

Three Separations in Cultural Post-modernism: A Brief Analysis of Don DeLillo's *White Noise*

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Abstract: This study examines Don DeLillo's *White Noise* through three critical ruptures in contemporary existence, respectively the de-sanctification of body from mind, the alienation between human consciousness and science, and the divergence of scientific truth from science itself. While previous scholarship has focused on postmodern popular culture and its intersection with everyday life through mediascape and technology, the individual transformations beneath these cultural manifestations remain unexplored. This analysis reveals how these separations illuminate the imperceptible yet profound changes in human existence, offering a way to recognize technological mediation without falling prey to its illusions.

Keywords: Post-modernism, *White Noise*, Corporeal Experience, Technological Mediation, Scientific Authority.

1. Introduction

Don DeLillo's protagonist Jack Gladney in *White Noise* "confronts a new order in which life is increasingly lived in a world of simulacra, where images and electronic representations replace direct experience" (Wilcox 346). Their connection with the real world is gradually diminished and even on the edge of disappearing as the digitalized and commodified bodies are encompassed into a comprehensible data-base tally. These undetectably drastic changes can be extended from "the turbulent environment of a hyperbolically postmodern America" (Wiese 3) to all corners of the world.

When analyzing Don DeLillo's iconic *White Noise*, many critics primarily discuss the postmodern popular culture like the mediascape and technology that intersects with the register of the everyday. As David Foster Wallace points out "We are dependent on image-technology; and the better the tech, the harder we're hooked" (36-53). In a similar vein, Cornel Bonca also notices that "*White Noise* coincided with the explosion of interest, first in academia and soon after in the popular press, with 'the postmodern' as an all-purpose American cultural signifier" (58). Besides, Bonca continues "DeLillo's fascination with mass media and the ways it has reconfigured contemporary notions of what constitutes reality and therefore plays havoc with our notions of representation" (Bonca 59). Laura Barrett also contends that "the distance between expression and experience" (97). Both of them fully and insightfully explored the disconnection between signifier and signified as the simulacrum is used as the most salient metaphor in the novel in which simulations exploit real catastrophes. Even DeLillo admits he is "stirred by the power of the image" as "technology is lust removed from nature" (285).

Though these pioneering opinions shed some light on a contemporary crisis in a popularly grand context but fail to focus on the individual changes behind the surface. As Susana S. Martins further adds "high tech also informs everyday life in America in much more mundane ways" (87). These daily excessive interactions with technologies and mass media require us to re-examine and negotiate our sense of animality, our position in relation to others and immediate things in everyday life, and our vision of the future. Richard Devetak then elaborates on how daily events have been "a mediated

experience, rather than a straight or direct experience with self-evident meaning" (796). As Harack observes, *White Noise* "reflects [DeLillo's] interest in going beneath the surface of American life and meditating more deeply on the nature of individual and cultural trauma" (304). All of them notice the individual's existential dilemma is more than a superficial exploration in the cultural context. Therefore, the purpose of my paper is to elucidate the three separations with human beings as an object of discussion in the hope that they can be awakened from the illusion of misinformation, alert about the dramatic but imperceptible changes without increasing the peril.

The first part begins with the de-sanctification of blood and flesh with the mind gaining the upper hand as the experience of dying is utterly mediated by technology and eclipsed by a world of symbols. The body begins to grow blunt and hollow without direct involvement in reality. With technology advancing exponentially, the outer form is transparently analyzed and compiled into an outstretched databank as an auxiliary device to serve the overbearing mind. Under this circumstance, their contradictions are unable to be reconciled, which is the first separation. The second part of this essay delineates the second separation between the human mind and science. Science rests first of all on reason which is elevated as the unique characteristic to distinguish men from savage animals. People are on the verge of losing their self-agency since the individuals are fervent and pious believers of the science religion which thoroughly upsets the equilibrium of body and mind. In the meantime, obsession with science brings about collective servility which results in class division. Anyone who is accessible to the colossal data tally can be defined as the privileged class. The doctor is a most noticeable case guaranteed with a sense of entitlement and empowerment to engage with and analyze graphic data which are sanctified as the secret code of life and death in disease-roaming times. The original patient-oriented system is overthrown by doctor's noble decrees. Ironically, doctors are still appended to science in that their storage of knowledge and mode of questioning and answering are wholly predetermined. The final and third part focuses on how scientific truth is split from science which has encroached on the domain of the mind. Science is a naturally inevitable expression of human life and will to power which is a product

