of thinking. (Richter 2003)

Individuals often speak of "the" postmodern way of looking at issues, when , in fact, an assortment of postmodern agendas exists. Oord (2001) shares a very useful overview of the five prevailing approaches to understanding postmodernism, prefacing his discussion with the following comment, "...some notions flying under the postmodernism flag oppose or contradict other notions under the same banner ...how does one decide which is authentic ? [This] proves to be difficult ".

Late Capitalism is often displayed in the emergence of the information society and high technologies which shape the postmodern world. Includes as Jameson notes:

Consumer society, media society, information society, electronic society or high technology and the like ... Besides the forms of transactional business... late capitalisms features include the new international divisions of late or, a vertiginous new dynamic in international banking and the stock exchanges (including the enormous second and third world debate) new forms of media interrelationship. Very much including transport systems such as a containerization . computers and automation, the light of production to advanced third world areas, along with all the more familiar social consequences, including the crisis of traditional labor, the emergence of yuppies and gentrification on a now – global- scale. (Jameson .p 16)

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Jameson, combines both the theoretical side and the production of postmodern world , which requires a large space in the market place for the consumer . He uses the postmodern aesthetics and emphasizes on its own position as contradictory to logical reasoning . He argues that postmodernism brought a new explication and different styles.

Cova (1996) notes that "the postmodernism represent a state without ideology or a single thought system, or utopia characterized by a plurality of values and styles." On the other hand Curbatov 2003 stressed this pluralism of styles and added the need of the Hyperreality and the self-expression through consumption. The importance of the Hyperreality and consequently, the importance of the imaginary, are given value by the integration of image through the means of communication. The Postmodernists point out the key role of electronic communication and technologies play in spectacularizing our realities (Firat & Venkatesch, 1995). The world becomes characterized by the image, the illusion and simulation .(Bourgeon Renault, 2007)

There seems to be no consensus on the nature of postmodernity. This illustrated by Berzonsky (2005), who focuses on the concept of 'knowing' in his discussion of postmodernity: "knowing is considered to be a constructive process of subjectively creating meaning, and those constructions always take place within a particular socio- culturally based context of implicit assumptions and theoretical constructs". Berzonsky adds that observations and perceptions are shaped by the historical and cultural settings within which individuals live. Cooper and Webb (1999) express a similar view. They postulate that:

..." 'postmodernism', in which the dissolution of traditional structures of culture, tradition and authority lead to a set of circumstances in which no single principle, person or institution is capable of exercising overall control, or decisive influence, upon a giving state of affairs. The increase in the diversity of forces and

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influences which bear upon any situation ... is both a source and an outcome of the overall trend... ". (Hall, p5)

Farrell (1994) discusses the 'character of postmodern 'thought and relates this to the character of manufactured image." This manufactured image is brought about by the experience of living in a world in which television, advertising and media manipulation seem to give reality the character of manufactured image. Farrell claims that the self has lost its former depth and become a "shallow artefact of cultural production" regarding the postmodern individual, Buchman and Brosio posit that the electronic media and related phenomena have caused the current 'shriveled attention span 'and 'present- tense emphasis'.

2.2 Consumerism

Consumerism is the belief that personal wellbeing and happiness depends to a very large extent on the level of personal consumption, particularly on the purchase of material goods. The idea is not simply that wellbeing depends upon a standard of living above some threshold, but that at the center of happiness is consumption and material possessions. A consumerist society is one in which people devote a great deal of time , energy, resources and thought to" consuming". The general view of life in a consumerist society is consumption is good, and more consumption is even better.

Consumerism is an acceptance of consumption as a way to self- development, self- realization and self- fulfillment. In a consumer society, individuals identity is tied to what s/he consumes. People end up buying more then they need for basic subsistence and end up being concerned for their self- interest rather than mutual, communal, or ecological interest .(Mc Gregor, 19-19)

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Marcuse claims that consumerism has transformed the very personality- structure , values, needs and behavior of individual in a way that:

"The people recognize themselves in their commodities; they find their soul in their automobiles, hi-fi set, split- level home, kitchen equipment . The very mechanism which ties an individual to his society has changed, and social control is anchored in the new needs which it has produced". (Kellner)

Horkheimer and Adorno (2002) argue that consumerism has a profound influence on body and soul:" under the private monopoly of culture tyranny does indeed leave the body free and sets to work directly on the soul". Trapped in the world of consumerism, people find themselves compelled to buy more and more products.

Wisalo (1999) suggests that consumerism occurs because of humans insecurity in their hearts and minds. Ironically, people allegedly consume to gain this security. He says that people feel they can become a new person by purchasing those products that support their self- image of whom they are, want to be, and where they want to go. Unfortunately, this approach to becoming a new person, to developing a sense of self, is unsustainable. People "under the influence of consumerism" never feel completely satisfied because owning something cannot help one meet the security and comfort of heart and mind, the deeper needs of humanity. Constantly spending and accumulating only gives short- term fulfilment and relief from the need to have peace and security in life. This lack of peace and security greatly compromises sustainable human development. (McGregor)

Robert Bocock(1993) describes modern consumers as follow: " modern consumers are physically passive , but mentally they are very busy, "consumption is more than ever before an

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experience which is to be located in the head, a matter of the brain and the mind, rather than seen as the process of simply satisfying biological body needs."

Valentine 2003 also links consumerism and the construction of individual's identities when she states that material possessions are not only things in their own right; they also convey meanings about , for example, 'style and class'. She also points out that consumption rituals mark social relationships of inclusion and exclusion- friendships and family ties are examples of this. Valentine quotes Holbrook and Jackson (1996) who are of the opinion that consumption is not just a simple momentary act of purchase, it "is a social process whereby people relate to goods and artefacts in complex ways transforming their meaning as they incorporate them into their lives". Valentine then concludes that goods are consumed for what they signify, for distinguishing the self, as well as for use value. In the act of consumption, people are active agents in the production of individuals styles and identities.

