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The Representation of Death in Selected Contemporary American Novels by Don DeLillo and Philip Roth

Presented by:

Mrs. ENTEGHAR Kahina

in front of the Jury composed of

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Declaration

I declare that this work is the product of the candidate's own investigation, and that necessary references are made, whenever necessary, to the works of other researchers. I assert also that this work has not been proposed and is not currently in submission for any other degree of professional qualification.

ENTEGHAR Kahina

Dedication

To myself and my daughter,

To my mother and dear husband

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Abstract

This thesis deals with the representation of death in four selected contemporary American novels: *White Noise* (1986) and *Zero K* (2016) by Don DeLillo, and *Everyman* (2003) and *Nemesis* (2010) by Philip Roth. Using the existential theories of Martin Heidegger, the psychoanalytical ideas of Sigmund Freud and the literary theory of dialogism by Mikhail Bakhtin, it looked into the cultural and private dynamics which altered the death epistemology in the selected novels. The existential, psychological and spiritual impacts of the dissimilar attitudes toward death range from denial to affirmation of its inevitability without admitting its existential/ ontological merit. Existential inauthenticity, meaninglessness, and loss of dwelling, in addition to psychological introversion and uncanniness, are consequences of the different representations of death. These consequences articulate the postmodern estrangement from the naturalness and necessity of finitude. However, while DeLillo struggles against the postmodern cultural pathology of meaninglessness by advocating reconciliation with the inevitability of death, Roth struggles with the idea of mortality and offers a cynical image of death synonymous with deprivation and humiliation. In addition, the thesis argued that DeLillo and Roth's conceptualisation of death absorbs philosophical, literary, psychoanalytical, religious and historical discourses and dialogises them in formulating a discourse of death which challenges all the claims of authority or centrality. It showed that a prior discourse on death is but a point of reference in the formulation of a wider postmodern discourse. In contrast to DeLillo's fiction which enters in a dialogue with context and historical events and updates, Roth's texts interrogate other literary texts in order to investigate contemporary attitudes to death; comparing and contrasting the epoch's image of death to previous ones, and answering DeLillo's discourse.

Keywords: Don DeLillo, Philip Roth, representation of death, Heidegger, Freud Postmodernity.

Résumé

Cette thèse traite de la représentation de la mort dans quatre romans américains contemporains : *Bruit de fond* (1985) et *Zéro K*(2016) de Don DeLillo, ainsi que *Un homme* (2003) et *Némésis* (2010) de Philip Roth. En nous appuyons sur les théories de l'existentialisme de Martin Heidegger, les idées psychanalytiques de Sigmund Freud et le principe littéraire dialogique de Mikhaïl Bakhtine, ce travail a étudié les conceptualisations postmodernes de l'idée de la mort et a analysé les dynamiques culturelles, historiques et individuelles qui influencent l'épistémologie de la mort dans ces romans. Le travail a, par ailleurs, examiné les impacts existentiels, psychologiques et spirituels des différentes perceptions et attitudes envers la mort. Ces dernières varient entre la négation et le refus et l'affirmation de l'inévitabilité de la mort sans admettre sa valeur existentielle et ontologique. Une inauthenticité et insignifiance de l'existence, perte de sens de l'« habiter », en outre introversion et étrangeté psychologiques sont les conséquences des différentes conceptualisations de la mort. Ces conséquences exposent l'éloignement de l'individu pendant la postmodernité vis-à-vis de la mort biologique et sa valeur. Cependant, alors que DeLillo récuse la pathologie culturelle postmoderne de l'insignifiance en proposant la réconciliation avec l'inévitabilité de la mort, Roth se débat avec la signification de l'idée de la mort et offre une image cynique sur la mort comme étant un synonyme de déchéance et d'humiliation. Aussi, cette thèse ambitionne à éclaircir leur conceptualisation de la mort, Don DeLillo et Philip Roth assimile des discours différents qui s'inspirent de la philosophie et de la littérature, la psychanalyse et la religion. Ils formulent un discours de la mort qui s'oppose à l'autorité ou la centralité d'un discours particulier sur un autre. Elle a montré qu'un discours antérieur de la mort n'est qu'un point de référence dans la formulation d'un discours postmoderne plus signifiant. En conclusion, contrairement aux œuvres de DeLillo qui entrent en dialogue avec le contexte (le monde) et les événements historiques, les romans de Roth interrogent d'autres textes littéraires pour comprendre les conceptions contemporaines de la mort, tout en comparant l'image de la mort de l'époque actuelle aux époques précédentes.

Mots clés: Don DeLillo, Philip Roth, représentation de la mort, Martin Heidegger, Postmodernisme.

CONTENTS

General Introduction

> "Knowing that it is our fate to die—and, what is worse, that it is our fate to know that we will die—makes us furious at nature."Evan Eisenberg, *The Ecology of Eden*
>
> "Thou owest heav'n a death."William Shakespeare , *Henry IV*
>
> "For as long as literature has been created, it has been screaming, in horror, at death. It has been mocking death, hiding from it behind Harmless little things or marching up to it in imperious fashion . . . The writer never forgets that death is waiting behind his back."
>
> Urs Widmer, *ON Life, Death & This & That of the Rest.*

Death is one of the greatest mysteries that have always occupied humans. Some people are scared by the idea of death, some see it as a refuge from the burdens of life, and others tend to think that death is something abnormal and should not exist. It is my concern in this study to show that responses and attitudes toward death are so diverse, personal and culture-bound.

Death is, says Robert Kastenbaum (2000), that which "elicits destabilizing responses" (17). For Michael Hviid Jacobsen (2003), death is that event which defines individuals' lives and on which centers human history which can be seen as "the unending meticulous recoding of what man does with death" (11). In contemporary times, in spite of all the scientific and technological developments that humanity has reached, death still holds a very particular significance because, confirms Tem Horwitz, as we are alive "all contests involve life and death. All battles in life are to the death" (8).

This study draws from literature, philosophy, and psychoanalysis in order to explore the representation of death in four selected novels by postmodern American authors Don DeLillo and Philip Roth. It relies on the existential theories of Martin Heidegger, the psychoanalytical

ideas of Sigmund Freud, and the theory of dialogism by Mikhail Bakhtin to investigate into the multiple conceptualizations of the idea of death in DeLillo's *White Noise* (1986) and *Zero K* (2016) in addition to Philip Roth's *Everyman* (2006) and *Nemesis* (2010). This study tackles the cultural, social and personal (advanced age, decayed body and threatened health) factors which influenced the conceptualization of death in the selected fiction. For this I argue that the intersection of cultural and private dynamics forms new perceptions and conceptualizations of death as unnatural, mediated, and "uncanny." It is my intention in this thesis, therefore, to investigate into the existential meaninglessness, spatial non-belonging and loss of the sense of "dwelling," in addition to the psychological uncanniness as consequences of these perceptions of death.

Interest in the role of death in literature, in general, and American literature in particular is not new. In *Love and Death in the American Novel (1960)*, Leslie Fiedler breaks the ground for contextual and textual analyses of many American novels (from *Edgar Huntly* (1799), *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), *The Monks of the Monk Hal (1845, Moby Dick* (1851), *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), *Huckleberry Finn* (1884), to *The Victim (1947*). Among the achievements of Fielder's study is the demonstration that the American novel is distinct from the European one in its "fate" and "character" (11). The author relies on the thematic analysis of love and death "in order to make clear the divergence of [the American] novelistic tradition from the continental one," saying that it is valuable to focus on these themes as "treated by major writers- and especially on the duplicity with which those themes are handled in the United States" (11). Fiedler also argues that American literature has always been obsessed with sex and death. In this thesis, I intend to take the study of the American literary obsession with death a step further by looking into its postmodern representation, attempting to chart a new territory to understanding the representation of death via the existential ideas of Martin Heidegger and dialogues with him.

By representation of death in this study I mean the way death is viewed and conceptualized by the mind of the characters. In fact, the title borrows and answers back to a study by Liran Razinsky entitled "Against Death's Representability: Freud and the Question of Death's Psychic presence" (2016) which addresses the absence of death in psychoanalysis and criticises Freud's argument of the impossibility of representing death, i. e that the latter cannot be perceived by the mind or accepted by the unconscious. For a long time, says Razinsky, death was considered non-representable and its psychic presence cannot be conceptualized. In "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death" (1915), *The Ego and the Id* (1923) and *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926), Freud sustains the premise of the impossibility of death representation by the fact that "the concept," "idea," and "phenomenon" of death is not reachable by the mind. Hence, fear of death is explained and thus replaced by other fears (such as the fear of castration), to be given a very minor place and importance (Razinsky 334). Freud also argues that death's "reference to time," its "abstract" nature and "negative content"—are all aspects that exclude it from the mind. Thus, it is impossible to grasp our own death because it always leaves us in a state of "spectators" (Razinsky 33). It is my intention in this thesis to show that death *can* be represented and conceptualized in various ways, arguing that people cannot fear, desire or be obsessed with something they cannot represent.

In modernity, or modernization, which refers to the civilization developed in Europe and North America since the Renaissance, an unprecedented "rise in material living standards" and unique combination of "science, technology, industry, free market, liberal democracy," promised better individual and social lives (Cahoone11). Though this evolution incited the West to believe in its perfection and invincibility, it heightened the feeling of being minute in the face of the universe because of the still presence of death (Harvey 10-12).

Death—and not least the failure to defeat it—seem incompatible and irrelevant to modern society, reason and rational science (Bauman qtd. in Jacobsen et al).

Critics have noted that modern science and progress encouraged repression and recoil from death for its abstract nature (Kaczmarek 2015) or for its "negativity" and association with the other forms of evil to exclude from modern life (Baudrillard 2002). Agneiz Kaczmarek and Jean Baudrillard, while highlighting the modern retreat from death neglect the perpetuations of estrangement from it in postmodernity because the repressed feelings toward death return to haunt the postmodern man. Besides, their analysis of perceptions of death does not tackle the possible existential and psychological plights that may befall the individual when recoiling from death. By situating the argument of this thesis within the existential framework of Martin Heidegger and the psychoanalytical ideas of Sigmund Freud, I investigate into the existential emptiness, sensation of non-belonging to the world, alienation, psychological unfamiliarity, uncanniness and introversion as consequences of postmodern attitudes to death.

The impossibility of defying death is brutally confirmed by the twentieth-century "death camps and death squads". This century stands as a spiteful period in history because of the escalating brutal wars; two world wars, holocausts, a Cold war and many other bloody events (Stromberg 242). The conflicts left man in fear and despair, pessimism and uncertainty. The violent hostilities alienated people and affected one's perception of one's self, view of the world and relation with the divine. They unleashed death and enthroned atheism. Nietzsche had proclaimed "God is dead: of his pity for man hath God died" (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 88). As a result, Man found himself living in a bare land, in a world prompted by death and

"rotten" bodies, a world which matches perfectly the one pervaded by an indiscriminate reaper in *The Triumph of Death*, the painting by Pieter Bruegel the Elder in 1562[1]

The twenty-first century which inherited the legacy of violence from the previous one continues to shatter the optimism fostered by modern progress, and succeeds to frustrate the contemporary systems which operate "on the basis of the exclusion of death, a system whose ideal is an ideal of zero-death," to quote from Baudrillard (16). In fact, though there are no officially announced world wars so far, people all around the world feel unsafe because of the impending threat of wars, like the American invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, the wars in Syria, Yemen, and the recent Russian military invasion of Ukraine, etc. Another kind of violence embodied in the form of terrorism made hope for security unfeasible. Last but not least, the optimism in a possible control of death was made unattainable by the appearance of viruses which may be of natural causes or may have escaped from human laboratories (like the Covid 19). In this study I intend to look into the change in the meaning of death from an inevitable certainty to a meaningless misfortune under the different forms of violence and terror.

My interest in the conceptualization of death in contemporary novels is also sustained by the confusion regarding the meaning of death in the light of advanced medical technologies which made it difficult to define death. For instance, with the introduction into the field of medicine and health care and of life-supporting machines, the definition of death is based on "total and irreversible cessation of brain function" (Youngner et all xiii). The aim is "to 'cheat on death and prolong life" (Jacobsen 12). Therefore, philosophers such as Geoffery Scarre (2003) highlighted the difficulty of defining death with the availability of the so-called "life-support mechanisms" which are available to sustain vital functions long beyond the stage at which the subject's own organs have become incapable of doing so" (5).

[1]See App. 1

As such, technological and scientific progress defies the comprehension as well the identification of mortality. Thus, what may sound a trivial subject known and understood by simple humans is so complex to define in recent times.

In *Postmortal Society: towards a Sociology of Immortality,* Michael Hviid Jacobsen surveys the human quest for immortality in fiction and reality. He states that away from the Mortalists' claim that "to be human is to be mortal" and the "Immortalists' attempt to cheat on mortality, death is at once "the Great Equalizer" and "the Great Humanizer" since it makes one realize that mortality is inevitable to all Men. Living in an age of "posts," according to Jacobsen, suggests that humanity is perhaps closer than ever before to life expansion and resurgence of the dead (10). Preconditioned by the great growth in medical as well as life expansion technologies, the "post mortal society" will have serious influences on the entire world challenging traditional conceptions of life, death, immortality and basic values, beliefs, ethics, economics, and social organisation (10). Though uncertain about the possibility of its realization, Jacobsen is confident that "as an idea, as a movement, as a potential," postmortalism is strongly integrating into the contemporary society (11). Throughout the analysis of *White Noise* and Z*ero K*, I will examine the means through which the contemporary American individual attempts to achieve immortality. Yet, unlike Jacobsen's study, my thesis will examine existential apathy, absurdity and confinement in space and loss of feeling at home as inevitable results of the projects of technological immortality. I consider DeLillo's ideas in *White Noise* and *Zero K* as warning against the postmortal ideas.

Philosophers and critics have examined the uncertainty and meaninglessness, nihilism and absurdity which invaded the world in light of the above-mentioned conditions. In *The Passion of the Western Mind* (1991), Richard Tarnas comments on the collapse of the old principles which used to reassure people by saying that the modern ma:

> mov[ed] from a near boundless confidence in his own powers, his spiritual potential, his capacity for certain knowledge, his mastery over nature, and his progressive destiny, to what often appeared to be a sharply opposite condition: a debilitating sense of metaphysical insignificance and personal futility, spiritual loss of faith, uncertainty in knowledge, a mutually destructive relationship with nature, and intense insecurity concerning the human future. In four centuries of modern man's existence, Bacon and Descart had become Kafka and Beckett. (393)

The quote explains the new conditions which characterised the existence of the modern man, clarifying that postmodern culture[2] has its roots in many modern crises which continued to shake one's spiritual and existential life. These conditions found expression in the philosophical ideas of the existentialist thinkers who talked about people's suffering, life, death, ambitions, possibilities and limits.

Drawing on Nietzsche, David Harvey described the modern man as "a vital energy, the will to live and to power, swimming in a sea of disorder, anarchy, destruction, individualism, alienation and despair" (15). These perspectives, though very meaningful, disregard the interrelation between the new conditions of spiritual, existential and psychological estrangement and one's attitudes to death. In this thesis, I intend to probe into the new attitudes to death which arose in postmodern times as a result of the collapse of the old principles mentioned by Tarnas and propose that denial of death or affirmation of its inevitability without recognizing its existential significance can be existentially and psychologically destructive.

[2]According to Gerhard Hoffmann, postmodernism which started as a critique of modernism in the 1950s, expanded to become a mode of writing and then to a general cultural phenomenon which dominated the cultural scene (14).

Many studies of attitudes to death come as surveys of cultural perceptions and images of death which prevailed in different historical periods in the West. For example, in "Writing in the Shadow of Death: Proust, Barthes, Tuszynska," Agneizka Kaczmarek claims that each epoch and each culture has its own unique image of death" and that "silence covered attitudes to death in modernity" (24). Similarly, in *Western Attitudes toward Death: from the Middle Ages to the Present* (1974), Philippe Aries works on the history of changing attitudes to death in Western societies from familiarity during Middles Ages to unfamiliarity in the twentieth-century. As far as America is concerned, Aries asserts that what is unique about Americans' attitude to death is that they are "very willing to transform death, to put make up on it, to sublimate it, but they do not want to make it disappear" (43). Unlike Aries' study which is conducted from diachronic and synchronic angles, my thesis is framed by existential and psychological perspectives, seeking not only to outline the changing attitudes to death but to understand their existential and psychological impacts. It is my intention to start from where Aries' study has ended and try to answer some of the questions he left non-answered such as: is there a permanent relationship between one's idea of death and oneself? Must we take for granted that it is impossible for [the] technological cultures ever to regain the naive confidence in Destiny which had been shown for so long by simple men when dying?

Attitudes to death in postmodern times remain at the periphery of both Aries and Kaczmarek's respective studies. My thesis will fill this gap in their works by looking into the various postmodern conditions of violence and examine the challenge they impose on the existential meaning of death reducing it to an unnecessary somatic condition. In other words, while examining the grandeur given to death by the prevalent terror, I will also investigate into how technology promises to conquer it, showing that both forces augment the plight of existential alienation from death. I intend to answer two main questions: how is postmodern

understanding of death different from the modern one? Is worship of science and blind belief in its invincibility to conquer death the fate of postmodern man too?

In *Death, Desire and Loss in Western Culture* (1998), Jonathan Dollimore attests for the strong connexion between death, loss, and desire and their essential role in the formation of the Western culture, assuming that the connection between death and desire is very complex and paradoxical ranging from death as an object of desire to death as the end of desire (xvii). Dollimore's study, unlike Aries' *Western Attitudes to Death*, is structured by intellectual trends instead of historical periods and concludes that the tragic consequences of the conspiracy between death and desire culminate in the catastrophe of AIDS in recent times. He declares that while social historians speak of an increasing denial of death in modern times, in the writings he examines in this book (being literary, philosophical or psychoanalytical), arguments sustain the thesis that there is rather a continuing and an intensifying preoccupation with death. So, whereas during the 19th century sex was the taboo and the forbidden, during the 20th century death has not been repressed as much as "resignified in new, complex and productive ways which then legitimates never-ending analyses of it" (124). As for denial of death, he says, it occurred only in the social belief that social change can be controlled "by praxis" (xxviii).

Though richly expressive and documented, Dollimore's study is limited in several respects. Though his arguments which bound death to desire are well sustained and meaningful, his negation of the denial of death is questionable as he does not extend thinking of desire—embodied in sexuality—as a defence against the consciousness of death. I consider his view of denial of death as being solely social too limited as it overlooks the possibility that it may occur at the personal level not because of fear from social change but as a result of hubristic refusal to accept finitude. While Dollimore argues that the interrelatedness of death

and desire may culminate in tragedies similar to AIDS, I argue that fleeing from death unravels as equally tragic when it culminates in existential and psychological plights.

Because this thesis starts from the perception of death in postmodern times and fiction, it also reflects a postmodern interest in the deconstruction and reconstruction of the meaning of death. In *From Modernism to Postmodernism, Concepts and Strategies of Postmodern American Fiction,* Gerhard Hoffmann argues that postmodern texts create a montage of discourses attempting to cope with the "accumulated dubieties, insecurities, vagaries and skepticisms of our time" (15). In these discourses, there intersect "expiring and evolving ideas and strategies." In postmodern fiction, he admits, "pluralism and a multiplicity of perspectives change relations of dominance in a spirit of liberation, a sense of joy at being released from stifling traditions and ideologies" (16). By reading the discourse of death from the perspective of postmodern pluralism, I seek to investigate into DeLillo's and Roth's deconstruction and reconstruction of opinions, conceptualizations and perspectives on death to show that the fact of death and the discourse surrounding it resists unity and singularity.

The plurality of attitudes to death invites reading the multi-dimensionality and the dialogic nature of the author's discourse using the theory of dialogism by Mikhail Bakhtin. It will investigate into the dialogue between Don DeLillo and Philip Roth concerning the idea of death, concluding that while DeLillo analyzes American cultural attitudes to death, Roth's fiction focuses more on the very personal and individual factors of advanced age, decayed bodies and unstable health. I will therefore proclaim the interrelatedness of the attitude to death, culture, identity, subjectivity, self-esteem and raison d'être.

The use of Bakhtin's dialogism will enlighten reading the dialogue between DeLillo, Philip Roth and Heidegger about death. Interestingly, despite the affirmation of their high standing position in the contemporary American literary field, one may notice the scarcity in

the studies that bring them together. Among the few studies which look at the similarities and differences in the authors perspective and the thematic concerns of their work is Kenneth Millard, in *Contemporary American Fiction,* where he basically examines Roth's and DeLillo's portrayal of American culture by explaining that their fiction investigates the "relationship between history, media, and myths of national identity (4). Yet, Millard's study does not tackle the authors' representations of death nor their dialogues with each other or with Martin Heidegger.

The review of literature has demonstrated that critics of death are divided into two camps; those who assume the existence of a deliberate denial of death in contemporary American culture and literature, and those who attest that denial of death exists only at the social level. In contrast to these views, I argue that postmodern literature defies single fixed attitudes to death and displays multiple perceptions and reactions to the epistemology of death. By investigating into the selected novels of Don DeLillo and Philip Roth, I intend to show that the responses range from death fear and terror which incite rejection of mortality and casting it as unnatural and nothing in front of modern technologies, to constant anxiety and anticipation of finitude which impose affirmation of its inevitability without tolerating its necessity and value.

While many critics provide platforms to frame and conceptualize the changing attitudes to death, I seek to understand the reasons behind the change by examining the postmodern conditions and the private factors of body, health and age which motivated it. I finally argue that these dynamics and reactions result in existential inauthenticity, and meaninglessness, failure of "dwelling," and spiritual void, in addition to psychological alienation and introversion.

To address this issue, I consider it fundamental to carry out my research at three different but interrelated levels beginning with the philosophical/ psychoanalytical perspectives, moving to the cultural/ historical aspects and ending up with the literary/dialogic ones. To achieve this objective I will rely on the existential theory of Martin Heidegger in *Being and Time* (2010)[3]and "Building Dwelling Thinking," Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical concepts of defence mechanisms and the "uncanny" in addition to Mikha'il Bakhtin's literary dialogism.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger emphasizes the role of death and its interconnectedness to life, asserting that mortality is a fundamental structure of a meaningful existence while alienation from the worth of mortality entails alienation from life itself. It is in its focus on the way existence is shaped by mortality instead of seeking a definition of the moment or event of death that Heidegger's theory helps my investigationof the existential crises which result from the postmodern responses to finitude.

Heidegger's ideas defy the philosophical speculations of the Enlightenment era which sought to understand "what existence was" by directing the focus to "what exists," the meaning of "being" and the fundamental structure of being human. He affirms that "being" presupposes any other experiences—including Descartes' "thinking"—because to be able to experience anything at all, one first needs to "be there" (12-15). This "being" is what Heidegger identifies as "Dasein" or "the being (Seined) which we ourselves in each case are and which includes inquiry among the possibilities of its being" (7-6). For Heidegger, the meaning of Dasein is ontologically prior to any other experiences because "Dasein" "is concerned *about* its very being, seeking its structure, nature and properties (11).

[3] I should mention that Heidegger's *Being and Time* was first published in 1927. In this thesis I use a translated version which is published in 2010.

Existentiell understanding refers to Dasein's understanding of itself in terms of the existence, [*Existenz*], to which he always relates and "its possibility to be itself." The possibilities to be one's self can either be "chosen," "stumbled upon," or "grown up in" (11). From this reasoning, Heidegger summarizes the priorities of Dasein as being *ontic* (because its being is defined by existence), *ontological* (because of its determination as existence) and ontic-ontological (because it has proven itself to be ontologically the primary being to be interrogated) (12).

Heidegger attributes two meanings to death including death as the real event which refers to the moment of destruction and annihilation i.e "demise," and death, or "dying" which is the personal understanding of that end as a possibility for being. Finally, he employs "perishing" to distinguish the death of other entities apart from the human beings (247). He defines death as "one's *ownmost, non-relational and insuperable possibility*." It is inevitable, unavoidable and "insuperable" because though Dasein does not choose it, he must undergo it as his whole existence is imposed on him by being *thrown* into the world with no choice (Italics original 251). The existential features of Heidegger's philosophy and its intersection with the other existentialists such as Jean Paul Sartre and Simon De Beauvoir are seen in the ideas of "fallness" and "throwness" into the world with no choice.

Death as "one's ownmost" indicates that it is the intimate experience that the individual does not and cannot share with others. One's own death, in this sense, is so subjective and individuating as no one can die instead of another and no one can stop or postpone the death of another. The third characteristic, "not to be outstripped," is a combination of two further attributes, death's certainty and indefiniteness. Death cannot be outstripped or overtaken as it is possible at any moment.

Heidegger draws the distinction between authentic and inauthentic attitudes to death. The former entails responsible acceptance that *being-in-the-world* is *being-toward-death*. To live authentically, Dasein must realize that death is not the eventual end of life but the inner possibility of "being." In this sense, authenticity and freedom are conditioned by the understanding of the meaning of death as "a phenomenon in life" (Dollimore 161).

In addition, while indifference toward one's death puts a barrier between Dasein and authentic affirmation of mortality, "anticipation" discloses to him the deception of his relation with others as well as the falsehood of the neglect of death. Interestingly too, Heidegger distinguishes between anxiety of death and fear of death. He states that while the first leads to authenticity by cultivating awareness of mortality, the latter is an inauthentic mood of weakness in the face of death as "accidentality" (254-55).

In this thesis, I consider that reading the significance of death in the selected novels necessitates a study of the psychological processes active in life as a result of awareness of death. Therefore, I apply some Freudian psychoanalytical concepts to analyze the selected novels by DeLillo and Roth. By placing the examination of attitudes to death within this framework, I do not intend to achieve a psychoanalytical interpretation of death but an analysis of the cultural and psychological dimensions of attitudes to it.

Freud has altered the understanding of human psychology by claiming that the psyche is structured by unconscious forces and clashing processes in search of pleasure and aversion of pain ("Thoughts on War and Death" 29). While pleasure results from satisfaction of intense needs and desires, suffering and pain may have three sources: "our own body, which is destined to decay and dissolution, and cannot even dispense with anxiety[4] and pain as danger-signals; from the outer world, which can rage against us with the most powerful and pitiless

[4]For S. Freud "anxiety never arises from libido" (Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety" 32)

forces of destruction; and finally from our relations with other men" (29). Taking this idea into consideration, I aim to show that attitudes to death are defined by one's body, relation with others, and the outer cultural, historical, social and political factors. I seek to show that these factors are not only sources of pain, but dynamics behind individual and cultural affirmation or denial of death.

In "Our Attitude toward Death," Freud asserts that "at bottom no one believes in his own death... in the unconscious everyone of us is convinced of his own immortality" (289). He implies that the unconscious in not able to admit its mortality and keeps considering itself immortal. Yet, he explains, this unconscious denial is not a barrier for the existence of the death drive "thanatos.'' Thus, in *The Pleasure Principle* (1919), Freud argues that "*the aim of all life is death*" (32). Life makes a great "*détour*" toward death and seeks to gratify the craving for the pre-lapsarian state of nothingness or "return to the inanimate state." He refers to this instinct as "death drive" (32). Given this reality, the only way to know mortality is by looking outside at the death of others and identifying with them to experience intimation of death.

The conflict of whether to surrender to the "rational conceptualization" of death as being an escapable reality and the unconscious denial and refusal to accept it gives birth to two distinct attitudes to death: social and private ones pushing people to acknowledge socially what they cannot acknowledge psychically (Carel 171-172). Hence, unlike Martin Heidegger who calls to prepare for one's own death, Freud calls for identification with others when seeking apprehension of mortality. Such claims, though coming from a psychoanalyst like Freud cannot be accepted without questioning their paradox. If humans do not believe in the possibility of their death, why are they so tormented by the fear of death? And why do others display a pathological desire for it?

Freud explains the effects of war and civilization in changing humans' attitudes to death. He affirms that war "strips us of the later accretions of civilization, and lays bare the primal man in each of us. It constrains us once more to be heroes who cannot believe in their own death; it stamps the alien as the enemy, whose death is to be brought about or desired; it counsels us to rise above the death of those we love" (24). Differently, in "Why War?" he states that war heals the symptoms of denial as it brings about the death of "tens of thousands" of people daily putting an end to the perception of death as "accident" or "chance event". With the return of death because of war, he says, "life has regained its full significance" (15-16). By using Freud's own self-contradictory assumption regarding the impacts of war on conceptualizing death, I argue that its impact is double-edged because while it awakens awareness of death it casts the latter as unnatural and unnecessary. Finally, Freud assumes that the "defence mechanisms" of repression, projection, displacement, sublimation and denial sustain the individual in dealing with non-acceptable sexual drives. The present thesis will highlight a new dimension to which little attention is paid in the study of death through psychoanalytical lenses by showing that these mechanisms of defence can also function against urges related to death (being fear or anxiety).

