

**MINISTRY OF HIGHER AND SECONDARY SPECIALIZED EDUCATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN**

**UZBEKISTAN STATE UNIVERSITY OF WORLD LANGUAGES**

**ENGLISH FACULTY III**

Course Paper

**THEME: An environmental catastrophe in the novel**

**”White noise “by Don DeLillo**

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**TASHKENT-2016**

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**Раҳбар \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**(Имзо)**

КУРС ИШИ ЛОЙИҲАСИГА ИЛМИЙ РАҲБАР

ТОМОНИДАН БЕРИЛГАН

**ТАҚРИЗ**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Only a catastrophe gets our attention. We want them, we need them, we depend on them, as long as they happen somewhere else.  
 Don DeLillo, *White Noise*

This course paper is devoted to the study of American writer Donald Richard "Don" DeLillo and his work ”White noise “.

**The theme** of our course paper is “An environmental catastrophe in the novel

”White noise “by Don Delillo”.

Don Delillo is an American novelist, playwright and essayist. His works have covered subjects as diverse as television, [nuclear war](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuclear_war), sports, the complexities of language, performance art, the [Cold War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cold_War), mathematics, the advent of the digital age, politics, economics, and global terrorism. Initially a well-regarded cult writer, the publication in 1985 of [White Noise](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Noise_(novel)) brought him widespread recognition, and was followed in 1988 by [Libra](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libra_(novel)), a [bestseller](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bestseller). DeLillo has twice been a [Pulitzer Prize for Fiction](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pulitzer_Prize_for_Fiction) finalist (for [Mao II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mao_II) in 1992 and for [Underworld](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Underworld_(DeLillo_novel)) in 1998), won the [PEN/Faulkner Award](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PEN/Faulkner_Award) for [Mao II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mao_II) in 1992 (receiving a further PEN/Faulkner Award nomination for [The Angel Esmeralda](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Angel_Esmeralda) in 2012), was granted the [PEN/Saul Bellow Award for Achievement in American Fiction](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PEN/Saul_Bellow_Award_for_Achievement_in_American_Fiction) in 2010, and won the inaugural [Library of Congress Prize for American Fiction](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Library_of_Congress_Prize_for_American_Fiction&action=edit&redlink=1) in 2013.

**The topicality** of the given course paper lies in learning American literature, especially post modern literature. The writer of this period as Don Delillo’s work is learned in this work.

**The aim** of the course paper is to show the role of American post modern literature for those who are interested in American literature. This topic has fascinated lots of learners and we believe that it lasts long. According to this general aim, we put forward the following **tasks** :

1) To analyze the development of American post modern literature;

2) To learn the role of Don Delillo in American literature;

3) To analyze the novel “White noise” by Don Delillo.

The most **important point** is that an American writer Don Delillo is one of the post modern writers and he plays the main role in the development of American literature with his fifteen novels.

The material includes:

1. Scientific, literary books and articles about post modern American literature.

2. Useful literary internet sites.

In order to carry out of our works we shall use the following **methods** of investigation:

1) Revealing the role of Post modern American literature;

2) Analysis of novel of Don Delillo “White noise”

The given research has the **theoretical significance**; it can be used as an additional material during lectures and on the history of American literature and stylistics.

**The practical significance** of the research is that the given materials and the results of the work can be used in the seminars on the history of American literature and in the aspect of Home reading.

The structure of present course paper:

It consists of introduction two chapters, conclusion and bibliography.

In **introduction** we touched upon the aim of research it tasks, its topicality, theoretical value and practical significance and structure of the work.

**Chapter I** entitled postmodernism is a “new sensibility” in literature.

**The first paragraph** is about post modern literature. We know that Postmodern literature is a type of literature that came to prominence after World War II. Postmodern literature also often rejects the boundaries between 'high' and 'low' forms of art and literature, as well as the distinctions between different genres and forms of writing and storytelling.

In **the second paragraph** we gave information about American writer Don DeLillo and his achievements in literature.

Don DeLillo is an American novelist, playwright and essayist. His works have covered subjects as diverse as television, [nuclear war](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuclear_war), sports, the complexities of language, performance art, the [Cold War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cold_War), mathematics, the advent of the digital age, politics, economics, and global terrorism. Initially a well-regarded cult writer, the publication in 1985 of [White Noise](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Noise_(novel)) brought him widespread recognition, and was followed in 1988 by [Libra](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libra_(novel)), a [bestseller](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bestseller).

**Chapter II** entitled the literary analysis of the novel “white noise” by Don DeLillo.

In the first paragraph we gave information about the novel “White Noise”.

White Noise is considered a postmodern classic and its unfolding of themes of consumerism, family and divorce, and technology as a deadly threat have attracted the attention of literary scholars since its publication.

Winner of the National Book Award in 1985, White Noise is the story of Jack and Babette and their children from their six or so various marriages. They live in a college town where Jack is Professor of Hitler Studies (and conceals the fact that he does not speak a word of German), and Babette teaches posture and volunteers by reading from the tabloids to a group of elderly shut-ins. They are happy enough until a deadly toxic accident and Babette's addiction to an experimental drug make Jake question everything.

In **the second paragraph** we learned An environmental catastrophe in the novel ”White noise “

Don DeLillo's 1984 novel White Noise shows us, jokes are the only way to cope with the psychological burden of environmental disaster.

The plot turns on what happens after Gladney's world is turned upside down by an "airborne toxic event." DeLillo goes out of his way to make the nature of this environmental calamity as ambiguous as possible.

**Conclusion** contains the main themes and ideas of the course paper.  
It summarizes the main points and reviews the information which was  
covered.