In discussing Bauman's view on postmodern consumerism, Gane (2001) talks about:

"...life organized around consumption...without norms insofar as it is guided by 'seduction', ever rising desires and volatile wishes."

Continuing his reflection on Bauman's argument, Gane suggests that consumer life in the life in the shopping malls, where "we are now individualized consumers 'free' to 'shop' around in the supermarket of identities". Bauman discusses also the weakness of the human individual in *Postmodernity and its Discontents*. He refers to this individual as devoted to the art of consumer self- indulgence: ... the dread of experiencing less and not as strongly as others perhaps do: ...the postmodern strategy of peak-experience".

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American writer and social critic Christopher Lash sees modern societies as societies that worship consumption and see it as a way to compensate for their inability to adjust their external rhythm of life through many compensatory strategies, such as the tendency of parents to compensate themselves, their families and their children for poor living conditions such as poverty and unemployment that they previously suffered. In doing so our subconscious responds to our inner chaos and instability through its tendency to seek temporary pleasure in our minds, and undoubtedly "shopping, consuming and owning products" serve this purpose, since they stimulate the reward system in the brain and raise the levels of the hormones of happiness and psychological comfort.

2.3 Postmodern Consumerism

A postmodern culture is a culture of consumerism that is dialectically linked to the contemporary world society, in which everything is subject to the dominance of consumption, or the dominance of a culture that is considered to be a deconstruction that produces a consumer dominance that is constantly generated withing a circular perspective and best represented by the American western society, especially since the media, development and markets are producing a huge amount of symbols and signs on a daily basis without the opportunity for assimilation or reflection . in fact, intellectual processes are not required under the banner of consumer culture and under the slogan of consumerism" I Consume, Therefore I am" .

Consumerism under Postmodernism has become a process that has to be continually fed by buying more things to define who we are. It is all about image and illusions, or reality is recreated on a daily basis by buying things. (Mc Gregor; p11)

Consumerism, in postmodern times, feeds on feelings of malais, alienation, and discontent. To heal this malaise, we place a primary on things because we have lost our trust in

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relationships. Things are permanent (unless obsolescence is built in) although people and relationships come and go. We want constancy in a time of constant change. We now seems morally hollow and empty so we fill the hunger with a constant fears on material things. Everything, every person and every relationship, has to be commodified (has a price for sale) to create enough things to buy. Driven by this horrible alienation and unhappiness from failed hopes, desires, and expectations, we enter into a relentless cycle of buying to fill the gap. Asking people to shift from self- interest to mutual interest and shared responsibilities for each other is asking a lot given their current affliction with consumerism. They are very unwell and may not be able to heal themselves. (McGregor)

Baudrillard explains in that postmodernity : " people come to *touch* , they were touching, their gaze is only an aspect of tactile manipulation. It is certainly a question of tactile universe, no longer a visual or discursive one, and people are directly implicated in the process : to manipulate/ to be manipulated, to ventilate to be ventilated, to circulate to make circulate, which is no longer the order of representation, nor of distance, nor of reflection. It is something that is part of panic, and a world in panic". (Davis, p6)

Rattansi and phoenix (1997) refer to our contemporary period as one of consumerism . this seems to describe people in the age of consumer culture, where choices of clothes , music styles and speech/slang are crucial to the construction of individuals identities. Rattansi and Phoenix state that western societies may be characterized as consumer societies were individuals distinguish themselves by their public consumption of particular 'designer labels' , in the form of cars , clothes, accessories, exotic holidays, body treatments, foods and drinks. These authors view the term 'fashion victim' as indicative of a popular and sociological view that regards label- obsession and the intense emotionality and pressures surrounding the possession of the latest

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'badges' as sad outcome of the forms in which capitalism and sophisticated marketing have turned the dreams into a never-ending trap.

Farrell (1994) discussed the 'character' of postmodern thought and relates this to "the character of a manufactured image". This manufactured image is brought about by the experience of living in a world in which television, advertising, and media manipulation seem to give reality the character of this manufactured image. Farrell claims that the self has lost its former depth and has become "a shallow artefact of cultural production". Regarding the postmodern individual, Buschman and Brosio (2006) posit that the electronic media and related phenomena have caused the current 'shriveled attention span' and 'present-tense emphasis'. (Hall, p10)

Joyce (1997) refers to "present day notions of materialism", while Bauman describes individuals in this consumer society as "constructed as sensation-gathered to seek and find". (Hall, p107). Rosenau (1992) describes the postmodern individual as the sceptic's alternative to the modern subject. She describes the postmodern individual at length. Her argument is epitomized by the following remarks:

The Post-modern individual is relaxed and flexible, oriented toward feelings and emotions , interiorization, and holding a 'be yourself ' attitude. S/he is an active human being constituting his/her own social reality, pursuing a personal quest for meaning but making no truth claims for what results. She looks for fantasy, humor, the culture of desire, and immediate gratification. Preferring the temporary over the permanent , s/he is contended with a 'live and let live' (in the present) attitude... Post-modern individuals are concerned with their own lives. their particular personal satisfaction, and self- promotion. Less concerned with old loyalties and modern affiliations such as marriage, family, church, and nation, they are more orientated toward their own needs.