of a rational and creative mind. Nevertheless, scientific truth is far from a feasible and practicable method to overcome human limitations. Mr. Gray, the previous project manager of developing Dylar, overhypes the scientific truth that the unsupervised drug can curb the excessive fear of death and uses his office to enchant more volunteers' submission as profit-seeking intension disorients the technical giants and scientists. Meanwhile, universally scientific truth has its physical presence in every family to propagate its contagious ideas around the clock. TV and radio are the immaculate vehicle, barely noticeable but indispensable. Irrelevant to neutrality and disinterestedness, the scientific truth is constructed as a form of manipulation in the guise of authentically scientific wisdom and stirs up a cult pseudoscience. Their stray estrangement induces the third separation in "a society built around an economy of artificial value" (Norton 25).

2. Separation between Body and Mind

Holiness in the physical bodies is permeated in the Scripture as in John 6:53–57, Jesus says, "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them". The body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit is superseded by the mind after the Renaissance when people ask for a return to human's passion, which penetrates into the subconsciousness. As the Enlightenment proceeded, reason was venerated as the measure of all. Science since then as the covertly veiled ideology has dictated its leadership in its governing domain, continuously expanding its territory. Bodies are degraded as an alterity, or the otherness of the mind, and then abdicate in a new context while "the mind runs on like a devouring machine, the only thing awake in the universe" (DeLillo 224). "[A] relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" (Said 5) continually advances and deepens. Slowly hollowed out and digitized, the once-holy body is affiliated with the overbearing mind.

Apart from the physically degrading senses in the media-saturated society, the body's divinity is deconstructed in the crowd watching, which blatantly divulges its vanishing mysteries. As Wilcox insightfully argues, "The body becomes simulacrum, and death loses its personal and existential resonances" (352). This is exemplified in the situation when Jack and Heinrich watch the livestream newsfilm of policemen digging the dead body buried in an unknown household's backyard in Bakersville. Jack and Heinrich fail to empathize with the casualties but wallow in their curiosity and captivation to desecrate the body. The dispatched reporter assertively anticipates the dozens of entombed bodies, sounding like "a lover's promise" (DeLillo 222). People spontaneously assemble in front of the rectangular screen to aboveboard pry into the decaying and decomposing bodies amid filthy mounds of dirt. A communal curiosity to the extent of blasphemy ruins the primitively mystical body. "Thus media and technology transform death into a sign spectacle" (Wilcox 353). To be more precise, unearthing the muddily corrupted bodies by the means of live broadcast and correspondingly designated commentary immensely dismantles the sanctity mysteriously inherent in the body, which is publicized as live entertainment or an eye-catching hype for hot traffic. Not as expected, no more bodies have been discovered as the newest broadcast confirmed after seventy-two hours. "A sadness and emptiness", and "a dejection and a sorry gloom" (DeLillo 222) overwhelm Jack

and Heinrich since their expectations for violence and trepidation are in vain to activate their necrobiotic bodies. This is the first step of bodily surrender antecedent to the bodily hollowness and bodily digitalization.