**The bibliography** contains the list of books used while investigating the research.

**CHAPTER I. POSTMODERNISM IS A “NEW SENSIBILITY” IN LITERATURE**

**1.1The main characteristics to post modern literature**

Postmodern literature is a form of literature which is marked, both stylistically and ideologically, by a reliance on such literary conventions as fragmentation, paradox, unreliable narrators, often unrealistic and downright impossible plots, games, parody, paranoia, dark humor and authorial self-reference. Postmodern authors tend to reject outright meanings in their novels, stories and poems, and, instead, highlight and celebrate the possibility of multiple meanings, or a complete lack of meaning, within a single literary work.

Postmodern literature is literature characterized by reliance on narrative techniques such as fragmentation, paradox, and the [unreliable narrator](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unreliable_narrator); and often is (though not exclusively) defined as a style or a trend which emerged in the post–World War II era. Postmodern works are seen as a response against [Enlightenment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Age_of_Enlightenment) thinking and [Modernist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modernism) approaches to [literature](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modernist_literature).[[1]](#footnote-2)

Postmodern literature, like [postmodernism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmodernism) as a whole, tends to resist definition or classification as a "[movement"](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literary_movement). Indeed, the convergence of postmodern literature with various modes of [critical theory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Critical_theory), particularly [reader-response](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reader-response_criticism) and [deconstructionist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deconstruction) approaches, and the subversions of the implicit contract between author, text and reader by which its works are often characterised, have led to pre-modern fictions such as [Cervantes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cervantes)' [Don Quixote](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Don_Quixote) (1605,1615) and [Laurence Sterne](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laurence_Sterne)'s eighteenth-century satire [Tristram Shandy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Life_and_Opinions_of_Tristram_Shandy,_Gentleman) being retrospectively considered by some as early examples of postmodern literature.[[2]](#footnote-3)

While there is little consensus on the precise characteristics, scope, and importance of postmodern literature, as is often the case with artistic movements, postmodern literature is commonly defined in relation to a precursor. For example, a postmodern literary work tends not to conclude with the neatly tied-up ending as is often found in modernist literature (Woolf, Joyce, Faulkner), but often parodies it. Postmodern authors tend to celebrate chance over craft, and further employ [metafiction](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metafiction) to undermine the writer's authority. Another characteristic of postmodern literature is the questioning of distinctions between high and low culture through the use of [pastiche](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pastiche), the combination of subjects and genres not previously deemed fit for literature.

Both modern and postmodern literature represent a break from 19th century [realism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Realism_(arts)). In character development, both modern and postmodern literature explore [subjectivism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metaphysical_subjectivism), turning from external reality to examine inner states of consciousness, in many cases drawing on modernist examples in the "[stream of consciousness](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stream_of_consciousness_(narrative_mode))" styles of [Virginia Woolf](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virginia_Woolf) and [James Joyce](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Joyce), or explorative poems like [The Waste Land](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Waste_Land) by [T. S. Eliot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/T._S._Eliot).[[3]](#footnote-4)

Though first used to define a style of architecture in the 1940s, the term postmodernism first became widely used in the 1960s to describe a “new sensibility” in literature which either rejected modernist attitudes and techniques or adapted or extended them. In the following decades the term began to figure in other academic disciplines too, such as social theory, cultural and media studies, visual arts, philosophy, and history. Such widespread usage meant that an already contentious term became overloaded with meaning, chiefly because it was being used to describe characteristics of the social and political landscape as well as art and literature.

To understand the postmodern it is therefore useful to distinguish between postmodernity, the economic and social conditions of the late twentieth and early

twenty-first centuries, and postmodernism, aesthetic and intellectual production in this period. More specifically, we can say that postmodernism refers to (1) changes in how we live in the period from, roughly, the Second World War to the present day and (2) how these changes have led to shifts in the way we think, feel, and express ourselves culturally and aesthetically. Postmodernity is an umbrella term for a set of related socioeconomic phenomena.

It is “postindustrial” (Bell 1973), as the production of consumer goods has replaced

“heavy” industry (such as manufacturing or coalmining); “post-Fordist” (Harvey 1989), in that work is increasingly bureaucratic, and an ethos of flexibility governs labour markets, patterns of consumption, and geographical mobility; and “late capitalist” ( Jameson 1984), as areas of society which were previously much less affected by the logic of the market, such as the media, the arts, or education are now effectively run as businesses. Crucially, this changing socioeconomic landscape is underscored by the massive late twentieth-century growth in the power and influence of global mass media.

The consequence of living in a postindustrial, media-saturated world, according to theorists of postmodernity, is that we have become alienated from those aspects of life we might consider authentic or real. While our working lives arestill “real” (we go to work and pay the bills) they are not as real as, say, working on the land or building a ship. Instead we spend most of our time at our desks in front of a computer screen processing “information” of one kind or another. What we engage with are effectively symbolic representations rather than real, tangible objects.[[4]](#footnote-5)

Postmodernism in literature is not an organized movement with leaders or central figures; therefore, it is more difficult to say if it has ended or when it will end (compared to, say, declaring the end of modernism with the death of Joyce or Woolf). Arguably postmodernism peaked in the 1960s and 1970s with the publication of [Catch-22](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catch-22) in 1961, [Lost in the Funhouse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lost_in_the_Funhouse) in 1968, [Slaughterhouse-Five](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slaughterhouse-Five) in 1969, and many others. Thomas Pynchon's 1973 novel [Gravity's Rainbow](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gravity%27s_Rainbow) is "often considered as the postmodern novel, redefining both [postmodernism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmodernism) and the novel in general."[[5]](#footnote-6)

Some declared the death of postmodernism in the 1980s with a new surge of realism represented and inspired by [Raymond Carver](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raymond_Carver). [Tom Wolfe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom_Wolfe) in his 1989 article "[Stalking the Billion-Footed Beast](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stalking_the_Billion-Footed_Beast)" called for a new emphasis on realism in fiction to replace postmodernism.[[6]](#footnote-7) With this new emphasis on realism in mind, some declared [White Noise](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Noise_(novel)) in 1985 or [The Satanic Verses](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Satanic_Verses_(novel)) in 1988 to be the last great novels of the postmodern era.