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The postmodern individual is described as a 'floating' individual, without distinct reference points or parameters. He is characterized by the absence of a strong singular identity, by fragmentation and lack of self-awareness. The postmodern individual favors the unrehearsed, rather than the organized. Pears (2005) describes the attributes of postmodern people in similar terms, adding that postmodern conditions have made identity unclear. He argues that the problem of rootlessness has been compounded by a postmodern ideology. He posits that the notion of 'personhood' can no longer be taken for granted. (Hall; p 7-8)

Smith (1999) states that in Bauman's view on postmodernity, there has been a radical shift away from production to consumption as a central integrity activity. Within modernity, *work* supplied identity, social bonds and social functioning – you are what you did for a *living*. By contrast, in a postmodern habit, you *are what you buy*." Advertisers train you to think this way from the moment you can blink at a television screen. Consumers are seduced into their purchasing role... It is the aesthetics of *consumption* that now rules where the work ethic once ruled". In this environment, the poor are useless, out of place and inconvenient, because they do not conform to the way of life that is valued in the postmodern habitat.

3. Jean Baudrillard *Consumer Society*

Consumerism is the central socio-economic activity in postmodernity and French philosopher Jean Baudrillard recognizes it as constituting the underlying postmodern framework. Indeed, Baudrillard argues in the consumer society that because of the intensification of consumerism, humanity increasingly alienates itself not simply from one another, but ecologically as well, he also states that consumer society is characterized with affluent goods and services. However, the scope of the product is not merely to fulfill basic needs, everything is transformed into services that are targeted as a source of personal satisfaction, as quoted:

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"... in this society everything is a service. What available to be consumed never presents itself as pure and simple products, but as a personal services, as gratification ".(Baudrillard, 1998)

In addition to that, consumer society is characterized by the individual and the government consumption for the benefit of private individuals that owns private industries .(Ariski Paramitha)

In this society where "all individuals are described in terms of their objects", to Baudrillard, an object has *sign-value*, and that value is based on sign of simulation, In other words, when a consumer buy an object, it signifies something more than a commodity. An object, no doubt, has use- value, but at the same time it stands for a sign of the consumers prestige, rank, and social understanding. In a consumer society, when a consumer buys an object, he is buying into a whole system of needs that is at once rational and hierarchical, the consumer consumes the sign not the object. In this way, consumption is not natural but cultural and rather becomes conspicuous consumption. (Munther Mohd ,p44)

Baudrillard's view the effects of consumption has increased through all aspects of life, from culture to human relations. Baudrillard writes:

"There is all around us today a kind of fantastic conspicuousness of consumption and abundance , constituted by the multiplication of objects, services and material goods, and this represents something of a fundamental mutation in the ecology of the human species .Strictly speaking, the humans of the age of affluence are surrounded not so much by other human beings, as they were all previous ages, nut by objects". (Shabrang and Hemmat, p 113)

Consumers contribue in the creation process of hyperreal. Baudrillard's provides insight on how simulation of reality can be found. The long and continuous process of simulation distorts the distinction between reality and illusion, as quoted:

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" simulation threatens the difference between the 'true' and the 'false', the 'real' and the 'imaginary' ".(Baudrillard,1994)

In consumer society, Hyperreality is the result of the technological and information advance where images and signs as representation circulate in reality. Hyperreality is a stage where an imitation is seen real. It even more real than reality. The imitation is able to control reality and present an image that looks better than reality. Simulation is needed beforehand, in order to develop Hyperreality. A simulation is an imitation of things that exist in reality such as person, a location or an object, whereas simulation, the process of how a simulacrum replaces reality and then creates Hyperreality, is divided into four steps:" It is the reflection of a profound reality, It makes and de- natures a profound reality, It makes the absence of a profound reality, It has no relation to any reality; it is the own pure simulacrum". (Baudrillard, 1994)

The first stage is when sign tries to reflect by imitating a reality. Secondly, imitation becomes an unfaithful copy of a reality by not representing it as a whole, only some part of it or even changes some element. Thirdly, imitation claims to represent reality, however, since it deviates from the reality, it actually represents nothing. The last stage is marked when the imitation exists without an original and lack of profound meaning. Hyperreality emerges when thing reaches its own pure simulacrum at the fourth order of simulation and it can be seen when reality has no distinguishable characteristic with simulacra. Simulacrum becomes the wrong representation of reality and becomes the reference to itself. It becomes harder to distinguish reality when simulacra simulate simulacra, making reality lost in the middle of countless simulacra. (Ariski Paramitha)

One of the most common criticism directed against consumer society is that it leads to people consuming more than they need. (Campbell) The idea that primary needs govern society is a myth. No objects exists isolated from other objects; every object is relational. The distinction

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is categorical. In the consumer society , objects becomes signs and economy defined by needs is left behind. A need is either psychological or cultural. Lifestyle and values, rather than economic needs, are the basis of social life. The distinction between the true and false needs or artificial and real needs makes no sense. It is moralism. (Roberto & Cherques)

For Baudrillard, capitalist consumer society has now completed itself. It has perfected its own reproduction. This is why social substance has disappeared from it. It no longer needs an external support for its claims. It has completed itself because it has escaped the dangerous determinacy of production, which rendered it dependent on labor. We can't tell real needs from false needs any more. (McLavery)

4. Consumerism and Media

The media world faced drastic changes once again in the 1980s with the spread of cable television. Viewers had a little limited number of channels during the early decades of television. Cable provides allowed viewers a wide menu of choices. Television provides vastly more visual information than radio, and is more dynamic than a static printed page. It can also be used to broadcast live events to a national wide audience.(Tamara)

The issue of consumerism and the way it shapes the lives of individuals is deemed to be one of the most dominant topics of postmodernist thoughts, however, the problems of consumer society are so interwoven with media saturation that the two cannot be observed separately. (Stanković) As Kellner states :

"Not only do Media shape our vision of contemporary world, determining what most people can or cannot see and hear".