The body has a low presence in modern culture which is "the widening of the mind". This is a holistic triumph of the mind when the exact name of the human body is an unfamiliar topic among family conversions teeming with misinformation as they mistake 'lens' as 'camera'. "How can people live their whole lives without knowing the names of their own parts of the body" (158)? With corporal names on the edge of being forgotten, "a number of long hollows" (26) deriving from the shortage of booming vitality encroach on the residue of the functional part of the body. It falls into its dormancy with the mind's consecutively overactive embezzlement from both inside and outside to lead to its dominance as Murray names "physical awkwardness a sign of an intelligence developing almost too rapidly" (228). The intense imbalance induces the individual obsession with something drifting and blurry like the overwhelming fear of death to distort or veto the reality. Apparently, the mind receives the information signals before the passive body has cerebrally infectious conditions. Jack is frequented by his fear of death which completely outbreaks after the airborne toxic event whereas he has never sensed any physiological discomfort like "skin irritation and sweaty palms" (110) in the initial stage, "nausea, vomiting, shortness of breath" in the escalating stage, and "heart palpitations and a sense of déjà vu" (116) in the ultimate stage, which are transmitted as the updated symptoms of chemical leak. Conversely, Jack's daughters and wife in quick procession catch the sequential symptoms as soon as the radio revises the latest ones. The high-strung mind receives the external signals before the insensible body. In other words, their unnatural and counterintuitive reactions are driven by the power of psychological suggestion. Among them, Denise shows an outdated symptom of vomiting which has already been amended as a sense of psychic disorientation before she is temporarily absent from the radio. As Devetak adds, in *White Noise*, experience is overshadowed by shifting theories about the after-effects of the ATE, creating confusion in the minds and bodies" (804). She is lagging behind the competitively simulated show to gain the newest symptom. Jack "feel[s] sad for people and the queer part we play in our own disasters" (DeLillo 126). Partially sober as Jack is, he is firmly attached to the disoriented community as a disguiser with outward composure. The respectable scholar is no exception in Blacksmith because he has earlier endeavored to immerse himself in Hitler studies to distract his wandering mind which predominates his natural reactions and bodily behaviors. Although Jack does not have any physical uneasiness, he has "felt hollow inside" (194) in the preceding decades when the haunting fear of death permeates the air. His mind rambles in the privy labyrinth of fear and torment all day long. "Only a mind or a self, alone in a vast space" (198) navigates a robotic torso.

Accordingly, people naturally undergo the transition from "the sum of our chemical impulses" (200) to "the total sum of our data" (140), from an aggregation of breathing organs to a synthetic substitute for technology. A barrage of tests takes in data from the human body, hereupon compiled in the brain-like computer. At the time Jack feels "a star-shaped hole" in which death is incubating, its ambiguity is tough to pin down; he is too physically paralyzed to perceive its burgeoning hole which can be only scanned clearly by the technically testing

devices. Jack consequently endures double strikes from the “bracketed numbers with pulsing stars” and his ossified body’s imperceptible hole which expands itself through distraught dreaming and embellished imagination. In this sense, the computerized star is imprinted by technology nimble enough to reveal his precarious life in the form of varying numbers to burn a hole in the holy body. Body and data are integrated as one, affiliated to the omniscient brain. Ultimately, people are more “the total sum of our data” than “the sum of our chemical impulses” (200). In other words, the human body can be visualized as an aggregation of computer data, which discloses the individual life condition. The unknown and elusive become visible and calculable, in turn facilitating people guided by instrumental reason to earn more life credit. The holy secret of the body is uncovered to every patient who since then has deified science which is able to process a corpus of medical data as the new God to give them a second life. However, the numbers are inspiring and downcast at the same time.

3. Separation between Mind and Science

After the mind seizes power, the body is subject to its arbitrary governance in which the mind catalyzes its concrete symbol, the all-encompassing data in a scientific territory. However, the fiercely uncontrollable development detaches the creature from the creator, undergoing the *Frankenstein* duplicate. To be clearer, science as the external derivative of the mind has become a maturely evolving entity to continuously influence the mind itself, straying from the designer’s original intention. Science goes viral, elevated to a new position as a far-reaching but gifted myth; it creates the unique kingdom of data and re-distributes the privileged class; it devours the people lacking autonomous thinking in full swing. In its rule, everything can be quantified, calculated, or sold as a commodity on the shelf with technological interference. Science created by the rational brain re-emerges as a new religion for the disoriented and credulous to worship and pay homage to.

Heinrich, the oldest son of Jack, who is delineated as a staunch champion of science tends to retort to the contradicting ideas in light of a “little fistful of data” (116). The 14-year-old youngster radiates rays of confidence when he talks about the scientific stuff as a decisive commander. He is captivated by the elaborate and florid propaganda of science. This also explains why Jack who gets accustomed to accumulating spiritual energies of life extension by dint of watching children sleep is unwilling to approach sleeping Heinrich whose mind is bewitched by the alluring science. Jack admits “he was not, in any case, a child whose lustrous slumber brought my peace” (147). To put it in another way, the insomniac wants to be near the authenticity innate in vigorous and youthful existence instead of the addictive mind. “It is the closest [he] can come to God” to relieve and refresh the exhausted soul. From the above analysis, the dominant science initially secondary to the mind also influences physicality, further promoting the first separation between the body and mind. As adolescents brought up in a science-oriented society grow intoxicated with substantial data to analyze or refute, adults are inclined to docilely succumb to the despotic power of science and technology. The disciplined ones of all ages become unconditionally attached to science or anything under the guise of science and hence their