Many postmodernists (and of course their museum director allies) would like us to entertain such thoughts about the ideas which might surround this ‘minimalist’ art. A pile of bricks is designedly elementary; it confronts and denies the emotionally expressive qualities of previous (modernist) art. Like Duchamp’s famous Urinal or his bicycle wheel mounted on a stool, it tests our intellectual responses and our tolerance of the works that the art gallery can bring to the attention of its public. It makes some essentially critical points, which add up to some quite self-denying assumptions about art. Andre says: ‘What I try to find are sets of particles and the rules which combine them in the simplest way’, and claims that his equivalents are ‘communistic because the form is equally accessible to all men’.[[7]](#footnote-8)

Postmodern literature serves as a reaction to the supposed stylistic and ideological limitations of modernist literature and the radical changes the world underwent after the end of World War II. While modernist literary writers often depicted the world as fragmented, troubled and on the edge of disaster, which is best displayed in the stories and novels of such modernist authors as Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Gertrude Stein, Albert Camus, Virginia Woolf and Thomas Mann, postmodern authors tend to depict the world as having already undergone countless disasters and being beyond redemption or understanding.

For many postmodern writers, the various disasters that occurred in the last half of the 20th century left a number of writers with a profound sense of paranoia. They also gave them an awareness of the possibility of utter disaster and apocalypse on the horizon. The notion of locating precise meanings and reasons behind any event became seen as impossible.

Postmodern literary writers have also been greatly influenced by various movements and ideas taken from postmodern philosophy. Postmodern philosophy tends to conceptualize the world as being impossible to strictly define or understand. Postmodern philosophy argues that knowledge and facts are always relative to particular situations and that it's both futile and impossible to attempt to locate any precise meaning to any idea, concept or event.

Postmodern philosophy tends to renounce the possibility of 'grand narratives' and, instead, argues that all belief systems and ideologies are developed for the express purpose of controlling others and maintaining particular political and social systems. The postmodern philosophical perspective is pretty cynical and takes nothing that is presented at face value or as being legitimate.

Similarly, at the core of many postmodern literary writer's imaginations is a belief that the world has already fallen apart and that actual, singular meaning is impossible to locate (if it can be said to exist at all), and that literature, instead, should serve to reveal the world's absurdities, countless paradoxes and ironies.

Postmodern literary writers come from all across the world. Postmodern literature is not specific to writers from any particular region or culture. There are thousands of writers and literary works from all around the world which are considered postmodern by critics and scholars. Among the most famous and critically respected works of postmodern literature include the following: [[8]](#footnote-9)

Variously defined, "postmodernism" can refer to a historical period that began in the 1940s, a style of literature, philosophy, art, and architecture, or the situation of Western society in a late capitalist or postcapitalist age.  
 The French theorist Jean-François Lyotard succinctly defined postmodernism as "incredulity towards metanarratives"; that is, a skepticism toward the "grand narratives" that seek to explain and plot human life and history. Literary postmodernism is generally characterized by features such as: a mixing of styles ("high" and "low," for example) in the same text; discontinuity of tone, point of view, register, and logical sequence; apparently random unexpected intrusions and disruptions in the text; a self-consciousness about language and literary technique, especially concerning the use of metaphor and symbol, and the use of self-referential tropes. Even though the writers most often associated with postmodernism may deal with serious themes, their work often has absurd, playful, or comic aspects, and sometimes makes special use of parody and pastiche and of references to other texts and artifacts.

The American writers most typically termed postmodernist are [Vladimir Nabokov](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americannovel/timeline/nabokov.html) (1899-1977), William S. Burroughs (1914-97), John Ashbery (b. 1927), Adrienne Rich (b. 1929), John Barth (b. 1930), Donald Barthelme (1931-89), Robert Coover (b. 1932), Richard Brautigan (1933-84), Thomas Pynchon, James Tate (b. 1943), Leslie Marmon Silko, and Kathy Acker (1948-97).

Postmodernism is a complicated term, or set of ideas, one that has only emerged as an area of academic study since the mid-1980s. Postmodernism is hard to define, because it is a concept that appears in a wide variety of disciplines or areas of study, including art, architecture, music, film, literature, sociology, communications, fashion, and technology. It's hard to locate it temporally or historically, because it's not clear exactly when postmodernism begins.  
 Perhaps the easiest way to start thinking about postmodernism is by thinking about modernism, the movement from which postmodernism seems to grow or emerge. Modernism has two facets, or two modes of definition, both of which are relevant to understanding postmodernism.

The first facet or definition of modernism comes from the aesthetic movement broadly labeled "modernism." This movement is roughly coterminous with twentieth century Western ideas about art (though traces of it in emergent forms can be found in the nineteenth century as well). Modernism, as you probably know, is the movement in visual arts, music, literature, and drama which rejected the old Victorian standards of how art should be made, consumed, and what it should mean. In the period of "high modernism," from around 1910 to 1930, the major figures of modernism literature helped radically to redefine what poetry and fiction could be and do: figures like Woolf, Joyce, Eliot, Pound, Stevens, Proust, Mallarme, Kafka, and Rilke are considered the founders of twentieth-century modernism.

**1.2 Don DeLillo as the writer of postmodernism**

Don DeLillo has established himself as one of the most important contemporary American novelists. His works probe the postmodern American consciousness in all its neurotic permutations, offering a compelling and disturbing

portrait of the contemporary American experience.

DeLillo was born on November 20, 1936, in New York City, the son of Italian immigrants. He grew up in the predominantly Italian American Fordham section of the Bronx, and he apparently led a typical boyhood centered around family and sports. Reared a Catholic, DeLillo was exposed early on to the mysteries and rituals of the church, and these had a major influence on his work. He has attributed the sense of mystery that permeates his fiction to his Catholic upbringing, as well as his fiction’s concern with various forms of discipline, ritual, and spectacle.