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Baudrillard interprets the Media as a key simulation machines which reproduce images, signs and codes which in turn come to constitute an autonomous realm of Hyperreality. He also states that:

" when we are watching Tv, Tv is actually watching us Tv alienates us, manipulates us, Tv inform us [...]a perspective information with the horizon of the real and of meaning as the vanishing point".
(Shabrang and Hemmat)

Baudrillard also hold the media for creating a society of consumerism, Media have rocked the very root of postmodern society, giving a new direction of reality. (Munther ,p 44) Buschman and Brosio (2006) state that, although the dominance of television may be overtaken by other media, it has been the most powerful vehicle of presentation. It features "an uninterrupted flow of decontextualized pictures". with an "emphasis on surface and a collapsed sense of time and space". (Hall, p107)

Images in the media can be seen as one form of simulacra. Baudrillard maintains that consumer society is constituted through a continual flow of images in the media and argues that a culture of consumption has dominated our ways of thinking so much that reality is filtered through media channels.(Vungthong ,p4) According to Baudrillard, people no longer see the difference between the original and the duplicate. That is, the "real" has disappeared and the only reality is thus superficiality and simulacra which is created by the media. As David Lyon maintains:

" Television and consumer culture belong together... and Tv is all about the production of needs and wants...consumer objects are actually a system of signs that differentiate the population. Signifiers, like Tv ads, "float" freely with only the loosest connection with actual objects."

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France (2007) states that the new Media is becoming more influential in the day to day lives of people. " one significant difference between the experience of people born after 1980 and their parents is the role of new media and information communication technologies in every life".

5. Consumerism and Freedom

Modern European and American history is focused on the effort to reach freedom and break all the political, economic, religious handcuffs and everything that has restricted humans, after man overthrew the sovereignty of nature he made himself a master, and after he overthrew the control of the church and the control of the absolute authoritarian state he made the mind a master (Erich Fromm).

But although the endless technological developments that paved the way theoretically to free the individual from needs and exploitative projects, by organizing the production process and control in a way that meets vital needs . However, what is truly happening is quite different; the modern consumer society is totalitarian politically and economically (Marcus).

The consumer society uses the concept of freedom in the same way that the industry society used it . Liberalism was an advocate of freedom at the beginning of the industrial era, but this call was fake, ideological and had other hidden aims . The principle of freedom, as used by the Industrial Society, served the task of break the individual's ties to all social units so that the system could enter individuals in the labor market and become a commodity . And this same principle of freedom is now used by the consumer society to apply it to the body . The body must now be liberated, that is, to break with the concepts of sin, fall and guilt that is, all the Christian and puritan religious concepts that impose on the body asceticism and austerity, so that it can become a subject of consumption.

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Liberalism understands freedom as finding its full and complete expression in the concept of private property and its sub-concepts such as possession, usufruct and contract as the recognition of ownership by the parties involved to each other and the rights of the participants in this contract . The concept of private property has been the source of liberal legal and political regulation of Western societies since the eighteenth century. The concept of private property is no longer as important in the consumer society . The concept of possession or acquisition no longer makes sense; these values have been replaced by the values of use, enjoyment and consumption . Possession is the retention of a certain thing that lasts and lasts and the benefit of it is long-term, but consumption is the satisfaction of a desire by wasting and wasting the subject of this desire . Once you buy a commodity, it means you agree to its price, and your agreement to the price means your agreement with the system. (kastning)

Consumer society turns democracy into something measured . Growth and productivity means welfare , welfare means well-being, and prosperity means democracy . Thus measuring growth and productivity means measuring the degree of democracy that exists . The natural rights of man become his rights to own and consume subjects to satisfy his needs . It makes no sense to question whether this society achieves freedom and equality or not, whether it is democratic or not, and whether it has eliminated previous inequalities or not, because this society has already shifted the issues of freedom, equality and democracy from the social and political field to the material sphere of consumerism. (Varman & Vikas)

Marcus claims that in a consumer society the individual's freedom is a pseudo-freedom that fails to see that bondage to the system is the price of its being able to "choose" to buy and live a consumer life style. Marcus believes that this "freedom" and "choice" is illusory because the

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people have been preconditioned to make their choices within a pre-determined universe that circumscribes their range of choices.(Kellner)

Consumerism leaves no choice. Freedom talks about the choice between greater or lesser satisfaction; rationality comes down to a choice between the better or worse. Consumerism is not, however associated with the use of the products; it is based on an imaginary pursuit of pleasure consumerism is not, however associated with the use of the products; it is based on an imaginary pursuit of pleasure acquisition, on the obligation to freely spend money. (Konrad Szocik et al)

For Baudrillard, consumer's behavior is a social; therefore, making a choice is a sign of conformity, not rationality. The essential choice to be made by unit is to accept a lifestyle- therefore. It is not a choice. Accordingly to Ritzer ,the culture is responsible for forming the code (a system of meanings , symbols and values) . it is the code that determines the unit's needs . It controls the act of consumption. Freedom based on symbolic meanings of the individual goods and services is illusory.

Chapter 2: The Impact of Consumerism and the False Sense of Freedom in White Noise

1. Consumerism in *White Noise*

1.1 Consumerism and Shopping Experience

White noise reflects upon the postmodern American world of Consumerism and Simulation. The space of the Supermarket reveals not only the postmodern subject's obsession with the erratic shopping mode of life, but also the detachment of the subject from the reality of the product she or she buys. (Hamdi)

Throughout the novel, the Gladney's move through the plot while showcasing many examples of their participation in the mass consumerism taking over their society. From their obsession with brands and shopping, to their Friday tradition of Chinese takeout and television, it can be seen that the Gladney family happily partake in any type of consumerism they can. One of the most memorable lines from the novel, "*MasterCard, Visa, American Express*" (white noise ,p 100) displays jack Gladney's unhealthy obsession with consumerism, seen through his listening of the different companies that produce credit cards. This listening not only highlights the importance of these items to Jack, but also creates a chant-like syntax within the line, thus showing how Jack feels a religious connection to the different kinds of credit cards, and how he worships them and all stand for the spending of money.(Pranidhi 2019) Religion itself is a concept that brings one comfort, and Jack's religious chant of the different brands of credit cards shows how he himself finds comfort in consumerism.