instinctive ability to think autonomously is neutralized by an overhyping ideology. The human mind makes the first concessions. The rationality of irreplaceable science is infinitely magnified, especially its determinate guidance in reforming medical science in cancerous times. Repressing the fear of death, preventing diseases in advance, or finding a workable way to live longer is the prior motive to ceaselessly develop science or the tricky maneuver to manipulate the innocent. To be clearer, the frequent occurrence of panic attacks since the mind gets tangled by the indelible image of death boosts the advance of science whose promising prospect illudes the public to servilely rely on. Their own meaningless insistence on unrealistic expectations impedes the reunification of mind and body and then engulfs the residue of individual sanity.

Deprived of the right to narrate their real medical condition, hopeless patients descend to obsequious and cringing servants driven by their fear of death in exchange for doctors’ nodding. The patient’s vulnerability in the degenerative society greatly crystallizes in the instance of Jack and Babette. Though Jack is an academically pioneering figure, his prerogative and authority fade away in his consultation with doctors and medical consultants since he is deeply apprehensive that the authoritative doctor would impose the death sentence on him, tak[ing] [his] dying for granted” (76). Apart from that, when Wilder cries rhythmically for consecutive 7 hours, Babette takes him to see a doctor whose attitude is too irritable and restless to make a suggestion or diagnosis. The couple should make a simulated exercise to anticipate a series of questions the doctor might ask and meticulously go through their seemingly immaculate answers over and over again before meeting the doctor. From their perspective, trying not to agitate or disobey the man whose words are inflamed with the power to decide one man’s lifeline avoids the head-on confrontation with death.

Jack and Babette epitomize the menial spirit of almost all other wandering souls in this doctor-dominated community, “like a child facing the school principal over a series of unexcused absences” (261). “The miracle vitamins, the cures for cancer, the remedies for obesity” (326) are irresistible publicity gimmicks for “adults and children, baggy-pantsed, short-legged, waddling” (14). The raging obsession and servility in the diseased community breed the privileged class who savors a notch above the others and nourishes from inquietude and helplessness. Doctors are symbiotic with their patients; the former’s leading position is secured by the latter’s servility. Publicizing the idea of “all permanent patients” (260) to the gullible and thoughtless ones consolidates the prioritized position of doctors who unconditionally depend on the persistent provision chain. Patients’ surplus against the backdrop of doctors in short supply simultaneously determines their destiny to be manipulated or brainwashed. This is evident in the case of the newly-employed doctors’ communication with Jack at Autumn Harvest Farms which is recommended by Dr. Chakravarty to do more tests with the assistance of new equipment. “[A] nervous young man in a white smock” (276) superfluously proposes a tangle of regularly scheduled questions as he receives all the results of Jack’s medical inspections. Why Jack is excluded from seeing his own printouts in a sealed envelope? He seems to be the only outsider of his bodily secrets buried by himself “in the bottom drawer of a dresser” (292). Pathetically, Jack cares more about the doctor’s verbally canonical offerings to postpone his

“technically dead” (158) line, whether it’s explicitly or implicitly stated, than their professionalism and leechcraft. He attempts to gain these untenable commitments in a deceptive manner, attentively observing, unaffectedly disguising, and hypocritically pandering. Jack is in essence level-headed. He is a sober victim of giving up unnecessary and futile struggles in the widening gap between the privileged class and the other classes. “It didn’t matter whether you believed in these things or not” (234). The doctor’s affirmation is a signal he desires most to stupefy his mind wounded by fear of death no matter what happens to his body. The oblique scale deters the unprivileged from receiving medically immediate and efficacious treatments and turbocharges the privileged to irresponsibly and repetitiously arrange physical tests among state-of-the-art equipment beyond medical ethics and humanity. Doctors continually absorb the dependents’ aroma of fear to make the gap unbridgeable. They get recharged from the idolatrous worship of dependent patients who seek psychological comfort from doctors’ confirming that their health is in good hands to sustain their expert aura. For instance, after introducing the cutting-edge devices, the newly-enjoined doctor firstly gains his confidence which soars when Jack who pretends to have never heard of Nyodene D. suddenly mentions this toxic substance’s side effect is unknown to humans. His anger and anxiety irrigate professional self-confidence with the shimmering tint of robust energies.