Another Freudian theory which is relevant to the reading of the novels' preoccupation with death and its effects of provoking estrangement and unfamiliarity is developed in his 1919 essay "The Uncanny" ("Das Unheimliche"). Freud explains that the linguistic roots of the uncanny go back to the German word "Unheimlich" which has the meaning of the "concealed, kept from sight, withheld from others" as opposed to "heimlich" which refers to the "familiar," "native," "belonging to the home" (154). The uncanny is the realm of the frightening, the creepy, and the experiences that arouse dread and horror. The uncanny is that which was meant to be hidden and repressed but resurfaces and becomes known, i.e., the re – occurrence of the repressed is what becomes uncanny and frightening (217).

The uncanny is related to that category of things, persons, sense-impressions, and experiences arousing “fright,” “dread,” and “horror.” The feeling of uncanniness accompanies the transformation of things known and “familiar” to things “strange” and “unfamiliar.” In this sense, it is a new feeling which rises from something already known. The unheimlich is a trope which manifests in domestic spaces describing a sense of unhomeliness, estrangement and unfamiliarity within the home and referring to the presence of something threatening, tempting and unknown that lies within the bounds of the intimate (Barett 107). In addition to the return of the repressed and the transformation of the familiar to the unfamiliar, the "uncanny" arises from the confusion of the animate with the inanimate and belief in the return of the dead (136-37). In this study I use this concept to read the meaning of death in Philip Roth’s fiction, arguing that his representation of death as uncanny implies his rejection of the new age’s insistence on technological explanation of death to affirm that it is a mystery which resists technological comprehensibility or scientific explanation.

To demonstrate that none of the novels understudy is authoritative in its discourse because of the narratives’ interaction with each other or with other texts to offer a better understanding of the idea of death in postmodern times, I will use Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism. Also, because “dialogic interrelation between reader, the text and the wider context constantly renews itself, in which internal values of exchange extend into the dynamics of external cultural contact” (Shomar and Abu Hilal 19), these texts will be situated contextually in relation to other discourses—in literature, philosophy, politics, media and terrorism—in order to highlight the reverberation of their ideas in the novels’ conceptualisation of the idea of death.

Mikhail Bakhtin perceives the novel as a dialogic genre considering it a social phenomenon at the levels of form and content. Bakhtin’s dialogic literature accepts discourse and communication with its contexts and other literary works: “in the light of dialogism, of

course, it is true all texts must be assumed to be interrelated ... the manifold strategies by which the novel demonstrates and deploys the complexities of relation—social, historical, personal, discursive, textual—are its essence" (Holquist 86). The use of this approach to literature helps show the dialogic/ plurality that characterizes the authors' discourse on death to demonstrate that dialogues and ideologies of death shape cultures in the same way that culture shapes one's discourse and attitude to death. That it is to say, the reading of the novels offered in this thesis will show that even the relation between culture and perception of death is dialogical given that, assumes Bakhtin, "there is no existence, no meaning, no word or thought that does not enter into a dialogue or dialogic relations with the other that does not exhibit intertextuality in both space and time" (Morris 247). My analysis of the representation of death in the selected novels by Don Delillo and Philip Roth echoes an interest in the different discursive modes for addressing death, including the social satire of *White Noise* (1985), the science fiction of *Zero K* (2016) and the social genre of *Everyman* (2006) and *Nemesis* (2010).

This thesis is divided into two parts, comprising two chapters each. The first part is devoted to Don DeLillo's *White Noise* and *Zero K* and argues that these narratives are subversive of the postmodern cultural logic and technological denial of death and reject the blind faith in science and technology. This part pays particular attention to DeLillo's re-conceptualisation of death as a possibility for a meaningful existence, and his understanding of postmodernism as a force aggravating individual psychological, existential and cultural pathologies.

The second part looks into the representation of death in Philip Roth's *Everyman* and *Nemesis* and focuses on the existential dimension of the characters' struggle to cope with or sublimate the idea of one's being close to death or the death of the other. It argues that unlike DeLillo's characters who deny death because of the postmodern conditions, Roth's characters

endure absurdity, spiritual void and uncanniness because of private factors related to the conditions of the body, old age and health issues. These factors push them to recognize the inevitability of death.

Chapter one is entitled "Death in *White Noise* (1985): From "Inauthenticity" to Reconciliation," and discusses DeLillo's text in the light of Heidegger's ideas on fear of death and the authenticity/inauthenticity of the self. It situates DeLillo's novel in the context of Cold War and Post-Vietnam American late-capitalist culture and examines the existential and psychological pathologies that capitalism, high cyberspace culture, technology and media had on the consciousness and epistemology of death. It argues that the characters fall prey to both postmodern conditions at home and the eminent threat of the nuclear war at the world scale and become haunted and estranged by fear of death. The analysis of *White Noise* purports that Delillo understands postmodernism of the 1980s as an antithesis to authentic conceptualization of death, which becomes an ideology of control and manipulation.

Chapter two which is entitled "Mediation of Death and the Limits of Posthuman Immortality in DeLillo's *Zero K*," looks at the posthuman rethinking of mortality and promotion of pride and technological immortality. In this chapter, I argue that search for immortality through technology burdens the characters existentially and alienates them psychologically. Informed by Martin Heidegger's idea of "dwelling" in his essay "Building Dwelling Thinking," the chapter discusses the posthuman transformation of the human as leading to confinement in space and failure of feeling at home in the world. It therefore focuses on the experience of space as a compressing and confining entity in the projects of immortality to conclude that both novels by DeLilo parody the postmodern reliance on science and technology which hinder the existential meaning of death.

Chapter one of part two is entitled “Death as an Uncanny Experience in Philip Roth’s *Everyman (2006).*” It looks into the conceptualization of death by an old man who is humiliated by advanced age, deteriorated body and declining health. It reveals that the sense of bodily humiliation enhances “anticipation” of death and affirmation of its inevitability. The use of Sigmund Freud’s theorization of the concept of “the uncanny” allows reading the characters’ psychological unfamiliarity and uncanniness toward their bodies and death. Furthermore, the chapter tackles the absurd approach to death in the novel and purports that its postmodern discourse on death is built by means of an intertextual dialogue with the morality play “the Summoning of Everyman.” The reading of the representation of death in *Everyman* allows discussion of its subversion and deconstruction of the medieval holistic view of God, salvation and death.

Chapter two which is entitled “Death by Epidemics: Tragedy and Ethical Engagement with the Death of the Other in Philip Roth’s *Nemesis”* argues that Roth’s novel goes to another level of death representation by fictionalizing the experience of the death of “the other” and its impact on the perception of one’s own death. It argues that while Roth’s other protagonists are constantly reminded of their death by decayed bodies and advanced age, Cantor and the other characters in *Nemesis* are haunted by a cruel cue which is the polio epidemic. It seeks to show that the threat of death as well as the hubristic attitude with which Cantor faces it throws him into disbelief, spiritual emptiness and introversion. For that reason, the chapterdemonstrates that familiarity with the event of death does not necessarily generate familiarity with the idea of finitude. Put otherwise, the viral death of people makes coping, sublimation or repression impossible and enhances certainty of death. By so doing, the chapter discusses the refutation of the significance of the death of the other in experiencing the intimation of mortality.

Part One:

The Representation of Death in Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (1985) and *Zero K* (2010)

Chapter One: Death in *White Noise* (1985): from "Inauthenticity"to Reconciliation

> "No sense of the irony of human existence, that we are the highest form of life on earth and yet ineffably sad because we know what no other animal knows, that we must die[5]."*(*Don DeLillo, *White Noise 99* [6]*)*

> *"* Let me whisper the terrible word, from the Old English, from the Old German, from the Old Norse. Death."(Don DeLillo, *White Noise 68).*

Introduction

Don DeLillo (1936-) is one of the most outstanding authors in the contemporary American literary scene. His fiction genuinely ponders upon the anxieties of the contemporary American society which is absorbed by mass culture politics, late-capitalist logic and technological monopoly. The magnitude of Don Dellilo as a writer is noticeable in both his style and themes. Critics argue that he owes much to Baudrillard and the influence of Pynchon and William Thomas Gaddis (Bloom 2). Postmodern themes, sensibilities and issues such as the individual and his place in society, the confinements of space and time in the age of technology and digital information, the search for the real in the age of simulation and

[5]DeLillo, Don. *White Noise.* (New York: Penguin Group, 1984) 99. Subsequent references to *White Noise* will be cited in text.

hyper-reality, criticism of the postmodern culture, the theme of American identity, the role of media, consumerism, memory, the 9/ 11 events, tint his fiction.

Critics have talked a lot about the fear of death in *White Noise*. My objective in this chapter is to give this perspective of death a supplementary interpretation by looking at its historical causes which are neglected by other critics. I will show that in this novel discourse on death reverberates with references to local as well as global disasters and threats. I will argue that death is feared and demonized because it is seen as the antithesis of everything the characters expect from advanced technology, late capitalism[7] and the escalating post-humanism, maintaining that death functions as a destructive force for the psychology and the self of the characters who are consequently forced to defend themselves by mechanisms which are known to Freud only in relation to libido.

The examination of attitudes to death in this chapter pursues a three-stage analysis. I first tackles its literary quality (in which interaction with other literary texts plays a crucial role), and then its cultural and historical aspects (by invoking the dialogic interaction of the novel with the context of Cold War and cultural updates of the era) to end up with its psychological and existential implications. I will demonstrate that the postmodern conditions of technological advancement, secularism and late-capitalist consumer habits strengthen the characters' hubris and refusal of death. Thus, their immersion in these conditions proves symbolic of their craving for immortality which results in the existential calamities of self-inauthenticity and psychological disorders.

[7]In *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late capitalism* (1990), Frederick Jameson defines late capitalism as "the third stage" of capitalism with economic and cultural effects appearing in the 1950s. He asserts that after the wartime shortages, "consumer goods and spare parts had been made up, and new products and new technologies (not least those of the media) could be pioneered" (xix). According to Jameson, the features of late-capitalism include "media interrelationship," "computers and automation," "new technological prerequisites." These features among others brought about cultural, social and psychological transformations (xix).

Following Bakhtin's claim in *Discourse in the Novel* that "verbal discourse is a social phenomenon—social throughout its entire range and in each and every of its factors, from the sound to the furthest reaches of abstract meaning" (*The Dialogic Imagination* 269), this study attempts to make sense of *White Noise* as a "heteroglot[8]" novel which interrogates the age's approximation to death along with the social and ideological contradictions of late-capitalism—which promised a utopian well-being and promoted anxiety and psychological pathologies—in order to understand responses to death.

In this chapter, therefore, I intend to prove the following hypotheses: First, *White Noise* is a dialogized heteroglossia which implicitly interviews the various historical realities of the age which contribute to the meaning of death as evil in the minds of the characters. Second, DeLillo attacks postmodernism as a force producing various pathologies for the individual comprising existential as well as psychological disturbances. Third, Don DeLillo does not celebrate postmodernism but unleashes an attack on it as an alienating logic. Four, DeLillo's solution for the postmodern sickness of meaninglessness in *White Noise* is reconciliation with real death and reconnection with human compassion.

Interest in Don DeLillo's *White Noise* is not new. Its thematic engagement with the various cultural and postmodern updates has been proved interesting to readers and critics alike. The following review of related literature should illustrate the considerable range of criticism which exists on the novel's major theme of fear of death. It shall help clarify my objectives and the legitimacy of my research.

[8]The genre of the novel is given an elevated status by Bakhtin because of its heteroglossic aspects and harmonious coordination of multiple voices and views which, unlike monologic genres such as poetry, permit to decentre dominant values and perspectives. Heteroglossia is a key concept in dialogical criticism which refers to the multiplicity of social discourses participating in the process of shaping truth and world views. While heteroglossia refers to the plurality of socially determined discourses,dialogism stands for the encounter of these discourses in speech. Drawing on Bakhtin, Pam Morris claimsthat "any attempt to impose one unitary monologic discourse as the 'Truth' is relativized by its dialogic contact with another social discourse, another view of the world" (74).

In “A Calculated Withdrawal”: Postmodern American Novelists, their Politics, and the Cold War” (2016), Jason Markell reads Don Dellilo’s fiction, mainly *Americana, End Zone, Players, Running Dog, The Names, Libra, Mao II,* and *Underworld,* in the context of the Cold War, showing that the novels are more than “metafictional” works which lack any inspiration from politics or history (2). Yet, he excludes *White Noise* from having any relations with Cold War or its politics not even with its impacts on the Americans. In contrast to the findings of Markell’s study, I aim to examine DeLillo’s hidden discourse with the politics of Cold War, arguing that it shapes the characters’ estrangement from the naturalness of death and its existential/ ontological importance.

In “How the dead speak to the living”: Intertextuality and the Postmodern Sublime in *White Noise*,” Laura Barrett interprets Delillo’s *White Noise* within the long tradition of western literature claiming that in this narrative not just individual characters

> are in conversation with the past [but] DeLillo’s entire narrative is a dialogue with older literary works, including sacred texts, Puritan sermons, westerns, and Modernist and Postmodernist fiction … DeLillo invokes older texts that might shed some light on a contemporary crisis in which the novel’s characters find themselves betwixt and between, unmoored from a clear point of origin (be it divine or psychological) and ill at ease with death as the final destination. (97- 98)

Barett uses intertextuality to stress the novel’s implication in different borrowings, yet she does not use Bakhtin’s dialogism to shed light on the link that may exist between this narrative and its broader historical contexts or the philosophy and ideas of Martin Heidegger. My study seeks to examine the text’s representation of death as evil as a result of the crucial events of the 1980s, demonstrating that they alienate the characters from the existential value of death.

"Postmodernism's Desire for Simulated Death: Andy Warhol's *Car Crashes*, J. G. Ballard's *Crash,* and Don Delillo's *White Noise*" is an interesting investigation of death in *White Noise* by Michael Hardin. It utilizes Baudrillard's simulation and simulacra in order to examine the Postmodern American cultural approach to death as simulacra, arguing that "death and disaster are presented as simulation, as hyperreal, but within each work, there is an unraveling of the postmodern denial of the real, an individual moment when death must be confronted as real" (21-2). Hardin claims that *White Noise* provides multiple perspectives of death, "from fascination to fear and abhorrence" (26). Despite its importance, this idea is superficially treated and no further elaboration is provided on these perspectives of death or their causes and consequences. Besides, while Hardin advances that the 'televised' death is the only real death in *White Noise*, I argue that the characters attempt to simulate death because they seek defense against their terror and reconnection with human essence. I also demonstrate that encounter with real death is never approximated through TV representations but with the true menace Jack faces after his attempt to kill Willie Mink.

In "Literary Contexts in Novels: Don DeLillo's *White Noise,*" Anne Longmuir contextualizes the analyses of famous events in the novel and writes that reviewers related the Airborne Toxic Event in the novel to "The Bhopal disaster" (1984) which occurred a few weeks before the publication of *White Noise* because "the Bhopal chemical leak affected precisely the kind of population Jack Gladney expects to be involved in such disasters, that is, the poor, rather than middle-class academics" (1-5). Longmuir adds that critics have often approached the novel as "a piece of cultural criticism" for its great ability to comment on the culture of the American society at that time. Though Longmuir's claims are worth considering, they fall short in counting for death and the impacts of the culture and the disasters on its meaning.

In “The Hero in Contemporary American Literature, the Works of Saul Bellow and Don DeLillo,” Stephanie Halldorson examines the issues of individuality and identity in *White Noise*. She asserts that death is a central “leitmotif” and “the first or last layer of identity,” maintaining that Gladney “is eager to find the inauthentic that will cover and console his fear” (111). She purports that Delillo’s narrative struggles for the construction of the idea of a hero against that of death, claiming that the protagonist’s real challenge is to create a balance between his “attraction” to his American culture and his fear of “disappearance in death and non-meaning” (122). In this chapter, I use Earnest Becker’s *Denial of Death* in order to read Jack’s involvement in Hitler studies as an attempt to immortalize himself by creating his *causa sui* project to ease his dread of death. In addition, by relying on Heidegger’s concepts of “tranquilization” and “das Man,” I seek to make sense of Jack’s obsession with Hitler and show that his attempts to appease the fear through reliance on others heightens his alienation and inauthenticity.

Halldorson demonstrates the importance of death in the novel and notes that the other working title for it was “The American Book of the Dead,” affirming the “the heroic impulse” to control death (134). Haldorson concludes that there is a “problem of identity formation” faced by Jack Gladney who “had a series of identities that worked because they all repressed not only the arbitrariness of their choice but their inability to cope with death (143). In fact, this book is very illuminating, but it can be reproached for its high emphasis on the protagonist putting aside other important characters and the different existential and psychological crises they face because of their reactions to death. Therefore, by analyzing additional characters such as Babette and Heinrich, I intend to investigate into the novel’s ambivalence to science and technology, showing that Babette’s inauthentic attitudes to death throw her into blind reliance on science while Heinrich’s postmodern skeptical mind help trace the danger of technology on the human.

Mark Conroy's "From Tombstone to Tabloid: Authority Figured in *White Noise*" discusses the various forms of "narratives of cultural transmission" in DeLillo's novel. He foregrounds the centrality of the past for the present and its being a source of "authority" and influence in Delillo's text. This study is so significant for it brings together the modern, more precisely scientific, ways of interacting with death with the very old modes of counting for it by highlighting the failure of scientific narratives in reforming and "transfiguring" death in contrast to the success of "earlier narratives of cultural transmission" such as the religious ones, in providing tales of immortality (160). To put it otherwise, this study shows that the scientific discourse fails in reducing the characters' fear of death in *White Noise* and contributes to their existential alienation from its worth. In this study, I attempt to give this scientific discourse a Heideggerian interpretation and show that science "tranquilizes" one in face of death and contributes to "enframing" life and "being" ("The Question Concerning Technology" 332).

The above review of scholarship on *White Noise* shows that many critics have read the issue of death, mainly fear of it. Yet, in my opinion few have read its dialogic interaction with Cold War and less have read its existential dimension from the Heideggerian lenses, or its psychological complications from Freudian psychoanalytical perspectives. Also, scholars have very much undervalued reading death as anti-modern for DeLillo's characters. Therefore, it is my objective in this chapter to show that *White Noise* represents death as a strange unnecessary bodily condition and portrays the character's inauthentic responses which culminate in weak selves and alienated existence. I also tackle the cultural/ historical factors which encourage refusal and fear of death to conclude that restoration of meaning and reconnection with human essence is possible only with reconciliation with the inevitability and necessity of death.

White Noise presents the lifestyle and torments of Jack Gladney's family which consists of his wife, Babbette, and their five children from previous marriages. The novel's first part, "Waves of Radiation," depicts the family life in the town of Blacksmith under the enormous flow of data, media culture, consumer habits and Jack's job as the head of the Department of Hitler Studies. The daily activities of the family range from food eating, phone answering, TV watching to nightly whispering between of Jack and Babette that each one wants to dies first.

Part Two of the novel, which is entitled "the Airborne Toxic Event" dramatizes the family's experience of a catastrophic event which is caused by the explosion of a train car carrying very dangerous chemical products. The spread in air of the smoke of this explosion eventually leads to serious health problems. After the announcement of an evacuation order of the area, Jack and his family head to a constructed refugee camp only to be exposed to the "fallout" from the product which inserts a possibility of death to his body by the Nyodene D. This part portrays Jack's various medical checks which display that the chemical will kill him before thirty years.

Part Three, "Dylarama," depicts Jack's discovery that his wife takes a psychopharmaceutical product to reduce fear of death. To his surprise, the drug is illegal and his wife has paid for it by adulterous acts with the inventor, Mr Gray. The discovery shatters Jack's wellbeing as he is at once furious at her and ready to do anything to take it, too. At the end, Jack decides to go and kill the doctor to punish him for the treachery of his wife and take some Dylar from his stock. Jack, unable to accomplish the act of murder, chooses instead to save the injured man.

1- **“Anxiety” and “Fear” of Death**

In *Being and Time,* Heidegger distinguishes between fear of death and anxiety about it. He states that the former is an inauthentic mood as it constitutes weakness in face of death, while the latter discloses the value of mortality and leads to authenticity. Anxiety awakens Dasein from being lost in the everyday public interpretation of death. To explain this point, Havi Carel says:

> the everyday links and significance arising from ordinary practices and the shared social world recedes and Dasein is forced to view this world as a whole… anxiety reveals Dasein’s lostness but also makes clear its relationship to possibility and the openness of existence … Through anxiety Dasein discovers this strange world to be its world, without the tranquilising das Man, and is forced to rediscover a more primordial world in its wholeness. (86)

It follows that awareness through anxiety includes recognition of the inevitability of death, life as being determined by death, and also death as “possibility” and source of meaning. Moments of anxiety may end up with a state of understanding and “non-fleeing” from death, to uncover the “being” as structured by finitude. In contrast to this, in fear Dasein “disregards” the call to authenticity and “flees in the face of itself into the “they” (322). Death is perceived as “threatening,” “fearful,” and avoidable, while in anxiety it is perceived as “certain” and possible though its time is imprecise and unknown. (140)

In anxiety one is anxious of something indefinite about death, and not scared of fatality as an annihilating force. Heidegger says that:

> Fear discloses Dasein predominantly in a privative way… that in the face of which we are alarmed is proximally something well known and familiar…fear becomes dread. And where that which threatens is laden with dread, and it at the

> same time encounters with the suddenness of the alarming then fear becomes terror. There are further variations of fear, which we know as timidity, shyness, misgiving, becoming startled. (181-2)

In relation to this, Heidegger sheds light on the threat that the others, or the "They" and "Mitsein" ("being-with") have on the authentic life of Dasein and his attitude to death. He explains that the social life and the interpretation of death by others generates authenticity and contradict the individuating feature of death. Therefore, deprivation of death from any existential meaning little by little terrorizes the humans and heightens their fear from being alone, seeking instead the support of others in facing death.

In *White Noise*, many of the characters are lost in "the everyday world" of Mitsein and its fear of death. Therefore, they seek out relief in being with others; unconsciously hoping that they can protect them from death. The characters who are enslaved by their dread gather in crowds to get rid of these emotions. Therefore, the more terrified they feel, the more dependent on others they become. In one of the lectures held about Elvis Presley by Murray Siskind, Jack decides to drop by and talk about some matters about Adolf Hitler. Describing the crowds who used to go to his mountain villa to hear him speak, Jack says:

> Crowds came to be hypnotized by the voice, the party anthems, the torchlight parades. There must be something different about these crowds. What was it? Let me whisper the terrible word, from the Old English, from the Old German, from the Old Norse. *Death*. Many of those crowds were assembled in the name of death. They were there to attend tributes to the dead. ... crowds came to form a shield against their own dying. To become a crowd is to keep out death. To break off from death the crowd is to risk death as an individual, to face dying alone... they were there to be a crowd (73).

The word "hypnotized" in the passage connotes the meaning of control. It suggests that the people attending Hitler's speech seek control over their feeling toward death in his words and in being amidst other people who are afraid of death, too. The crowds, from Heidegger's perspective "tranquilize" the person and make one believe that one is untouchable by death while being with others. Yet, they only mask the subjectivity of the person and enhance denial of possibility of death at any moment and in any place. Having this inescapable need to be with others in order to feel safe proves that they have retreated from courage in face of death and become victims of fear and dependency on others. Therefore, their authentic and individual self is eradicated.

Significantly, Jack's invocation of the crowds attending Hitler's speech is an unconscious articulation of his postmodern society's analogous need. For that reason, shortly after, and in the same room, Jack suddenly understands that he, Murray and the students also form a crowd. This crowd, his speech about Hitler and the help that he offers to Murray make him feel in control of death. He says:

> People gathered round, students and staff, and in the mild din of half heard remarks and orbiting voices I realized we were now a crowd. Not that I needed a crowd around me now. Least of all now. *Death* was strictly a professional matter here. I was comfortable with it, *I was on top of it*. Murray made his way to my side and escorted me from the room; parting the crowd with his fluttering hand. (Emphasis added 74)

Seeking protection from death in the crowd expresses a denial of the fact that "death individuates Dasein, emphasizing its uniqueness and its radically individual nature" (Havi 65). To face his death authentically, Dasein needs to overcome the tranquilization of das Man[9] because, though humans are inherently social, death individualizes them. In the case of Jack Gladney, he tries to

[9]In English 'they believe', 'one believe', or 'it is believed' (*BeingandTime*150).

render death a public experience and a professional issue amidst the crowd to control and manipulate it.

Such an attitude to finitude does not only encourage constant "fleeing" in the face of death but also alienates the individual from its unique relationship to existence. Any attempt to flee death or deny it, for Heidegger, is itself "a fleeing of Dasein in the face of itself—of itself as an authentic potentiality-for-Being-its-Self" (229). At a fundamental level, this means that by running away from death, the individual also escapes its potentiality to be a distinct self, and as such one fails to actualize an authentic existence.

Vernon, Jack's father-in-law, also likes "to mingle with shopping mall crowds" (249). Vernon, it should be mentioned, is an aged man whose health is deteriorating as he is enduring chronicle limp, sight problems, teeth deterioration and shakes in the body. In addition to his critical health, he is a perfect hedonist that his daughter, Babette, worries "he'll die in a burning bed with a missing woman at his side" (246). This man does not really show fear of death but denial of it. He reduces everything, including mortality to nothing. So he says: "death is nothing, health problems are nothing even money is "no problem… zero pensions, zero savings, zero stocks and bonds" (255). Though this man tries to show indifference to death, one is inclined to think that he is only repressing his fear and fleeing his dread by focusing on its nothingness. His fear to be alone and his desire for immersion in crowds illustrate his disquiet with the fact that he is dying.

The reading of *White Noise* shows that inauthentic fear of death deprives the characters of their authentic being and prevents them from manifesting in the world authentically. In order to forget death, they plunge in other various activities such as shopping in big malls, living in spaces away from the city, watching the death and disaster of other people, affirming that they fail to see anything positive or meaningful in death. They are uncomfortable with the

world because death awaits them. For instance, when Jack tells Babbette that her life "sounds like a boring life," she answers "I hope it lasts forever" (53). As a result of her constant attempt to flee death and the terror it generates in her, Babette falls into adultery and suffers "memory lapses and forgetfulness" (53). According to Jack, what scares her about death is "being left alone" in addition to "the emptiness, the sense of cosmic darkness" (100). In this sense, Babette reacts to death as a physical disappearance into nothingness and fails to understand it as an existential potentiality for individuality and wholeness.

Babette's understanding of death departs from Heidegger's call to consider death as an end; he does not accord it the meaning of "disappearing" or "no longer being available" (245). He does not characterize death as the end of Dasein as he says "the ending which we have in mind when we speak of death, does not signify Dasein's Being-at-an-end." What he means is that death is a way to be in life a "*Being towards the end…* Death is a way to be, which Dasein takes over as soon as it is" (246). In this sense, death and existing in life are quite inseparable and endow each other with sense and meaning.

` The characters in *White Noise* conceptualize death as a limitation of all their options and prospects in life and believe that it is too early for them to die. For instance, Jack who always tells Babette that he wants to die first turns out to be lying, as he confesses: "the truth is I don't want to die first. Given a choice between loneliness and death, it would take me a fraction of a second to decide. I want to cry out to that fifth century sky ablaze with mystery and spiral light. Let us both life forever, in sickness and health" (158). Furthermore, when he discovers that Babette is terrorized by fear of death and is taking Dylar, he tries to comfort her by saying "save it for old age. You are still young, you get plenty of exercise. This is not a reasonable fear" (196). Jack goes further to express his wish to deny the existence of death fear and the shame surrounding the topic when he tells her "how can you be sure it is death you fear? Death is so vague. No one knows what it is, what it feels like or looks like. Maybe

you just have a personal problem that surfaces in the form of a great universal problem … something you're hiding from yourself. Your weight maybe" (196). Jack's discourse expresses many forms of denial including the certainty of death, its possibility regardless of age and the legitimacy of being anxious over one's death. The latter, i.e anxiety pushes one to anticipate its arrival and irrevocability. In fact, despite his various attempts, Babette never feels better.

In contrast to Jack's tempt to tranquilize his wife, Heidegger explains that in anxiety Dasein is anxious about finite existence and "being in the world itself" which is already defined as being-toward-death, and pushes it toward "its authentic potentiality-for-being-in-the-world"(232). He adds that "anxiety individualizes Dasein" (233). To put it otherwise, in anxiety Dasein understands that being-toward-death does not mean that someday, in the distant future, we will grow old and die. Instead, anxiety "discloses" the existential truth that at every moment we face "the possibility of the impossibility of any existence at all (307).