Gladney describes these brands as supranational names, transcending the power of borders and governments, uniting the world together. Once again listing of the brand names creates a chant like syntax, giving the brands a religious connotation, heightened by the diction of "supranational", thus showcasing how the brand names and consumerism have caused delusion in

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the characters minds, as they believe that these brands surpass all, using them for comfort as uniting factor among humanity. (Pranidhi 2019)

Jacks exhausted description of objects show that *White Noise* belongs to a world dominated by the culture of commodities, congested by their presence, and glutted by their consumption, a commodified world wherein consumer objects hijack and colonize the thoughts, imagination, practices, and desires of its mesmerized subjects. In DeLillo's view, identity is constituted and created around goods, and commodity itself has become representative of an entire lifestyle, which therefore functions as an emblem of nationhood and whose effect on people is a sense of belonging derived from a shared pattern of consumption. Co-opted by the culture of commodity, the characters of the novel represent the American people whom have become a mere "... collection of the like-minded and the spirituality akin, a people, a nation of goods and surfaces". The shopping obsessed atmosphere reveals not only peoples immersion in the culture of consumption but also DeLillo's critique of the postmodern era. (Hamdi, p94-95)

The shopping spree scene is one of the defining moments in the novel, displaying Gladney's new found obsession with shopping – thus showing how consumerism has taken over different aspects of his life. Feeling emasculated after an encounter with Massingale, in which he is called harmless, old and 'indistinct'. immediately, Gladney is in "the mood to shop" thus after being insulted, his immediate reaction is to increase his self-esteem, and regain his masculinity by buying items. This is a prime example of how mass consumerism creates delusions of security, as he feels that by engaging in consumption, Gladney will be able to feel as though he is in control and a man rather than harmless and indistinct person. (Pranidhi 2019)

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As Bauman sees it, consuming for the Gladney is what makes life palpable ; this is because individually it makes consumers feel visible, and it has the ability to show what happiness looks like, in this sense he recognizes that consumer goods are not simply objects, consumers see themselves in them.(Blackshaw,p119) They now experiences life through the images and objects of consumption or as Baudrillard puts it " we are here at the control of a micro- satellite, in orbit, living no longer as an actor or dramaturge but as a terminal of multiple networks". (Blackshaw ,p10)

The mall, which is described as large – 10 stories high – with many unnecessary items such as fountains, waterfalls and gardens. These large decorations and additions to the mall tower over the family and completely surround them acting as walls and guards that keep them in. these items surrounding the family could be perceived as a prison, but it feels more as comfortable walls which guides the family throughout the establishment. The grandeur and largess of the shopping mall displays the American society and its love for consumerism. The large size creates a sense of security for the shoppers, which also ends with the shoppers being trapped as they are forced to take refuge once they enter the shopping center. Moving further into the mall, jack describes his family leading him towards different stores as his" guides to endless wellbeing". As Jack assume that as long as he is able to shop, he will be fine with whatever comes forth. He describes the different smells and items that come for him to either taste or sense, " pretzel, beer, souvlaki, and chocolate, popcorn, cologne", showing how during his time of low self- esteem, these items were surrounding him, acting as 'comfort food'. (Pranidhi 2019)

While scowering the mall for items and designs, Jack describes his experience as fulfilling, stating that he " began to grow in value and self- regard".(white noise ,p 84) As what

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Massingale had taken away from him by calling him old harmless, Jack was able to regain by buying items for himself and his family, and spending money as though it is meaningless. Further into the passage, Jack describes himself as "the benefactor" and how it makes him feel powerful. The entire passage itself shows how Jack depends on shopping and consumerism in order to keep his mental state healthy, and keep his self-esteem high, thus showing how consumerism is able to create delusions of security within one's mind. On one such occasion, Murry tells Jack "how happy he is to be in Blacksmith, in the mall, in the rooming house, on the hill". He continues to say:

"I feel I am learning important things every day. Death, disease, afterlife, outer space. It's all much clearer here. I can think and see". (White noise, p36)

With Murray expressing his feelings to Jack, it is almost as if these encounters at the mall are replacing customary aside from being a meeting ground, the mall is filled with many consumer goods conventionally in bulk.

Shopping provides the Gladney's with the feeling that they have achieved a fullness of being, unknown to those who need or buy less and plan their lives around solidarity evening walks. The clear suggestion of this compulsive consumption implies that the Gladney family seeks comfort in "... the spending money, not the actual acquisition of goods". Jack confirms as much when he talks about the rush he gets from spending money. He argues that the more money he spends on shopping, the less important it seems. "I was bigger than these sums. "These sums poured off my skin like so much rain, he says. These sums in fact came back to me in the form of existentialist credit." (Hamdi ,p 94)

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1.2 The Gladney's as Consumers

Consumerism is taking place everywhere, it has come to invade our everyday modern lives. Steven miles says:" How we consume, why we consume, and the parameters laid down for us within which we consume have become increasingly significant influences on how we construct our everyday lives". Consumerism has even gotten to the point of affecting the way we go about living and controlling our personal and social lives (Miles, p5). Whenever we go and whatever we do, consumerism is praised as the answer to all of our problems, an escape from the harsh realities of our lives. Don DeLillo's *White Noise* depicts consumerism for the Gladney family as a way of life. It is something they are always taking part in, even if it is unconsciously. Consumerism is incorporated in with virtually every activity the family takes part in, whether it be eating out, spending a day together at the shopping mall, or making a quick stop at the supermarket.

