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THE DESCRIPTION OF THE HERO'S PSYCHE IN NOVELS OF THE 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MODERNISM GENRE: AN ANALYSIS OF DON DELILLO'S WHITE NOISE

ANNOTATION: This article examines the depiction of the protagonist's psyche in Don DeLillo's White Noise as an exemplar of 20th-century American modernism. Modernist literature, with its emphasis on psychological depth, alienation, and existential inquiry, profoundly influenced the portrayal of individual consciousness in fiction. By analyzing the hero of White Noise, Jack Gladney, this study highlights how DeLillo merges modernist introspection with postmodern concerns such as consumerism, technology, and media saturation. The article explores key aspects of the protagonist's inner world, including his fear of death, fragmented identity, and struggle to find meaning in a chaotic, consumer-driven society.
KEY WORDS: Don DeLillo, White Noise, 20th-century American modernism, psyche, alienation, existentialism, consumerism, postmodern literature

ANNOTATSIYA: Ushbu maqolada Don DeLillo'nun "Oq shovqin" (White Noise) asarida qahramonning psixologik olami 20-asr Amerika modernizmi namunasi sifatida ko'rsatilishi o'rganiladi. Modernistik adabiyotning psixologik chuqurlik, begonalashuv va ekzistensial savollarga e'tibor qaratishi badiiy asarda shaxsiy ong tasvirini chuqur ta'sirlagan. Ushbu tadqiqot "Oq shovqin" qahramoni Jek Glednining ichki olamini tahlil qilish orqali, DeLillo qanday qilib modernistik introspeksiyani iste'molchilik, texnologiya va ommaviy axborot vositalari kabi postmodern masalalar bilan uyg'unlashtirganini ko'rsatadi. Maqolada qahramonning o'lim qo'rquvi, bo'laklangan identiteti va iste'molchilik jamiyatidagi betartiblik ichida ma'no topishga bo'lgan kurashi kabi muhim jihatlar o'rganiladi.
KALIT SO'ZLAR: Don DeLillo, "Oq shovqin", 20-asr Amerika modernizmi, psixika, begonalashuv, ekzistensializm, iste'molchilik, postmodern adabiyot
АННОТАЦИЯ:В данной статье исследуется изображение психологии главного героя в романе Дона Делилло «Белый шум» как пример американского модернизма XX века. Модернистская литература, с её акцентом на психологическую глубину, отчуждение и экзистенциальный поиск, оказала значительное влияние на изображение индивидуального сознания в художественных произведениях. Анализируя главного героя романа, Джека Глэдни, исследование показывает, как Делилло сочетает модернистскую интроспекцию с постмодернистскими темами, такими как потребительство, технологии и влияние медиа. В статье рассматриваются ключевые аспекты внутреннего мира героя, включая его страх смерти, фрагментированную идентичность и стремление найти смысл в хаотичном, ориентированном на потребление обществе.
КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА: Дон Делилло, «Белый шум», американский модернизм XX века, психика, отчуждение, экзистенциализм, потребительство, постмодернистская литература.

INTRODUCTION

The 20th century witnessed a profound transformation in literature, with modernism emerging as a response to the disillusionment caused by industrialization, World Wars, and the fragmentation of traditional societal structures. Modernist authors often focused on the complexities of human consciousness, delving into the psyche of their characters to explore themes of alienation, identity, and existential despair.

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Don DeLillo's White Noise (1985), although primarily classified as postmodern, inherits significant modernist characteristics, especially in its exploration of the protagonist's psyche. The novel encapsulates the anxieties of late 20th-century America, where technology, consumerism, and media influence permeate everyday life. Jack Gladney, the central character, serves as a vessel for examining the psychological consequences of living in a world dominated by noise, distraction, and the looming awareness of mortality. This article investigates how DeLillo portrays the inner turmoil of Jack Gladney, linking it to the broader themes of modernism and the unique challenges of postmodernity.

MAIN PART

The modernist hero is often characterized by feelings of alienation and disconnection from society. The rapid changes of the 20th century disrupted traditional values and norms, leaving individuals in a state of existential uncertainty. This alienation is mirrored in the fragmented narrative structures and stream-of-consciousness techniques that define much of modernist literature. For example, in James Joyce's Ulysses (1922), Leopold Bloom navigates the city of Dublin while engaging in a rich interior monologue that reveals his insecurities, desires, and philosophical musings. Similarly, Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway (1925) delves into the inner lives of its characters, particularly Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith, to portray their struggles with identity and societal expectations. Existential questions about the nature of existence, purpose, and mortality are central to the modernist hero's psyche. Influenced by existential philosophy, modernist protagonists often grapple with feelings of despair and futility. T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land (1922) epitomizes this theme, portraying a world devoid of spiritual and moral certainties. Similarly, in Ernest Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises (1926), the protagonist Jake Barnes exemplifies the "lost generation" — individuals disillusioned by the aftermath of World War I and searching for meaning in a fragmented world.

Modernist heroes are deeply introspective, often engaging in internal dialogues that reveal their inner conflicts. These characters are not presented as heroic in the traditional sense; instead, they are flawed, complex individuals whose psyches reflect the broader uncertainties of their time.

William Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury (1929) employs multiple narrators to provide an intricate portrayal of the Compson family's decline. Quentin Compson, in particular, embodies the modernist hero's obsession with time, memory, and the past, which leads to his ultimate demise. Sigmund Freud's theories on the unconscious mind had a profound impact on modernist literature. The exploration of dreams, desires, and repressed emotions became a hallmark of the modernist hero's psychological depth. In to the Lighthouse (1927), Virginia Woolf captures the inner thoughts of her characters through a stream-of-consciousness narrative that reflects their subconscious fears and desires. Woolf's depiction of time, memory, and the fragmented self resonates with Freud's ideas about the complexities of human consciousness.[1] The modernist hero often subverts the traditional archetype of the strong, decisive protagonist. Instead, modernist literature portrays characters who are introspective, passive, or even anti-heroic. This departure reflects the era's skepticism toward grand narratives and idealized notions of heroism. In F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby (1925), Jay Gatsby is a tragic figure whose pursuit of the American Dream reveals the emptiness of material success. His inner vulnerability contrasts sharply with the outward image of wealth and charisma he projects.

[1] Bloom, Harold, editor. Don DeLillo's White Noise. Chelsea House, 2003.

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Modernist literature is characterized by a focus on the individual's internal experience, often emphasizing subjectivity and fragmentation. Authors like Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and William Faulkner pioneered techniques such as stream-of-consciousness narration to depict the fluidity and complexity of human thought. DeLillo's work, while often labeled as postmodern, retains these modernist tendencies, particularly in its exploration of Jack Gladney's psychological state. Jack is a professor of Hitler Studies at a small liberal arts college, and his profession itself reflects a fragmented and ironic sense of identity. [2]The creation of such an obscure academic discipline suggests Jack's attempt to assert intellectual control in a world that feels increasingly chaotic. This need for control, coupled with his existential fears, is a hallmark of modernist protagonists who grapple with the loss of traditional sources of meaning.

One of the most pervasive elements of Jack Gladney's psyche is his overwhelming fear of death, which DeLillo terms the "white noise" of his existence. [3]This fear mirrors the existential preoccupations of modernist literature, where death is often portrayed as the ultimate unknown that destabilizes the individual's sense of self. Jack's obsession with mortality surfaces repeatedly, from his dread of airborne toxic events to his dependence on Dylar, a drug purported to alleviate the fear of death.

DeLillo uses Jack's fear to explore the broader anxieties of contemporary society, where technology and consumer culture fail to provide solace in the face of life's transience.[4] Unlike traditional modernist heroes who seek refuge in art or intellectual pursuits, Jack's coping mechanisms—such as his reliance on consumer goods and pharmaceuticals—highlight the emptiness of postmodern substitutes for meaning. Jack Gladney's psyche is deeply influenced by the media-saturated environment in which he lives. Television, radio, and advertisements bombard him with fragmented images and messages, contributing to a sense of disconnection from reality. DeLillo portrays this constant influx of information as another form of "white noise" that drowns out authentic human experience.

This media-driven fragmentation aligns with the modernist concern for the disintegration of a cohesive self. However, DeLillo extends this theme to critique the postmodern condition, where individuals like Jack become passive consumers of information rather than active participants in their own lives. The result is a protagonist who struggles to reconcile his intellectual pursuits with the overwhelming triviality of his environment.

Despite his academic achievements and professional status, Jack's personal life is riddled with insecurities and contradictions.[5] His relationship with his wife, Babette, is marked by mutual dependence yet overshadowed by their shared fear of death. The family unit, traditionally a source of stability in literature, becomes another site of anxiety in White Noise.

Jack's interactions with his children further illuminate his fragmented psyche. While he attempts to maintain a paternal authority, he is often outsmarted or overshadowed by their precociousness. These dynamics reflect the modernist theme of alienation within familial and societal structures, intensified by the postmodern context of consumer-driven relationships.

CONCLUSION

[2] LeClair, Tom. In the Loop: Don DeLillo and the Systems Novel. University of Illinois Press, 2014.

[3] Bradbury, Malcolm. The Modern American Novel. Oxford University Press, 2010.

[4] Waugh, Patricia. Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction. Methuen, 2013.

[5] DeLillo, Don. White Noise. Penguin Books, 1985.

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Don DeLillo's White Noise masterfully portrays the complexities of the modern human psyche through the character of Jack Gladney. By blending modernist introspection with postmodern critiques of consumerism and media influence, DeLillo creates a protagonist who embodies the anxieties and contradictions of late 20th-century life. Jack's fear of death, fragmented identity, and struggles with meaning underscore the enduring relevance of modernist themes in contemporary literature. Ultimately, White Noise serves as both a continuation and a critique of modernist traditions, highlighting the psychological consequences of living in a world defined by noise, distraction, and the pervasive fear of mortality. Jack Gladney's psyche is not only a reflection of his personal struggles but also a mirror of the broader existential dilemmas faced by individuals in a rapidly changing society.

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