The only character who echoes a Heideggerian authentic response to death is Winnie Richards. The latter, when answering Jack's question about the meaning of death, states: "Self, self, self. If death can be seen as less strange and unreferenced, your sense of self in relation to death will diminish, and so will your fear" (74). She also holds a view of life as "being-toward-death." For her, "anticipating" death and being in constant wait for it, despite the uneasiness it generates is the correct attitude to one's mortality. When Jack asks how he can make death seem less 'strange' she says that she does not have an answer and advises him to go on with his life. She asserts:

> "I don't know what your personal involvement is with this substance," she said, "but I think it's a mistake to lose one's sense of death, even one's fear of death. Isn't death the boundary we need? Doesn't it give a precious texture to life, a

> sense of definition? You have to ask yourself whether anything you do in this life would have beauty and meaning without the knowledge you carry of a final line, a border or limit." (229)

In this novel, then, DeLillo represents the fear of death as voracious to subjectivity, self assertion and *bien-être*. In a struggle to attain the unattainable i.e., immortality, the characters' triumph is not preordained as their lives turn to be more meaningless and their subjectivities to be more fragile and absent.

2- **Divesting Death of its Existential Worth**

In *White Noise*, the characters level death down to "an ontic event" or a physical condition which concerns the individual as entity and not its mode of "being. Hence, they deprive it from its quality of "existentiale" or "a way to be" (*Being and Time* 230). They tend to consider it as a mere result of misfortune or accident. In a similar context, Freud says that "our habit is to lay stress on the fortuitous causation of the death—accident, disease, infection, advanced age; in this way we betray an effort to reduce death from a necessity to a chance event" ("Thoughts on War and Death" 16). Freud's claim, if understood from an ontological/ existential perspective would mean that humans often understand death as an event which is caused by some adversity instead of an ontological prerequisite which defines human essence.

In *White Noise*, for instance, after the disappearance of the Treadwells, Jack says that "Mr Treadwell's sister died ... the doctor said she died of lingering dread, a result of the four days and nights she and her brother had spent in the Mid-Village Mall, lost and confused" (99). In this quotation, death is represented as something avoidable by implying that if the woman was not lost in the mall, she would have been alive. In other cases, Jack recites many deaths emphasizing their causes and making analogies between them, their causes, and his own self and mortality. He states:

> A man in Glassboro died when the rear wheel of his car separated from the axle. An idiosyncrasy of that particular model.
>
> The lieutenant governor of the state died of undisclosed natural causes, after a long illness. We all know what that means.
>
> A Mechanicsville man died outside Tokyo during a siege of the airport by ten thousand helmeted students. *When I read obituaries I always note the age of the deceased. Automatically I relate this figure to my own age. Four years to go, I think. Nine more years.* Two years and I'm dead. The power of numbers is never more evident than when *we* use them to speculate on the time of our dying. (Emphasis added 99)

The emphasis on the causes of death in this passage articulates it conception as a misfortunate disaster caused by some uncontrolled mistakes rather than an ontological and existential necessity and certainty. It implies that the death of these people was made certain only by these accidents and not by their intrinsic essence as finite beings.

Jack considers death as "the irony of human existence" and the horrible fate of human beings who not only die, but have to live with the awareness of death. Jack and his wife think that they can avoid death if they avoid its causes. Babette also thinks that "nothing can happen to us as long as there are dependent children in the house. The kids are a guarantee of our relative longevity. We're safe as long as they're around" (100). The kids who are thought to be too young to die and too naïve to know or fear death represent assurance against death for this woman. According to Heidegger, who relates Dasein's authentic being to his "being-toward-death," one should overcome the influence of the environment in its attitudes to death. He says: "If 'one' understands death as an event which one encounters in one's environment, then the certainty which is related to such events does not pertain to Being-towards-the-end"

(257). This means that death should be understood as a structure of "being" which endows it with meaning.

Even when it concerns his own death, Jack seems to reduce it to a consequence of the misfortune which brought him outside the car to be exposed and contaminated by the deadly chemical, Nyoden D. He says in this context: "It's the two and a half minutes standing right in it that makes me wince. Actual skin and orifice contact. This is Nyodene D. A whole new generation of toxic waste" (139). Jack is convinced "death has entered" his body only because of the chemical (141). In order to make sure that this does not kill him, says doctor Dr. Shiv Chatterjee, Jack needs to live with it for 15years: "so, to outlive this substance, I will have to make it into my eighties. Then I can begin to relax" (141). The doctor's declaration motivates him to plan a relaxation after his eighties, hoping that by then he will have conquered death once and for all.

Following the doctors' words, Jack cannot grasp his mortality in a familiar way because of the way death has been caused to him and because of the technological way and techniques through which the diagnosis has been made: "It is when death is rendered graphically, is televised so to speak, that you sense an eerie separation between your condition and yourself. A network of symbols has been introduced, an eerie awesome technology wrested from the gods it makes you feel like a stranger in your own dying" (142). In a similar context, Heidegger affirms that modern man is "unfree and chained by technology" which challenges one's relation to truth, hindering any authentic encounter with the true human condition and essence in due course "The Question Concerning Technology 332-33"

For Heidegger, interpretation of death as a distant avoidable event or accident devalues death which is irreplaceably "one's own," and distorts its features of "possibility," "non-relationality" and "insuperability" (253). The interference of others to interpret death to

someone is labelled by Heidegger as “everyday public interpretedness” (252). He comments on this point by saying that:

> The publicness of everyday being-with-one-another “knows” death as a constantly occurring event, as a “case of death.” Someone or another “dies,” be it a neighbour or a stranger. People unknown to us “die” daily and hourly. “Death” is encountered as a familiar event occurring within the world. As such it remains in the inconspicuousness characteristic of everyday encounters. The they has also already secured an interpretation for this event. The “fleeting” talk about this, which is either expressed or else mostly kept back, says: one also dies at the end, but for now one is not affected. (253)

The attitude of “everydayness tranquilization” and “fleeing” in the face of death can also be noticed in the following conversation between Murray and Jack when the latter informs his friend that:

> “Cotsakis, my rival, is no longer among the living.”
>
> “What does that mean?”
>
> “It means he’s dead.”
>
> “Dead?”
>
> “Lost in the surf off Malibu. During the term break. I found out an hour ago. Came right here.”
>
> … “Poor Cotsakis, lost in the surf,” I said. “That enormous man.”
>
> “That’s the one.”
>
> “I don’t know what to say.”
>
> “He was big all right.”
>
> “Enormously so” (168-169).

In the passage, DeLillo implies that Jack and Murray tend to exclude some people from the possibility of dying. Cotsakis, as they view him, is bigger and more enormous than death which surprises him in "the surf." By considering his death as an outcome of an accident they reduce it to "demise" and physical extinction, covering up its existential significance and contribution to individualizing the person, granting wholeness to existence.

Murray Siskind responds to the news of Cotsackis' death by saying: "I don't know what to say either. Except better him than me." Jack responds with almost the same words: "It's better not knowing them when they die. It's better them than us" (169). According to Kübler-Ross the individual who senses danger cannot continue to pretend that he is safe and "maintain denial forever" (8). So, if someone cannot deny death he may attempt "to master it… but also rejoice—"It was the other guy, not me, I made it" (9). Hence, the delight that the death of this person raises in Jack and Murray articulates their wish to surpass death. This is contradictory to the one important aspect which Heidegger attributes to death; its "ownmost," "non-relationality" and "potentiality-for-Being" (257). It means that every individual has to die his own death, alone with no relation to others and the death of another does not add or remove anything from one's death, according to Heidegger. Perpetuating perception of death as a misfortune or some reality that befalls the "other" and not the self generates an inauthentic attitude to death.

Before the Airborne Toxic Event, Jack and his family chose to live in Blacksmith because they believed it to be safer than all the other American cities (85). Besides, he decides to work in a college which is "*on-the*" Hill, suggesting that it is thought to be above all the dangers and threats of death. Jack claims that in the city and the college, they don't feel "aggrieved and in quite the same way other towns do. [They]'re not smack in the path history and its contaminations" (85). In fact, when the Allies wanted to end WWII they considered it important to attack the biggest cities of Japan and they did it. The fear from the city which is expressed by

Jack can be the result of this historical reality which reminds of the modern city's closeness to death. Therefore, Jack's confidence in the total security of the town space is shattered by the Airborne Toxic Event which comes to remind him that they live in an age of threats, an age so close to death that no place is exempt.

3- "Cross-Talking Multiple Tongues,"*White Noise's* Dialgue with Other Texts on Death:

Revisiting old texts is a literary technique that characterizes DeLillo's attempts at conveying the postmodern perception of death. His dialogic investigation into the meaning of death is clear from the very start when he (re)visits Old English, Old German, Old Norse to borrow one of its aspects; terror (73). This is shown in the second epigraph which echoes a conviction that dialogizing the meaning of the word uncovers its intense features in an age of "confusion" and "conflicts" (Tarnas 444). To these two concepts by Richard Tarnas which he employs to describe modern times, I will add "alienation" and give a ground on which my analyses of death in DeLillo's novels can harbor.

In the epilogue to *The Passion of the Western Mind* (1991), Tarnas states that the Western civilization is at the edge of its death "it is so mature that it is approaching its death," not only civilization but also "the modern man" is dying and "perhaps the end of "man" himself is at hand" (445). Throughout my analyses of Delillo's novels in this research I intend to take this claim further and show that the American civilization, despite its economical, scientific and technological growth is unconscious of its destruction and mortification of the human. I imply that DeLillo recycles the antique and revisits the past to conceptualize the concerns of the modern[10] Western man, demonstrating that the latter is metaphorically at the

[10] While I basically distinguish between the two terms "modernity" and "postmodernity" as I consider that they refer to different areas and periods of times, I use "modern" and "contemporary" interchangeably whenever I talk about anything recent happening in or concerning contemporary postmodern age.

edge of death by sacrificing human essence for the sake of the ideologies of late capitalist and post-human achievements. This "montage," to borrow a Derridean term, of various sources to form a discourse on death, enriches the meaning of the concept.

DeLillo's dialogue of interaction with other cultures starts with his invocation of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. For instance, when shopping in the supermarket, Murray Siskind ponders on the American way of life and contrasts it with that of the Tibetans and says "Tibetans try to see death for what it is. It is the end of attachment to things" (83). The contrast of the postmodern estrangement from death with the Tibetan familiarity prepares the ground to parody the contemporary attitude. Hence, DeLillo's comment affirms the "multi-voiced" aspect of the discourse on death and reflects Bakhtin's saying: "In this huge novel-in this mirror of constantly evolving heteroglossia—any direct word and especially that of the dominant discourse is reflected as something more or less bounded, typical and characteristic of a particular era, aging, dying, ripe for change and renewal"(84).

Murray establishes a link between shopping and death and expresses an agony over the Americans' enslavement by the market which he calls "clinging to life artificially," because they feel that "here we don't die, here we shop. But the difference is less marked than you think" (38). Asserting that there is almost no difference between dying and shopping proposes that in shopping these people experience death, probably not the biological "demise" but the metaphorical death of human essence and man's authenticity. Therefore, one may borrow the Heideggerian term "inauthentically" in order to replace "artificially". The former means "really not" or the mode in which Dasein is very likely to lose his true "Being". Heidegger says that inauthentic existence does not mean "Being-no-longer-in-the-world" but rather a "quite distinctive kind of Being-in-the-world-the kind which is completely fascinated by the 'world' and by the Dasein-with of Others in the "they" (220).

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger explains inauthenticity as the mode in which Dasein is very likely to lose his true "Being," and implies that it is a distinctive kind of "Being-in-the-world" where Dasein loses authentic life because of immersion in the world of others and "facticity" (157). In fact, by bringing the Tibetan conceptualization of death as an end of attachments to things, DeLillo implies that the Americans do not accord to death any of its natural features, as a result of their attachment to worldly goods, expressing their desire to resist it. This is noticeable in the remaining conversation when Siskind says "once we stop denying death, we can proceed calmly to die" (38). This suggests that they wish to be protected from death by denial.

Michael Billig explains that in denial, one does not fail to visually see some event, but fails to see the deeper meaning and significance of the event. If interpreted from this standpoint, Siskind presents himself as an immortal in the supermarket at the "latent level," but at the "manifest level," he knows that he needs to acknowledge the inevitability of death in order to live and die calmly (506). One may notice here the delusion of the postmodern cultural context and its impacts on the conceptualization of death.

In addition to the Tibetan convictions about matters of life and death, which seem to fascinate DeLillo as they will appear years later in *Zero K* (249), the author recalls the legends of famous historical leaders in order to parody the situation of the postmodern characters. Jack Gladney, who usually reads obituaries for the sake of comparing his age to that of the dead in the news, feels relieved whenever he notices that he is younger than the dead persons, assuring to him that he still has many other years to live (99). For example, he evokes the legend of Attila the Hun "the invader of Europe and the Scourge of God," who died in his forties (99). Jack confesses that he needs to imagine that this strong king did never fear death and that he said positive things about death before he dies.

Elizabeth Kübler-Ross says that terrified people seek relief for their anxiety of death in understanding the attitudes of strong leaders: "a chance for peace [in front of death] may thus be found in studying the attitudes toward death in the leaders of the nations, in those who make the final decisions of war and peace between nations" (11). Jack reflects on Attila The Hun telling his aides and soldiers: "That pathetic flea-ridden beast is better off than the greatest ruler of men. It doesn't know what we know, it doesn't feel what we feel, it can't be sad as we are sad" (100). To realize the dialogic value of this quote, one should place it in dialogue with Ernest Becker's argument in *Denial of Death* (1973), when he states that: "the essence of man is his *paradoxical* nature… he has an awareness of his own splendid uniqueness in that he sticks out of nature with a towering majesty, and yet he goes back into the ground a few feet in order blindly and dumbly to rot and disappear forever" (26). Both Becker's and Attila's statements imply that the irony of human existence lies in the fact that man is of higher being than animals, but man's situation is pitiable because of his awareness of the inevitability of his death.

Allusions to history and Becker's theory allow DeLillo to genuinely highlight Jack Gladney's terrific existential dilemma of being mortal and aware of his mortality. In fact, by projecting Jack's situation in light of that of an undefeatable king from the fifth century indicates that no matter how powerful a person is, he is after all a "food for worms" (Becker 26). Juxtaposing the situation of a man who lives in a technologically developed postmodern West against that of an Eastern man who led powerful armies centuries ago entails that modern man's life proves no better than that of ancient people. On the contrary, the latter may be preferred for its heroics and courage vis-à-vis death, while the postmodern one is to be disproved for it endless estrangement and attempts to defy death.

4- Into DeLillo's "Appetite for the Unspeakable,[11]" and Satire on the 1980s

The review of literature on *White Noise* has shown that there is a lack of studies which contextualize the novel, and that the impacts of its historical context, embodied in the Cold War and the nuclear threat, have been remarkably underemphasized. I here endeavour to read this novel against the backdrops of "nuclear arms race" and "atomic anxiety" (Sauer 1-6) in order to understand its perception and obsession with death. In order to achieve this objective,I utilize Bakhtin's "heterroglossia" and attempt to make sense of *White Noise* as a "heteroglot" novel which interrogates the 1980s approximation to death along with the social and ideological contradictions of late-capitalism. I show that the latter promised a utopian well-being and promoted anxiety and psychological pathologies which shaped responses to death as unacceptable and abnormal. Relying on the assumption that dialogism is based on the "dialogue between individual and social, text and context, and text and text …" and given that it "resists the opposition between text/context and emphasizes their connectedness" (Morris 133-34), I argue that attitudes to death in *White Noise* are shaped by the novel's backdrop of race for a balance of power between U.S.A and U.R.S.S.

According to Holquist, Bakhtin's forms of analysis are revolutionary in the sense that they consider language and novels as being heteroglot. That is to say, while conventional forms of criticism disregard extra-textual/literary factors as being slight in their effects on the meaning of the text and words in it, Bakhtin's dialogism assumes that such factors act heavily on the meaning of any literary text, and that at any given time, in any given place, there is a set of powerful but highly unstable conditions at work that will give a word uttered then and there a meaning that is different from what it would be at other times and in other places (67).

[11]This expression is taken from *White Noise*, page 57.

From this perspective, it will be argued that when invoking the Cold War and the struggle for a balance of power between U.S.A and U.R.S.S., and the nuclear menace, Don DeLillo offers a repertoire of images to interpret in an implicit and ambiguous discourse. Despite the similarities between the events he depicts in the novel and the realities of the previously mentioned historical realities, the author never uses the literal words of Cold War, or nuclear/ atomic bombs. Instead, like the character Heinrich, DeLillo "spoke the words in a clipped and foreboding manner, syllable by syllable, as if he senses the threat in state-created terminology" (117). Therefore, understanding the incomprehensible and perplexing discourse on Cold war in the novel entails the use of an analogical-reading approach by comparing some claims by DeLillo to the realities of the Cold War and the 1980s.

DeLillo's discursive strategy reflects the "postmodern intellectual situation [which] is profoundly complex and ambiguous" wherein the critical search for truth is "constrained to be tolerant of ambiguity and pluralism" (Tarnas 395-96). However, it also suggests the treatment of the topic as taboo and justifies the author's "appetite for the unspeakable." The association of the topic of death with "taboo" is better explained in Frank Sauer's Atomic *Anxiety* when he claims that after the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagazaki, the nuclear weapons were never used again. This persistent "non-use" of the nuclear can be explained, according to him, by two reasons: *nuclear deterrence*[12] and *nuclear taboo (*emphasis original 24*)*. He defines the word taboo with its possible meanings in the following passage:

> A taboo conveys a very strict prohibition to protect people from the dangerous consequences of disobeying it. Because breaking a taboo poses such great risk to not only an individual but also society as a whole, deeming something taboo is considerably more than just labeling it 'forbidden'. Taboo means it is neither to be

[12] For a better understanding of the concept of "nuclear deterrence," see Frank Sauer's *Atomic Anxiety* 8-24.

> done, nor touched, nor said, and sometimes not even thought of. Strong taboos mark what is unnatural, abnormal, *unthinkable* within the framework of a society; consequently, taboos are basically unquestionable and go along with threats of automatic and severe punishment in case of a violation. (Sauer 25)

It follows, then, that "the unspeakable" is another synonym for taboo which is associated with the nuclear in order not to be used any more. The nuclear taboo, Sauer writes, derives its explanatory power from a strong "normative understanding [which] ensures that no civilized nation would ever again dare to bring such destruction and suffering as in Hiroshima and Nagasaki upon another people." It is this normative factor and "the strong social norm in the minds of decision-makers that simply renders a first-use of nuclear weapons *wrong*" (25). Therefore, since the attacks on Japan in 1945, the use of nuclear weapons has become taboo and unthinkable basically for the American administration under the presidency of John Kennedy, and the idea of possible nuclear assault was documented once again only in General Taylor's attempt to attack Cuba (Sauer 9).

DeLillo ceaselessly repeats the notion that the causes of the characters' misfortunes are worldly and cosmic rather than mere local or cultural affairs. In one of their conversations, Murray declares: "we are fragile creatures surrounded by a world of hostile facts. Facts threaten our happiness and security. The deeper we delve into the nature of things, the looser our structure may seem to become... not knowing is a weapon of survival" (81-82). Against the historical backdrop of the novel one is inclined to think of "hostile facts" in this sentence only in relation to the menace of nuclear attacks, and "not knowing is a weapon of survival" suggests the intentional attempts at refutation in order not to collapse psychologically.

DeLillo's indirectness of discourse, style and expressions, his incoherence and ambiguity is not particular to *White Noise*; various critics have paid attention to his interest in

mysteries (McLurre 167). Therefore, in this section I need to pay attention to the metaphorical[13] embeddedness and embodiment of the nuclear threat in the Airborne Toxic Event. The latter which produces a dangerous "chemical fallout" and "radiation or toxic fallout" (118), is similar to the atomic bombs which cause "clouds of radioactive dust and ash, called fallout" (Burgan 89). The connection between the situation of people under the threat of the toxic event and those under the threat of atomic effects is seen in DeLillo's description of the state of confusion of the evacuated people from the threatened areas:

> they just keep moving across the bridge through patches of snow-raging light. Out in the open, keeping their children near, carrying what they could, they seemed to be part of some ancient destiny, *connected in doom and ruin to a whole history of people trekking across wasted landscape*. There was an epic quality about them that made me for the first time of the scope of our predicament.(Emphasis added 122)

The sentence, "they seemed to be part of some ancient destiny, *connected in doom and ruin to a whole history of people trekking across wasted landscape"* in this specific historical period and specific nuclear context makes the relation of similitude between the event and the atomic one very strong. The key words in this passage including "connected," "doom and ruin" "history of people," "epic quality," and "scope of our predicament" incite thinking of the broader connotation of the event beyond that of a chemical disaster. The accident, like the nuclear bombing which shattered belief in human goodness, pushes people to wonder "was this some kind of end-of-the-world elation?" (123).

[13] In the interpretation of DeLillo's discourse on Cold War I use the word metaphor to refer to an "object, process or concept, or colligates in an unconventional way" (Goatly 8).

What makes the toxic chemical a strong reminder of the effects of the atomic bombs is its long lasting effect "once it seeps into the soil, it has a life span of forty years. This is longer than a lot of people... I guess there is a lesson in all this. Get to know your chemicals" (132). Similarly, in Hiroshima, the atomic radiation and blast had long lasting poisonous effects on the victims who were suffering from "radiation poisoning" as a result of exposure to high levels of radiation. Michael Burgan asserts that American scientists had known about this danger but they had not predicted that the poisoning would be so widespread (75). As such, it becomes obvious that DeLillo's choice of such an event to be a driving force for the plot of the novel is not random or hazardous; it is rather a metaphor which speaks loudly for the more dangerous threat of the atomic weapons and their mass destructive impacts.

DeLillo draws a picture of imageries about the cloud which brings to the mind of the reader a white and black photograph of the cloud which rose after the atomic explosions of the nuclear bombs on Japan or any tested bomb explosion. In one of the striking passages Jack gives the following description of the event:

> through the stark trees we saw it, the immense toxic cloud, lighted now by eighteen choppers—immense almost beyond comprehension, beyond legend and rumor, a roiling bloated slog-shaped mass. It seems to be generating its own inner storms. There were cracklings and sputtering, flashes of light, long looping streaks of chemical flame. The car horns blared and moaned. The helicopter throbbed like giant appliances. We sat in the car, in the snowy woods, saying nothing. The great cloud, beyond its turbulent core, was silver-tipped in the spotlights. It moved horribly and sluglike though the night, the choppers seeming to putter ineffectually around its edges. In its tremendous size, its dark and bulky menace, its aircraft, *the cloud resembled a national promotion for death, a multimillion-dollar compaign backed by radio spots, heavy print and billboard, TV saturation.*

> *There was a high-tension discharge of vivid light. The horn-blowing increased in volume.*(Emphasis added 156-57)

The passage above illustrates the metaphoric connection between the horrors of the cloud and those of the destructive nuclear bombing[14] In this way, the chemical poison released by the explosion in *White Noise* is analogous to the nuclear atom in its dangerous radiation effects.

When trying to flee the toxic event with his family, Jack was exposed to a dangerous chemical called Nyodene D. The killer Nyodene D. has such ruinous and long lasting effects like the nuclear left-out. Heinrich defines it saying that: "in powder form its colorless, odourless and very dangerous, except no one knows exactly what it causes in human or in the offspring of humans. They tested for years and either they don't know for sure what or they know and aren't saying. Some things are too awful to publicize" (132). In this claim, Heinrich expresses his recognition that the tendency not to say everything is a strategy of defence and survival in his culture.

The surprising effects that the cloud had on Jack recalls the atomic tragedy of *Fukuryu Maru* (Lucky Dragon) in Japan in 1954 when the radioactive fallout of the hydrogen bomb testing in the pacific started to rain on Japanese fishers, who were "85 miles away," leading ultimately to their sickness and the death of one member of the crew (Burgan 89). This incident evoked the tragedy of Hiroshima but also reminded people that they are not in control of the nuclear, its annihilation may be far from being predicted and recalled Martin Sherwin's view that "the survival of humanity could no longer be assumed" (qtd. in Burgan 92).

Titles from the tabloids in the supermarket certify that forgetting the dangers hovering around the world is impossible in the 1980s. After the Gladney family returns home from the evacuation camp, Babette reads the following titles from the tabloids "A Japanese consortium

[14] See App. 2

will buy Air Forse Onen and turn into a luxury flying condominium with midair refueling privileges air-to-surface missile capability" (145), "from beyond the grave, dead living legend John Wayne will communicate telepathetically with President Reagan to help frame U. S. Foreign policy. Mellowed by death, the strapping actor will advocate a hopeful policy of peace and love" (146). The invocation of president Reagan, his foreign policy and the references to the Japanese competition for missile ownership recalls the competition for a balance of power during Cold War, which, to follow Baudrillard ultimately led to exclusion of death as acceptable for humans, mainly the Americans (*The Spirit of Terrorism* 14). The latter, according to Victor Meladze, have fed a strong dream of possessing and controlling death by owning the weapons of mass destruction. Yet, Don DeLillo makes it clear that it only made awareness of death and terror of it ever present than before.

In another instance, the novel recalls the unsettling relationship between Russia and U.S.A. and the mutual mistrust which characterises the vision of their politics. In one conversation among the Gladney family members, Babette says:

> "it's supposed to be Rassian psychics who are causing this crazy weather,"
>
> "What crazy weather?" [Jack] sa[ys]
>
> Heinrich said: "we have psychics, they have psychics, supposedly. They want to disrupt our crops by influencing the weather." (234)

Heinrich's sentence is full of historical significance and refers to the involvement of the two poles in a competition to keep equilibrium of power between them. The Americans first possessed the nuclear bomb but later on the Russians did invent and possess one too, and the truth is that in case of war there would be a mutual destruction of the two camps. This reference sheds light on how the topic of Cold War, though masterfully repressed, at times

defies the power of the unconscious processes and resurfaces to the light. It hints at the powerful omnipresence of history which defies marginalisation even if through "symbolic presentation" (Giaimo 45).

While drawing parallelism between the effects of the cloud and the nuclear explosions, *White Noise* depicts a Yeat's world *par excellence*, a world where things "fall apart" and "the centre cannot hold" because of "wars, famines, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions. It is all beginning to jell ... floods, tornados, epidemics of strange new diseases" (136). The black man that Jack sees in the refugee camp is the prophetic voice which anticipates some tragic event, some catastrophe, and more, an apocalypse at hand. He says that "God's Kingdom" is coming and mankind is about to face an "Armageddon" against nuclear evil and Western weapon hegemony which make the age rotten by the smell of death (136). The age's proximity to destruction and the twentieth-century's high death-tolls and horrors push people toward pessimism and anticipation of a final "battle between good and evil "an Armageddon" to mark the end of the world.

White Noise demonstrates that while the war outside America was about to be fought with arms, people at home suffered from existential uneasiness and psychological insecurity. In one instance, when Jack is on his way back home after a medical check-up, he is surprised by a group of people lying in the street of the town playing the roles of victims following an invitation from the "Advanced Disaster Management, a private consulting firm that conceives and operates simulated evacuations" (205). The man inaugurating the operation advises the personnel by saying: "save your tender loving care for the nuclear fire ball in June" (206). The passage which dramatises a whole preparation for 'simulated evacuation' of people under nuclear firing, illustrates the pressure of history in the novel and the anxiety under which the characters live anticipating a "nuclear fire ball" persistently (206).

Among the participants in the evacuation, Jack finds his young daughter, Steffie, and claims "I could hardly bear to look. Is this how she thinks of herself at the age of nine—already a victim, trying to polish her skills? How natural she looked, how deeply imbued with the idea of a sweeping disaster. Is this the future she envisions?" (205). This suggests that the atmosphere of the nuclear anxiety which surrounds the lives of these people shatters their pride in leadership and enhances a debased self-esteem. They conceive themselves as mere victims and fallible which causes their hatred of human nature and mortality. The condition is particular to the 1980s' people who were living at the edge of destruction, constantly expecting a nuclear catastrophe.

The characters' attempts at repeating images of death go in vain as it remains a reality that haunts them while awake and asleep. While Becker insists that the basic role of culture is to protect us from our awareness of mortality (4), the culture which worships technology, and hyper-reality, and which is born into an age of turmoil in *White Noise* keeps reminding everyone that escaping mortality is not an easy task. The simulated events are privileged over the real ones mainly when they provide the possibility of coping with or forgetting the haunting fear of death since, says Baudrillard "to simulate … implies … an absence" (3). They think that if they manage to blur the boundaries between "the real" and the "imaginary," then they can draw another image about what is real and what is not. In this case, they can reduce the significance of death in their lives and convince themselves that it is but an unreal event. Baudrillard confirms this by saying "all the institutions speak of themselves through denial, in order to attempt, by simulating death, to escape their real death throes" (20). It is on this hope that their well-being depends.