The characters of *White Noise* interact and understand the world through postmodern consumerism, Gladney and others consume images and signs as form of entertainment, perceive reality through Media. (Davis .p12) Although the people in Blacksmith, or at least Jack Gladney, seem to realize that they are surrounded by the imminent death brought upon them by the products they buy, causing suffering both physically and mentally, they try to ignore this fact and turn to the illusive comfort that consumerism provides.

The Gladney's as consumers believe that consumers products can help them in their helpless situation. The drug Dylar is a clear example of this point. Dylar represent the ultimate from of consumer product as it is believed to eliminate the fear of death itself. Although it proves ineffective with Babette, Jack wants to take this drug to get rid of his fear of anxiety. Dylar is

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similar to any other consumer product in the way that it make an illusive promise to fulfill consumer's wants. Even though the promise is illusive and impossible, the Gladney's as desperate consumers are willing to take it as a last refuge they can cling to in the postmodern world where threats are ubiquitous. In the same way, Jack believes that if he thinks Dylar will help him, it will help him no matter how strong or weak Dylar is. Jack tells Denise, his daughter, that:

" the power of suggestion could be more important than side effects. (White noise ,p 251)

Although Denise thinks this sounds stupid, Jack says:

" I am eager to be humored, to be fooled... this is what happens to desperate people'. (White noise, p 251)

Consumer products continuously occupy the minds of the characters in the novel: "Dacron, Orion, Lycra Spandex" (white noise, p 52). "Kraylon, Rust- oleum, Red Devil" (white noise ,p 159). " Tegrin, Denorex, Selsun Blue" (white noise, p 289). Brand names appear in the course of their daily lives out of nothing, with no reason or function. Jean Baudrillard describes the frequency of advertisement in our lives as follows: " four pages of poetic prose and the company trademark placed shame- facedly (!) at the foot of a page". Advertising and trademarks lead to confusion in everyday life. Advertising confuses and lulls people in everyday life. (Inci, p 14)

This conversation indicates that the people are so hopeless that they are eager to be fooled by the cycle of consumerism. They are ready to believe anything and indulge themselves in consumerist ecstasy. (Vungthong)

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2. The Supermarket Temple and False Needs

The supermarket itself is a hotspot for consumerism, as it is a place full of advertisement and marketing, which influences the characters to buy more than what they need. The supermarket takes on an important function within Blacksmith as a site of consolidated abundance. That is, the regularity with which the Gladney family joins in among the crowd of customers at the local supermarket informs their larger sense of bourgeois regularity and uniformitarian expectations that it entails. Jack articulates his feeling of reaffirmation that he derives from the supermarket by narrating (Gray) :

" It seemed to me that Babette and I, in the mass and variety of our purchases, in the sheer plenitude those crowded bags suggested, 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 we felt, the sense of well- being, the security and contentment these products brought to some snug home in our souls – it seemed we had achieved a fullness of being that is not. (White noise, p 51)

White Noise depicts large stores, with the rapid growth of cannel and flamboyant garments, give characters a lot of quasi beautiful looks and feeling engineered for certain purposes. Baudrillard states that " the human of the age of affluence are surrounded not too much by other human beings, as they were in all pervious ages, but by objects". Circle of objects represented in the novel are organized as collections or lists of objects intermingled with identity of the objects listed in the stores. This demonstrated by Murry where:

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" Everything is concealed in symbolism, hidden by veils of mystery and layers of cultural materials... " (Z.S.Ismailinejad,p 11)

Throughout the novel, Gladney is constantly drawn to the supermarket due to his love for shopping. (Pranidhi) The supermarket is, according to Murry, both a spiritual crucible and a node in the media network; it is place that:

" recharges us spiritually, it prepares us spiritually, it prepares us, it's a gateway or pathway. Look how bright. It's full of psychic data...Energy waves, incident radiation. All the letters and numbers are here, all the colors of the spectrum, all the voices and sounds... it is just a question of deciphering, rearranging, peeling off the layers of unspeakability. Not that we would want tom not that any useful purpose would be served. This is not Tibet. Even Tibet is not Tibet anymore... Tibetans try to see death for what it is. It is the end of attachment to things. The simple truth is hard to fathom. But once we stop denying death, we can proceed calmly to die...we can do so with clear vision, without awe or terror. We don't have to cling to life artificially, or to death for that matter. We simply walk through the sliding doors. Waves and radiation...the place is sealed off, self- contained... here we don't die, we shop. But the difference is less marked than you think". (White noise ,p 38-39)

Jack feels as if shopping restores his identity ,his uniqueness , but his identity in the mall is generic and temporary , shared by thousands of other consumers . A Paul C. Cantor puts , he "shops[s] around for [his] values and identities ". Jack locates the elements of his identity from outside , from the products he buys to put on around himself :

"I filled myself out , found new aspects of myself , located a person I'd forgotten existed ".(wwhite noise, p84) .