DeLillo attended Cardinal Hayes High School in New York, which he despised, and then Fordham University, which he also found less than inspiring. He has cited his aversion to school as the reason he now refuses to give academic lectures or to teach. This antipathy toward formal schooling, however, should not be equated with an indifference to learning, as the massive research projects he undertook in preparation for Ratner’s Star (1976) and Libra (1988) would indicate. After graduating from Fordham, DeLillo began a ‘‘short, uninteresting’’ career at the advertising agency of Ogilvie and Mather. He wrote fiction in his spare time, publishing his first short story, ‘‘The River Jordan,’’ in Epoch in 1960. Throughout the decade, he would publish a handful of other stories in Epoch, Kenyon Review, and Carolina Quarterly. DeLillo quit his job at Ogilvie and Mather in 1964 and began working as a freelance writer in nonfiction. He wrote pieces on such diverse topics as furniture and computers, and lived on approximately $2,000 a year.

DeLillo began his first novel, Americana (1971), in 1966. Americana is a sprawling, free-form novel. Such a project possesses an affinity with the Beat aesthetic, and in many ways Americana emulates, even satirizes, the ‘‘road’’ novels of writers such as Jack Kerouac. Along with Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burrough, and others, Kerouac belonged to The Beat Generation, a label referring to a group of writers who published works in the late 1950s and early 1960s. These ‘‘beatniks,’’ as they are sometimes called, inspired a cultural phenomenon that emphasized spontaneity, emotional engagement with life’s difficulties, and spiritual yearning. Although they were characterized by some as bohemian hedonists, their artistic efforts served to liberalize restrictions on published works in the United States.

After Americana, DeLillo devoted himself full-time to writing fiction, abandoning all freelance work. He began his second novel, End Zone (1972), within weeks of completing Americana and in a burst of creative energy finished it within a year. End Zone is a more tautly structured and cohesive novel than Americana, perhaps an indication that DeLillo learned quite a bit about the craft of novel writing during the four-year ordeal of Americana. DeLillo also shifted his thematic focus with his new novel. Whereas Americana was primarily concerned with the influence of the media image on identity in America, End Zone explores the importance of language in defining reality.

DeLillo continued the sports theme of End Zone shortly after its publication with another contribution to Sports Illustrated (November 27, 1972): ‘‘Total Loss

Weekend,’’ a story about a compulsive gambler who bets on every possible sporting event. But his third novel, Great Jones Street (1973), which also appeared within the year, moved into new territory. Having tackled the American pop phenomena of television, film, and football in his first two novels, DeLillo took on a third in Great Jones Street: rock and roll. The 1950s and 1960s had seen the rise of the rock star as a pop culture phenomenon.

Critics have speculated that DeLillo based his character in part on Bob Dylan, a prolific and influential musician known for his sometimes erratic behavior.

In contrast to the rapid production of End Zone and Great Jones Street, DeLillo’s fourth novel, Ratner’s Star (1976), took three years to complete. DeLillo conducted an enormous amount of research in the field of mathematics in preparation, a project he undertook because he ‘‘wanted a fresh view of the world.’’ Ratner’s Star is a long, abstruse novel whose primary subject matter is math and logic. In it, DeLillo abandoned the first-person narration he had used in his first three novels but continued his exploration of human ordering structures, their limitations, and their distortions. He also took on yet another literary genre: science fiction. In addition, in 1975 DeLillo married and moved to a suburb of New York City. Ratner’s Star was followed by the shorter, more quickly written novel Players (1977). Once again, DeLillo grappled with another phenomenon of the contemporary landscape, terrorism, and appropriated another literary genre as his vehicle, the spy thriller. Yet, despite the different subject matter and form, DeLillo continued to explore his themes of the emptiness and alienation of modern life and the effect of the media upon it. DeLillo’s subsequent novel, Running Dog (1978), is another spy thriller. Like Players, it too examines the dynamics and appeal of conspiracy, as well as exploring DeLillo’s recurrentthemes of the power of images, commodification, and human organizing structures.

In the years immediately following, DeLillo wrote a two-act play, The Engineer of Moonlight (1979), which has yet to be performed, and lived in Greece for three years researching and writing his seventh major novel, The Names (1982). Another examination of the American condition, The Names is a postmodern expatriate novel in which DeLillo moves his characters and concerns onto the international scene. It explores American attitudes toward, and interactions with, foreigners and vice versa, focusing on language as the structural underpinning of their divergent

conceptions. The Names was widely regarded as a departure for DeLillo, a movement away from the fantastic of his previous fiction and toward realism—the depiction of life as it occurs without interpretation.

After completing The Names, DeLillo began work on what would become his breakthrough novel, White Noise (1985). In 1983, however, he took time off from its composition to research and write an essay on the assassination of President John Kennedy, ‘‘American Blood: A Journey through the Labyrinth of Dallas and JFK,’’ which was published in Rolling Stone in December of that year. President John Kennedy was shot dead while riding in an open car in Dallas, Texas, on November 22, 1963, an event that profoundly shocked and saddened the country.[[9]](#footnote-10)

DeLillo’s two-act play, The Day Room, premiered at the American Repertory Theater in April 1986, then was performed at the Manhattan Theater Club in New York City and published in 1987. During this time, DeLillo was working on his ninth novel, Libra, a fictionalized account of the Kennedy assassination that he began in the fall of 1984 before White Noise was even published. The Kennedy assassination was a pivotal event for DeLillo’s generation and for modern America in general, a watershed that he has repeatedly acknowledged as a major literary influence and to which he had alluded in many of his previous novels. Libra would prove to be DeLillo’s most artistically successful work to date.