Besides, the description of the toxic event in Blacksmith captures the existential struggles of the tiny individuals against worldly threats and cosmic forces beyond one's control:

> the enormous dark mass moved like some death ship in a Norse legend, escorted across the night by armoured creatures with spiral wings. We weren't sure how to react. It was a terrible thing to see, so close, so low, packed with chlorides, benzines, phenols, hydrocarbons, or whatever the precise toxic content ... our fear was accompanied by a sense of awe bordered on the religious. It is surely possible to be awed by the things that threaten your life, to see it as a cosmic force, so much larger than yourself, more powerful, created by elemental and wilful rhythms. *This was a death made in the laboratory*, defined in a simple and primitive way, as some seasonal perversity of the earth like a flood or tornado, something *not subject to control*. Our helplessness did not seem compatible with the idea of a man-made event ... but this was not history we were witnessing. It was some secret festering thing, some dreamed emotions that accompanies the dreamer out of sleep. (128)

In this quotation DeLillo captures loss of control over human technological/scientific creation as dangerous and destructive. The incompatibility between creation of death and failure of protection against it is exhaustive and perplexing for the characters and generates inability to accept their "helplessness" in front of an event which is created by Man. In *Inhuman*, Lyotard comments on loss of control over human inventions by saying that "if new culture can produce such divergent effects, of generalization and destruction, this is because it seems to belong to the human domain neither by its aim nor its origins ... the human race is, so to speak, 'pulled forward' by this process without possessing the slightest capacity for mastering it" (64). Similarly, Heidegger rejects the human confidence in its ability to control technology, and warns against the danger of losing mastery over it ("The Question Concerning Technology" 332).

The history of death in the twentieth- century and the disastrous events of *White Noise* proved how dangerous the loss of mastery over human inventory can be. Therefore, Paul Giaimo's claim that in *White Noise* "the pressures of advertising and capital make it so difficult to think historically" (2) is not firm because history is there no matter whether it is explicitly declared or not. As such, one should not be tempted to read DeLillo's discourse as one limited to environment (Orr 15) but rather as being related to the nuclear anxiety and the America's struggle to avoid its annihilation.

At the end, *White Noise* is rich with metaphorical allusions to Cold War and the nuclear menace of the 1980s. As such, DeLillo's discourse of death intersects with fear of the atomic war. The two discourses are highly inter-related in explaining the perception of death, showing that the meaning of death is not separable from the whole view of the world as an unsafe place under the nuclear weapons. This dialogic reading of *White Noise* with its context deconstructs Derrida's claim that "il n'y a pas de hors text" and shows that text, meaning and context are linked. Dialogism is DeLillo's effective tool in conceptualizing death in his novel. His discourse on death is politically and socially determined as the author relies on the macro level of the characters to understand their micro concerns about mortality.

5- Technology[15] and Technological Immortality: Exacerbating Fear of Death

The development of information technology revolutionized the Western life-style. According to Fukuyama, this technology produced "many social benefits and relatively few harms" (22). He says that it remained under weak governmental or political control because it was judged safe. The revolution in this field has reinforced the American "fondness for technology" and convinced people that technology will inevitably liberate the individual and enrich his personality (Fukuyama 11). *White Noise* shows that Fukuyama's claim is

[15] The term is quoted by Francis Fukuyama in his *Our Posthuman Future: consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution* (2002). Information technologies also include personnel computers, radios, faxes and emails (4).

convincing to some extent because the Americans' high consumption of television and radio programs stems from great faith in technology as a savior. However, DeLillo's text contradicts Fukuyama's claim regarding safety and well-being. In this novel, traumatic events and "outer torments" (85), to use Jack's terms, are brought so close to the eye and the ear of the Americans by information technology which lead to the spread of constant terror and threatened the psychological stability of the characters.

The need for communication and connectedness is depicted in *White Noise* as pathology of postmodern times. In the novel, this lack of communication is compensated for by constant watch of TV programs. Significantly, through the lack of communication Don DeLillo hints at conceptualization of death as taboo. In many instances we see that the characters dare to communicate trivial things about their lives but when it comes to what they feel toward death, they become speechless, isolated from each other and prefer the private realm of secrecy. The best example to provide is the case of Babette and Jack. Death for her is what Paul Giaimo calls "the unspeakable mystery of innocent human suffering" (81). This becomes clear when Jack hesitates to tell Babette about his fears of death:

> Babette and I tell each other everything … but when I say I believe in complete disclosure I don't mean it cheaply, as anecdotal sport or shallow revelation … Babette and I have turned our lives for each other's thoughtful regard, turned them in the moonlight in our pale hands, spoken deep into the night about fathers and mothers, childhood, friendships, awakenings, old loves, old fears (except fear of death). No detail must be left out, not even a dog with ticks or a neighbor's boy who ate an insect on a dare (30).

Babette tells Jack everything in life but her fears of death which eventually leads her to drugs and adultery (190-93). This causes him extreme pain and disappointment. Excluding the talk

about fear of death from the conversational agenda indicates the characters' need for protection from it. Michael Billig, relying on the Freudian ideas of unconscious repression talks about "repression of shameful thoughts" and the "expressive" and "repressive" aspects of language which result from the fact that when learning to speak, the individual learns "what not to say" (i). So, Jack's and Babette's choice of 'not saying' things related to their fear of death is not only about shame as it is about avoidance of pain, pushing the idea away from consciousness to the realm of the unknown seeking psychological protection.

The break away from "verbal symbols" during the twentieth century and the emergence of the image and "the sign" as based on "resemblance" brought people to a new "iconocentric" age dominated by TV and computer screens. This new form of discourse and "iconic shift" have in effect enhanced "the effectiveness of the fear culture, as characteristic of icons lend themselves to more emotional and less analytic styles of thought" (Skoll115).

Information technology has anon turned to be a real source of terror invading indoors and private spaces within the technological West by raising emotions of fear through representations. In *White Noise*, television reports constantly "documentary clips of calamity and death," (65) and "newsfilm" of murder and criminality (222). Murray Siskind's students consider it "worse than junk mail. Television is the death throes of human consciousness ... they are ashamed of their television past" (51). For most people in DeLillo's text "there are only two places in the world. Where they live and their TV set. If a thing happens on television, we have every right to find it fascinating, whatever it is" (66). This fascination by what happens in TV stems from the characters' inability and confusion to distinguish between the Real event[16] and the represented one.

[16] See chapter two for a detailed analysis of the same point from a Lacanian perspective of the "Real" and Zizek's elaboration on it in *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*(2002).

Television and radio are presented as icons of globalisation, they are the new technologies which furnish "cultural models which are not initially rooted in the local context but are immediately formed in view of the broadest diffusion across the surface of the globe." In this way, they provide a remarkable means of "overcoming the obstacle traditional culture imposes to the recording, transfer and communication of information" (Lyotard *94*). The global aspect of TV information is interesting to consider because it has serious impacts on the American psychology. Jack says that though they live in the safe town of Blacksmith, they cannot feel safe because of TV which spreads fear: "we're not smack in the path of history and its contaminations. If our complaints have a focal point, it would be the TV set, where the outer torment lurks causing fears and secret desires" (85). In this sense, the historical threats mentioned by Jack come from outside America by the medium of television to cause fear in the heart of the Americans.

Because of television and radio programs, the American individual is torn between real fear and fear resulting from watching TV representations: "Older people in particular were susceptible to news of impending calamity as it was forecast on TV … When TV didn't fill them with rage, it scared them half to death" (167-68). This quote shows that people cannot resist the fear transmitted by the news on TV. On the contrary, they endure a fragmented psychology because the images of disaster are established as "iconic signs" and become sources of "ideological formation and sources of generalized fear in society" (Skoll 120). The "ideological formative" side of TV becomes evident when Murray Siskind says that he changes his ideological orientations and interest in life after watching a TV program : "It was as though a message was being transmitted from the weather satellite through that young man and then to me in my canvas chair. I turned to meteorology for comfort (55). This illustrates the great impact that television has in shaping people's opinions and decisions.

The techno-scientific facilities in the lives of the characters endow them with hubris and hope that they may move a step forward their defenselessness as mortals. However, they soon turn to be mere illusions which eventually deceive them and lay bare their vulnerability. In *Inhuman, Reflections on Time,* Francois Lyotard contends that "the penetration of techno-scientific apparatus into the cultural field in no way signifies an increase of knowledge, sensibility, tolerance and liberty. Reinforcing this apparatus does not liberate the spirit … Experience shows rather the reverse: a new poverty, merciless remodeling of opinion by the media, immiseration of the mind, obsolescence of the soul" (63). In light of this claim, *White Noise* depicts the techno-scientific progress of the American culture as a double-edged power which refashions refusal of death. As such, concretizes Lyotard's "remodeling of opinion" as referring to opinion about mortality. It also shows science as "a form of sickness" just as it was for modernity (Nietzsche, *Will to Power* 32).

At the same time, attaching to a false hope in technology helps the characters cope with their terror. For this reason, Jack, enable to reveal what he thinks to the others, says in an internal voice:

> I wanted to ask him why should I believe these scientific findings but not the results that indicate we were safe from Nyodene contamination. But what could I say, considering my condition? I wanted to ask him that statistical evidence of the kind he was quoting from was by nature inconclusive and misleading. I wanted to say that he would learn to regard all such catastrophic findings with equanimity as he matured, grew out of his confining literalism, developed a spirit of informed and skeptical enquiry, advanced in wisdom and rounded judgment, got old, declined, died.

> But I only said, "Terrifying data is now an industry in itself.Different firms of compete to see how badly they can scare us." (175)

By "my condition," Jack means the fact of being "scheduled to die," after being affected by Nyodene D., the state after which his fear is heightened to the extreme making him "haunted, ashen, lost." (163). The quotation explains that he wants to believe that he can trust the "scientific findings" which say that Noyodene D. is no longer a threat and an equivalent to death. Mistakenly, Jack thinks that by protecting him from the chemical, science can protect him from death too. Therefore, he conceptualizes death as an avoidable accident instead of a meaningful existential possibility which grants the chance of a complete existence (Heidegger 242).

The failure of Dylar in healing the patients and the unexpected side effects of some technological innovations and scientific projects attest that technology may become a source of angst and unrest and that science can improve man's life but will never be a deity granting immortality. Delillo's overtly expressed satire and lack of faith in technology is resonant from the many disasters that put men's life at the edge of death during the eighties due to technology mainly as it resulted in an irrational competition to possess nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction. In this context Leonardo Orr commenting on *White Noise* argues that the 1980s

> saw one ecological and technological disaster after another: the meltdown at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in 1986, the Exxon Valdez oil tanker apill off the cost of Alaska in 1989, and just a few months before the publication of *White Noise*, the worst event in terms of human life: the December 1984 release of toxic gas from Union Carbide Plant in Bhopal, India. (15)

Furthermore, Heinrich, Jack's adolescent son, the seemingly single conscious character in the novel, in one of his discussions with Babette says:

> "The real issue is the kind of radiation that surrounds us everyday. Your radio, your TV, your microwave oven, your power lines just outside the door, your radar speed-trap on the highway. For years they told us these low doses weren't dangerous"
>
> "And now?" Babette said.
>
> "This is the new worry," he said. "what makes these people so sad and depressed? Just the *sight* of ugly wires and utility poles? Or does something happen to their brain cells from being exposed to constant rays?" ... where do you think all the deformed babies are coming from? Radio and TV. That's where." (174- 175)

In this discussion, Heinrich extols his distrust of the decency of technology and his awareness that it threatens to annihilate humanity. To some extent one may assume that Heinrich's attitudes to science and technology resembles to a great degree that of both DeLillo and Heidegger. Comments on the postmodern subjects are delivered through the mouth-piece of this paradoxical character. The use of the adjective "paradoxical" to describe Heinrich is not hap-hazardous but stems from the fact that he is the one who at once believes in science and at the same time questions its findings. He becomes, as a result, the embodiment of the spirit of postmodern skepticism of truth, logic and unified systems.

In the refugee camp, Heinrich suspects the state of the postmodern man as a knowing-person by drawing a comparison between modern and Stone Age people and way of life. For him, the modern man lives in a state of lies because he thinks himself more powerful and more modern than the Stone Agers, but facts show the opposite:

> It's like we've been flung back in time," he said. "Here we are in the Stone Age, knowing all these great things after centuries of progress but what can we do to make life easier for the Stone Agers? Can we make a refrigerator? …If you came awake tomorrow in the Middle Ages and there was an epidemic raging, what could you do to stop it, knowing what you know about the progress of medicines and diseases? Here it is practically the twenty-first century and you've read hundreds of books and magazines and seen a hundred TV shows about science and medicine. Could you tell those people one little crucial thing that might save a million and a half lives?... What good is knowledge if it just floats in the air? It goes from computer to computer. It changes and grows every second of every day. But nobody actually knows anything. (144)

The passage above shows Heinrich's doubt of modern knowledge and highlights the threat that the human is facing. This threat concerns his agency and survival as he is getting manipulated by technology and computers. It parodies man's trust of knowledge by comparing it to the man of Stone Ages who could face nature with true empirical knowledge and skills. The practicality of knowledge, according to this view, serves better the human being and can save him in real life situations.

The doomed-to-failure of technological innovations and the scientific discoveries in Delillo's text can be read as a "parody" of the belief in the limitlessness of technology including the posthuman promise and credence in the possibility of revolutionizing human life on earth by means of techno-science. In a nutshell, technology in *White Noise* ranks not only as a false insurance of immortality, but as a source of terror and death. The discourse of fear experienced through watching television intersects with the terrors of the 1980s to structure an atmosphere of paranoia around the American citizen in DeLillo's postmodern novel.

6- **Absence of Religion and Re-Conceptualization of the Spiritual**

Capitalist societies are "increasingly becoming secular" and people happily "submit to such a highly irrational and devastatingly unstable mode of production" and religion is gradually seen as a "false consciousness" (Fong 81). In *White Noise*, the spiritual bears a new significance and the characters do not stick to any specific or overtly-declared religion. As such, they cannot hold a natural relationship or understanding of death which is conceptualized along the lost spiritual to mean the subverted, the needless and the left-away. Elizabeth Kübler-Ross explains that:

> In the old days more people seemed to believe in G
>
> od unquestionably; they believed in a hereafter, which was to relieve people of their suffering and their pain. There was a reward in heaven, and if we had suffered much here on earth we would be rewarded after death depending on the courage and grace, patience and dignity with which we had carried our burden. (12)

The above quotation helps understand that the change in the state of religion results in a change in the representation of death. No wonder, then, that death in the secular world becomes terrific and beyond the comprehension of humans. Religion as the strongest pillar which can provide man with some reconciliation and consolation withdraws leaving the characters to face their horrific death with empty souls.

In *White Noise*, the church, the traditionally sacred Christian place of worshipping God, loses its spiritual significance and turns to a place of earthly services and physical pleasures. Indeed, it is in the "Congregational church" that Babette teaches the old men of the town correct postures and good manners before they ask her to give another course about "eating and drinking." The course will eventually be called "Eating and Drinking: Basic Parameters"

(171). So, in the churches of *White Noise* no place is left for religious sermons or Christian lessons. People do not even think they may find comprehension, solace or acceptance of their declining bodies in the church. Focusing on the requirements of the aged body and neglecting the needs of the soul explains the terror DeLillo's characters experience in relation to their bodies. The church is added to the other places of powerful physical pleasures like "the kitchen" and the "bedroom" (6) to speak loudly for the failure of religion during modern and postmodern times in providing an alternate source of spirituality and meaning to everyone's existence. This change in the role of the church is a chilling reminder of man's estrangement from God and inevitably from human mortality.

Instead, the supermarket is what seems to provide a sense of grandeur and relief for the fear of death and the sense of insecurity which intensified in every single human because of the Airborne Toxic Event. Once returning home after the accident, Jack and his family notice how the houses "show signs of neglect … Signs of time" (170). In contrast, the supermarket did not change, except for the better: "It was well-stocked, musical and bright. This was the key, it seemed to us. Everything was fine, would continue to be fine, would eventually get better as long as the supermarket did not slip" (170). One's power and comfort, as this quote shows, is inspired from the supermarket and is not believed to be revealed by God.

Alternatively, injuries or emptiness in the soul of humans are temporarily soothed by the activities of shopping and consumerism related to the supermarket. For Jack, Babette and their children, the more they purchase, the happier they get and more relaxed they feel: "the sense of replenishment we felt, the sense of well-being, the security and contentment these products brought to some snug home in our souls—it seemed we had achieved a fullness of being that is not known to people who need less, expect less, who plan their lives around lonely walks in the evening" (20).

Psychologically speaking, this situation brings about an understanding of Freud's concept of "sublimation". Though the latter is associated with inhibition of sexual desires (Billig 258), its definition also fits the attempts at concealing the fear of death and the unacceptable behavior which it may generate by going to shop in the market. The unconscious mechanism of sublimating fear of death and vulnerability through shopping is best illustrated when Jack meets Eric who sees him without his academic clothes and who disturbs his *bien-être* by saying: "you look so harmless, Jack. A big, harmless, aging, indistinct sort of guy" (85). Jack says that "the encounter put [him] in the mood to shop… puzzled but excited by [his] desire to buy" (85). Then, he joins his family for a big shopping which he believes to grant him a sense of existential and psychological well-being. He says:

> I shopped for immediate needs and distant contingencies. I shopped for its own sake … I began to grow in value and self regard. I filled myself out, found new aspects of myself, located a person I had forgotten existed. Brightness settled around me…The more money I spent, the less important it seemed …These sums poured off my skin like. These sums in fact came back to me in form of existential credit. I felt expansive, inclined to be sweepingly generous, and told the kids to pick up out their Christmas gifts *here and now.* (emphasis added 84)

The above quotation shows that Jack is indeed overwhelmed by undesirable feelings he needs to urgently conceal and surmount. These feelings can be so unacceptable and harmful if he does not succeed to turn them toward something less destructive, like shopping. It is clear that the latter is related to the whole existence of the Americans in the here and now because it is not only a process of acquiring "commodities" but an end in itself. The causal sequence uniting Jack's running away from the academia and his heading directly to the supermarket reflects a longing for the sense of "being at home," to borrow Heidegger.

The characters "transfer" their terror of death toward spending money. This "repetition-compulsion" for shopping and being at the market expresses a need to ensure the continuity of pleasure sensations. Murray Siskind, for instance, likes being in the supermarket because it is full of spirituality and "psychic data," and fills him with its own sense of immortality. For him "it is timeless" and, as such, substitutes the church or religion as sources of transcendental experiences (38). The novel ends with the description of the supermarket in its new state of rearranged shelves (325). It then becomes "an aimless haunted mood" (326). The fact that the change in the market marks a change in the mood of Jack shows that he relates strongly to this place and his well-being is inspired and defined by the well-arrangements of its space. This lays bare the character's high relatedness on the place and that his being is well defined with "being-in" the supermarket. However, it turns out that consumerism becomes like the "seawater that increases thirst instead of quenching it, the more they consume the more they have to consume" (Skoll 137). In this long process of consumerism, the promise of relief from fear of death is not fulfilled and the authentic assertion of self and existence is lost.

The continuous references to the fear of death that invades the characters and their attempts at being immersed in spaces that can grant them some relief for their existential dilemma with death invite reading these spaces following Heidegger's thoughts on "being" as not being detached from the world but as being spatially structured as "being-in-the-world" (41). Exploring the meaning of "Dasein" as "being-in-the world" reveals the precedence and importance of place in understanding one's existence. Heidegger explains that the "in" in "being-in-the-world" does not contain a meaning of being "contained"[17] in the world but a

[17]Heidegger explains this point by saying " we supplement the expression being-in right away with the phrase "in the world" ...with this term, the kind of being of a being is named which is "in" something else, as water is "in" the glass, the dress is in the closet. By this "in" we mean the relation of being that two beings extended in space have to each other with regard to their location in that space... nor does the term being-in designate a spatial " in one another" of two

sense of "involvement" and familiarity in the world. Being-in-the-world is what fulfills Dasein with content and meaning, without which it remains empty and meaningless. White Noise then is a novel which acknowledges the existential significance of spatiality in accounting for attitudes to death which challenge one's experience of spatial environments.

In addition to search for spirituality and meaning in shopping and the space of the supermarket implies that belief in God and Christianity no longer hold as true even in the hearts of religious representatives. This is shown by the nuns Jack meets at the "congregational church" who turned out to be fake believers who pretend to be true ones. When Jack asks the nun whether she still believes in God and what were the reasons which motivate her to keep the picture of John Kennedy with Pope John XXIII on the wall, she unexpectedly answers:

> It's for others, Not for us… All the others who spend their lives believing that *we* still believe. It is our task in the world to believe things no one else takes seriously. To abandon such beliefs completely, the human race would die. This is why we are here. A tiny minority. To embody old things, old beliefs. The devil, the angles, heaven, hell. If we did not pretend to belive these things, the worl collapse… of course pretend. Do you think we are stupid? … our pretense is a dedication. Someone must appear to believe… as belief shrinks from the world, people find it more necessary to than ever that *someone* believe… they are sure that they are right not to believe but they know belief must not fade completely. Hell is when no one believes. We are your lunatics. (318-19)

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things objectively present. "In" stems from innan-, to live, habitate, to dwell. "An" means I am used to, familiar with, I take care of something" (54).

The confession of the nun mocks the believers and declares them fool. It ranks the world of *White Noise* as a nihilistic one par excellence[18]. It is a world wherein the existence of religion has reached ground zero and belief systems have collapsed. Once more, Jack is shocked to the reality that in this world there is no certainty or reality. On the one hand, DeLillo reflects the absence of an underlined solid system of truth or meaning in the postmodern era. On the other hand, he implies that every truth is but a facet which hides some lies. In the same line of thought, Richard Tarnas explains that the postmodern worldview recognizes reality as being manipulated, as no longer accepted as "solid" and "self contained" but as being "fluid" (396). As such, the individual is doomed to search and construct meaning from an empty center. DeLillo, then, parodies established religions and catholic churches as being absent and disappointing in the post Vietnam-war America.

By the end of the novel, Jack understands that in the long process of consumerism, the promise of relief from fear of death is not fulfilled and the authentic assertion of self and existence is lost. Therefore, he confesses that he feels "more at ease in this German-speaking company than … with Hitler scholars" (317). The company Jack is talking about is that of the nuns which is named "Iron City Lying-In. Mother of Mercy. Commiseration and Rapport." (315). Finding relief with these nuns suggests that Jack becomes aware that he is so much in need for spirituality and that his intellectual activities and efforts devoted for studying Hilter, in attempt to make it up for his fragile manhood, collapse in a moment of precious recognition. It is suggestive that DeLillo still believes in the ability of the "traditional spirituality" to redeem the injured soul of the postmodern man. Yet, it is noteworthy that Jack

[18] Nihilism or "nothing is" has found entrance to the modern life and become a very dangerous illness which threatens its fundamental nature (Cunningham 1). As a result, a significant part of Nietzsche's work constitutes an attempt to help the modern man escape from the nihilistic perspectives which suffuse and permeate every facet of human existence. Different types of nihilism; radical, passive, metaphysical and ethical, have featured the postmodern age.

arrives at this realization only after he faces a real death threat which reawakened him to human compassion and essence.

Helas, true or traditional conviction is not possible to find because even religion and religious people are mere "hallucinatory resemblance[s]" and images of the real faith which is lost (Baurillard, *Simulation Simulacra* 24). From the same perspective of simulation, it can be claimed that the nuns who are fake versions of true faith are used to create a version of real religion and religious practices only to cover for the real which has escaped the society. It is very similar to the other characters attempts to create real versions of life events such as accidents and being bitten by snakes only to gain acquaintance and acceptance of them (207).

In fact, even if it is a false non-original fact, they prefer the created version of the reality because it is something that they have imitated, it is man-created and thus, easy to be controlled. Following Baudrillard's reasoning, this is the reason why they seem to be happy with these simulations which destroy the original because "to simulate is not simply to feign ... feigning or dissimulation leaves the reality intact ... whereas simulation threatens the difference between 'true' and 'false' between real and imaginary" (*Simulation and Simulacra* 5). To get involved in the process of Simulation is to lose the meaning and the value because all that remains is a sign referring to itself without a meaning. In the case of the nuns and their church which are signs of the traditional religion, their being a symbol and a sign is more important that what they truly believe. The nun says that this representation, though not real, is what may ensure the continuation of the human race, and without it the latter "would die" (318).

7- The Search for Appeasement of Death Fear and Identification with the Powerful

At its heart, Freud's psychoanalysis is a theory of libido and sexuality, of conscious and unconscious impulses. When he talks about defending the psyche from psychological

disturbances, he refers to the disturbances created by sexual desires seeking gratification. He basically suggests the protection of the ego from unacceptable feelings. He states: "it will be an undoubted advantage, I think, to revert to the old concept of 'defence' provided we employ it explicitly as a general designation for all the techniques which the ego makes use of in conflicts which may lead to a neurosis" (*Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety 72).* In light of this, and in addition to shopping which provides a means of 'sublimation' of undesirable feelings toward death to protect the ego from destruction, it is worth considering other actions that help the characters redirect the fear of death toward some socially acceptable behaviors in *White Noise*.

After his hopeless search for the other bottle of Dylar that is hidden by his daughter, Denise, Jack decides to have another medical check with Dr. Chkravarty. The latter's tests reveal something wrong in Jack's system though the latter denies any exposition to some threatening chemical substance. As a result, he decides to ask for further exams. The diagnosis which proves that he carries the deadly Nyodene D. shocks him and reminds him of his terror of death. So, he decides to go home where, he started throwing things away:

> I threw away fishing lures, dead tennis balls, torn luggage …The house was a sepia maze of old and tired things. There was an immensity of things, an overburdening weight, a connection, *a mortality* … I just wanted to get the stuff out of the house. I sat on the front steps alone, waiting for a sense of ease and peace to settle in the air around me. (126)

This scene pictures Jack's exaggerated reaction, so to speak, and depicts his mental and emotional "maladjustments to one's environment" (Freud, *Totem and Taboo* 4). His search for relief from the doctor's diagnosis is remarkable in this passage. To avoid dangerous manifestations of the feelings of fear, he deports the unpleasant ideas about the death

threatening his life and succeeds to sublimate them into cleaning the house and throwing old useless old staff which may remind him of his state as an aged sick man. One may also think of this as a crisis of self-esteem due to the doctor's diagnosis which has violently shaken his preferable image of himself as a strong influential individual. Cleaning the house and throwing the old objects which he connects to mortality are comparable to his previous activities of shopping and identification with the Hitler Department in their being defensive against irreconcilable ideas about death and fragility.

Another presence of sublimation as a defense mechanism against fear of death is deduced in the characters' redirection of their fears toward food. DeLillo, in fact, pictures a whole society seeking diversion from fear in food-consuming:

> When times are bad, people feel compelled to overeat. Blacksmith is full of obese adults and children, baggy-pantsed, short-legged, waddling. They struggle to emerge from compact cars; they don sweatsuits and run in families across the landscape; they walk down the street with food in their faces; they eat in stores, cars, parking lots, on bus lines and movie lines, under the stately trees. (14)

In these lines, it becomes clear that there is an inclination to convert bad feelings into eating food. In much the same way, Babette who is haunted by dread says: "I need either … chew gum with sugar and artificial coloring or …chew sugarless and colorless gum that's harmful to rats … All I want to do is chew a pathetic little tasteless chunk of gum now and then. Chewing happens to relax me" (42). Her need to chew gum all the time mirrors her inability to handle her fear otherwise. In addition, her psychological unbalance and state of forgetfulness are the results of her consciousness of death which she certainly needs to transform to a more tolerable act. Chewing gum provides her with the pleasurable sensation

which she loses while thinking of death, and keeps her in the realm of the acceptable behavior in dealing with the terror.

When Jack finds out about Dylar, its immense bad effects and his wife's deceitful behaviors, the whole family was troubled. So,

> No one wanted to cook that night. We all got in the car and went out to the commercial strip in the no man's land beyond the town boundary. The never-ending neon. I pulled in at a place that specialized in chicken parts and brownies … There was a mood of intense concentration, minds converging on a single compelling idea. I was surprised to find I was enormously hungry. I chewed and ate, looking only inches past my hands. This is how hunger shrinks the world. This is the edge of the observable universe of food … People gave Babette their bones to clean and suck. I fought off an image of Mr. Gray lazing naked on a motel bed, an unresolved picture collapsing at the edges. We sent Denise to get more food, waiting for her in silence. Then we started in again, half stunned by the dimensions of our pleasure.(231)

The passage above shows that Jack transfers the feelings caused by his wife's sexual relation with Mr. Gray while seeking a solution to her fear of death toward eating chicken. This act minimizes his suffering and alleviates the sense of pain in him because, explains Freud, the human psyche is structured in a way to seek pleasure and avoid pain (*Civilization and its Discontent* 29).

