



## Critiquing Noise With Reference To Acoustics in Don Delillo's White Noise

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### ABSTRACT:

Sound plays a prominent role in the description of environmental conditions in American literature. In the postmodern era, American society has undergone technological development. The development contributes technology threats to humans. The paper aims to bring the impact of technical barriers in the form of air pollution, water pollution, consumerism, and toxic events in the novels. The beneficence of sonic events has been dismissed largely in recent research complications. The paper analyses the work of DeLillo's White Noise. It epitomizes the theme of sound changes into noise and explores inconvenience among the characters.

**KEYWORDS:** Noise, Sound, Technology, Pollution

Ecocriticism begins in 1970 and starts as a scholastic discipline in 1990. The word Ecocriticism is a semi neologism and it is defined as the connection between writing and the environment. The initial term in ecocriticism is an ecology that engages with the relationship between the environment and living organisms. The most broadly known ecocritics are Lawrence Buell, Cheryl Glotfelty, Simon C. Estok, Harold Fromm, William Howarth, William Rueckert, Suellan Campbell, Michael P. Branch, and Glen A. Love. The significant critics inquire and underline nature by perusing the writing.

Literature and environment pay attention to the analysis of the relationship between nature and society. A number of improvements in literary works during the nineteenth century concerned environmental issues. In contemporary fiction, the environment is portrayed through the association of numerous sounds in the form of noise. Noise pollution in the contemporary world is considered a serious issue. The reason behind the issue is an abuse of natural resources and extreme use of technology. The researchers and naturalists focus on the noise as a superwicked problem that is

created by man over non-human living and non-living substances.

The term soundscape enumerates the concept of noise environment in soundscape studies which are related to ecocriticism. Murray Schafer has popularized the term soundscape in the ecocriticism interdisciplinary field. It deals with the study of sounds and the environment in order to expose noise in urban landscapes. The soundscape study is normalized by the publication of the book called *The Turning of the World* (1977). The book is considered as the scripture for soundscape contemplation. It presents the thought of genuine sound conditions in the contemporary world.

In America and British, the heartfelt authors are eager regarding the matter of noise pollution. Donald Richard DeLillo (November 20, 1938) is a writer and dramatist conceived in New York. He experienced childhood in a little common Roman Catholic Family and communicates in Italian and English conversely. His education is totally American and impacted by sports, cards, and billiards in adolescence. His inspirational writers are James Joyce, William Faulkner O'Connor, and Ernest Hemingway. His novels have covered the topics of atomic conflicts, sports, intricacies of language, the Cold War, and global terror.

*White Noise* is an eighth novel published in the year 1985. It is one of the best illustrations of a postmodern novel. He chooses to name the novel *Panasonic*. In basic terms, *Panasonic* implies noise. The novel is set up with different sounds like radio, television, alarms, and bullhorns. It examines the topics such as commercialization, media, scholarly people, and human-made disasters. The postmodern culture in the novel portrays the soundscape of the environment that hints at the advancement of technology and its noise. DeLillo's *White Noise* is an artistic reference to the fictional soundscape. He shows the place as a polluted landscape occupied with anthropony. The characters in the novel are immersed in the postmodern innovative machines. Jack Gladney, the narrator of the story, and his family members live in a small town called



Blacksmith. Jack experiences the place as a sonic hell. Various machine sounds have surrounded the city.

A blacksmith is a place of a quiet street with an expressway in the backyard. The scene opens with Jack's realization of the city. Jack Gladney is a college professor who works in The College-On-The Hill. He thinks people who live in the exposed area suffer from man-made disasters and the impact of nature. The opening scene witnesses the character's realization of the urban town. Jack walked down from the college to the hill and into the town. He observes the place set up with woods everywhere but hears only the traffic noise beyond the city. Jack remembers the place once occupied with ancient maples and woods that produced nature sounds.

In the past life of the narrator arises the sense of social distinction between natural soundscape and polluted soundscape. He observes that the place is fully occupied with natural resources but the sound of machines in the background overlaps the natural sounds of wind and birds. DeLillo's representation of Blacksmith town establishes the postmodern city.