DeLillo began his tenth novel, Mao II (1991), in March 1989, shortly after the Ayatollah Khomeini—at that time the leader of the Islamic government of Iran—issued a death sentence for British author Salman Rushdie for ‘‘blaspheming’’ Islam in his novel The Satanic Verses (1989). DeLillo viewed this event as a threat to artistic freedom everywhere, and it strongly affected his new novel. DeLillo, along with several other writers, read from Rushdie’s work at the Columns in New York City in a show of support for Rushdie and freedom of speech that was organized by the Author’s Guild, PEN American Center, and Article 19. DeLillo worked on Mao II for the next two years, during which time (April 1990) his short play The Rapture of the Athlete Assumed into Heaven (1990) was performed by the American Repertory Theater.

DeLillo’s most recent works of fiction include Underworld (1997), which traces the journeys of a baseball and remains one of his better-known works, The Body Artist (2001), an unusually philosophical novel for DeLillo, Cosmopolis (2003), set in a billionaire’s limousine moving across Manhattan, and Falling Man (2007), the story of a survivor of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States.

Widely regarded as a preeminent satirist of modern culture, DeLillo depicts American society as rampant with paranoia and malaise and on the brink of chaos. His fiction displays a preoccupation with the overwhelming influence of the American media and the ritualistic qualities of language, the latter of which he considers the only human means capable of imposing order on random events. DeLillo’s work is often compared to that of Thomas Pynchon and Kurt Vonnegut for its black humor and apocalyptic vision. Although he credits writers such as Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, and, later, Pynchon and William Gaddis for awakening him to the possibilities of writing, it was the European films (particularly those of Franco-Swiss film-maker Jean-Luc Godard), jazz, and Abstract Expressionism to which he was exposed in New York that he acknowledges as primary influences. DeLillo has suggested that the assassination of President John F. Kennedy had a bigger impact on his writing than any of his literary predecessors.

**CHAPTER II.LITERARY ANALYSIS OF THE NOVEL “WHITE NOISE” BY DON DELILLO**

**2.1 “White Noise” is an example of** [**postmodern literature**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmodern_literature)

White Noise is the eighth novel by [Don DeLillo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Don_DeLillo), published by [Viking Press](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viking_Press) in 1985. It won the U.S. [National Book Award for Fiction](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Book_Award_for_Fiction).[[10]](#footnote-11)

White Noise is an example of [postmodern literature](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmodern_literature). It is widely considered DeLillo's "breakout" work and brought him to the attention of a much larger audience. [Time](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Time_(magazine)) included the novel in its Time 100 Best English-language Novels from 1923 to 2005.[[11]](#footnote-12) DeLillo originally wanted to call the book Panasonic, but the [Panasonic Corporation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panasonic_Corporation) objected.[[12]](#footnote-13)

White Noise explores several themes that emerged during the mid-to-late twentieth century, e.g., rampant [consumerism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consumerism), media saturation, novelty academic intellectualism, underground conspiracies, the disintegration and reintegration of the [family](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Family), human-made [disasters](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disasters), and the [potentially regenerative nature](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Redemption) of human [violence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Violence). The novel's style is characterized by a heterogeneity that utilizes "montages of tones, styles, and voices that have the effect of yoking together terror and wild humor as the essential tone of contemporary America."[[13]](#footnote-14)

Set at a bucolic Midwestern college known only as The-College-on-the-Hill, *White Noise* follows a year in the life of Jack Gladney, a [professor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Professor) who has made his name by pioneering the field of [Hitler](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adolf_Hitler) studies (though he hasn't taken [German language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_language) lessons until this year). He has been married five times to four women and rears a brood of children and stepchildren (Heinrich, Denise, Steffie, Wilder) with his current wife, Babette. Jack and Babette are both extremely afraid of death; they frequently wonder which of them will be the first to die. The first part of *White Noise*, called "Waves and Radiation," is a chronicle of contemporary family life combined with academic [satire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satire).

There is little plot development in this first section, which mainly serves as an introduction to the characters and themes which will dominate the rest of the book. For instance, the mysterious deaths of men in "Mylex" (intended to suggest *Mylar*) suits and the ashen, shaken survivors of a plane that went into free fall anticipate the catastrophe of the book's second part. Beyond the Gladney family, another important character introduced here is Murray Jay Siskind, also a college professor and friend of Gladney, who frequently discusses his theories, which relate to the rest of the book.

In the second part, "The Airborne Toxic Event," a chemical spill from a rail car releases a black noxious cloud over Jack's home region, prompting an evacuation. Frightened by his exposure to the [toxin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toxin), Gladney is forced to confront his [mortality](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death). An organization called SIMUVAC (short for "simulated evacuation") is also introduced in Part Two, an indication of simulations replacing reality.

In part three of the book, "Dylarama," Gladney discovers that Babette has been cheating on him in order to gain access to a fictional [drug](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medication) called Dylar, an experimental treatment for the terror of [death](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death). The novel becomes a meditation on modern society's fear of death and its obsession with chemical cures as Gladney seeks to obtain his own [black market](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_market) supply of Dylar. However, Dylar does not work for Babette, and it has many possible side effects, including losing the ability to "distinguish words from things, so that if someone said aloud the words "speeding bullet", I would fall to the floor to take cover."[[14]](#footnote-15)

Jack continues to obsess over death. During a discussion about mortality, Murray hypothesizes that killing someone could perhaps alleviate the fear. Jack decides to test Murray's theory by tracking down and planning to kill the man who had given Dylar to Babette in exchange for sex. After a [black comedy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_comedy) scene of Jack driving and rehearsing, in his head, several ways in which their encounter might proceed, he successfully locates and shoots the drug-pusher, Willie Mink, who at the time is in a delirious state caused by his own Dylar addiction.