Interrogating the different factors which have important impacts on producing or reproducing a particular reaction to mortality in the characters necessitates a reflection on the presence of Hitler, one of the most important political personalities of the twentieth-century. In this section,I argue that Jack surrenders to a very unconventional strategy of defence

against the torment of death by identification with the strong Adolf Hitler. The borrowing of this figure from history and politics reproduces Kübler-Ross' view that attitudes of relief in front of death as shown by leaders of strong nations sustain feelings of peace and safety in terrified people (11). Moreover, I consider Jack's yearning for university fame and longing for an identity which is not separable from that of Hitler as his own "causa-sui" project of immortality.

In *The Denial of Death (*1973), Ernest Becker displays an original opinion about man's unconscious drives in life. For Becker the strongest force behind man's activity on earth is the universal fear of death. In this perspective, he departs from Freud's famous thesis that human beings are driven by their sexual impulses. Becker provides strong arguments from the fields of philosophy and psychology to sustain the theory that people protect themselves from the consuming effects of death fear by denying it (165). To live with this fear, a human being relies on the "lie" of the "causa-sui project" of immortality which he defines as "the personal vehicle for heroism, for transcendence of vulnerability and human limitation" (109). As such, the causa-sui grants the feeling that one is "secure in something stronger, larger, and more important than one's own strength and life" (120). As such, by devoting himself to Hitler Studies, Jack attempts to construct for himself a reputation as strong as Hitler's in order to ease his fear from annihilation and non-significance. Hitler functions as a tool of strength for Jack's weak ego toward the inevitability of mortality because he sees him as "larger than death" (287). He also seeks to immortalize himself and make his memory alive in the eyes of the society through linking to the man he sees as the creator of death and the leader who has never been a dier.

Interpreting Theodor Adorno, Benjamin Fong writes that in "identifying with the leader image" the follower gratifies "the twofold wish to submit to authority and to be authority himself" (95). Following this reasoning, it can be argued that Jack follows and identifies with

the authoritative Hitler in order to feel safe and powerful in face of his torment by death. Similarly, Murray Siskind explains Jack's love for Hitler and says: "on one level you wanted to be helped and sheltered… on another level you wanted to use him to grow in significance and strength" (287).

Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytical concept of "identification" which he defines as the "transformation which takes place in the subject when he assumes an image" (*Ecrits* 1) is applicable to Jack's case, too. Lacan identifies three orders of personality development which are the imaginary, the symbolic and the Real. Because the image is a vital medium of identification, the imaginary stage designates "that basic and enduring dimension of experience that is oriented by images, perceived or fantasized" (Boothby 18). It follows that the imaginary is a site of fake self which is recognized via the image of another person. Lacan states that identification with an external subject to the ego is "what structures the subject as a rival to himself" (*Ecrit* 19). As regards the symbolic, it is the order of social and cultural interaction and conceptions structured by language. The third stage which is the real is that by which everyday life is measured and at the experience of it "lays the heart of trauma" (Boothby 19). The "real" is not reality because the latter is knowable but the real is "that before which the imaginary faltered, that over which the symbolic stumbles, that which is refractory, resistant. Hence the formula: 'the real is the impossible' (Ecrit x). As such, when the person seeks coherence and unity in the imaginary identification with another, all he gets is an "alienated identity" (Lacan, *Ecrits* 3).

In light of this, Jack routinely reads "deeply in Hitler into the night," expressing his non-satisfaction with the person he is and his readiness to conformism and change to resemble Hitler. He confesses: "Hitler gave me something to grow into and develop toward." Clearly, he seeks significance and fulfillment in Hitler. He tells his wife that the chancellor advised him to "do something about [his] name and appearance if [he] wanted to be taken seriously as

a Hitler innovator." As a result, he literally agrees to change and modify his name to "J. A. K Gladney" and wear it like "A borrowed suit" (16). In the illusionary request of self-immortalization in the figure of Hitler, Jack gets more and more alienated from his authentic being admitting that he is "the false character that follows the name around" (16). Despite his recognition, he fails to stand up against his alienation and continues to melt into the life of someone else.

Jack's mimicry of Hitler hides beneath an unconscious desire to forget death. His inauthentic fear of death pushes him to recognize himself in Hitler who functions as a tool of strength for his ego, which is very fragile in front of the inevitability of mortality because, he assumes, "Hitler is larger than death" (287). He tries to appropriate his fame and influence in the world in order to construct for himself a reputation as strong as Hitler's "from the great marketplace of history Gladney has chosen Hitler as an ego for his own inauthenticity, existential dread, and fear of non-existence" (Dewey qtd. in Arno 207-8).

Moreover, Jack confesses that he names his son Heinrich by that name because it has "Something German" and that the name is supposed to "make him unafraid" (63). The act of "transference" of his own fear to his son is an unconscious technique to protect himself against fear. Ultimately, Jack' hidden intentions and objectives behind his commitment to Hitler's life and work are revealed by his friend Murray Siskind who says that:

> helpless and fearful people are drawn to magical figures, mythic figures, epic men who intimidate and darkly loom … Some people are larger than life … You thought he would protect you. I understand completely… The overwhelming horror would leave no room for your own death. "Submerge me," you said. 'Absorb my fear.' (287)

Gradually, the strong relationship he tries to establish with the dead leader alienates him from meaningful existential, truth and life. This results in a premature stage of personality development and alienated self because "alienation is constitutive of the imaginary order" (*Ecrit* 146). The passage shows Jack's psychological backwardness as he prefers to hide in the very first stage of the Lacanian psychological development of the imaginary which gains him only confusion and psychological alienation because, it turns out, his devotedness to Hitler is an illusion which nourishes his dependence rather than freedom from dread: "he now knows he [Hitler] won't go down in history… neither will [he]" (45).

Existentially speaking, Jack's identification with a German enemy confirms not only his self-alienation but his estrangement from the postmodern America where he lives. It echoes his non-satisfaction with the world he inhabits and seeks to create a space of belonging somewhere else away from the confinements of postmodernism and late capitalism. Jack shows a strong "will to power" which Nietzsche defines as a longing "to find the way to higher level of being" and "becoming stronger, more superhuman, more terrible, more wiser" (*Will to Power* 30-31). He shows some intentions to overcome the limits that may characterize ordinary people, the class which Nietzsche calls "Herd." He seeks to be stronger than the herd, the weak and the ordinary and belong to "a stronger species, a higher type that arises and preserves itself under different conditions from those of the average man" (*The Will to Power* 464). Nietzsche famously calls this type of man "overman" or "superman." Jack looks to "invent a *higher form of being" (464),* a being free of death as a weakness and a sickness too and "*overman"* embodied in Hitler is the goal for him (519).

Similarly to Hitler who needed courage and strength to face military armies seeking control over the whole world, Jack, needs the same virtues to control some inner sounds threatening his stability which is his obsession with death. So, by means of analogy, the two men, Jack and Hitler, are alike in their "Will to Power." Jack does not care about any of the

moral codes which classify Hitler in the red list of the Nazis whose acts of violence purged the twentieth-century of its innocence. Instead, he dives into his fame, strength and power at once seeking appeasement of death fear and conciliation for the low-esteem of his mortal self. Jack's carelessness about moral codes and rejection of Hitler and his atrocities, echoes Nietzsche's explanation that morality "treated the violent despots, the doers of violence, the "masters" in general as the enemies against whom the common man must be protected." He adds that Morality consequently "taught men to hate and despise most profoundly what is the basic character trait of those who rule: their will to power … there is nothing to life that has value, except the degree of power—assuming that life itself is the will to power (37).

Despite his ignorance of all moral codes in his engagement with Hitler and his aspiring for his power, Jack is constantly deceived by Hitler. Because he cannot succeed to speak German, all studies are second-hand and not original; they must be mere (re)reading of translations. Jack's inability to speak German hinders his efforts at being a successful scholar of these studies. He lives in constant fear of having his secret revealed or disclosed to other scholars. The power of Hitler is supposed to sustain his low self-esteem, but the power of German language which surpasses his abilities reawakens him to the illusion of his aspirations. Hence, he continues to live in constant fear of having his secret revealed or disclosed to other scholars of Hitler and enhances his crises in building a strong resistant self. Therefore, once more, DeLillo uses political and historical discourses to unleash a dialogized satire on the postmodern self and culture as being weak and shallow.

8- **Facing Death and the Call Back For Human Compassion**

In the America of the 1980s where Jack and his family live, alienation of the individual from basic human essence, God and mortal nature is the result of the various forces at work in the culture. It has been previously shown that late capitalism becomes an ideology

which enhances this alienation and throws the individual to psychological turmoil and confusion. DeLillo describes this ideology as a source of financial welfare resulting in an intriguing development in the fields of technology, data information and production of food. However, he also elucidates the various conflicts that accompany such development in the individual and the culture.

When Jack's recurrent visits to the supermarket, his attempts at being surrounded with crowds and his academic commitment to Hitler studies fail to grant him effective ways to cope with or ease his fear of death, he decides to try one last thing: killing. In fact, since the very moment he learns that Babette is "not the woman he thinks she is" because she lied to him concerning her use of Dylar which she gets only by having an adulterous relation with Willie Mink, Jack becomes obsessed with the idea of meeting him. Though he constantly denies that his need to meet him is getting Dylar, it can be inferred that his true urge is consuming the drug to allay his fear because, after a discussion with Siskind, Jack is convinced that he needs to kill him to "cure" himself from death (290), but also to "take the victim's supply of Dylar tablets" (304). Murray Siskind convinces him that:

> "there are two kinds of people in the world. Killers and diers. Most of us are diers. We don't have the disposition, the rage or whatever it takes to be a killer. We let death happen. We lie down and die. But think what it's like to be a killer. Think how exciting it is, in theory, to kill a person in direct confrontation. If he dies, you cannot. To kill him is to gain life-credit. The more people you kill, the more credit you store up. It explains any number of massacres, wars, executions."
>
> "Are you saying that men have tried throughout history to cure themselves of death by killing others?" "It's obvious.""And you call this exciting?"
>
> "I'm talking theory. In theory, violence is a form of rebirth. The dier passively succumbs. The killer lives on. What a marvelous equation. As a marauding band

amasses dead bodies, it gathers strength. Strength accumulates like a favor from the gods." (308)

In light of this, it can be claimed that throughout the novel we meet Jack as a dier. He has just turned 51 years, so he is getting old, he carries death in his system after being exposed to "Nyoden Derivative" which makes him "scheduled to die" in thirty years. Besides, everything on which he relies fails him and proves he is ephemeral: Babbette turns out to be a lier who is obsessed with fear of death, his academic career is never complete because he does not speak German, his status as "a college professor" cannot protect him when it comes to serious threats like the one embodied in the Airborne Toxic Event, and his money, which can buy him endless products from the market, cannot not purchase him immortality.

When Jack decides to kill Mink, he unconsciously wants to reverse the roles and construct a new identity for himself as the creator of death and not a receiver, to be some deity, or perhaps beast, unleashing death on other weak, vulnerable pathetic humans. Jack confirms these assumptions when he utters "Transient pleasures, drastic measures" while narrating his crime (304). This resonates from the pleasure he gets when watching the dying process of Mink:

> I fired the gun, the weapon, the pistol, the firearm, the automatic … I watched blood squirt from the victim's midsection. A *delicate* arc. I *marveled* at the rich color …I saw beyond words. I knew what red was, saw it in terms of dominant wavelength, luminance, purity, Mink's pain was *beautiful, intense* …I fired the second shot just to fire it, *relive the experience*, hear the sonic waves layering thought the room, feel the jolt travel up my arm. I paused to notice him. He sat wedged between the toilet bowl and wall, one sandal missing, eyes totally white. *I tried to see myself from Mink's viewpoint. Looming, dominant, gaining life-power,*

storing up life credit. But he was too far gone to have a viewpoint. (Emphasis added 312)

The above citation shows that the synonyms of the gun are various but the meaning and the significance it holds for Jack is the same: it is the weapon which can make him a creator of death with all the sensations of glory and magnificence that this may donate him.

Critical interpretations of this scene have varied. Stephanie Halldorson considers that Jack "settle[s] on killing in order to live (or at least to forget his own death)" (136), and Frank Lentricchia believes that Jack's entire "plot" to commit the murder embodies "his dream of existential self-determination" (112), while Cornel Bonca argues that "Jack has wounded Willie in a psychological re-enactment of Nazi's efforts to conquer his own death fears by killing others" (36). Yet, I suggest another possibility to read Jack's aggressive behavior which is highly overlooked by critic via the Freudian concept of "death drive." To assume that Jack has a death instinct "the instinct of destruction" (*Civilization and its Discontent* 56) and a desire to return to "the state of zero tension" (56) may be very challenging, but certainly not impossible given some textual evidence which supports.

After its development, Freud's theory created a new opposition, this time between life drives and death drives. In "Why War?" Freud confirms that "human instincts are of two kinds: those that serve and unify, which he calls "erotic," and the instincts to destroy and kill, which he assimilates as "the aggressive or destructive instincts," Thanatos (92). Freud warns that the death instinct is given very little attention though it deserves more because it is at work in all humans even those who are unconscious of it. Importantly too, he highlights that Eros and thanatos "always mingle with each other in different, very varying proportions, and so make themselves unrecognizable to us" (54).

The fusion of the two instincts in Jack makes his death drive unrecognizable, though existent in "the deepest strata of his mind" (*Thoughts on War and Death* 21-22). Before the

possible manifestation of his Thanatos in the external destructive act of killing another human, Jack's death instinct started its work to destroy him internally from the inside. This becomes more evident when he starts his reluctance in visiting his doctor or following his advice to minimize the harms of the Nyoden D. which contaminates and threats to kill him. When he is in The Autumn Harvest Farms[19], the center of very advanced machines for diagnosis and "sophisticated computers to analyze the data" and "save lives" (277), Jack denies his exposure to the toxic even though he knows that informing the doctors may save his life. His answer to the doctor comes as follows: "how can that be if I've never heard of it?" (279). From that time on, Jack never goes back to his doctor and he is "making it a point to stay away… taking no calls" (325). Jack looks as if he has lost his "faith in technology," his "appetite for immortality (285) and turns to be more reclusive than never.

The working of this drive in Jack Gladney can be understood in relation to Freud's claim that death drive has internal and external manifestations. When this drive is directed inwards it may hurt the self, when it is directed outwards it creates aggression and destruction of the world. Conversely, any cessation of this flow outwards must have the effect of intensifying the self-destruction which in any case would always be going on within" (*Civilization and Its Discontents* 5). Similarly, driving on Freud, Earnest Becker writes that "aggressiveness comes about through a fusion of the life instinct and the death instinct... man defeats his death instinct by killing others" (Becker 100). In light of these psychoanalytical perspectives it can be postulated that at this level Jack's being exhausted by the fear he has been suffering from since a long time starts to have an unconscious desire to die. So, to defend himself from this destructive force, he unconsciously redirects his instinct toward murdering and annihilating others as a strategy of defense.

[19] For a clear description of the center and its highly sophisticated equipments see pages 275, 276, 277 and 278.

Equally significant, things turn upside down for Jack and his "world collapsed inward" when Mink raises a hand to shoot him in the wrist. Only then does Jack recognize that the certainty of death distinguishes him as a human. He, for the first time in his life, restores his humanity and recognizes people as humans and not objects or commodities: "I looked at him. Alive. His lap a puddle of blood. With the restoration of the normal order of matter and sensation, I felt I was seeing him for the first time as a person. The old human muddles and quirks were set flowing again. Compassion, remorse, mercy" (313).

Jack collapses in front of real death entering his body in the form of a harming bullet shaking him inside. Jack who has always been immersed in the consumerist and mass media culture needed "a more violent intervention" to shake him out of his "hypnotic consumerist state" and only a serious injury threatening his life can do the job (Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* 9). This experience of killing and getting in touch with true blood is Jack's unique authentic experience. The absence of any form of mediation or media representation of the near-death threat he lives makes of it a first-hand pure authentic moment. Hence, describing those moments, he says: "there was something redemptive here ... Something large and grand and scenic. Is it better to commit evil and attempt to balance it with an exalted act than to live a resolutely neutral life? I know I felt virtuous, I felt blood-stained and stately, dragging the badly wounded man through the dark and empty street" (313). By "here" Jack means the place where he faces real and natural death. He questions the "neutral" life he was living before because it was a life invaded with representation and simulations of death instead of real ones. Therefore, the evil, or the death which he was about to inflict on Mink re-awakens in him the virtue and the ethical responsibility to another man and his death.

This responsibility toward the dying man who went short of oxygen encouragedhim to attempt a "mouth-to-mouth" technique to save him. The awkwardness and "grim intimacy of the act made it seem all the more dignified under the circumstances. All the larger, more

generous … this was the key to selflessness … my humanity soared" (314). By these words Jack explains the rapid increase and the height of his humanity when he had his direct contact with Mink's face and death. As such, it can be said that death, though denied by the characters, is considered important by Delillo because it is what may take the postmodern human out of the realm of objectification, mediation and representation, to the realm of meaning, reality and authenticity.

In addition, while the desire for an encounter with the Real is seen in the Gladneys' yearning to see violent death on TV, experience of the Real is granted for Jack by seeing his warm blood. In fact, since the Lacanian Real culminates in its opposite of "theatrical spectacle" and violence (9), and like the "cutters" who have an "irresistible urge to cut themselves with razors" in an attempt to "(re)gain a hold on reality" (Žižek 10), Jack Gladney experiences the Real when he sees his "forearm" covered in blood, his blood (311). According to Žižek, the cutters say that once they see "the warm red blood flowing out of the self-inflicted wound, they feel alive again, firmly rooted in reality" (10). Likewise, Jack after seeing his blood feels himself existent. He is freed from the agonizing anxiety of always perceiving of himself part of a whole and non-existent in the postmodern society of "Semblances" (Žižek 10), of things akin to other things and people who are typical reflections of other people. After this accident, Jack regains hold of authentic reality and reconciles with his lost humanity in the course of the fake, unreal existence under the shadows of secularism, consumerism and TV saturated everydayness.

In this sense, DeLillo recommends experience of the real and reconciliation with human compassion as a remedy for the dehumanization inflicted on the postmodern American individual because "our humanity is tested and revealed in the way in which we behave toward death" (May 488). When Jack says "the old human muddles and quirks were set flowing again," he implies that while technology and consumerism have dehumanized him

and estranged him from his essence, encounter with death in the form of a bullet in his wrist has restored in him the strange aspects of his personality and put him once again in a state of human "muddles," of confusion and untidiness.

The whole incident is then redemptive. What finally grants Jack a sense of grandeur is the selfishness that he reestablishes in himself and not the violent act of murder he planned to accomplish. He ultimately realizes that he cannot tell whether the "blood in [his] hands and clothes was his or [Mink's]" (315) because all what shall matter is its being human blood. He then learns that there is nothing heroic about aggression and criminality. The latter were the norms in the world during the Cold War and all they caused was confusion and uneasiness. Since DeLillo was writing in a difficult era and his solution for the sick postmodern individual is return to human essence, reconciliation with natural death and restoration of human compassion. So, if T. S Eliot's *Waste Land* proposes "Datta," "Dayadhvam," and "Damyata" (Give, compassion and control) as remedies for the sicknesses of modernity, DeLillo's *White Noise* insists on the need for compassion, sympathy and acceptance of mortality to heal the postmodern illnesses.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I have argued that Delillo's *White Noise* subverts and satirizes postmodern cultural blind acceptance of the late-capitalist monopoly of the individual and its dangerous redefinition of the latter's relation to his humanity with all its aspects encompassing death. I have shown that the characters' immersion in activities of late capitalism costs them loss of their very human agencies to become objects sold and bought, monopolized and controlled by the particular cultural logic surrounding them. This culture, we have seen, stands as a barrier between the individual and his acceptance or understanding of human mortality. I have shown that the late capitalist ideology conceals dangerous intentions behind the bright screens it puts in front of the viewer. In this sense, the chapter has

displayed that the American contemporary civilization is annihilating and figuratively slaughtering the individual who is not only a dependent consumer but a controlled product of culture. Therefore, the American society of *White noise* is an environment where reverberates an attitude to death which can be described as "cultural-conventional" (Freud *Thoughts on War and Death*).

In *White Noise*, as it has been demonstrated, death is conceptualized as a force which dictates the actions and behaviors of the characters both existentially and psychologically. I have shown that people fail to recognize it as inevitable and continue to behave as if it is avoidable and taboo. The possibilities of driving out fear of death from the thoughts of the characters in this society are constantly shaken by violent reminders of the postmodern conditions of the 1980s which reshaped the individual's natural connection to and acceptance of transience. Finally, it has been revealed that death is represented by DeLillo as an authentic way of being on earth and not a mere bodily condition. Though the characters fail to understand this perception, the end of the novel uncovers DeLillo's proposition of acceptance of the inevitability of death as a therapy for postmodern loss of meaning.

The coming chapter shall examine DeLillo's *Zero K* and maintain that the relation between the two binaries: individual/ culture and culture/ mortality is more complex than it appears, arguing that the characters' perception of their death as unacceptable pushes them toward shaping a culture of inauthentic surrender to science and technology. It shall reveal that the posthuman solutions result in psychological and existential alienation from society, subjectivity and most importantly from meaningful "dwelling" in the world. It will reveal that DeLillo's prophecies of man's estrangement under technology come true in the light of post-human radical modifications of human essence in order to ensure immortality.

Chapter Two:

Mediation of Death and the Limits of Posthuman Immortality in DeLillo's *Zero K,*

"Our whole modern existence is nothing but *hubris* and godlessness"

F. Nietzsche *On the Genealogy of Morals* (78)

"They're making the future. A new idea of the future. Different from the others" Don DeLillo, *Zero K*[20] (30).

"I teach you the overman. Man is something to be surpassed"

Thus SpokeZarathustra 11

"Is she dying naturally or is the last breath being induced?" "You understand there's something beyond the last breath. You understand this is only the preface to something larger, to what is next."

Don DeLillo, *Zero K*

Introduction

In this chapter I intend to show that Don DeLillo's *Zero K* (2016) rejects the post-human premises which incapacitate the American individual and society while pretending to empower them by promoting technological immortality. I argue that DeLillo continues the attack on the forces which alienate the individual and shows that during the twenty-first century humanity is facing more serious threats than the ones survived in *White Noise* by maintaining that the postmodern man, backed up with post-human technologies of life enhancement, experiences with death in order to conquer it. From this experiment emanates an attitude of denial of death tantamount to the fear endured in *White Noise*. I shall

[20] DeLillo, Don. *Zero K*. (New York: Scribner, 2016) 29. Subsequent references to *Zero K* will be cited in text.

demonstrate that *Zero K* decries the innovative post-human[21] science of immortality as opening additional doors for otherness, inequality, deformation of nature, and spatial crises. By utilizing Martin Heidegger's claim that to be a "human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell," [22] I seek to demonstrate that the Convergence epitomizes the power of technology to evade consciousness of space and deprive man of feelings of homeliness and dwelling when attempting to endorse the innovative programs of immortality.

Zero K's section, "Artis Martineau," invites contemplation over what makes the self, and whether the body is part of the self or not. By analyzing this section in light of Bakhtin's dialogical orientedness of human consciousness I will discuss the post human claim of a possibility of human self and consciousness without a real contact with other humans. From this perspective, pothumanism is revealed as one-dimensional since it reduces humans to mere biological bodies with consciousness under suffering. Therefore, by regarding death as a disease to be healed these projects progress toward a (re)conceptualization of the human which is more compatible with a body without consciousness.

Besides, I will argue that *Zero* K represents death as an ideology of control, and I will examine the novel's uneasiness with the posthuman tasks to "eliminate unexpected surprises by making of nature something manipulable, organizable, navigable[23]" (Fong 84) in order to reveal that an existential dread from both life and death leads to the choice of cryogenics, and vice-versa. I will reveal that the project, by making the human into a cyborg, an amalgam of

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[21] I use the term Posthumanism to mean "a human-technology symbiosis" (Haney 2). It refers to the interface of biology-machine by the use of developed biotechnologies. Posthumanism, sometimes called "transhumanism," is a field of inquiry and a set of practices that does not ask "Who or what is a person?" but "How is a person?" (Weinstone 4).

[22] According to Heidegger,dwelling, refers to "the manner in which we humans *are* on the earth" (349).

[23] It is worth noting that Benjamin Fong takes this idea from Joel Witebook's article "The Marriage of Marx and Freud: Critical Theory and Psychoanalysis," to comment on the Enlightenment's project of manipulating nature, which was considered as an "outside" and "real source of fear" (84), in order to rescue its survival.

machine and human (Hayles xii), deconstructs the authentic notion of human self-sovereignty and independent identity and points toward complete eradication of the human as we know it. Besides, by the use of the Lacan's ideas on the orders of the psyche with the Platonic idea of "the cave of shadows," I will read the journey toward the Convergence as a journey toward the shadows of the unconscious and a symbol of man's desire for truth concealed in the material world of late-capitalism and posthumanism.

Finally, by relying on Slavog Žižek's postulation that "the value of a certain commodity is such-and-such amount of money," I will reflect on the fetishist quality of the project which treats both humans and death as commodities to exchange for money (*The Sublime Object of Ideology* 19). In this sense, it should be shown that the project utilizes death as an ideological weapon for the capitalist contest for money and dominance as its "true economic function" is concealed by the fixed quality of being a project of human enhancement. This Marxist interpretation of the fetishist nature of the project discloses its ideological pretention of (de)/(re)forming the human species. As such, the postmodernist subject is once more trapped by the illusion that "we live in a 'post-ideological' condition" (Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* xxxi), whereas the truth is that he still lives under ideological dominance. In addition, while Richard Tarnas sees that postmodern thought has subverted all inequalities and blurred the boundaries between the different categories and hierarchies (440), DeLillo shows that fear of death has generated a discourse on technological ways of achieving immortality which favors the financially powerful over other people. In that way, it reinforces the hegemony of the wealthy. I conclude the chapter by postulating that in *Zero K,* DeLillo condemns the subversive capacities of postmodernism and posthumanism as more deconstructive.

Zero K invites the reader to a new experience of humanity under the new and unusual posthuman methods. Part one of this novel, "In the Time of Chelyabinsk," is set in a

complicated setting of the desert of Kazakestan. In this desert is built the Convergence; the center of cryonic preservation of frozen bodies of people who are promised resurrection. At this enterprise, specialized scientists and even religious men abandon their lives outside and devote sacred efforts to push forward the limits of life by developing a program which allows people to be frozen for an unknown period of time before they can be brought back to live eternally (33).

The scientists and managers of the project actualize the desire of the participants to extend their days on earth and grant them physical power, promising "the materialization of an idea expressed wistfully in *White Noise*" (Cofer 465). As such, this chapter will utilize the theories of post-humanism to show that the project promises to "broaden every possibility" (33) and sustain the weak humans in an attempt to ease the worries and terror of death endured in *White Noise*. More importantly, though, my analyses in this chapter go in a less optimistic direction and aim to demonstrate that the project with all the horizons it seeks to open unravels as disappointing and existentially alienating the invidual.

One of the co-founders and shareholders of the Convergence, which is "buried somewhere on the map in the old U.S.S.R., hemmed in by China, Iran, Afghanistan and so on" (188), is Ross Lockhart. He is the billionaire who, as the chapter advances, is led by hubris to construct the project. He joins his dying wife, Artis Martineau, who doesn't seem to have much choice except natural death or cryonic suspension. The operation and the project represent for Ross a new possibility to "get beyond [his] experience, beyond [his] limitations" (35). In accordance, it will be shown that Ross Lockhart is a postmodern reincarnation of Icarus, who, out of false high self-esteem flies too high and too close to the sun only to meet a tragic fall later on.

Jeffery Lockhart, Ross' son and the narrator of the story, describes his stay at the center as being characterized by multiple feelings of awe, unfamiliarity and awkwardness. The exceptional construction of the center with its subterranean location, giant screens, absence of windows, empty halls, weird programmers in addition to the various doors he sees but cannot open make him feel "out of place." He continues to flee forward and backward in time trying to hold a sense of sanity by remembering his old days and dead mother. Jeffery's fine relationship with his step mother, Artis Martineau, gets more intimate as he accompanies her during her last breaths and moments of physical weakness and suffering. The Convergence finally puts an end to her pain by freezing her. In the part entitled "Artis Martineau" Jeffery imagines how she might be when she is reduced to a mere consciousness within a pod unable to speak up for herself and needs. It is before the end of this part that Ross informs Jeffery about his decision to undergo the same process of cryonic suspension.

