

Don delillo's white noise: obsession, silence, and communication that display dea...

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Death is the total and permanent cessation of all the vital functions of an organism. What constitutes the vital function of an organism? Perhaps it is the constant salivation for the presence of someone we love or the bombardment of reality shown in a little box amidst the room in your little world where you take comfort next to the warmth of the fire. Maybe it is the constant beep in your ear that doesn't shut up, but gives you reassurance that there is no straight line yet. What is death really? Death may be the numerous times you lay on the floor in your dark cave and listened to the same song over and over and over again for four hours straight. It is always darkest just before the lights come on. In *White Noise*, Jack displays the revolution of death which he does not yet understand. It's a revolution that not even the geniuses of the world can comprehend, but they try. The concept of death is always looming. Jack displays through obsession, silence, and communication that death is the white noise in the room.

Death carries families, friends, sorrows, tears, joy, pain, reflection, worry, and even obsession. More than just the "loss" of someone, death brings worry and obsession to many people, and many individuals need to understand every single intricate detail to be satisfied with life. Jack is a prime example of a person with an obsession with death. He lectures his class and he explains to them that all plots move "deathward." Death has many meanings, but the dictionary clearly states the total and permanent cessation of all the vital functions of an organism. Then, let's consider plots as living breathing animals walking upon this earth. People, especially in the age of technology and speed, look toward the end of a book, a story, a television show, a movie, or even the plot of stages in our own lives. This

tells us that we look for the “ deathward” movement in plots. We read faster, binge watch television shows, skip commercials, and look up answers on the internet. It shows an obsession with death that many people have even when we don't realize it. How is Jack's obsession the same in comparison to other people? In the book, Jack states, “ Sweat trickled down my ribs. The digital reading on the clock-radio was 3: 51. Always odd numbers at times like this. What does it mean? Is death odd-numbered?” (47). The readers cannot tell if Jack is crazy or if there is fuel behind his paranoia. People have an obsession with death and we have no idea that it is constantly looming. Jack would choose loneliness over death. Do people in real life have the capacity to make that decision too? Perhaps, Jack doesn't see companionship or someone accompanying him as a vital function of his being. This contradicts his obsession a little bit. Why question death and get so involved with death and yet not want anything to do with it? He would take loneliness over death? Maybe his plot does not move deathward, but remains forever.

A stamp representing Jack Gladney is put on envelope or a Hitler lecture program with Jack Gladney in fine print on the cover. His name is a vital function to living and to being. It would not cessate totally or permanently. Yet, Jack believes wholeheartedly that he is obsessed. Maybe the obsession is not with death, but an obsession without death. Without death, how many people would live on this earth? Without death, does Jack ever have to worry about life without Babette or worry about leaving Babette to live alone? The longing for a life without death is so evident the obsession becomes focused on quite the opposite where it then turns into a fuel that burns in our souls.

Death is not Jack's obsession. Life without death is Jack's obsession.

However, we all know death is the looming white noise in the room.

The interpretation of silence is symbolic amongst the different characters of life. Silence may resemble anger, sorrow, vengeance, and sometimes even fierce love. Silence also resembles fear. Why talk about the things we fear when we can just simply avoid them? That is exactly what Jack and Babette do. Jack and Babette tell each other everything, except about their fear of death. It shows great loyalty in a relationship to tell each other absolutely everything, but the fear of death is something confidential between each individual. One may consider that death is something that is not essential to discuss because no one likes talking about it. What makes death so ominous? Truthfully, in the story, the sinister feeling of death comes between Jack and Babette.

Babette is secretly taking a bottle of pills called Dylar to help her "fear of death" or "obsession". Babette says, "I'm afraid to die... I think about it all the time. It won't go away" (196). However, Babette claims we should fear death. Babette did not tell Jack about this bottle of Dylar and she begins to claim her true fear of death, the two things in their relationship that held constant. No secrets and no discussion of the fear of death. A minimal silence that has now been broken by a drug named Dylar. It has the word die in it. Who takes a drug called Dylar? It isn't an appealing name to make it sound even remotely lively or healing. Maybe Dylar holds the silence. The silence of death. The silence of a marriage so loyal and honest that even that loudest pots and pans cannot disturb. So Babette did not speak of Dylar, her

noise is the infatuation with death. The constant beeping is in her ear. Perhaps the silence for Jack is without death. No worry of his prominent death. No deathly forecast. Jack doesn't turn on the little box in the living room to see a weather man proclaim, "Today is cloudy with a slight chance of death." It is looming. Jack's noise is the reminder that death is chasing him. It chases all of us. The road comes to an end somewhere. The silence between the two is fierce love. Neither Babette nor Jack can imagine a life without the other. It is all so crazy. Maybe, the concept of death disappears. The noise stops. Jack and Babette can look into each other in the deepest crevices of each other's soul. Pure silence will remain. Except for the heartbeat. The white noise is the heartbeat, a vital function that would no longer cessate because of indisputable truth of death.

It is interesting that silence can contribute to death's white noise and yet communication can do quite the same thing. So why would communication affect the idea that death is the white noise in the room at all? A very simple example of the communication is when Jack speaks about Hitler's relationship with crowds. He says that crowds are a way to keep out death and to break away from a crowd is to face death alone. This concept is communicated clearly to his students, but what does this mean to Jack? Jack is facing his forecasted death because of his exposure to Nyodene D. He is facing it alone. He confides about this to Murray who is deranged and peculiar throughout the story. But that is not nearly enough to call a crowd. Jack believes his death is certain because he is facing it alone. Had he and a huge group of people been exposed for sure, he would not be nearly as

skeptical because the crowd would keep death out. Through this simple communication to Jack's students, death proves to be looming and especially in Jack's circumstances. Another communicating event is when Jack talks to Orest Mercator about wanting to sit in a cage of poisonous snakes and then proceed to discuss the possibility of death. Jack says, " You are intentionally facing death. You are setting out to do exactly what people spend their lives trying not to do. Die. I want to know why" (266). Jack cannot wrap his head around the idea of death. This exchange in communication is even consumed with the concept of death whether it be the physical auditory discussion of death or the visual communication. Maybe we must view communication as an organism as well. Once the motion of the vocal folds in the larynx has stopped, the vital function of communication is then cessated. Communication dies. Death prevails.

Now, the obsession is without death. The silence is fierce love. The communication is dead. All in the name of the ominous ghost figure that chases us six feet into the ground. Jack is consumed in a revolution so large that the very concept of death is most likely nonexistent. The crackle of the fire is subtle and becomes hard to notice. The box you stare at constantly sitting on a shelf has now become background noise because it doesn't meet life's standards. The music fades. The beeping stops. From here on, the vital function is now permanently cessated, but there is a flicker. A light in the distance. You won't know what it is until you go there, but it looks to be wonderful. The white noise is death, and the white noise of death is light.