Jack puts the gun in Willie's hand to make the murder look like a suicide, but Willie then shoots Jack in the arm. Suddenly realizing the needless loss of life, Jack carries Willie to a hospital run by German [nuns](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nun) who do not believe in God or an [afterlife](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afterlife). Having saved Willie, Jack returns home to watch his children sleep.

The final chapter describes Wilder, Jack's youngest child, riding a tricycle across the highway and miraculously surviving.

**Jack Gladney** is the protagonist and narrator of the novel. He is a professor of Hitler studies at a liberal arts college in middle America.

**Babette** is Jack's wife. They have four children from previous marriages. She has an affair with Willie Mink, aka Mr. Gray, in order to obtain Dylar.

**Heinrich** is the fourteen-year-old son of Jack and Janet Savory. He is precociously intellectual, prone to be contrary, and plays [correspondence chess](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Correspondence_chess) with an imprisoned mass murderer.

**Dana Breedlove** is Jack's first and fourth wife and the mother of Mary Alice and Steffie.

**Denise** is the eleven-year-old daughter of Babette and Bob Pardee. She suspects her mother is a drug addict and steals the bottle of Dylar to hide it.

**Steffie** is the nine-year-old daughter of Jack and Dana Breedlove.

**Wilder** is Babette's six-year-old son, and the youngest child in the family. Wilder is never quoted for dialogue in the novel (however, at one point, it is said that he asked for a glass of milk), and periodically Jack worries about the boy's slow linguistic development.

**Mary Alice** is the nineteen-year-old daughter of Dana Breedlove and Jack's first marriage.

**Murray Jay Siskind** is a colleague of Gladney's. He wants to create a field of study centered around [Elvis Presley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elvis_Presley) in the same way that Jack has created one around Hitler. He teaches a course on the cinema of car crashes, watches TV obsessively, and cheerfully theorizes about many subjects.

**Orest Mercator** is Heinrich's friend who trains to sit in a cage with vipers.

**Vernon Dickey** is Babette's father who visits the family in chapter 33 and gives Jack a gun.

**Willie Mink** is a compromised researcher who invents Dylar.

**Winnie Richards** is a scientist at the college where Jack works, to whom Jack goes for information about Dylar.

The White Noise of the Post-modern Experience A darkly comic novel, White Noise focuses on a single American family in another attempt to probe the postmodern American experience. White noise—the sound of all audible radio frequencies heard simultaneously—is the central metaphor of the novel, linking its major themes.As information without meaning, white noise suggests, on one level, the media bombardment designed not to inform the public but to sell commercial products to it. One consequence of the mediated existence, of life removed from

the direct apprehension of experience, is that life and death become abstractions. The novel’s protagonists, the Gladneys, are fascinated by ‘‘media disaster,’’ the floods, earthquakes, and accidents that make up the television news, but are nonplussed when they find themselves in the midst of one during the Airborne Toxic Event.

DeLillo’s work has influenced numerous contemporary authors including, but not limited to, Bret Easton Ellis, David Foster Wallace, and Jonathan Franzen.

Works in Critical Context DeLillo’s early works were not widely reviewed and critiques of Americana, End Zone, Great Jones Street, Ratner’s Star, Running Dog, and The Names ranged from qualified praise to descriptions of the author’s many limitations. It was with the publication of White Noise, in1985, that DeLillo achieved wide-spread critical acclaim.

Since then, his works have become increasingly popular, establishing him firmly as an important contemporary American author.

White Noise was highly acclaimed and won the 1985 American Book Award for fiction. Richard Eder in the Los Angeles Times Book Review (January 13, 1985) called White Noise a ‘‘stunning book’’ that adroitly captured the contemporary American mood. The novel, he declared, was ‘‘a moving picture of a disquiet we seem to share more and more.’’ Eder waxed poetic about DeLillo’s talent: ‘‘The author is Charon as a master mariner; his flame, like Quevedo’s, knows how to swim the icy water. He brings us across the Styx in a lilting maneuver that is so adept that we can’t help laughing as we go.’’ Jayne Anne Phillips in The New York Times Book Review (January 13, 1985) also praised DeLillo’s insight into the American psyche, calling White Noise ‘‘timely and frightening . . . because of its totally American concerns, its rendering of a particularly American numbness.’’ She found Jack Gladney’s narrative voice ‘‘one of the most ironic, intelligent, grimly funny voices yet to comment on life in present-day America.’’ Diane Johnson in the New York Review of Books (March 14, 1985) agreed, citing Jack’s ‘‘eloquence’’ as mitigating what might otherwise

have been an overly ‘‘exacting and despairing view of civilization.’’ Like many reviewers, Walter Clemons in Newsweek (January 21, 1985) predicted that White Noise would gain DeLillo ‘‘wide recognition . . . as one of the best American novelists.’’ In stark contrast to his earlier works, the novels that followed White Noise were widely reviewed and positively received. Libra became a best-seller and a critical success. It won the Irish Times-Aer Lingus International Fiction

Prize and was nominated for the American Book Award. Mao II won the PEN/Faulkner Award.[[15]](#footnote-16)