Part two, "In the Time of Konstantinovka," pictures Jeffery and Ross back to their life in New York where they perceive everything differently after the experiences at the convergence. Jeffery hesitates to take a job offer from his father and rejects the possibility of being the son-heir of his empire. He prefers to find a job somewhere else and live a life of an ordinary middle class man. Jeffery narrates the memories he shares with his girl friend Emma and her adopted Ukranian son, Stak. The three hang out continuously in the overwhelming city of New York before everything turns upside down with the disappearance of Stak. While Emma chooses to be with her ex-husband to search for the boy, Jeffery is left with an empty life of complete solitude and seclusion. Life continues with this routine until it is time for Ross to go back to the Convergence for cryonics. Jeffery joins his father and lives with him the last moments before being inserted into the pod. The departure of Artis, Emma and Ross

alienate him more and more from living a happy comfortable life. Jeffery turns into a "flâneur"[24] who roams the streets going everywhere which is also nowhere.

Given the recent publication of *Zero K*, one may notice the dearth of criticism and published studies on it except for few articles that I shall tackle in the following discussion. To begin with, an interesting critique written by Laura Barrett is entitled "*[R]adiance in dailiness":* The Uncanny Ordinary in Don DeLillo's *Zero K"* (2018).It relies on Freud's theory of the Uncanny to read the promise of "crystalline language, transcendent truth and immortality," which are offered by the Convergence as "a form of skepticism that prevents us from seeing the extraordinariness of the ordinary" (106). Barett observes that the novel conveys two different but interrelated versions of the uncanny. The first one, she notes, can be seen in the identical depiction of "humans and androids, reality and artifice" which are encountered in the Convergence. The similarities between the human and the humanoids sweep away "individuality along with mortality" and echo dissatisfaction with human limits (120).

The other form of the uncanny which is presented in *Zero K* meets its readers is the one created by the reflection of the sunsets in the towers of Manhattan. This one, she writes "speaks not to our limits as humans but to the wonder of the ordinary world when we know how to look" (121). Barrett's study is interesting and its findings are right to the point of the concerns of the novel, but, it can be said that there are other facets of the depiction of the ordinary which she does not take into consideration. Thus, my study will depart from hers as it will read return to the ordinary as an antidote to the human alienation. In the following analyses, I shall also read the characters' estrangement from the ordinary as a result of the

[24] My use of the term meets Chris Jenks depiction of the flâneur as a product of modernity and a person who "moves through space and among the people with a viscosity that both enables and privileges vision… the *flâneur* possesses a power, it walks at will, freely and seemingly without purpose, but simultaneously with an inquisitive wonder and an infinite capacity to absorb the activities of the collective" (146).

extreme ideology of late-capitalism which nurtures feelings of hubris and illusion of being able to control nature when one possess money and financial power.

Moreover, "Owning the End of the World*: Zero K* and Don DeLillo's Post-postmodern Mutation" is another interesting study by Eric Cofer. The objective of Cofer's study is to position DeLillo's treatment "of the human condition *in Zero K as a superficial* companion and spiritual counter to *White Noise*, underscores DeLillo's turn away from a postmodern outlook to a more post-postmodern stance gaining traction in the twenty-first century" (460). Cofer assumes that while *White Noise* still participates in various postmodern phenomena it critiques, *Zero K* attests for "DeLillo's arrival at a more prescriptive "post-postmodern" thematic (460).

Although Cofer's analyses are very enlightening and worthy to consider while analyzing the novel, the current study, instead, argues that the interaction between *Zero K* and *White Noise* is a process of continuation and cause-effect pattern. In a sense, I argue that *Zero K* travels back to *White Noise* equipped with dialogic techniques to tackle the very primeval causes of choosing transhuman measures of cryonic freezing. That is to say, the cryonic choice of the characters in *Zero K* can be regarded as a natural outcome of the psychological turmoil and fright experienced in *White Noise*. I seek to show that *Zero K* extends the worries of *White Noise* to a level of extreme alienation from nature and culture.

In "Death Itself Shall Be Deathless": Transrationalism and Eternal Death in Don DeLillo's *Zero K*," Nathan Ashman tackles the conjunction between death and technology of cryonics which makes the realization of the "fantasy" of immortality possible. Ashman shows that DeLillo does not depict the prolongation of life by these technologies but reveals that they equal eternal death, instead. The article argues that because of these technologies

"death's ineluctability is disturbed and remodulated, meaning that temporal and spatial boundaries become violently unhinged and entirely immeasurable" (300).

Ashman argues that the "remodulation" of mortality by the remote compound of radical developments in biomedical and cryonic science problematizes the basic demarcation of being and nonbeing because the novel does not explain what forms that the promised immortality may take (308). He concludes that:

> While mortality is still not eradicated, the notion of death as boundary is forcefully and detrimentally ruptured. As epitomized by the Convergence facility, this precipitates a sense of incomprehensible boundlessness, a *"*transrational*"* state that dislocates clear notions of time, space, and language. As such, the facility becomes a microcosm of a contemporary culture increasingly under threat from the combined forces of technology and global capital. As the tactility of our already loosening reality begins to unravel, Delillo presents us with the disorientating consequences of a world stripped of death as the final frontier of the real. (309)

Ashman's conclusion that the blurring of the boundaries between mortality and immortality disrupts traditional notions of time, space and language is of high importance. However, it remains underemphasized and non-framed within any theory. Therefore, in this study, I seek to elaborate on the effects of the search for immortality via technology from an existential and psychological angle, arguing that life without death condemns the individual to compression in space and feeling "out of place" in the world.

In "A Heideggerian Existential Reading of the Posthuman Treatment of Death in Don DeLillo's *Zero K*," Kahina Enteghar and Amar Guendouzi examine the posthuman treatment of death and promotion of technological immortality from Heidegger's perspectives on death,

time and "being. The authors argue that the posthuman subject is eventually thrown into existential boredom, inauthenticity and loss of human essence, rejecting, in due course, the utopian claims of the technological supplanting of the inefficient humans against death.

Enteghar and Guendouzi show that the Convergence convinces that the world and the human face serious threats which necessitate technological solutions. Hence, it plays on the worldly anxieties, wars and terror in order to represent death as an unnecessary conquerable bodily condition. This conceptualization denies any existential/ ontological significance of death for humans. Besides, the article makes an interesting contribution by showing that in its attempts to manipulate death; the Convergence manipulates time and reconfigures temporality by according importance to "a new temporality of a long-lasting present in order to reach the possibility of a life span over eternally" (10). It concludes that in *Zero K*, DeLillo cautions in a Heideggerian tone, that "humanity has its predefined essence as finite and any attempts at redefining its parameters threaten to destroy the individual. Posthuman resistance to mortality, according to these perspectives, conceals an unsecure future for humanity as it contributes more to erasing than fortifying the human" (11). Differently from this article's claims, in the present study I focus more on the spatial impacts of the posthuman mediation of death. By utilizing Martin Heidegger's ideas of "dwelling" and feeling at home, I show that the Convergence not only threatens to reconfigure temporality and generate boredom, but also makes of the world a confined space devoid of sensations of homeliness and "dwelling," generating a crisis of space and home for the postmodern individual.

1- **The Death Threats of Global Warming and Ecological Instability**:

In "A Heideggerian Existential Reading of the Posthuman Treatment of death in Don DeLillo's *Zero K,"* Enteghar and Guendouzi have shown that the Convergence initiates a propagandist discourse which stresses on the worldly terror caused by information technology

and religious terrorist groups in order to drive the billionaires around the globe toward posthuman solutions. The article has shown that the responsible of the compound who were scientists, philosophers or religious men, place the project's vision of the perfect invincible human against the context of worldly terror and wars. According to this study, terrorism, in the form of wars, terrorist attacks and cyberspace insecurity pushes people to abhor death beyond all limits and consider it the result of these events. Relying on Heidegger's concept of "demise" the authors have exposed that because of the twenty-first century's context of terror, the characters conceptualize death as an unnecessary accident and somatic condition with no existential significance.

Differently from their article, in this section of my thesis, I seek to investigate into global warming and ecological instabilities to reveal that it is considered a worldly concern and a subject worthy of some method of inquiry by the Convergence which takes it as a challenge to protect humans from its death menaces. The project's programmers encourage the billionaires to move a step beyond the state of "the human" and embrace the "cyborg," or the combination of the human and the machine for a more secure future, claiming that it is a human glory to challenge fate (death) and to want life (253).

Importantly, the implications of the collapse of the capitalist system as extended on in "the chaos theory" by Immanuel Wallerstein shows that like all systems, once "it enters systematic crisis it bifurcates as it moves irremediably away from equilibrium. It enters a period of chaos."(qtd. in Skoll 27).These periods of crisis, as he explains, have consequences on the social and global scales during the twenty-first century. So, in addition to financial crisis and wars, "consequences of socially organized causative vectors, *global warming* for instance, *drastically affect* the *physical environment*. *Extreme weather,* epidemics, *draughts,* and *floods* follow" (emphasis added, Skoll 27). Therefore, it is into the same context of global

warming and environmental crisis that the Convergence's proposals of support and empowerment of the human should be examined.

The utilization of the various ecological threats to advertise for the project of cryogenics sounds very pertinent. The programmers know that even if there is a category of people who may feel excluded from the dangers of religious, political or cyberspace terrors, the environmental crises are of universal human concern. Leonardo Orr, commenting on this point writes that "whatever else divides humankind, we share a common dependence on the waters, air, soils, and life systems of the Earth. These are given to us as a sacred trust to be passed on to all those who will follow" (13). This argument illustrates that environmental interests are related to human existence and man's survival depends on ecological stability.

Indeed, the inability of the world to regain safety and peace testify for the emergence of psychological instabilities in the people who cannot help cope with atrocity. These massacres have "the butterfly effect: a butterfly flapping its wings in Argentina can produce a typhoon in Indonesia" (Skoll 28). This means that the world and the individuals within are beset by both macrocosmic as well as microcosmic instabilities which increase insecurity and fear of being annihilated. The discourse on abhorrence of death in *Zero K*, then, is firstly enhanced by the age's ruptures of fear including, or perhaps leading to the climatic one.

It is no wonder, then, that Stak, who never enters the Convergence, senses the same danger and prophesizes a climate of high dreadful temperature hitting the world from "Tucson," "Phonix" to the far cities of the Arab Golf including Riadh and Baghdad which he thinks will exceed "one hundred and nine degrees Fahrenheit" (177). This reminds that the world is facing a serious threat of global warming. The latter confines humans' existence on earth and shatters optimism in a better future. In fact, it comes from here that the future of

humanity is no longer perceived with optimism and that thoughts of depression become its significant synonym.

The speakers at the posthuman project advance that climate change which has serious impacts on the ecosystems makes death ever present and imposes another limitation for the process of coping or repressing the fear of its inevitability. They attempt to estrange the participants and their companions from the earth climate system and its biosphere by claiming that: "the sun is an unknown entity. They spoke of solar storms, flares and super flares, coronal mass ejections." The man who was conferring cranked his hand in odd synchrony with his references to earth orbit, attempting to find the adequate metaphors and arguments "for our vulnerable earth, the comets, asteroids, … the past extinctions, the current loss of species." He spoke of similar things before announcing that "catastrophe is our bedtime story" (65- 66). This suggests that human is no longer familiar and stable in the world because of the environmental perils of the 21st century, which also nurture psychological instabilities and gloomy perception of the future. It makes clear that humanity needs big efforts to protect itself from the commands of nature in the contemporary age of climactic and ecological instabilities which become increasingly serious. While having already dramatized the psychological suffering and failure to face mortality with reverence because of the threat of the chemicals and the nuclear in *White Noise*, DeLillo in *Zero K* asserts that the contemporary times' threat which is manifested in climatic change and global warming, serenity in face of death and repression of fear of it are impossible.

According to the posthumanists, their projects were born when doubt and catastrophe became the norm of contemporary life in order to offer a hope that things "could be better, should be better. We face interminable war, food and water shortages, global warming, economic instability, senseless violence, and many of us have little faith that current social institutions can handle these problem" (Lilley 2). In this perspective, *Zero K*'s guarantees a

way out of the problems of environmental terror which is not yet provided by any other social or scientific institution. Therefore, they design "a response to whatever eventual calamity may strike the planet," assuming that at some point in the future, death will become unacceptable "even as life in the planet becomes more fragile" (66). This claim suggests that the frailty of life and the feebleness of the human and his nature will not enhance acceptance of death, but will impose its refusal and abhorrence, implying, in due course, that transcendence of human weakness by the help of technology remains the preeminent option.

In this context, Ben-Ezra tells Jeffery that the Convergence will become the unique secure place to protect participants from the terrifying future with its various environmental menaces and its consequences. Jeffery says:

> I listened to him speak about the hundreds of millions of people into the future billions who are struggling to find something to eat not once or twice a day but all day every day. He spoke in detail about food systems, weather systems, the loss of forests, the spread of drought, the massive die-offs of birds and ocean life, the levels of carbon dioxide, the lack of drinking water, the waves of virus that envelop broad geographies" (126).

In this passage, Ben Ezra highlights the effects of the climate change on food supply systems and security. He implies the high temperatures and the noticeable warming of the globe during the recent years has caused the death of animals, the drought of the lands and remarkable decrease of water supplies in many regions. This will inevitably lead to a shortage of food availability and insecurity, too. As suggested in a study by Chase Sova, Kimberly Flowers, and Christian Man, climate change and its consequences on food security has potential "existential economic, political, and social outcomes for humanity" (1). From a similar perspective, Ben Ezra stresses that climate change gives grandeur to death and haunts

the postmodern individual. To put it theoretically, he argues that global warming is what threatens to bring death and tries to drive the listeners to inauthenticity and "untruth" as they interpret death as an event which "one encounters in one's environment" rather that an ontological necessity (*Being and Time* 246–247).

The speaker in this passage challenges the audience to choose transhuman technologies because the environmental perils of the 21st century nurture psychological instabilities and fearful perception of the future. It makes crystal clear the point that humanity needs big efforts to protect itself from the commands of nature in the contemporary age. His discourse pushes people to abhor and disgust natural death, seeking to flee it by technology. He encourages the billionaires to subvert reality and ensure a place for themselves "beyond the realm of mortal existence" (242).

Another speaker, to whom Jeffery gives the name of Miklos Szabo, explains one more posthuman ideal regarding environmental crisis and ecological catastrophes when he says that they impose collective death which devalues the personal mortality in the same way the crowds give illusionary protection against one's death. He states: "it overwhelms what is weak and fearful in our bodies and minds. We face the end but not alone" (67). Therefore, to be protected from one's death, one needs to face it alone. Hence, to scare the individual by the terror of death, is to enhance the power and the feeling of solitude: "we are here to learn the power of solitude. We are here to reconsider everything about life's end. And we will emerge in cyber human form into a universe that will speak to us in a very different way" (67). In this sense, they advocate the power of individualism and rewrite the meaning of the self as being "everything you are, without others, without friends or strangers or lovers or children …" (67).

In calling for a transhumanity debate instead of categorical refutation of technological enhancement, Stephen Lilley asserts that: "after the twentieth century with its gas chambers, chemical and nuclear warfare, and environmental pollution, no responsible person should accept without question the belief that we will find deliverance through science and technology" (2). In light of this deliverance through science, the Convergence in *Zero K* promises to build a protective shield not only because of its advanced equipments but also because of its spatial features which challenge natural and environmental forces. In fact, it is constructed in the desert where "the site is fixed" and it is not built "in a zone susceptible to earthquakes or to minor swarms but there are seismic countermeasures in every detail of the structure, with every conceivable safeguard against systems failure" (129). So, its being fixed and eqipped with all protective measures against possible natural threats guarantees the safety which is absent in the outside real world.

The Monk at the Convergence explains the projects' objectives, its construction and relation to the deserts in the following passage:

> we have remade this wasteland, this secluded desert shithole, in order to separate ourselves from reasonableness… when the time comes, we'll depart finally from our secure northern home to this desert place. Old and frail, limping and shuffling, to approach the final reckoning. (71)

The choice of the isolated desert of remote Asia to realize the posthuman dream of immortality echoes the seclusion of death from the very public spaces and the isolation of the bodies from inhabited cities. It serves as a metaphor for the growing unfamiliarity with natural death. Philip Aries explains that during the 20th century, when natural death has become less acceptable and less familiar, the event of death was moved from its site in the home and bedroom "one no longer died at home in the bosom of one's family, but in the hospital, alone"

(87). In this case, death is redefined from a natural necessity and existential possibility to a "technical phenomenon obtained by a cessation of care, a cessation determined in a more or less avowed way by a decision of the doctor" (88).

Explaining the Convergence's construction in the remote desert, instead of any closer place in America, in the light of Aries' discussion of the significance of death and state of the dead in the 20th century shows that America during the 21st century witnesses "technologized" and "medecalized" death. It circles back to the 20th century in the attitudes of rejection of natural death. It suggests that though the Americans still admit that natural death cannot possibly be healed or avoided at the present time, they hope that with the currently advanced technological equipments, it can at least be taken away from public sight and awareness. This procedure is an embracement of what Vivian Sobchack calls "public disappearance" of natural death (285). In addition, the isolation of the dead people from common places shows the still taboo nature of dying and its unfamiliarity.

The above analyses have tackled "the dialogic inter-orientation" of DeLillo's discourse on death by the contemporary age's discourse on environmental terrorism and global warming. Following Bakhtin's claim that "the dialogic orientation of discourse is a phenomenon that is, of course, a property of any discourse. It is the natural orientation of any living discourse" ((*Discourse on the Novel* 279), the section has examined the link between posthuman reactions and perceptions of death in *Zero K* and the extra-textual updates which determine them in relation to environmental menaces. It has shown the conditions of global warming and ecological terror always carry within them seeds of influence on the American characters' attitudes to death. It has therefore demonstrated that formulations of any response to mortality always engage in an active relation with the situation of the inhabited world and environment either of terror or peace. Hence, while in *White Noise* people are terrorized by the threats of the chemicals and the nuclear weapons, in *Zero K* various other forms of

terrorism are at work including political, religious, cyberspace, information technology and environmental terrorism.

2-Faith-Based Technology" and Loss of Spiritual Faith

Zero K pictures a world where the role of traditional religion has noticeably diminished and is about to disappear. Loss of faith in religion, accompanied with belief that God is no longer the dominant, has downgraded humans' acceptance of mortality and vulnerability. Secularization and religious skepticism has radically transformed humans' interpretation and understanding of basic realities related to life and death and increased estrangement from finitude only to enhance the prestige of the posthuman technologiess. In *Zero K*, similarly to *White Noise,* secularism causes consideration of death as meaninglessly eerie and sustains desire to erase it.

In his essay "the Sacral Power of Death in Contemporary Experience," William May argues that "the satirists are wrong, however, in so far as they impute to Americans a belief in the triumph of technology over death… in effect, death (or the reality that brings it) is recognized as a sacred power that confounds efforts of men to master it" (470). The chapter calls this argument into question because in *Zero K* belief in God is really deserted and replaced by an ideology of belief in technology. With credence in biotechnology as a new "sacramental" deity, billionaires find it easier to promote projects which allow humans to be frozen before they awaken to immortality.

According to Charles Taylor's S*ecular Age*, the idea of "death of God" captures uncountable meanings. One of these is that "conditions have arisen in the modern world in which it is no longer possible, honestly, rationally, without confusions, or fudging, or mental reservation, to believe in God. These conditions leave us nothing we can believe in beyond the human—human happiness, or potentialities, or heroism" (560). Commensurate with this,

the condition which operates in the world of DeLillo's *Zero K* and which establishes new epistemologies of God, faith and spirituality is post-humanism[25]. The latter makes belief in the traditional sense no longer possible by reforming the processes of life, birth and death. The scientists in the cryonic facility assume the role of God as they decide the moment of death and rebirth, becoming the "techno-Christ" to preach happiness and comfort in a world with no death (Dinello 18).

The novel conceptualizes the "immanent" and the "transcendental" not in the conventional concept of the magnificent God but rather in technology. Ross says that "Faith-based technology" is "Another god. Not so different, it turns out, from some of the earlier ones. Except that it's real, it's true, it delivers" (9). The postmodern "new god," as it is in this quotation, is deemed truer and more reliable than all the previous gods in which the West has once believed. This shows that another force, posthuman technology, combines with the various malaises already at work in the American society to estrange the individual from natural relation to death and enhance the loss of belief in God or any other ensuring spiritual power.

Ross and his followers enter "a new dimension of belief" in the unique operation named the Convergence which allows "forces of life and death" to intersect and merge to give "end and beginning" (255). As such, it nourishes the trust that "time will come when there are ways to counteract the circumstances that led to the end. Mind and body are restored, returned to life" (8). Exceptional medical, technological and philosophical amenities were put at the disposition of the programmers to realize the dream. This dogmatic new belief system is what Daniel Dinello calls "technologism: the religion of technology" (18). It is a dystopian belief system which substitutes the divine by the technological by "evangeliz(ing) for artificial

[25] For an elaborated explanation of the meaning of posthumanism, see Enteghar and Guendouzi, pages 1-2.

intelligence, robotics, bionics, cryonics, virtual reality, biotechnology, and nanotechnology" (18). This echoes strongly the expressions of "new god" and "another god;" which attests for the death of God which is announced by Nietzsche's Zarathurstra (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 13).

According to Kübler-Ross "while society has contributed to our denial of death, religion has lost many of its believers in a life after death, i.e., immortality, and thus has decreased the denial of death in that respect" (13). According to this view, people in *Zero K* fail to believe in being rewarded in heaven and, as a consequence, they can no longer forget or suppress the fear of death. This failure of repression encourages them to opt for the cryonic solution of post-humanism in order to triumph over "demise." By the endorsement of immortality, the project denies that death is certain. It is exactly the "fantastic degrees of denial" which they advance that the majority of DeLillo's characters really need in order to "avoid facing death as reality" (Kübler-Ross 13).

Logically, then, in *Zero K,* the meaning of life and death is drawn from science, mathematics, biology and physiology instead of any sacred text (9). Truth about mortality and life is not divine but man-made. This man-constructed reality seeks to change the destiny of mankind, something which was impossible to imagine in the previous centuries according to Ross, who is certain that if such a place existed before, pilgrims would have chosen it over holy sanctuaries, when he says: "and I find myself trying to imagine such a place centuries back. A lodging, a shelter for travelers. For pilgrims" (9).

Unlike Ross and Artis, Jeffery never celebrates the technological achievements of The Convergence with its innovative spirit and epistemology of "*time, fate, chance, immortality*" (Italics original 15). Once there, he flees the awkwardness of the place and its proposals by recalling the old days with his mother in a single "Ash Wednesday" childhood visit to the

Holy Mother Church (15-16). In that church, he realizes that he is not a catholic and none of his family actually was. In a moment of epiphany, the Monk's words "Dust thou art" and "*to dust thou shalt return*" make him conscious that they lead a purposeless life: "we were Eat and Sleep" and "Take Daddy's suit to the Dry Cleaner" (Italics original 15). Jeffery's mother responds to the Monk's ash stain by mockery considering it a boring practice (16). This incident spotlights the secularity that pervades Jeffery's life and society with the decline of religion. Besides, being in the Convergence and recalling the above teachings from the bible appeals for a reflection on the disparity between the project's objectives of preserving bodies before reawakening them and the religious call to accept that man is from the dust and to dust he will inevitably return.

Francis Fukuyama claims that "religion provides the clearest grounds for objecting to the genetic engineering of human beings, so it is not surprising that much of the opposition to a variety of new reproductive technologies has come from people with religious convictions" (101). In fact, the Convergence's intention to empower the human go beyond the ethics of "God works through nature to produce these outcomes" (88-89). Given these premises, it is not surprising that the American billionaires shun religious teachings which do not meet their egoistic desire of living forever and thus embrace "secular ideologies" (Fukuyama 90). The proposal to regulate nature to serve human needs can be exemplified in the project's technological stimulation the end in order "to study it, possibly to survive it? Are we adjusting the future, moving it into our immediate time frame? At some point in the future, death will be unacceptable even as the life of the planet becomes more fragile" (66).

The cryonic preservation is the result of a long existential quest for meaning in the absurd contemporary world. According to Martin Heidegger, and many other existentialists, the absolute curse of humanity is its total freedom. Though man is "thrown to the world" without choosing to be, he is free to choose what to do with his life on earth (*Being and*

*Time*135). Don DeLillo dramatizes this struggle in the characters of *Zero K*, mainly those who choose cryonic death despite their physical strength. A woman at the center explains to Jeffery that she had long and various discussions with Ross and Artis before they affirmed that they refuse to accept the human fate and proclaim the power of their own will and choice: "We are born without choosing to be. Should we have to die in the same manner? The resources he placed at our disposal were of crucial importance… isn't it a human glory to refuse to accept a certain fate? What is it that we want here? Only life. Let it happen. Give us breath" (252-3). Taking this claim into consideration, it is worth arguing that the novel projects the existentialist theory of "free will" which, according to Nietzsche, is "antireligious" and "seeks to create the right for man to think of himself as cause of his exalted state and actions: it is a form of growing *feeling of pride"* (*Will to Power* 162). The characters at this center challenge the meaninglessness of their life as being determined by God's decision and proclaim the individual free will of dying technologically instead of living naturally.

Ironically though, the enterprise relies on a religious monk to prepare the adherents for what is to come. What is more surprising is the fact that the monk they employ for the mission has no faith in it. Furthermore, he shows neo-existentialist tendencies to death considering it the source of meaning for life: "I don't think I want to [believe]. I just talk about the end calmly, quietly … I want to die and be finished forever. Don't you want to die? … What's the point of living if we don't die at the end of it?" (40). The Monk's participation in a project in which he does not believe requires considering it in relation to the fake nun of *White Noise*. Both characters pretend to be something they are not, which spotlights the hypocrisy, moral aridity as well as religious emptiness of the contemporary postmodern religious representatives.

The Monk decides to join the team working there after long years of desperations beginning with the sight of hundreds of people "boiled" to death in Tashkent (40), to the falling to the ocean of a "meteoroid" from the space for which he and his group were "lusting" and "praying" (41). Perhaps, he thinks, the meteoroid was supposed to show the infinite power of God but human-made "satellites" caught it before it falls at "Chelyabinsk" and be caught in "Siberia" (42). His assumption that a human force was able to stop an order by God replicates his doubt of God's supreme immutable power.

The Monk is a man who desires to die while he unexpectedly accepts to consulate people who undertake the venture toward immortality, life-extension and reawakening. This sounds very contradictory till the moment he declares that the Convergence, regardless of its "advanced equipment and advanced staff," equals "twelfth-century Jerusalem, where an order of knights cared for the pilgrims. He imagined at times that he was walking among lepers and plague victims, seeing gaunt faces from old Flemish painting" (42). Witnessing these people preparing themselves for the cryonic experience reminds him that he is a "hospitaler" no matter where he is, his duty is to comfort the "sick, the dying" the "bleedings and the purgings" (42-43). The invocation of the bloody dark images of the weak people from the medieval times to describe the postmodern patients of the project suggests that the "heralds" themselves are, in fact, the poorest category of the society despite their being rich. What makes them the weakest from this standpoint is their uttered understanding of human nature and mortality.

The above also implies that the venture which attracts people seeking "a higher being here, or at least a scientific process that will keep their body from decomposing" is a great lie (43). The Monk's view of the Convergence and the people undergoing cryonic embalmment evidences that *Zero K* is not only a science fiction novel but also a satire of the late capitalist rich people.

The presence of the Monk which charges the Convergence with the ethical stances which are denied by its disavowal of nature and God suggests the need for the return of the religious and the spiritual to the mainstream public life of America. To be in need of a Monk to accompany the patients in their journey toward transgression of human fate emphasizes the ethical uncertainties which hover over the project. Probably too, this should be understood as a negative response to the state of the American transhumanism which is a "scientifically oriented secularis[t]" one as contrasted to the Russian posthumanism which is considering the possibility of incorporating transcendental ideas too. In this context, Anya Bernstein explains that some transhumant theorists hold that "secular science" is more apt to realize this end while others think that this science should be blended with the "transcendental technologies" of the body which are inspired from various religious systems of transcendence (767).