In addition to the satisfactory servility, numbers are a shelter for his floating mind as Jack enters his secret code to check his balance in “the automated teller machine” (46) or he exchanges money for “the form of existential credit” (84) through dazzling stores. The digital numbers assure Jack of his steady and tranquil life. In other words, money stabilizes Jack’s masculine or scholarly confidence to avert his attention and then the mammoth data mitigate Jack to settle in either temporary or permanent self-escapism. The same as Jack tries his personal code to retain a sense of security and satisfaction, the doctor is fulfilled and empowered due to his privilege in the expansive databank. The resources shared by Jack and the doctor derive from their accumulated in different banks, either the money bank or the bank of medical data. The doctor is the ferocious guardian of the life profile and the final interpreter of the secret code and meanwhile doctor himself is a secret code for the patient to decipher. The asymmetrical distribution of the right to have access to the data leads to the information gap, universal ignorance, and blind obedience. The public has to input the specific code to entertain their life profile but they are confined to the superficial understanding of massive data and have no idea of what numbers mean. The doctor is exclusively trained to read and understand the connotative meaning of massive data like a medium to decode a sea of symbols from printouts ejaculated by corresponding machines. Recondite data also paralyze the patient’s sensibility to confounding the truth from the falsity and scares them to pretend and dissemble instead of making a genuine and heartfelt response to the doctor’s questions, compelled to perform as an otherness stripped of their right to enquire. They have to believe whatever feeds them and clutch at straws of information to survive in the sudden disaster since “this death was still too deep to be glimpsed” (204). Ultimately, autonomous thinking dissolves in the arbitrary ideology.

Except for doctors who are capable of glancing over the individual data profile, serving members of SIMUVAC are granted the privilege of getting into the data-base tally. An

obvious example in *White Noise* is that the man in the A-to-M desk, an employed member of SIMUVAC whose sense of superiority is plain to see. He is permitted to access the database where “computerized dots registered [people’s] life and death” (140), functioning according to the specific instructions. As Jack asks “What if you were a human” (141), the subjunctive mood indicates the consultant is a more systemically set robot than an alive and kicking human. In his opinion, the human body is the incarnation of holly data which can only be processed by the reasonable mind. However, he retains a sliver of humanity in essence. The man resembling a veteran to guard the security of data tally or a paid murderer to assassinate anyone attempting to intrude in Mylex’s suit emanates the condescending air of mastering the privilege and revels in the “servile and fawning” hopelessness.

Accordingly, these occupations or the privileged class bear a close resemblance to a priest who avails the puzzled believers of communication with the God of technology. In this sense, science as the core of advanced technology evolves into an exotic religion with pious believers whose feelings are mixed with “deference, awe and dread” (275). As Martins argues, “Technology’ does not (only) appear to us as some historical force sweeping through and transforming everyday life or reifying existing social norms” (88). Over-dependence on science and technology brings about people’s intellectual decline and infectious thoughtlessness, which pushes for the second separation between science and mind. Ironically, doctors belong to the privileged class and yet they are also conformist discipliners of science like the others dominated by the supreme science. It forges a vicious circle, as patients count on the doctors who turn to mechanical procedures to make medical diagnoses. Human beings are engulfed by what they have created. Finally, when science dictates the world, the brain will also be concluded as the products in the assembly line. Even though the collective mind completely makes space for science omnipresent as white noise, the body still ranks last, which furthers the first separation between body and mind.

4. Separation between Science and Scientific Truth

Nietzsche implicitly accepts the authority of scientifically established empirical belief as indicated in his broad reference to the sciences in terms of Darwinian evolution, psychology, and anthropology while he still argues that “science is the most recent, most aggressive and most dogmatic form of that idealism which is hostile to life and which has been taught since the time of Plato” (*The Will to Power* 9). His ambiguities indicate the exact possibility of the third separation lies in “the victory of scientific method over science” (*Beyond Good and Evil* 14). In other words, the scientific judgments could be divorced from the real science, both of which cannot be mixed up in one inextricable whir. As Nietzsche perceptively mentions the scientific truth is a human invention that can be simplified or distorted according to the ruling class’s interests and values. On the one hand, science uniformly and temperately governs the human mind in the growing sphere of influence; on the other hand, scientific truth detaches itself from science as a stunt to intrigue and deceive people short of the ability to think autonomously and dialectically.