America is popular with urban soundscapes. DeLillo uses the characters repeatedly to express the important idea of the novel about the place. Murray Siskind, the colleague of Jack realizes the same acoustic variation when he and Jack visit the barn in America. DeLillo asserts the Blacksmith is famous through the barn. The barn is occupied with meadows and orchards. Murray observes the place and people. The people in the barn come to take pictures rather than enjoy the beauty of the aura.

The traditional picture of the place states the advancement of progress in postmodern life. Murray feels the aura is similar to Jack's realization of acoustic difference in the postmodern landscape. The natural soundscape of the barn replaces by the noise of the shutter release button in the camera. Murray's feedback on the acoustic environment renders the difference between the acoustic natural space and polluted space. DeLillo attempts to encounter the remarkable difference between nature sounds and technology noise.

The characters are disturbed continuously through the sounds of the gas meter, thermostat, washing machine, clothes dryer, refrigerator, the emerging voice from television, and radio in the house. DeLillo describes the role of background noise in Jack's house as a vague and sonic monster. The chirping noise of the radiator and compactor noise in the kitchen reminds the readers that the

machines become an indispensable part of the characters' life.

Jack and his family perceive the background noise when silence fills the house. The idea of a domestic soundscape exposes the noise while Jack and his family sit for dinner together. The presence of a smoke alarm in the background noise of the house makes the characters aware of the dense acoustic soundscape in the Blacksmith. DeLillo explores the domestic background noise as beyond the perception of the postmodern city.

The presence of consumerism noise is a form of noise pollution in postmodern culture. The consumerism noise in the novel makes the street of Blacksmith an extremely loud city. The city is built with local supermarkets everywhere. Jack's family visits the department stores frequently. The stores occupy the space with the sounds of consumer messages, coffee grinders, chiming bells, and humming maintenance systems. DeLillo intimates a form of consumerism noise always present within the postmodern soundscape.

Jack's family enters the supermarket to enjoy the outdoors. In the supermarket, Jack experiences that his ears are disturbed by an extreme noise. The place fills with enormous electrical appliances noise. The new quality of aural experience highlights the environment is covered in noise. The concept of commodification is the main feature in the portrayal of a consumer society. The advertisement jingles and slogans become an integral part of the lives of the characters. The noise of slogans is appearing in the mind of the characters affects them mentally as well as physically. DeLillo uses the supermarket as a symbol to depict the city immersed in the sea of sound.

Traffic noise is a disturbing sound and a symbol of modern life in Blacksmith town. Jack informs that the backyard of the house is set up with deep ravines. Jack's family is disturbed by the horn sound at night. It is far away from the expressway. DeLillo describes the noise of traffic as a "murmur around the sleep" (White Noise, 4). In the streets of Blacksmith, the traffic and industrial noise is mostly heard from a distance. DeLillo asserts the novel is a straightforward source to qualify the polluted environment. The background noise changes to sound imperialism in the midsection of the novel. The consequences of changes bring chaos and fear to the characters.

The traffic noise far from the expressway becomes close to Jack's house when the airborne



toxic event takes place. It is an accident due to the train crash. After the event, Jack becomes aware of the sound environment. The toxic spill urges Jack's family to evacuate to a safer place. The sirens and the loudspeaker are used to announce the critical situation of the disaster. Jack's family hears the air raid sirens as a noise of terrorism. It hears close to their house of Jack. Jack realizes the siren sound is brute aggression that the walls of the house fly away. The characters' perception of sirens close to the house is described as: "they made a noise like some territorial squawk out of the Mesozoic A parrotcarnivore with a DC-9 wingspan. What a raucousness of brute aggression filled the house. making it seem as if the walls would fly apart. So close to us, so surely upon us. Amazing to think this sonic monster lay hidden nearby for years" (*White Noise* 118).

In conclusion, *White Noise* remains one of DeLillo's significant novels in portraying the acoustic environment of the world. The supermarket, domestic environment, and streets are a perfect polluted landscape that reflects the consequences of noise pollution in the setting of the novel. The narration illustrates the background noise turns into sound imperialism through the collecting occasion with the environment. Though the human-made technological appliances bring less harm, the characters realize the sound transition at the beginning of the novel. The novel presents the figures and pictures of the urban environment from the beginning of the novel and insists to think about the forthcoming disaster in prior.

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