3- Hubris and the Choice of Posthuman Immortality

To stay in the same context of arrogant defiance of God, it is worthy to consider the trait of hubris which pushes the characters to engage and investigate in the projects of life extension and body enhancement. As a matter of fact, *Zero K* reworks the pathologies of *White Noise* which are related to the late-capitalist activities of consumerism in a more sweeping way to feature a new form of consumerism which is epitomized in a radical exchange of capital money for eternity. Ross Lokhart's investment in the project results from his craving to satisfy an egoistic yearning "*to own the end of the world*" (Italics original 1). His desire is enhanced by an Icarus's mythic "mania" to fly so high using posthuman technological wings (Stevens 126). A similar obsession to fly above the indicated human prospects is also echoed in the discourse of one of the leaders, Zara, who says: "your situation, those few of you on the verge of the journey toward rebirth. You are completely outside the narrative of what we refer to as history. *There are no horizons here*" (emphasis

added 237). Both cases show that the adherents of the project allow themselves to "think big" and refuse to submit to the rules which govern the entire human community (Cairns 1).

According to Douglas Cairns, who derives the meaning of "hybris" or "hubris" from Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, the trait exists in the context of money and wealth (24). Likewise, Ross Lockhart is "a man shaped by money" and "like(s) to talk about money" (13). He is a strong influential billionaire who "made an early reputation by analyzing the profit impact of natural disaster" (1). He is the owner of a "network of companies, agencies, funds, trusts, foundation, syndicates, communes, and clans" (7). So, his high self-esteem is reinforced by his fortune and soon after turns to hubris when he refuses to recognize that as a human he has limitations inscribed on his species by the Creator. His extreme pride and negation of human vulnerability encourage him to invest money and exercise power in the project which defies the law of mortality.

Moreover, Ross' money leads him to mistakenly believe in super-human qualities to be granted by money, "serious money … tons of it" (33). His hubris trespasses Icarus' because while the latter wished to fly higher for a while, Ross wants to "die a while, then live forever" like some immortal Greek god (114). Though he pretends to descend to the cryonic pod because of his love for Artis, the truth is that he wants to use the procedure to fool death and reawaken to eternity: "There is a special unit. Zero K. it's predicated on the subject's willingness to make certain kind of transition to the next level" (112). Similarly, he assumes that his beloved Artis will "die, chemically prompted, in a subzero vault, in a highly precise medical procedure guided by mass delusion, by superstition and arrogance and self-deception" (50) only temporarily to be reawakened in a better future. So, Ross "thinks big" and wants to use his money as wings to fly beyond death and reach the world of immortals. Cairn finds in *Rhetoric* many examples which sustain the thesis that "thinking big" is not

distinguishable from hubris and he proves that "God allows no one but himself to think big" (14).

Zero K denounces the capitalist greed which does not seem to have any restrictions and criticizes post-capital money as being at the origins of the disconnection between humans and their mortality. Besides, DeLillo censures it as a cause behind the enhanced otherness and alienation of the different social classes and human races from each other. The same thinking resonates in the project designers' speech:

> Here you are, collected, convened. Isn't this what you've been waiting for? A way to claim the myth for yourselves. Life everlasting belongs to those of breathtaking wealth … Kings, queens, emperors, pharaos … It's no longer a teasing whisper you hear in your sleep. This is real. You can think beyond the godlike touch of fingertip billions. (76)

Clearly, the production of the immortal humans takes another detour by being "inseparable from the production of commodities" which conceals the true economic function of the project (Clarke 216-18). By proclaiming the place as a setting for the realization of the billionaires' wish for immortality, DeLillo expresses pessimism toward the West's controversial time of big money, egocentrism and zero heroics and heroism in the 21st century. He blames the late-capitalist rich business leaders for the creation and proliferation of posthuman projects which are but other memorials of powers for them. They exist to gratify the Western egoist longings to continue living eternally, representing metaphors for more personal entitlement and achievements.

Ross Lockhart points out that the place is built by people who are led by a pure Nietzschean "Will to Power" and search for supreme existence when he says "people made long journeys to find a form of higher being here" (43). Yet, what is implied in this statement

is that the project should be discredited because giving mortality to wealthy people at the expanse of the poor points toward social discrimination and unequal distribution of chances. In a similar tone, Stephen Lilley alerts us to the fact that posthuman/transhuman ideologies are far more dangerous and much more daring than Nazism itself (1). With this said, DeLillo predicts a disquiet over the fact that the social category of rich will be perfected at the expense of those who don't have enough money to pay for enhancement. This disruption will result in deeper social inequality, and perhaps more dangerously, in the revival of totalitarianism (Fukuyama4).

4- The Disruption of Authentic Self-Consciousness: The Case of Artis Martineau

In *White Noise,* the reader is introduced to typical characters like Babette and Jack who keep wishing their boring lives can last forever. After more than three decades, *Zero K* comes to grant people like them the technology that can realize their dreams: "If we tell our selves forthright that consciousness will persist, that cryo-preservatives will continue to nourish the body, it is the first awakening toward the blessed state. We are here to make it happen, not simply to will it, or crawl toward it, but to place the endeavor in full dimension (253). This citation demonstrates that the high developed medical technologies, "scanners" and secret research led to discover Dylar in *White Noise* attain a more advanced state thanks to the financial support that men like Ross generously provides to the Convergence. Clearly, the desire to relegate death has lived and intensified all along these years in the American society which learned to develop new strategies and politics of immortality.

Artis by choosing the innovatory step of being frozen in the pods loses what is a, or perhaps, the only, nonpluralistic feature of what is to be human" i.e., consciousness (Forman 132). This is shown by her being unable to express out her thoughts and is therefore spoken

for by other. Her thoughts and consciousness are grounded in scientific and "cultural attributes" (Haney vii) away from her human nature. With this objective in mind, I shall discuss the post-human critical insights which consider consciousness as a non-necessary entity for human existence (Haney viii).

Zero K is narrated from the first person point of view of Jeffery Lackhart. His narrative is trustworthy as he is the "son, the stepson, the privileged witness" his father has chosen to accompany him and his wife in their experience of cryonics (258). Jeffery narrates all the details which he sees and hears, or the ones which his father or Artis transmit to him confidentially. The novel, like many of Delillo's texts and other postmodern narratives, subverts patterns of narrative cohesion. Chapter two of part one which is entitled "Artis Martineau," describes Artis as a frozen body and a creature reduced to a consciousness which is unable to express itself, *"she is all words but doesn't know how to get out of words into being someone, being the person who knows the words" (157).* The fact that Artis knows words but cannot speak them out or use her human faculty of speech in order to express herself demonstrate that the post-human biotechnological mechanisms used to freeze her body lose their appeal to guarantee a human consciousness purely aware and able to express itself (Haney 2).

DeLillo switches narration of this woman's consciousness from flow of consciousness and first-person point of view to third-person objective as spoken by Jeffery who attempts to understand what it means to be human with consciousness in a state of cryonic cessation. He imagines her thoughts and reports them in a series of unrelated fragmentations as she wonders "but am I who I was. I think I am someone. But what is here and how long am I here and am I only what is here" (157). Artis' thoughts reveal that she is trapped in the present frame of tense with no past or future (157). The third person which attempts to understand her state, says that "*she is first person and third person both … she is able to say what she feels and she*

is also the person who stands outside the feeling" (158). This assumed interplay between Artis' inner mind and the consciousness of the third person narrator, Jeffery, can also be explained as a kind of Bakhtinian dialogical orientedness of humans' thought, consciousness and sensitivity. Bakhtin argues for "the Nonself-sufficiency, the impossibility of the existence of a single consciousness," proposing that being a human entails a need for human communication with others (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics 287)*.

To consider the point further, it is necessary to have a look at what the woman conferring at the Convergence, whom Jeffery names Zara, says in this context:

> Will new technologies allow the brain to function at the level of identity? This is what you may have to confront. The conscious mind. Solitude in extremis. Alone … All one. The self. What is the self? Everything you are, without others, without friends or strangers or lovers or children or streets to walk or food to eat or mirrors in which to see yourself. But are you anyone without others? (67)

This passage makes obvious that the Convergence experiments with the brain's capacities of thought and feeling in its 'Zero k' state of cryonics. To state this theoretically, post-humanism "envisions a biology/machine symbiosis that will promote this extension by artificially enhancing our mental and physical powers, arguably at the expense of the natural tendency of the mind to move toward pure awareness" (Haney viii).

Artis' pathetic state of confusion and perhaps ennui illustrates how much such techniques demoralize human nature. Though they seek to allow the human an authentic encounter with his true self, they fail because they ignore that encounter with another is what guarantees essence and "separation, dissociation, and enclosure within the self as the main reason for the loss of one's self" (Bakhtin 287). In addition, given that the reader is highly confused whether he is inside the consciousness of Artis or is allowed access to it only by

medium of third person narration implies that the post-human endeavors are confusing too. The non-satisfaction of the human faculty of need for communication in the frozen "heralds" of DeLillo's novel shows that it decries the limitation of the post-human technologies of brain manipulation.

Artis thinks and the third person narrator reports her words. However, there is no actual or concrete dialogue between the two. The source of the narrator's knowledge is ambiguous. This absence of dialogue must have a deeper and more latent significance. According to Michael Bakhtin:

> I am conscious of myself and become myself only while revealing myself to another, through another, and with the help of another. The most important acts of constituting self-consciousness are determined by a relationship towards another consciousness (towards *thou)* ... The very being of man (both external and internal) is the *deepest communion. To be* means *to communicate.* (*The Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics 287*)

A meaningful human existence, from Bakhtin's standpoint, is permeated by familiarization with the other. In the same way, in recounting the feelings of Artis in the pod, DeLillo delivers her existential crisis of the self "*she is living within the grim limits of self… she is the residue, all that is left of an identity …. Is this the nightmare of self drawn so tight that she is trapped forever… she is not able to see herself, give herself a name, estimate the time since she began to think what she is thinking"* (160-161). The unfamiliar stylistic techniques with which DeLillo writes this section including the elimination of question marks from Artis' questions may suggest that they are both questions and answers at the same time. Assumedly, the fusion of the tone of interrogation with that of affirmation highlights Artis' tragic state of uncertainty and loss of authentic being. It also reveals her inability to

understand whether she has become immortal or that she is still a mortal creature. Bakhtin's saying that: "Absolute death (nonbeing) is the state of being unheard, unrecognized, unremembered" is relevant to depict her state in this example (287).

Noticeably too, an intense sense of uncanniness accompanies Artis' thoughts about her body, the time she experiences and the space she inhabits. She therefore keeps asking:

> where is her …The only here is where I am. But where is here. And why just here and nowhere else … where is my body … In this my body. Is this what makes me whatever I know and whatever I am … can't stop being who I am and become no one… is this my body. I think I am someone. What does it mean to be who I am. (Emphasis added 157-162)

Artis keeps asking questions that she cannot answer. Her isolation from the world sounds like a punishment for her defiance of mortality. The third person narrator of her thoughts assumes that she has become a passive cryonic subject who starves for communication but gets extreme loneliness *"does she need third person. Let her live down in the soundings inside herself. Let her ask questions to noone but herself" (162).*

Boredom, confusion and an unfulfilled needs for communication and "being-with others"seem to be her eternal nemesis for the hubristic choice to be a cryonized body with a tortured consciousness. Following this, Eric cofer notes that "Being cryonically frozen delivers Artis to a state worse than death" (476). By the end of the novel, in a passage which shows that the third person narrator of Artis thoughts is Jeffery, the latter says:

> I think of Artis in the capsule and try to imagine, against my firm consciousness that she is able to experience minimal consciousness. I think of her in a state of virgin solitude. No stimulus, no human activity to incite response, barest trace of

> memory. Then I try to imagine an inner monologue, hers, self-generated, possibly nonstop, the open prose of a third –person voice that is also her voice, a form of chant in a single low tone. (272)

Yet, unlike Jeffery who is plagued by the idea of a spirit incarcerated within a frozen body for an unlimited period of time, the project managers have envisaged "nanotechnology" to ease the task for them. They suggest "nano-units implanted in the suitable receptors of the brain. Russian novels, the films of Bergman, Kubrick, Kurosawa, Tarkovsky. Classic works of art … in the capsule you study the intertwined structures of music and mathematics. You reread the plays of Ibsen, revisit the rivers and streams of sentences in Hemingway" (72). Again, the human is being turned to a cyborg while machines become "the repository of human consciousness—that machines can, for all practical purposes, becomes human beings. You are the cyborg, and the cyborg is you" (Hayles xii).

5- **Spatial Crisis and Failure of "Dwelling"**

Jeffery's inability to establish any psychological or existential meaningfulness or connection with the space of the Convergence stands as a metaphor for humanity's homelessness and possibility of facing a special crisis in a world of posthuman ideals. Posthuman constructions, from this perspective, are reducing the world into an uninhabitable place. Jeffery's wandering within the center and outside stems from his need for a home, highlighting loss of one of the essential structures of "Being" which is "Being-in-the-world" (Heidegger, *Being and Time* 54).

To emphasize, "being-in-the-world" is a basic constituent of the "being" of Dasein, as it is clear in Heidegger's saying "it is true that being-in-the-world is an a-priori necessary constitution of Dasein" (*Being and Time* 54). He also says that when spatiality is attributed to Dasein, this "being [Sein] in space" must evidently "be understood in terms of the kind of

being of this being"(102). This suggests that the essence of the being of Dasein is inseparable from the essence of the space one inhabits. For that reason, the implication of the "in" in Dasein's spatiality should be attributed to its familiarity and "heedful dealing with the beings encountered in the world" (102).

To connect to a place is what constitutes the essence of dwelling. More importantly, to be human entails being able to die and dwell on earth when he says "the human consists in dwelling and, indeed, dwelling in the sense of the stay of mortals on earth" (351). Heidegger asserts that the central aspect of dwelling is the unity of "the fourfold[26]" which are the earth, the sky, the divinities and the mortals (351). In other words, man for Heidegger is not only being in the world but also part of the fourfold, as well. Human beings by recognizing their death and limited existence, they constitute the dwelling by which they sustain the fourfold and its unity.

The first declaration that Jeffery makes following his arrival to the city of Chelyabinsk was that "none of it was familiar, not the situation or the physical environment …"(8). The place, raises in him awe, estrangement and he never succeeds to feel at home inside. In less than twenty-four hours, he starts to endure the confinement of the space getting unbearable with every second which passes. He says: "I was already feeling trapped… I felt the effects of the restriction … the room made me feel that I was being absorbed into the essential content of the place" (21).

Along his stay, Jeffery cannot perceive any meaning in the place beyond being a construction of walls and rocks (21-22). He keeps thinking of escape because he senses the

[26]The fourfold is the unity of the earth, the sky, the divinities and the mortals. The mortals are the human beings who are called so because "they can die. To die means to be capable of death *as* death" (352). The divinities, on the other hand, are "the beakoning messenger of the godhead" which is also a basic criterion of mankind. God's presence on earth is in everything and everywhere though it is concealed: "the god appears in his presence or withdrawns into his concealment" (352).

destructive impacts on his mental state too "I walked the halls … I started to feel foolish with every step I took and every door I scrutinized… I wanted to know where I was and what was happening around me"(23). Jeffery's sentences engage the reader to experience his inner instability at that moment. Therefore, the "muted blue" with which the doors were painted stands for the shallowness of the place and the mute and empty experiences inside.

What deprives the place of any invocation of home is that it was under high level of human and camera surveillance. Because he had no freedom to open the doors and discover what lies behind, Jeffery does not feel at home. In fact, the total control over the place mirrors manipulative spirit of the new technologies, reminding, in a way, the surveillance of the "Big Brother" over the entire city in George Orwell's 1984. To soothe the impacts of the place and its standards of improbability, Jeffery chooses to consider it as "visionary art… mean to accompany and surround the hardwired initiative" (23). The doors and the walls which match each other at the convergence hint at the hidden intentions to erase all distinctions not only between humans—as it is reflected in the uncanny resemblances of all the individuals and the mannequins at the center—but also differences in the spaces inhibited by humans too. The eerie resemblance of the places denies them the spirit distinctiveness which may allow a person to dwell within them. In this context, Heidegger says that not all buildings which "house man" are dwelling places because some places can be inhabited but cannot be dwelt (347-48). The sense of dwelling and its importance to the "Being" of Dasein should not be taken for granted given that a meaningful being is interconnected with being-in the world and being mortal (349). In this sense, the Convergence strips the human of the true meaning of being by taking away morality and dwelling.

In "Building Dwelling Thinking," Heidegger claims that thinking also belongs to dwelling, and that the latter's essence should be traced in thinking. He admits that "enough will be gained if dwelling and building have become *worthy of questioning* and thus have

remained worthy of thought" (362). In contrast to the claim, the builders of the Convergence claim that the building is born out of a desire to challenge any "responsible thinking" suggesting that the center is a mere medium of scientific endeavors into which thinking of the essence of dwelling is not added (363).

Jeffery could not enjoy or accept the space of the Convergence and the sedimentary lifestyle imposed on people inside. Therefore, in a nomadic spirit of displacement, he transgresses the laws and opens the closed doors trying to find an open space where he can walk into "earth, air, and sky" (122). Searching for these elements underlines their absence in the center. According to Heidegger, the simple essence of dwelling is ensured by preserving the fourfold of "to save the earth, to receive the sky, to await the divinities, to initiate mortals" (360). In other words, a building which does not house the four elements can be anything but a place to dwell. In this sense, the Convergence, which deprives humans of the earth, the sky, the divine and mortality is, far from granting a sense of belonging and homeliness.

After opening the doors, Jeffery finally gets into an open space, which he deceptively discovers to be an artificial "English garden" and not a natural desert oasis. What he feels, then, is "mystery, the paradox, or the ruse, whatever it was" (122). Significantly enough, access to the garden was denied and getting there necessitates escape from "unusual safeguard" which Jeffery could "magically" realize only because his disk was not functioning (143). This implies that the Convergence is found on the basis of isolation, seclusion and deprivation from natural experiences of space as well as time[27] It purposefully denies access to any space which grants familiarity, homeliness, proclaiming itself as a place of erasure of belonging and dwelling.

[27] For a better understanding of the center's transgression of the notion of time see Enteghar and Guendouzi (2020).

Narrating its decent into the enterprise's veer where Ross' body is supposed to be kept, Jeffery says:

> they led us to a space that became an abstract thing, a theoretical occurrence. I don't know how else to put it. An idea of motion that was also a change of position or place…. I wasn't sure whether this was due to the sad circumstances or to the nature of the conveyance, the feel of angled descent, the feel of being detached from out sensory apparatus, coasting in a way that was mental more than physical.(138)

Heidegger claims that the "*plight of dwelling*" is so old in history and cannot only be connoted in the lack of houses. The plight of dwelling, according to him, lies in the mortals' forgetting or carelessness to search "anew for the essence of dwelling, that the*y "must ever learn to dwell" (363).* What this suggests in relation to the homelessness that Jeffery endures at the Convergence is that the latter does not even give a thought about the sense of dwelling. Its construction, seemingly, does it in purpose to deprive the people of dwelling. It does not call people to dwelling because, as explains Heidegger, Dwelling, mortality and Being are interconnected compositions of Dasein. Therefore, dwelling may remind of the existential and ontological implication of death on "being" and as a result, it may thwart from the trasnhuman a priori of immortality.

Upon his return to the city after the freezing of Aris and Ross, Jeffery feels that the entire city is meaningless and uninhabitable. Sometimes, in week-ends, he looks for warmth in "a guest room in [his] father's town house" (265). All he can think of himself is his being "a guest" and a stranger to his father and his properties and home. Heidegger asserts that "Man's relation to locales, and through locales to spaces, inheres in his dwelling. The relationship between man and space is none other than dwelling" (359). As such, despite its being an

extravagant and very expensive house, Ross' residence is considered as a mere building without the spirit of dwelling. Because dwelling "is *the basic character of* Being, in keeping with which mortals exist," Jeffery's inability to dwell in the Convergence or his father's house or any other place suggests his loss of meaningful being too. In fact, things of this sort are housings, though not necessarily dwelling-houses in the narrower sense (Building Dwelling Thinking 360).

6- The Convergence as a Platonic "Cave of Shadows"

Having been at the Convergence to watch Artis die and then go back to the city before returning once again to accompany Ross in his last adventure, devastate Jeffery and push him to see life pessimistically. He claims that "this visit was different, a deathwatch. The son permitted to accompany his father into the depths, beyond the allowable levels" (247). In this respect and in many others, the Convergence recalls Plato's "Parable of the Cave." Its programmers and visitors remind of the Platonic prisoners and its perception of death recalls the inauthentic reflection of reality in the walls of the cave. In fact, understanding the Convergence as a Platonic cave of shadows shows that the project it represents is shallow, misleading and alienating the contemporary individual from wisdom and reality.

In his *Republic* (book VII), Plato reflects on the situation of chained prisoners who are confined to live in an "underground cave-dwelling" to look at a blank wall without any possibility of turning around or aside. Facing these prisoners there is a wall and behind the wall there is fire and an exit to the outside world from where enters the light which extends all over the length of the cave. These prisoners see on the blank wall the reflections of the objects and the artifacts that "puppet-handlers" carry above the wall behind them, without being able to look at their original shape[28] (193, bk VII).

[28]See App. 3

The Stenmark brothers, Lars and Nils, as Jeffery chooses to name them, created the Convergence "with its aesthetic of seclusion and concealment" (73) and they best qualify to the Platonic slaves. They say that they spent "six years, without a break" completely immersed in that place (74). They went out in a brief journey outside the place "and back and forth ever since" (75). Unlike them, a platonic sage man dreams to break the bonds which enchain him in order to move out of the cave and look into the sun. However, the Stenmarks lack any longing for liberation from the conventions of the Convergence which tell them to live in transgression and disagreement with human nature. Philosophically speaking, the choice of the brothers to carry on working in the project of immortality and never renounce it until they become cryonised bodies shows that they do not have the ability to look behind the reflections of reality they see in the wall of the Convergence about death.

Plato's allegory invites contemplation of the dividing line between knowing the truth and rejoicing to live with a false copy of it. Like the prisoners of Plato's cave, the programmers are also confined inside the walls of the Convergence and all they can perceive is the reflection of their own ideas and rhetorics of immortality. From this perspective, the immortality which is offered by the project should be understood as a mere misapprehension of the inevitability of death. By logic of implication, it can also be claimed that the post-human aspiration for an eternal life is a mere illusion and shadow with no original copy anchored in truth.

Metaphorically speaking, Jeffery's constant longing for a window to look from at the outside world echoes his longing for an authentic truth behind any of the representations which persist in the Convergence. Hence, rather than being forced to live in the outside world of original ideas and figures, Ross and the programmers in the Cave of the Convergence choose to live in darkness and devote their whole thought and money to fashion a fantasy and miss-representation of truth.

Ross stands as a symbol of the cave men who, once faced with the light of the real world is blinded and can no longer perceive the truth. After coming back from the Convergence, Ross becomes estranged from his environment and people around him; he loses his sense of well-being and enters an experience of non-belonging. Jeffery says that: "He let his hair grow wild and walked nearly everywhere he cared to go, which was nowhere. He was slow and a little stooped and when I spoke about exercise, diet and self-responsibility. We both understood that this was just an inventory of hollow sounds" (168). Ross seems to lose joy of life and become a wanderer whose sense of being at home is shattered by incomprehensibility:

> in his town house, he eventually wanders down the stairs to sit in the room with the monochrome of paintings ... the man stares at something that is not in the room. He is remembering or imagining and I'm not sure if he is aware of my presence but I know that his mind is tunneling back to the dead land where the bodies are banked and waiting. (168)

The passage suggests that the Convergence has a high ability to manipulate the spirit. What happens to Ross is similar to what happens to the enchained cave man if released and told that what he sees now is the correct real shape of the "things that passed by" (194). This man, according to Plato, will be "dazzled" by the light and continue to believe that what "was seen before is truer than what was now shown" and when he comes to the light, he will be unable to see because he has got used to darkness (194). A sage man, after discovering the outside world as the authentic one, should feel "pity" for the other prisoners and be happy for himself when he recalls his previous home of shadows (195). Even if he learns that his previous companions will be honored and empowered for remembering the sequential passing of the objects, he should not be content to go back and be the most powerful among

them (Plato 195). However, Ross, unlike the sage man who finally sees the authentic truth out of the cave, is eager to return to the Convergence and receive the award of immortality.

Jeffery, in contrast, can be seen as the Platonic sage man who quits the cave of shadows in order to better experience the real authentic world. He is the only person who has doubt and suspects the power of the Convergence "since coming here I've found myself concentrating on small things, then smaller. My mind is unwinding, unspooling. I think of details buried for years. I see what I missed before or thought too trivial to recall. It's my condition, of course, or my medication" (16-17). His situation is very similar to the released prisoner who has faced the sun light and become accustomed to the light of the real world. In this case, and given thi wisdom he will never accept to return to the world of the shadows, even if he is told that he will be crowned the king of the prisoners.

When Jeffery gets to the Convergence he expresses that "none of it was familiar, not the situation or the physical environment of the bearded man himself. I'd be on my way home before I'd be able to absorb any of it" (17). When he quits and returns to New York, he expresses joy that he is back to history and originality: "we see the people who serve food we eat in public establishment. We walk on paved surfaces and stand on a corner to hail a cab. Toxicabs are yellow, fire trucks red, bikes mostly blue…" (167). This suggests that the Convergence represents a world of unfamiliarity, unreality and fake copies and this includes the lure of immorality which is another lie, a false shadow of the fact that humans are inescapably mortal.

The references to Plato's parable of the cave have shown that the programmers of the Convergence are blinded by their denial of death that they cannot see that the immortality they promote deprives the individual of human nature, reducing him to a chained man who cannot perceive truth and contents himself with the perception of false reflections. Their

decent to the subterranean construction of the Convergence and refusal to return to reality outside the construction enhances their dangerous corruption of human nature. Having been explored as a reflection of Plato's cave of shadows, the certainty revealed by the Convergence unravels as a misleading copy of the certainty that death is the original genuine accuracy which cannot be modified.

7- Posthuman Immortality: from Psychological to Existential Alienation

Intellectuals and critics such as Francis Fukuyama and Stephen Lilley expressed their disquiet vis-à-vis the dangerous outcomes of the post-human solutions for man's vulnerability and mortality. However, these critiques tend to overlook the existential dimension of the threat. The analyses above have put the premises of post-humanism beside Heidegger's perspectives on authentic attitudes to death and shown that advanced post-human technologies "tranquilize" the individual in front of his death and encourage him to "flee it." This leads to an existence deprived of authentic commitments and considerations. The subsequent reflections on Jeffery's psychological and existential loneliness and estrangement after his second visit to the convergence shall highlight existential alienation as another result of posthumanism.

The end of *Zero K* pictures Jeffery's messy life with the isolation which pervades it. Jeffery, though being the "son" of the billionaire Lockhart and the only heir of an empire of money and power, does not seem to be immersed in any pleasures. On the contrary, he turns to someone who roams the city streets contemplating its state and seeking a meaning for his miseries. Since the moment he comes back from the Convergence leaving his father and step mother behind as frozen bodies, nothing seems to be able to grant him a feeling of meaningful belonging.

At times he goes to museums "just to hear the languages spoken by visitors to the galleries" (265), implying that he is more "at home" with foreign languages than he is with his American English. This is another indication of his distance from the whole society which uses this language. He even confesses that he "adapt[s] well" in Compliance and Ethics officer, where he works because of "the methods [he has] developed to perform the requisite duties and conform to the indigenous language" (266).

Though Jeffery does not consciously admit that the failure of his integration in the city of Manhattan results from Ross' financed project of immortality, the following passage makes the assumption very valid:

> There's the wide-ranging dynamic of my father's corporate career and there's the endland of the Convergence and I tell myself that I'm not hiding inside a life that's a reaction to this, or a retaliation for this. Then again, I stand forever in the shadow of Ross and Artis and *it's not their resonant lives that haunt me but their manner of dying.* (Emphasis added 266)

It follows that Ross and Artis' unusual and innovative death haunts Jeffery who tries to keep a spirit of sanity in facing this dilemma. In another situation, Jeffery admits: "the still-life future of father and step mother in cryonic suspension" is the "force that made me" (271). Ever since his return, pessimism becomes the new mood of his life: "the long soft life is what I feel I'm settling into and the only question is how *deadly it will turn out to be*. But do I believe this or am I searching for effect, a way to balance the ease of my everydayness? (Emphasis added 268). All in all, Jeffery's longing and desire for life disappears in the course of his reminisces as he says: "the craving is gone and may be this is what reduces me" (269). Significantly, Jeffery seems to have found meaning in the sight of a "taxi driver kneeling in the gutter slime, turned toward Mecca, and I try to reconcile the firm placement of his world into the scatter

life of this one (271). This Islamic practice or prayer which captivates his interest is alien to the America where he lives and suggests that meaning which is absent in his environment can be found in Eastern practices.