“Scientific truth is not valuable in itself, but only serves the will to power of those who seek it” (*Will to Power* 10). It is a vehicle for the goal-oriented person to stir up the target’s

frame of mind. In this respect, the scientific truth could be tailored as an ideology to control or confuse the public like a psychic which has a reasonable and pervasive presence “in a world that is mediated by and constituted in the technologico-semiotic regime” (Wilcox 346) or like an aestheticization of disasters. Despite the fact that the drug on trial has side effects to the extent of “beach[ing] a whale” (DeLillo 300), such as “outright death, brain death, left brain death, partial paralysis, other cruel and bizarre conditions of the body and mind” (250), Mr. Gray privately insists on his secretive and controversial experiments to coercively interfere the natural fear of death. He deceives Babette into periodically furthering the test on their own in a shabby motel, which is a body trade of indiscretion for Babette to use Dylar. Hence, Dylar is not a product of science but an artificially constructed truth concerning the fantastic science. Though Dylar has an efficient working and destruction system that functions well to help humans escape from the reality of individual finitude, it absolutely fails from the beginning. Futile and meaningless attempts to repress the natural fear of death are a counteraction against human sentiments, instinct, and vitality. Gray Research, the company secretly leads the project supported by a multinational giant with dogged resolve, even if science and technology are incorporated in the process of exaggerating and demonizing the natural feelings of human beings as auxiliary conspirators. Real science is on the edge of demise as transnational corporations manufacture the needs by spreading the panicked news about death and offer a lifeline to deal with the universal penchant for immortality simultaneously. It “got you here, it can get you out” (285) as if it is the stage props in a self-directed and self-acted farce. The ambitious pursuit of gaining substantive profits stigmatizes the appropriate way to use science and technology, which speeds up the collapse of the science kingdom and the ascent of scientific truth which is imposed on the public as a persuasive maxim.

Apart from the money-driven motive at the expense of sacrificing the non-utilitarian science, Mr. Gray as the project manager is a more distinct example of dissociating scientific truth from science. The words like “experiment” and “FEAR OF DEATH” advertised in a gossip tabloid appeal to someone who worships science as a savior or desperately attempts to restrain the fear of death elicited by the lucrative business. Mr. Gray employs the demagogic and far-ranging influence of scientific truth to serve his purpose of attracting potential volunteers among which Babette is a thorough victim in this playful scam. His seemingly scientific behavior as “he interviews the respondents in a motel room, testing them for emotional integration and about a dozen other things” (300) is a powerful and convincing camouflage to cheat on test subjects that death has a cure. If he were a professional scientist, Mr. Gray would never neglect the “dangers in running tests on a human” (193) and violate the code of ethics. In fact, he hypocritically utilizes Babette’s helplessness to trade the unlisted drug with sexual behaviors as he defies the scientific fact that Dylar can suppress the fear of death. Babette offers her mind first and then her body though she is conscious about what she is doing and yet far harder to extricate herself from. Furthermore, Mr. Gray spins a web of lies to swindle himself so he has the reasonable excuse to take Dylar, awash in the addictive decline. He is even more corrupted than an isolated intellect who “no longer knows what is great or beautiful; he does not even know himself” (*Human, All Too Human* 113). Finally, Mr. Gray’s dismissal

from the project does not simply lie in the deliberate concealment of his own hazardously unsupervised human experiment, but his conflict of interests with Gray Research which defiles the essence of real science compels him to retire from the stage of history. “The project goes on without him” (DeLillo 300) as Mr. Gray is not the center figure. Data resources are extremely valued. What Gray Research worries about Mr. Gray is his independently developed drug in advance to initially occupy the market. Entangled discords between them escalate to flood the innocent prey with the dazzlingly scientific truth in various tabloids and other mass media. Jack is one of the inadvertently targeted subjects overcast by mutual propaganda of scientific fantasy and since then has been plagued by his longing for Dylar and a sense of powerlessness to attain it. Wholeheartedly getting himself on death watch, Jack imagines “the drug core dissolving, releasing benevolent chemicals” and “silently self-destructing in a tiny inward burst” (210).