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Shopping in fact only alienates him further from himself . His self is felt as an empty vessel that has to be filled out . He learns something new about himself by buying new products . The distance between Jack and the "person " he finally defines as himself will remain . As Zimmerman points out , it is only the " illusion of distinction " he gains instead of a true self .
(Gray)

DeLillo's focus on the overriding presence of shopping spaces illustrates that the mantra of consumerism, in late twentieth century America, had sunk so deeply into the collective social consciousness that it operated at unconscious level as well. (Hamdi,p 94)

Postmodern consumption is not predicated upon satisfying material needs, the Gladney's desire "something bigger, grander, more sweeping" (White Noise, p 64). Nothing this tension in postmodern consumption, Baudrillard explain that, "... consumption must henceforward either keep surprising itself or keep repeating itself merely in order to remain what is- namely, a reason for living" (Davis). Richard Heggart believes that media strategies constantly legitimize people's false need to consume more. And it is unreal needs, this is obvious when Jack explains his reason for buying:

" I shopped for its own sake, looking and touching, inspecting merchandise I had no intension 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."(White Noise, p 37-38)

Heggart in *the Uses of Literacy* (1998) further argues that commodities cannot fulfill people's needs because they lack authenticity. this belief argue that people are manipulated to buy

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products without even actually having the chance to gain a sense of fulfillment through those products (Vungthong ,p2 - 3). It is observed that the Gladney family are not able to fully satisfied their needs.(S.Z.Ismail, p 15)

3. Simulation and the Loss of the Real

" All Media exist to invest our lives with artificial perceptions and arbitrary values"

Marshall McLucan

Media nowadays is not only useful for simply providing information and entertainment for people but also a powerful tool of consumerism shaping and conditioning the human mind and behavior. The media which can be accessed by a large number of viewers significantly influences people in many ways (Vungthong, p 17) .

Don DeLillo manipulates the term Media to analyze consumption in the consumer society of White Noise. In the Media everything falls within the framework of the consumption pattern. Characters of the novel are dealing with Media and its signs, but the meaning and message they receive from the Media is not the meaning and messages of those signs. Here , the meaning dies, and they become a consumer of signs they enjoy. Media do nothing but manipulating the audience, and DeLillo see them as a force on the part of capitalist authority.(S.Z.Ismail, p 13-15)

In *White Noise*, the chair of the department of pop cultural studies, Alfonse Stompanato, claims that- for most people there in Blacksmith there are two places in the world: where they live and their Tv set. If a thing happens on television, we have every right to find it fascinating, whatever it is. In other words, every experience that a person has in *White Noise* beyond that

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which occurs in his or her physically tangible world, is filtered by media. The *White Noise* postmodern world is filled with individuals who are constituted by the consumer ideology that is ever-present in the image of media. (Eid12).

White Noise characters are deeply and constantly influenced by the media in their daily lives. DeLillo's novel shows that television, being the most popular communication medium in north America, has turned life into two categories, the ordinary and the televised:

"...television becomes the dominant technology that changes our relation to natural world. We experience in its terms, begin to live in reference to it, and ratify experiences in terms of its on screen simulation." (Horizonte 233).

Tv seems to have succeeded in pervading their lives, and shaping their behavior and even their expectations of others and of themselves. The novel reflects the role that Tv has been playing in postmodern American consumer society by providing one with a representation of the preoccupation of the characters with modeling their lives in accordance with Tv images. (Eid 4) The role of Tv is there for not only to manipulate but also socialize people and create out of them replicants of replicants in which there is no origin and room for any ideas of radical changes (Eid16) .

Since the characters are exposed to televised accidents and disasters, it leads the Gladney's for instance to a life deprived of sharing other people's sorrow:

" That night, a Friday, we gathered in front of the set... there were floods, earthquakes, mud slides, erupting volcanoes. We'd never before so attentive to our duty, our Friday assembly... watching

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hours slide into the ocean, whole villages crackle and ignite in a mass of advancing lava. Every disaster made us wish for more, for something bigger, grander, more sweeping". (White noise, p 64)

The effect of television, mainly the media, on people's perception of disasters, accidents, and other fatal incidents changes their perception of others. Consequently, they stop empathizing and become alienated from each other. (Inci P,22)

In "the implosion of meaning in the media" Baudrillard describes how the abundance of information leads to the disappearance of the information's significance. When people face too much information, the effect that it has on them decrease. In the same way, the Gladney family when faced with bombardment of information cannot accurately judge the meaning or importance of what they are hearing. As a result, the characters cannot differentiate between valuable information. In *White Noise*, information closes its meaning to the extent that the power of suggestion becomes even more powerful than human own direct experience. Accordingly, the Gladney rely more and more on the media as the only form of reality and simultaneously believe media information even more than their own perception (Vungthong ,p20).

In *White Noise*, the Gladney refer to what is seen on Tv or said on the radio to interpret the daily events. Heinrich refuses to trust his senses in observing the weather and chooses to believe the radio instead. He believes that all what is broadcast on the radio is true. Heinrich says:

" it's going to rain tonight."

" it's raining now", "I said."

"the radio said tonight. " (white noise, p22)

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Here, Heinrich hypothetically surrounds to the media message. Which he believes to be truer than the fact that is actually raining at the moment. This is what consumer society is about. (Ghashmari ,p177-178)

The simulacrum, which becomes the dominant feature of consumer society, expands to include people's feelings of illnesses. People have come to believe simulacra more than their direct personal perceptions even about the symptoms of illnesses. Steffie and Denise suffer from *déjà vu* after the "Airbone Toxic Event", and Babette suggests that the solution of this is to keep the radio turned off:

" So the girls can't hear. They haven't got beyond *déjà vu*. I want to keep it that way."

"What if the symptoms are real?"

"How could they be real?"

"Why couldn't they be real?"

"They get them only when they are broadcast", She whispered.
(White noise, p133)

We may refer here to Baudrillard's three orders of simulacrum this event is an example of the third- order simulacrum in which the image precedes the origin or effaces it. So we have seen that the symptoms of disease can be simulated, and since they are simulated, they too belong to the realm of Hyperreality; therefore, they cannot be falsified. (Ghashmari, 178_180)

One of the most aspects of consumer society is the failure of significance. In *White Noise*, and in the episode of *déjà vu*, DeLillo draws a very significant image of the floating signs and the

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endless chains of signifiers. We know that it is normal that people have *déjà vu*, about things in their daily lives, but DeLillo gives an intelligent example . this happens when Jack and his wife Babette talk about the *déjà vu* their kids have, at that moment Babette notes that:

" This happened before," She said finally.