**2.2 An environmental catastrophe in the novel ”White noise “**

DeLillo's work displays elements of both [modernism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modernism) and [postmodernism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmodernism).[[16]](#footnote-17) (Though it is worth noting that DeLillo himself claims not to know if his work is postmodern: "It is not [postmodern]. I'm the last guy to ask. If I had to classify myself, it would be in the long line of modernists, from James Joyce through William Faulkner and so on. That has always been my model." [[17]](#footnote-18)He has said the primary influences on his work and development are "abstract expressionism, foreign films, and jazz." Many of DeLillo's books (notably [*White Noise*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Noise_(novel))) [satirize](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satirize) academia and explore [postmodern](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmodern) themes of rampant consumerism, novelty intellectualism, underground conspiracies, the disintegration and re-integration of the family, and the promise of rebirth through violence. In several of his novels, DeLillo explores the idea of the increasing visibility and effectiveness of terrorists as societal actors and, consequently, the displacement of what he views to be artists', and particularly novelists', traditional role in facilitating social discourse ([*Players*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Players_(novel)), [*Mao II*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mao_II), [*Falling Man*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Falling_Man_(novel))). Another perpetual theme in DeLillo's books is the saturation of [mass media](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mass_media) and its role in forming [simulacra](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simulacrum), resulting in the removal of an event from its context and the consequent draining of meaning (see the highway shooter in [*Underworld*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Underworld_(DeLillo_novel)), the televised disasters longed for in [*White Noise*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Noise_(novel)), the planes in [*Falling Man*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Falling_Man_(novel)), the evolving story of the interviewee in [*Valparaiso*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valparaiso_(play))). The psychology of crowds and the capitulation of individuals to group identity is a theme DeLillo examines in several of his novels, especially in the prologue to [*Underworld*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Underworld_(DeLillo_novel)), [*Mao II*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mao_II), and [*Falling Man*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Falling_Man_(novel)).

In his remarkable 1985 novel *White Noise*, Don DeLillo stages a primal scene of the electronic age. A postnuclear family—two adults and an assortment of children from previous marriages, an endearingly dysfunctional Brady Bunch—is gathered together on a Friday night, eating Chinese takeout, watching TV. All eyes are riveted on the screen, taking in image after image of “floods, earthquakes, mud slides, erupting volcanoes.” The scene is familiar enough, but there is something arresting about the enthusiasm of these media consumers for all things catastrophic: “Every disaster made us wish for more, for something bigger, grander, more sweeping.” So narrates Professor Jack Gladney, matter-of-factly describing his family’s response to the evening’s entertainment. But the experience weighs on him, and by the next day he is looking to his university colleagues for explanations. “Why is it,” he asks, “that decent, well-meaning and responsible people find themselves intrigued by catastrophe when they see it on television?”

This is a good question. If the content of movies, video games, and network news reports is any indication, we live in a culture of calamity. It sometimes seems that we can’t turn on our televisions without encountering dramatic images of destruction: a hurricane battering a southern resort; a sea of fire engulfing a national forest; a great river breaking through its levees and rolling over the surrounding countryside; a tower of glass and steel bursting into flames and crumbling to the city streets below. Why are these images ubiquitous? What makes disasters so fascinating, so thrilling, so involving? *White Noise*, to the extent that it is a story about a disaster, “an airborne toxic event,” is a symptom of the culture of calamity. It also offers a diagnosis. Troubled by the inevitability of death, haunted by postnuclear anxieties about impending technological and environmental annihilation, the novel presents our interest in disasters as an expression of existential anxiety, as an entirely natural response to the prospect of personal and collective obliteration. More remarkable, however, are those passages that attend to the claims of culture, insisting on the intensified attraction of images of calamity in a mass media society. “Only a catastrophe gets our attention,” Gladney is assured by a professor of popular culture, Alfonse Stompanato. “We want them, we need them, we depend on them.” This is an extraordinary assertion, but one that deserves to be taken seriously. DeLillo properly places disasters at the center of contemporary fields of desire, gesturing at a theory of attention for the postmodern age. Of course, it is necessary to be precise about the subject of Stompanato’s statement. Who, exactly, needs disasters? In one sense everybody, or nearly everybody. The culture of calamity reveals a general psychological addiction to images and stories of disaster in our society, though this varies in significant ways across registers of class, gender, and race. There is also a decisive structural or ideological component to the American dependency on disasters. After all, dominant political and economic systems have long relied for their authority and legitimacy on the presence or threat of calamities and other crises. We must consider the development of both of these forms of dependency if we are to fathom the power and place of calamity in American culture.

In this book we offer an analytical history that traces and analyzes the evolution of American ways of managing and imagining disasters between the seventeenth century and the present. We can take notice of the political, economic, and environmental dimensions of this story even as we endeavor to track down the cultural meanings that Americans have attached to natural disasters (fires, floods, hurricanes) and to sudden catastrophes that share many properties with natural disasters (nuclear hazards, terrorist attacks). Seeking to detail changing responses to calamity, we can consult relief records, legislative transcripts, economic data, private papers, newspapers, letters, memoirs, diaries, sermons, philosophical treatises, poems, novels, photographs, movies, and television footage. The sheer volume and intensity of this material (collected in local and national archives across the country) convinces us that disasters have been, and continue to be, occasions for extraordinary cultural production. Disasters have made history. It is clear from this documentation that critics working at that uncommonly productive junction of Marxist and postmodern theory (David Harvey, Marshall Berman, Edward Soja, Frederic Jameson, Michel Foucault, to name a few) are not the only ones who have grasped the peculiar prominence and resonance of disasters in the world that capitalism has made. It is our lot, our predicament, and possibly our fortune to possess a crisis-oriented imagination.

This denatured understanding of the spectacular character of “events” has transformed cultural criticism over the past generation, with weighty implications for disaster studies. In the same year that White Noise appeared, Neil Postman published Amusing Ourselves to Death, a gloomy philosophical jeremiad on the decline of morality and reason in the new media age. Adapting and revising Marshall McLuhan’s famous formulation “the medium is the message,” he argued that it was an intrinsic property of electronic visual media to convert all experience into entertainment, vacating incidents and events of complexity, depth, and history. According to his analysis, death and destruction, like sex and violence and anything else for that matter, now appeared on television only as amusing or distracting images; this, indeed, was the inevitable fate of all representations enhanced by stirring music, voiceovers, and dramatic editing techniques and inserted into a data flow that blurred distinctions and transitions between dramas, sitcoms, commercials, and news reports. Disasters, in this interpretation, were extreme cases, evidence that even the most horrifying events were bound to end up as spectacles.