“Television is the death throes of human consciousness” (51), one of the sources of white noise which increasingly exerts its scientific influence on every family unit as the impeccable carrier to causally publicize the scientific truth. In TV’s moment, the obscured boundary between reality and falsity weakens people’s natural ability to grasp immediate and veritable things. Therefore, the ordinary is reduced to an easily manipulative puppet unconsciously imbued with the government’s ideology. “Sealed-off, timeless, self-contained, self-referring” (50) experience of congregating in front of TV screens is like a religious and mythical ritual. What comes from TV is accepted and disseminated so the scientific truth finds another suitable and efficacious channel to expeditiously circulate. As Babette’s image appears on the TV, is she Babette herself or the digital avatar? “It was but wasn’t her” (104). In contrast to his daughters “flushed with excitement” (105), the fretful father is reminded of “a walker in the mists of the dead” (104) since “some journey out of life or death” or “some mysterious separation” (105) is a frequent and pervasive theme of moving picture patterns hyped up by scientific truth. In this regard, it serves the purpose of aestheticizing disasters and yielding death anxiety. Hence, his traumatized imagination runs wild and desperately, conjuring up her “dead, missing, disembodied” (104) scene. To put it differently, Jack unconsciously establishes connections between Babette’s unusual appearance on TV without prior notice with the disaster videos or violence clips. However, his daughters are only immersed in the sense of novelty as they are able to narrow the distance between the digital models and the real person. “Growing up without television” (50), Wilder who has no idea of what is television mighty enough to contaminate pristine souls directly “approached the set and touched her body” (105). Jack and his premature girls are preys of the scientific truth skillfully concealed in televisions. “[A]nimated but also flat, distanced, sealed off, timeless” (104) female figure of electrons shares its essence with the scientific truth whose artificially constructed facticity dusts the eyes of the thoughtless one. Nebulously alternating between truth and falsehood, they are gradually subject to the absolute governance of scientific truth, with their judgments becoming vestigial. Correspondingly, the spoiled science together with the scientific truth in the ascendant dissolves the boundary between true and false.

As the primal force of white noise in the American home, television or radio is “another name for junk mail” (50) and prompts excessive brain noise and brain fade. It seems that

the ordinary would easily accept the supernatural explanation that signals “travel through the air in magic waves” (148) rather than the scientifically abstruse working mechanism of radio. “There are no facts, only interpretations” (*Twilight of the Idols* 12) modified to the ideology at its peak. The scientific truth is intertwined with “incredible amounts of psychic data” (DeLillo 50), prompting the disappearance of real science. For example, the impotent police should call a psychic for help to “determine the missing Treadwells’ whereabouts and fate” (60) instead of taking realistic and reasonable actions. Ridiculously, police psychics are considered an indispensable position to handle a case like hypnotists. In addition, the “country’s leading psychics and their predictions for the coming year” (145) are published on the cover of tabloids. People in the country are addicted to extraterrestrial or supernatural things as they are a part of “American mystery” (60). Psychic data are everywhere, emerging as a new source of misinformation that spread in accord with the privileged class, “working on the superstitious part” (161) of human nature. Scientific truth finds a more spellbinding and sufficient way to govern its subjects in a wide range. Consequently, the real science gradually erodes away whereas the scientific truth augments its strength, which becomes a tool to manipulate and delude the ordinary. This is the third separation between the science religion and the scientific truth.

5. Conclusion

“With its focus on the decentered subject and its playful highlighting of the American love of violence, the media, and commercialism” (Harack 305), all these changes in Blacksmith, “an urban(ist) setting that is neither city nor country” (307), cast light upon the great possibility of a palpable phenomenon in the worldwide. “In addition to maneuvering between reality and art” (Barrett 98), the three separations manifest themselves in the real world, which will ultimately lead to a quandary that either leads to an extreme idolatry of scientific truth or a nihilistic crisis. The antidote for “The semi-apocalyptic fears, such as the fear that technology is slowly squashing the life out of us, that it somehow gets ‘between’ us and reality, that it precludes meaningful communication” (Martins 109) from my viewpoint is to externally grasp the immediate things and internally advocate for a return of animality. As Berger adds, “Wilder lives in an extended and unmediated present moment” (352), he “is one possible, though insufficient, way out of the symbolic and its accompanying knowledge of death”. Thereupon, apart from learning to “listen and look as children” (DeLillo 67), it is urgent to internalize and integrate the animality slumbering in the human body and mind.

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