" What happened before?"

"Eating yogurt, sitting here, talking about *déjà vu*". (white noise, p133)

In *White Noise*, Jack and his friend Murry, drive to see a famous barn, described as the "most photographed barn in America". They couldn't experience the real existence of the barn, as if the real barn has disappeared and is replaced by signs of it(Ghashmari, p 180). Murry tells Jack:

" No one sees the bar", he claims.

"Once you've seen the signs about the barn, it becomes impossible to see the barn."

"We are not here to capture an image, we're here to maintain one. Every photograph reinforces the aura..."

" Being here is an kind of spiritual surrender. We see only what the others see...A religious experience in away, like all tourism."

" What was the barn like before it was photographed? ... What did it look like, how was it different from the other barns, how was it similar to other barns? We can't answer these questions because we've read the signs..."

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Murry's words here echo Jean Baudrillard's analysis of the simulacrum – the notion that, in the age of hyperreal, the image precedes the real. As Claire Colebrook observes, the barn in the novel is a simulacrum, in Baudrillard's terms:

"Precisely because it has no origin. You can only photograph the most photographed barn in America after it has been photographed; the process of imagining and simulation precedes the produces what the barn is...From a Baudrillardian point of view this is lamentable. We have lost all relation with actual barns- their place in farm life and rural culture- and fallen into a world where we value something only to the extent to which it has been copied".
(Allen & Handley, p366)

DeLillo, in his description of the barn, focuses on images, signs, cameras, photographs, and photographers more than the real barn itself, and he also describes how people come to this place not intending to experience the real but rather to capture images. In a reminiscent nostalgic moment to the loss of reality, Murry says:

"... seen the whole people snapping the pictures we can't get outside the aura. Were here, we're now". (white noise, p 13)

Murry's final words can be interpreted as that the main impact of the era of consumerism on everyday life is that the loss of the real.

4. the *False Sense of Freedom in White Noise*

Consumption is a game in which the participant is the consumer, above all, they are collectors of new sensations; they gather only secondary items as derivative of sensations . purchasing in accordance with the trends and moods turns the consumers into this loop of

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restriction of free will and the need to adopt to the lifestyle or walk of life. The choice are made on the basis of picking the items that meet the actual situation or even a certain occasion (Szocik et al ,p 2108) . Consumer society is characterized by total organization of daily life , where the only freedom people are entitled to is the illusory freedom of consumer choice- i.e., the freedom to prefer one consumer product to another. Don DeLillo's *White Noise*, at mocking and applauding about consumer culture, captures well Bauman's sense of ambivalence towards the freedom offered by consumption, and the following description, which elucidates all of the juicy significance of shopping for consumers in a consumer society:

" I found the others and we walked across two parking lots to the main structure in the mind village mall[...] puzzled but excited by my desire to buy. When I could not decide between two shirts, they encouraged me to buy both. When I said I was hungry, they fed me pretzels, beer and souvlaki".

Leisure is duty, measured time is not free, but attached to its distinction as an abstracted production time. Work is opposed to leisure, but leisure is not free. Non-working time is not a time for calmness, escape from the fatigue of working life, or rest, but acquisition time. What we call leisure is measured time, a time that does not exist in primitive societies; a holiday or vacation time. Accordingly, in *White Noise* Tv- watching is supposed to be an activity that takes place during free time at home. However, the family is still not free at home, the same capitalist relations of production that determine their lives outside home, continue to following them during their" free" time (Eid 13). Consumerism plays a role in structuring a free time in accordance with the interest of those who own it as an institution. It, moreover, creates uncritical obedience to the existing powers according to Horkheimer and Adorno freedom in consumer

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society is an "illusion"; even the individual her/himself is an illusion, and completely coopted in the unquestionable status.

For DeLillo, there are only a few objects available for sale alone, and the characters are faced with a body of objects that give them meaning for life. Characters do not refer to the object for its particular benefit but as a set of objects with their general implications. For instance, Jack describes the supermarket as "if there is a transitional state between death and rebirth, a period in which the soul restores to itself some of the divinity lost at birth" (S.Z. Ismail, p11) the Gladney becomes slaves of objects around them and live with a false sense of freedom.

Conclusion

In conclusion, through the close reading of DeLillo's novel *White Noise*, it can be seen that consumerism is incredibly powerful in the novel and completely takes over the lives of its characters. While taking inspiration from real life and the expansion of consumerism, DeLillo showcases a very scary yet possible future for humanity. The consumerism becomes such a large part of the characters mindset that is able to control their wants and needs as well as their own moods and self- esteem.

The discussed elements in chapter one are intercalated. They pour in the aim of interpreting DeLillo's work after acknowledging all the surrounding factors that helped shaping the literary work being able to understand postmodernism and consumerism will help understanding the novel. Jean Baudrillard consumer society and its effects shaped the novel of *white noise*. Consumerism existed in many American writings and through analyzing *white noise*. It is possible at least to understand one of the reasons that motivate American writers to engage consumerism in their writings.

The next chapter will examine consumerism in *white noise* and provide a particular application of consumer society effects on the characters of the novel.

The significance of this novel, and its commentary on social consumerism allows eyes to be opened on a topic that is otherwise not given much attention. While consumerism is discussed in the media, it is brushed off, even though there are many examples both real world and literary, that show the harmful and negative effects that over- consumption can have. Research into consumerism, along with the psychology of it can always be expanded, giving us explanations to the reasons for the uncontrollable compulsion to consumerism and .how it affect us in the long term

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