Social conditions and experiences have somehow become sedimented into our fantasies. It is no surprise that we dream of catastrophes because we live in a catastrophic world. Spectacles of calamity command our attention because they present an occasion for processing, intellectually and emotionally, the experience of living in a world of systematic ruin and renewal, destruction and reconstruction, where technological and environmental disasters always loom.

One of DeLillo’s achievements in White Noise, a text that maps out recent (middle-class) responses to disaster as richly as any work of fiction I know, lies precisely in his ability to grasp the mingled hope and dread, distaste and delight, involvement and distance so characteristic of responses to disaster in our time. White Noise properly treats calamities as events that make things happen. And it is alert to the continuing imprint of established values and outlooks. One of the most powerful is a residual romanticism that continues to have a profound influence on our understanding of the good life, and which reserves a privileged place for adversity.

Without a cultural history we cannot begin to fathom the powerful hold of these customary reactions on the contemporary imagination of calamity. Nor can we grasp how and why the conditions of modernity might play such an important, possibly paramount, role in the story I tell here. For all the surface cynicism, for all the irony, White Noise is also thoroughly susceptible to the fraying modern dream of a world without disaster, the prospect of a future in which technology might be harnessed to protect us from the harms of nature and the hazards of science itself. Despite his suspicion of the motives of politicians and experts and his sneaking disillusionment with the ways of the modern world, Jack Gladney, for example, takes heart from the presence of bureaucrats, technicians, and soldiers, gladly submitting to their commands and ministrations. “They seem to have things under control” is a thought, or wish, that brings assurance and satisfaction (147). [[18]](#footnote-19)

Even as disasters have become entertaining spectacles, they have also laid the cultural groundwork for the expansion of a powerful national security apparatus. This suggests a widespread longing for protection from calamity, and underscores the extent to which the current political system depends on disasters to justify exercises of power in an era of supposed fiscal restraint and deregulation, as well as the degree to which laws and institutions are organized around the avoidance and mitigation of disaster—risk management. In the novel, to be sure, disaster officials assume a rather outlandish appearance in the guise of Advanced Disaster Management, a private consulting firm that “interfaces” with state governments to simulate evacuations in preparation for disasters. The inevitable joke is that the organization ends up treating a real toxic spill as a statistical deviation: “The insertion curve isn’t as smooth as we would like. There’s a probability excess. Plus which we don’t have our victims laid out where we’d want them if this was an actual simulation” (139). This passage reads like a literary gloss on Jean Baudrillard’s well-known and provocative assertion that in postmodern society life is actually “organised according to a script for a disaster film.” Still, DeLillo has identified one of the most important developments of our time, the morphing of a national security state into what might better be described as a disaster-security state in which official and semiofficial agencies have come to wield extraordinary power—all in the name of disaster prevention and relief. This, the novel suggests, is an age in which disasters are always happening, or always about to happen, and in which emergency management, however disconcerting and preposterous, is necessary and unavoidable.

**Conclusion**

In this course paper we tried to analyze the novel of Don Delillo“White noise”.

Don Delillo had been publishing for some time before establishing his reputation with White Noise (1985) and confirming it with Libra (1988) and Underworld (1997). The universe of his novels is one where language, media, and consumerism so package and transmit the real that for many of his characters this secondary version replaces authentic experience. In addition, the novels posit a complex system of connections between corporations and government agencies that produce forces aimed at defining and exploiting the individual. But for all the bleakness of this vision, many commentators find a suggestion of transcendent possibilities in DeLillo’s work. The author himself has suggested in interviews that the novel is the form in which the presence of the forces that package and replace the real can best be exposed, and – at least to some extent – might be foiled.

Don Delillo’s novel “White noise” is the modern satire. It took us some time to adjust to the writing style and to what the author was trying to accomplish with White Noise.

White Noise begins as an examination of a "modern" family. The members' relationship with each other, technology and their fear of death and aging. White Noise was written in the mid-1980s, but it still has resonance. The characters philosophize and make interesting observations but at a certain point in the novel the town that is the setting of the book faces an environmental disaster that could be deadly for all of its inhabitants. White Noise follows the family, observes their reactions and ultimately makes a comment on how we live our life.  
 American society has a deep fear of death and aging. We seem to imbue the elderly and those that age with some blame for getting old. But when faced with dangers to ourselves, we often adopt apathy and fail to react. Perhaps because it seems hopeless or we feel helpless or it is bigger than us.   
White Noise has a brilliant side critique of academic life and its perhaps irrelevance with respect to daily life of human beings. The main character in a quest to establish him as unique has created a "Hitler Studies" department at the college where he teaches. Yet he cannot speak or read German. His colleague is hoping to create similar staying power by creating an Elvis Presley Studies and has been invited to teach a course on the cinematography of car crashes.  
 The main focus of the book are the characters obsessive fear of dying. And the absurdity of trying to stop the slow descent. Babette, the main characters wife, bizarrely enough teaches a class on proper posture to elderly people at a local church. As if they have just forgotten how to stand properly. As if this class will allow them to suddenly stand straight up and no longer remind us of what we will all become.

"White Noise was written before cell phones, laptops, and the internet became a massive part of life. Nevertheless, the book captures the already growing spirit of distraction in the modern culture as well as the inundation of information (of varying degrees of accuracy) and the hardening and disconnection with disaster. Nevertheless, the book's most consistent theme--death--is perhaps the very oldest idea behind stories as death is, arguably, the force that drives religion and all other creation myths. Despite incorporating what were, at the time, the most modern themes, White Noise is just one in an endless series of books in which a character must come to grips with the fact that humans, unlike literature, must reach an end. White Noise eventually falls victim to its own conceit; in reading a book so devoted to exploring the theme of white noise, it is impossible to escape the feeling that White Noise is itself white noise. Consider consciously listening to the gurgling of your refrigerator instead--you would probably gain the same insight in much less time.

Having done this research I learnt much information about the post modern literature and the representative of this period Don DeLillo.

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