After the call from Emma informing Jeffery that her son, Stak, has disappeared, Jeffery says: "I stood in the bedroom and felt defeated. It was a cheap and selfish feeling, a bitterness of spirit … I looked in the mirror over the bureau and simulated a suicide by gunshot to the head. I did it three more times, working on different faces" (227). Jeffery's longing for suicide echoes fascination with death as a liberating force. Being very confined by his unpleasant life, Jeffery is attracted to the idea of death because it can open to him new possibilities of being away from the fake American late-capitalist life, money and immortality. Jeffery reveals himself as an existentialist hero in full readiness for a life which heads deathward and his death wish represents, from an existentialist perspective against which I base my interpretation, an authentic being amid the meaninglessness of post-modernity. Such representations of death rank Delillo as a neo-existentialist writer and thinker.

A little time after his second return from the Convergence, Jeffery turns into a new Erik Parker[29] roaming the streets of Manhattan seeking belonging and meaning for his insignificant existence, and projecting the features of a "flâneur" who "aptly disposes such an interested analyst to simultaneously resist and invert the seemless nihilism of the postmodern city experience" (Jenks 20). His life is nihilistic[30] in many respects because he lives in a milieu which rejects religion and proudly embraces "god technology," a milieu which refuses

[29]He is the protagonist of *Cosmopolis* (20030, DeLillo's 13th novel.

[30] Nihilism, says Charles Guignon, is Nietzsche's concept for "loss of meaning or direction"(291). It stands for insignificance at both personal and public levels erasing all sense of "authority, commitment, or claims on us" (291). The erasure of these concepts in the state of complete nihilism opens possibility for another erasure, that of difference. Therefore, there will be "less and less difference among political parties, among religious communities, among social causes, among cultural practices—everything is on a par, all meaningful differences are being levelled" (291).

mortality and embraces futurist programs of eternal life. As a result, revisiting Manhattan takes him back to Ross' famous announcement of his desire to be the owner of the end of the world (274). Jeffery, the "*flâneur*" who depicts the urban spaces with a critical mind, records the passing historical period of acceptance of death and meaningful life in the big American city (Jenks 145).

After witnessing the world around him distorting the significance of the human and the essence of "being," Jeffery seeks to understand things from the perspective of the innocent kid he sees in the bus heading from "the West to the East" (273). The boy fascinates him with his "howls of awe" which he finds "more suitable than words" to represent the depressing life of Manhattan. The howls he desires bring to mind the primitive life which is supposed to be more meaningful than the late-capitalist American one. Therefore, it emphasizes the need for the naïve belief in the essence of things and nature.

i. Desire for an Encounter with "the Real," and Thirst for Ordinary Death

Like *White Noise*, DeLillo's science fictional *Zero K* projects media and TV screens as dominant forces which preach horror. The convergence, like Jack Gladney's house, has a life inherent in the screens which are on all the time. According to Jeffery, the enterprise's halls are endowed with screens which appear and "disappear to the ceiling" (85). These screens are giant and their "size lifted the effect out of the category of usual broadcast breath," making of images so "real" despite the fact that there "was no audio" (11). Jeffery and other viewers are left at the mercy of images and representations without comments or sound-clarifications to watch constantly news of deadly floods (11), tornadoes (36), burning fires (120, 121), tsunamis (121), "lava magma" (121), and refugees from "crushed cities and town, dying at sea" (127). So, in addition to the Convergence's devotion to ensure avoidance of biological

death at all expanses, it also devotes energy for "a preoccupation with death as a destructive and catastrophic event" (May 470).

According to Vivian Sobchack, when natural death is taken away from "public space and discourse" the only death left for "public sites and conversation" is "violent death" (285). Sobchack explains that this leads to what Geoffry Gorer calls "pornography of death" or a representation of death which shows obsession with "sensational activity of a body-object" (285). In *Zero K,* as in *White Noise*, the death represented on screen is desirable because it is violent, inscribed on the body and replaces the natural death which becomes taboo, basically at the Convergence. Thus, at the transhuman center which denies death, Jeffery finds gratification for encounter with real death in the giant screens. For instance, he extols the horror he senses after a live display of three men who set fire on themselves by emptying bottles of "kerosene" or "gasoline" on their bodies (61). Terrified by the sight, Jeffery "stepped back from the screen" face shocked by "the burning men, mouths open, swayed above me. I stepped further back. They were formless, soundless, screaming" (62). At the same time, and in a similar tone with the Gladneys who are fascinated with TV disasters and "wanted more, more" (86). Jeffery says that "the images were everywhere around me, those awful seconds, the distress I felt when the man kept striking the match without getting flame. I wanted him to light the match" (62). He adds: "I wanted it to last longer" (121). Jeffery's longing is an epitome for the intrinsic human need for connection with death which the posthuman technologies deny.

In fact, the morbid allure of spectacles of disaster and violence in DeLillo's novels can also be explained in terms of Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytical ideas of the order of the Real and Slavog Žižek's explanation of the Westerners' loss and desire for an encounter with the Real. According to Lacan, we are always summoned for "tuche" or an encounter with the Real, which always "eludes us" because the Real represents an "impossibility" of

representation by the symbolic order (*The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* 68). The Real manifests in trauma and anxiety, and missed encounter with this order, he says, is enough to "rouse our attention, that of the trauma" (69). In other words, the failure to meet the Real produces trauma and shock. Properly, Jeffery's and the Gladneys' longing to watch violence and trauma in television can be understood as the call they receive from their unconsciousness which craves and yearns to experience the Real which is beyond all other orders. Also, because the Real is the absolute, unchangeable truth "which always returns to the same place" (*Ecrit* x), it is difficult to experience it in a place of unreality and mediation like the Convergence or the Gladneys' home. In these two places, as the previous analyses have shown, authentic reality is effaced, computerized and substituted by mere technological mediations and representations.

Likewise, Žižek claims that people and the Westerners in particular experience a "passion for the Real" because it represents authentic existence (*Welcome to the Desert* 5). He claims that "the ultimate and defining moment of the twentieth century was the direct experience of the Real as opposed to everyday social reality" (5). Paradoxically, the Real is experienced as a form of violence and brutality. He writes in this context that "the Real in its extreme violence is the price to be paid for peeling off the deceptive layers of reality… authenticity resides in the act of violent transgression" (6). Since the Real is confronted via violent acts and scenes, Jeffery and the Gladneys are excited by the same scenes of violence which terrify them. Jeffery's desire to watch the men burn in fire and his ambition to see more violence in TV replicate his own version of "passion for the Real" (5). Jeffery who is surrounded by a virtual world in New York, and an unreal life and space in the Convergence unleashes desperate longing to return for a more authentic existence and experience truth without mediation.

Moreover, Jeffery's condition of running away from representation in order to meet the authentic reality is also parallel to that of the characters' of *Point Omega* (2010). In *Point Omega*, Delillo's post 9/11 novel, an unnamed man watches the movie *24H Psycho* and is "impressed by its terror, in which Jenet Leigh, the woman in the film, experiences "a hellish death." Because the man is "consciously aware of his existential situation in the faked reality of the postmodern universe," his contemplation of the crime scene exemplifies "the Western ambition to return to the Real" (Bessedik 24). Indeed, like the terror of watching the crime scene which never attains "the gravity of desert terror" in *Point Omega* (Bessedik 27), the terror generated by watching strangers who face horror on screen never actually attains the same Real effect of watching the death of a close friend die. The latter resonates perfectly well from Jeffery's shocking watch of Stak's murder in the news: "I haven't been able to recall a single faint instant of dreamtime since my return. Stak is the waking dream, the boy soldier looming onscreen, about to come crashing down on top of me" (267). This shows that Stak's murder had the Real terror effect on Jeffery.

Jeffery's desire to watch the disaster over and over is gratified by "prolongation" and "repetition" of impressive images" and events under what Erik Cofer terms as "cultural celebration of tragedy" (460). What can be noticed about all these TV diffusions is their focus on appalling and violent death while avoiding natural one. This limited representation calls for consideration of postmodern culture as a culture of death as taboo. In the wealthy American of the 21st century, natural death is doomed inappropriate because it humiliates the American ego and pride in self-constructed power. What is needed is rather death as an incident, a "chance event," a death which has a reason, which happens accidentally. More importantly depriving death of its necessity and reducing it to a trivial accident speaks for the postmodern man's existential inauthentic being.

Ross Lockhart and the other benefactors construct a project which allows them to disappear from current life hoping that the one to which they will reborn will inspire more happiness and meaningfulness. In this novel, the characters lose delight in life because they no longer appreciate the everyday ordinary things they possess and keep longing for what is beyond their reach. DeLillo advances that death is what makes us human and simple common things make life meaningful and as it is put in the words of Jeffery's mother who passed away years ago, "ordinary moments make the life" (109).

When Ross is imprisoned in the pod, Jeffery never expresses grief over losing him. The sensation that the father's departure has left in his son is never clearly exteriorized. He is completely indifferent to his death because he chooses it freely and probably because he regards it as momentary death, just like Ross does. In contrast, he keeps recalling the death of his mother with grief. One time after Ross is put to cryonic suspension, Jeffery lies asleep and like a medieval poet of some Dream Vision, he sees his dead mother present in the room. He feels estranged by her presence and says that she appears "with her avatar of personal technology, the mute button of the TV remote. Here she is. A breath, an emanation" (248). When he sees this dream, he says in a Freudian tone:

> I'd never felt more human than I did when my mother lay in bed, dying. This was not the frailty of a man who is said to be "only human," subject to a weakness or a vulnerability. This was a wave of sadness and loss that made me understand that I was a man expanded by grief. There were memories, everywhere, unsummoned. There were images, visions, voices and how a woman's last breath gives expression to her son's constrained humanity. (248)

In *Thoughts for the Times of War and Death,* Freud states: "if you want to endure life, prepare yourself for death" (20). Since the unconscious is unaware of its death, Freud adds, a person

can only experience knowledge of death by acknowledging the death of another "civilized man … can hardly even entertain the thought of another's death without seeming to himself hard or evil-hearted" (15). According to this claim, the death for which someone needs to prepare one's self is the death of another. Though this claim sounds contradictory to Heidegger's characterization of death as "non-relational," it fits the description of Jeffery's situation. The latter, as says Freud "could no longer keep death at a distance, for he had tasted it in his grief for the dead" (19). So, it is only his mother's death which allows him an ethical understanding of finitude[31].

Jeffery's indifference to his father's death and his endless mourning of Madeline's passing away speaks for the human and particularly the American individual's need and lust for the ordinary. Jeffery tries to overcome any ethical responsibility toward Ross or his death by thinking of the moment he left him as a child while he was doing "his trigonometry homework" (14). The mourning of the death of the mother and the neutrality and detachment toward the death of the father has nothing to do with the Freudian Oedipus complex and desire to kill the father; it rather suggests an embrace of the very natural way of treating death and a rejection of the post-human late capitalist-like attitude of using power to control mortality. While Ross' death corrupts nature, Madeline's death echoes the truth that "nature wants to kill us off in order to return to its untouched and uncorrupted form," to quote the man conferring at the Convergence (70).

The natural death of Madeline gives it meaning while Ross' simulated one confuses Jeffery and affects his understanding of the meaning of life and death. While Madeline represents the familiar, Ross and his business enterprise create a sense of defamiliarisation and estrangement from himself and the world. DeLillo's invocation of "the ordinary" as haven and place of escape from manipulated and transformed realities calls attention to his

[31]For a better elaboration on the same ethical imperative, see chapter four of this thesis.

ironic treatment of how the American character is so pre-occupied by what he does not have and forgets to enjoy the here and now.

Madeline's death in her bed, as a consequence, takes us back to "the tamed" death which is not usually associated with the pain or humiliation which accompanies the process of cryonization in *Zero K*. Madeline, says Jeffery, is his "place of safe return" because she "was ordinary in her own way" (249). It is this aspect of ordinariness which has always distinguished her from the billionaire father. Even in their deaths, they are differentiated by the ordinary and the artificial; Ross' death is artificial while hers is so natural. Furthermore, Ross dies a technological and dehumanizing death but Madeline dies at home, accompanied by neighbors and surrounded by family and familiarity.

Through the contrast of the death of Jeffery's parent, DeLillo is cautiously revealing all the dehumanizing and humiliating consequences of the cryonics. He describes the individuals after being taken down as mere unfamiliar statues with weird appearances. The best illustration of this can be seen in Jeffery's description of the frozen humans at the center:

> This was their idea of postmodern décor and it occurred to me that there was a prediction implied in this exhibit. Human bodies, saturated with advanced preservatives, serving as mainstays in the art markets of the future. Stunted monoliths of once-lived flesh placed in the show rooms of the auction houses or set in the windows of an elite antiquarium shop along the stylish stretch of Madison Avenue. (232)

Jeffery's words show the dehumanization of people and the blurring of the demarcation between the human and the inanimate object. Soon, the human will become mere objects for ornamentation to attest for a spectacle of humanity at its death throes.

Longing for sensations of ordinariness accompanies Jeffery even when he comes back to New York city:

> Things people do, ordinarily, forgettably, things that breathe just under the surface of what we acknowledge having in common. I want these gestures, these moments to have meaning, check the wallet, check the keys, something that draws us together, implicitly, lock and relock the front door, inspect the burners on the stove for dwindling blue flame or seeping gas. (209)

Jeffery has often blamed the billionaire's money for the suffering of skeptic people like himself. He tells Emma: "I wanted to stop using my credit card. I wanted to pay cash, to live a life in which it is possible to pay cash, whatever the circumstances. To live a life…" (171). This means that hostility for the very basic factors that define the American life of materialism is at the heart of his shallow existence, proposing that the late capitalist big money obstructs the individual from existing meaningfully and ordinarily. Through the traumatizing impacts of the artificial death of Ross Lockhart and the healing aspects of Madeline's natural and familiar death, *Zero K* warns against posthuman immortality and suggests that return to the ordinary and acceptance of natural death is an antidote to the postmodern man's alienation.

ii. Concluding Remarks

Zero K fictionalizes a postmodern and post-human experience of death mediated via the advanced technologies of human enhancement and life longevity. In this chapter I have examined the existential consequences of the posthuman promises of immortality and shown that these projects exacerbate the abhorrence of death. Hence, *Zero K* has been read as an attack on the disillusioning realities of the post-human condition which, when blended with

the already alienating forces of postmodernism, will inevitably eliminate the human and realize Richard Tarnas' prophecy that the end of western man is at hand (445).

Beginning with the highly equipped health care centers and hospitals of *White Noise* all through the technological development of the cryonic centers of *Zero K*, this part of my thesis has captured man's resort to developed scientific and technological techniques to conquer death with which the contemporary American man can no longer cope or repress. Therefore, whereas the Stenmark brothers consider that terrorism and the global warming are the true threats to humanity, DeLillo is more concerned about the post-human technologies and the merit of the enhancement itself, reflecting in due course his neo-existential views toward death and meaningful "being."

In *White Noise,* the antidote proposed for the sickness of postmodern individual is reconciliation with death and acceptance of it as an inevitable natural outcome and life. Similarly, *Zero K*, recommends reconciliation with ordinary natural death and acceptance of mortality as a way back to meaning and dwelling. The novel cautions that by deserting such reality, existence will be reduced to meaninglessness and Man will never find a true home "to dwell" in. The long trajectory of experiences with the human limitation since *White Noise*, through *Falling Man* to *Zero K*, reveals to DeLillo that taking life as it is with its simple things and the dangers with which it may challenge humans can be the remedy to alienation from death, nature and life.

While DeLillo agrees with other critics of postmodernism that it is a psychological and cultural power enhanced by the influence of capitalist and late-capitalist forces, *White Noise* and *Zero K* position him within the category of the harsh critics of postmodernism. The two narratives invite reconsideration of postmodernism as an alienating force which generates estrangement and homelessness. For DeLillo, there are no liberating possibilities in the whole

systems underlying postmodern thought and culture. On the contrary, they constitute an eternal source of sorrow, anguish and prison for contemporary man.

It has been demonstrated that the only change that occurred in the attitudes to death from the times of *White Noise* till the 21st century is that it became more abhorred and refuted. This refutation comes as an outcome of reaction to death as an anti-thesis to the immense human potential for big accomplishments and high technological advancement. Yet, by putting DeLillo side by side with Heidegger and Freud,the study has concluded that the mental and psychological method that the posthumanists use to ease fear of death is illusionary. Their inauthentic reliance on technology to eradicate death echoes what Freud qualifies as loss of connection with reality while "satisfaction is obtained through illusions" (" Civilization and its Discontent" 33) which block the interference of reality in seeking the pleasure and tranquilization from fear of death.

Part Two:

The Representation of Death in Philip Roth's *Everyman* (2006) and *Nemesis* (2010)

ChapterOne:

Death as an Uncanny Experience in Philip Roth's *Everyman* (2006)

> "From the smile of that Dionysius, the Olympians are born, from his tears human beings"
> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* 52

> "he had no grudge against either the limitations or the comforts of conformity… he was not claiming to be exceptional. Only vulnerable and assailable and confused" (*Everyman*[32] 32).

Introduction

Philip Roth (1933-2018) is an outstanding American author of contemporary times. He wrote different novels, experimented with various genres and won many awards. He produced a wealthy legacy of significant works including the Pulitzer price owner *American Pastoral*, and the National Book award owner, *Sabbath's Theatre,* etc. Roth has published eighteen works of fiction in "an oeuvre that spans high seriousness, low humour, expansive monologue and elliptical dialogue, spare realism and grotesque surrealism" (Brauner 1). He treats various themes such as Jewish identity, materialism in the American society, the clash between individual freedom and the established social norms and fleshly desires, political correctness, alienation and the failure of the American Dream, among others. His fiction is also remarkable for the life it gives for a fictional character named Nathan Zackerman, who is always seen as "Roth's alter ego" (Brauner 2).

[32] Roth, Philip. *Everyman.* (New York: Vintage Books) 32. Subsequent references to *Everyman* will be cited in text.

In this chapter, I study the representations of death in his post 9/11 novel, *Everyman* (2006). I intend to demonstrate that postmodern spiritual and existential void meets with biological conditions of old age and decayed bodies and foster anxiety of death in the text. While in the previous part of this study I have examined the various postmodern conditions as quintessential reasons behind denial of death, in the present one I tackle conditions of the body, old age and health issues as causes of death anxiety, existential angst and psychological unfamiliarity. I maintain that these factors disclose to Everyman the inevitability of death and the nothingness of existence, or what Havi Carel would put as "the vacuity of not pressing into any possibility" (105).

In this part of my thesis, which analyzes *Everyman* (2003) and *Nemesis* (2010), I seek to show that unlike DeLillo, Roth diminishes uncertainties surrounding the inevitability of death in the postmodern era. I argue that Philip Roth portrays a protagonist who refuses to mitigate death via the modern technologies which defy it. This shows that Roth does not attribute death to a force which can effectively be conquered by science or technology, stressing, in due course, the futility of all attempts to flee it. In that respect, the novel reflects an existential affirmation that death is certain, unavoidable and can never be surpassed. However, I maintain that though the characters recognize these realities about death, they still lack existential authenticity because they do not approach death as an individuating force or a possibility for a complete existence and perceive it as unnecessary to life.

Equally important, because one of the thesis' main objectives is to investigate into the dialogic nature of the postmodern discourse of death, I will examine the essential relation that Roth's *Everyman* has with the medieval morality play "The Summoning of Everyman." Drawing on Bakhtin's "hidden polemics" and "parody," I intend to demonstrate that Everyman parodies the religious discourse of the morality play, suggesting that religion has lost its place in post-modern times as secular conceptualizations of death prevail. In other

words, I aim to show that contrary to "The Summoning of Everyman," whose thematic and contextual concerns echo what Baudrillard calls "hope for parousia" and the necessity of "the realization of the kingdom of God" (145), Roth's novel affirms that while preoccupation with death has survived in the Western culture since the medieval times, interest in religion and salvation is invalid in contemporary times.

Relying on Sigmund Freud's declaration that: "our possibilities of happiness are thus limited from the start by our very constitution. It is much less difficult to be unhappy. Suffering comes from three quarters: from our own body, which is destined to decay and dissolution, and cannot even dispense with anxiety and pain as danger-signals" ("Civilization and its Discontents" 29), I focus on the sorrow of death which accompanies Everyman whenever he thinks that his body has betrayed him as he can no longer rely on it for support. In this respect, I argue that attitudes to death in *Everyman* are shaped by humiliation because of advanced age and deteriorated body; giving power to death as the grim reaper in the eyes of the protagonist. By relying on Hegel's master-slave dialectics and the role of women and family, the following analysis demonstrates that Everyman's relations with women exceeds the realm of bodily desires because his intimation with the female reflects his need for the feminine to alleviate his fear of death, on the one hand, and to satisfy the need for recognition, on the other.

While William Deresiewicz finds that Everyman's sexual force gives him confidence to face death and the world (5), I assume that his bodily humiliation is what strengthens his death certainty and alienation. In addition, differently from Ben Schermbrucker's view that *Everyman* represents only the sour taste of death, my study claims that in the text death is less abhorred when compared to humiliation because once the latter takes hold of man's psychology, death becomes a necessary condition for dignity. As such, and through the psychoanalytical lenses of Freud's "The Uncanny," this study captures the old sick body as

the unfamiliar which cripples, haunts and destabilizes Everyman's life and foregrounds perception of death as an uncanny experience of biological cessation. Finally, I conclude that in *Everyman,* Philip Roth is trying to understand the condition of human mortality and does not attempt to find a solution to it as do posthumanists. While in *White Noise* and *Zero K* Don DeLillo understands death as the force which gives meaning to life, Philip Roth fails to see in death more than an uncanny inevitability.

Everyman revolves around an unnamed 71-years- old man, Everyman, who is terrified of dying. The events of the novel begin in the Jewish cemetery, near New York, where the funeral of Everyman is held with the presence of his daughter, Nancy, his two sons, Randy and Lonny, his ex-wife Phoebe and few other persons and his friends or students at the art classes. It is from the cemetery and near the grave that the story of Everyman is told by the voice of his young brother Howie. Everyman was born to a family who owned jewellery stores where he spent the beautiful days of his youth "before the invention of death," i.e., they were innocent kids unaware of the existence of death (14). Everyman's life is notable for the recurrent occurrences of sickness and death of others, along with the experiences he had with women. In addition to his bodily sickness since an early age, his life is shaped by the fear he lived as a child because of the Nazi menace and the horror he endures because of the 9/11 attacks. Everyman has lived a professionally successful career as a commercial artist with a New York ad agency while his personal life was rather a mass of failed marriages and broken relationships. After retirement and the attacks on the Twin Towers, he went away from Manhattan to start art classes in the Starfish Beach retirement village looking for better times. Yet, meeting old, tired and sick people worsened his anxiety and intensified his loneliness and alienation. Finally, he succumbs to death alone at the age of seventy-one.

Many critics have noted the centrality of death to Philip Roth's novels. For instance, Debra Shostak, in "Roth's Graveyards, Narrative Desire, and 'Professional Competition with

Death," draws on psychoanalytic accounts of narrative desires to discuss Roth's occupation with the graveyard scenes. She points out that by appearing at the beginning and at the end of the narrative, the gravesite scenes clarify the protagonist's capacities to look closely at his mortality (5). Despite its contribution to the study of death in this text, Shostack's article does not pay any attention to the existential impacts of perception of death on its main character Everyman.

"Dead Man" by William Deresiewicz underlines the centrality of manhood and masculinity to Roth's fiction. He sees that Everyman's relationship to the world is defined by his "sexual force" that grants him "confidence" against the impending death (14). According to this study, the potency of Roth's *Everyman* lies in its revelation of the "modern way of death" which is accompanied by a long process of "illness" and "medical treatment" with all its existential effects and agony (15). In this chapter, I seek to give these existential effects further interpretation through a Heideggerian lens.

"There is no Remaking Reality," Roth and the Embodied Human Condition in *Everyman*" is another important study by Ben Schermbrucker, who utilizes Keatsian and Christian arguments to examine the refute of death, suffering and salvation in Roth's *Everyman*. Schermbrucker looks at how Roth's treatment of aging and sexuality strengthens his personal views on death. He also emphasizes that while Keats asserts the life-affirming force of death and its preservation of one's humanity, Roth's *Everyman* represents but the sour taste of death and its unpleasantness (41). Hence, the characters are estranged from God and salvation as Roth chooses to stand against Keats and the Christian belief to depict a merciless death reigning over Everyman's life. In addition, differently from Ben Schermbrucker's view that *Everyman* represents only the sour taste of death, I claim that death is less abhorred when in the novel when compared to humiliation because the latter takes hold of Everyman's psychology and defines his conceptualization of death.

In another review entitled "Death Becomes Him," William Deresiewicz starts by drawing a comparison between Roth's protagonist in *Everyman* and the protagonist of the medieval morality play *The Summoning of Everyman,* highlighting that both protagonists "look back on a life of error" (14). Yet, he says, in Roth's novel, there is no place for God or heaven, thus, no place for the protagonist's repentance. In addition, while Deresiewicz finds that Everyman's sexual force gives him confidences to face death and the world (5), I argue that the old man's humiliation in his masculinity and sexuality is what strengthens his certainty of death and alienation from the world.

In "Death Be not Mundane," James Poniewozik says that while thinkers since Descart have denigrated the body into "mind's Sherpa," Philip Roth in *Everyman* succeeds to show that when the body dies, it takes the mind with it (2). For Everyman, he says, life presumes in the body and there is no "hocus-pocus" of God or heaven. Thus, Everyman rejects the idea of death and the fact that "it renders us all the same" (2). These studies have touched upon important issues, yet, they do not highlight the strong relationship between the secularism of the characters' world and their anxiety and abhorrence of death. They also neglect the psychological and existential effects which accompany this attitude to death and the body.

"The Fate of Sex: Late Style and 'The Chaos of Eros" is a worth considering study by Ira Nadel. It deals with the dialogue of Roth's late fiction with his early work regarding death, sexuality, family and the meaning of the grave sites. In this article, Nadel attributes the frustration endured by Roth's characters to the "weakening of sexual impulses" they endure (85). Nadel utilizes the Freudian concepts of "Thanatos" and "Eros" in order to comprehend the bond between death and sexuality in Roth's work, affirming that sexuality "confirms one's existence and not extinction" (85). While Nadel's study treats the dialogic nature of Roth's treatment of these subjects in his early and late work, it does not study it as a dialogue with the medieval morality play, "Everyman."

In “The Undiscovered Country”, “A Kind Behind The Door”, “Neverland”, Or “A Small Unfocused Blur”: Uncanny Literary Definitions Of Death” Katarzyna Małecka looks at the literary definitions of death that present mortality as a concept both “familiar and unfamiliar, conforming and discomforting, domestic and strange,” arguing that like Freud’s uncanny, death is both “complex, mysterious and elusive”(147). She analyses poems by Emily Dickinson, Kinnell Galway, Philip Larkin, among others. In the course of the study she refers to Philip Roth’s Everyman claiming that Roth’s idea of death is far from being “consoling” but rather disturbing (156). The analysis of *Everyman* in this article remains superficial and does not give the topic of death its due merit. By blending existential and psychoanalytical perspectives, I intend to show that death is represented by Roth as an uncanny experience which generates alienation and lowliness.

1- Bodily Humiliation, “The Uncanny” and Death Anxiety

Because of bodily incapacities, Everyman finds himself many times in different operation rooms facing “the uncanny nature of illness” (40). The experiences are not only unpleasant but humiliating too: “He lay strapped to the operating table amid all *the intimidating machinery* designed to keep cardiac patients alive” (emphasis added 73). The intimidation he associates with the machine bitterly lowers appreciation of his manhood. The old man he becomes certainly does not suit him and he keeps longing for youth and boyhood, anxious that the lamentation is essentially sterile as miracles do not happen in such situation. He says: “But how much time could a man spend remembering the best of boyhood? What about enjoying the best of old age? Or was the best of old age just that—the longing for the best of boyhood for the tubular sprout that was then his body and that rode the waves” (126). Thus, hovering through memories of the past reconciles the anxieties of Everyman.

During the surgery for major obstruction, Everyman, after the suggestion of the doctors chooses local anesthesia over the general one. The choice turns out to be a bad one because the operation lasted for a long time. He states that:

> his head was claustrophobically draped with a cloth and the cutting and scraping took place so close to his ear, he could hear every move their instruments made as though he were inside an echo chamber. *But there was nothing to be done. No fight to put up. You take it and endure it. Just give yourself over to it for as long as it lasts"* (70). The fact that Everyman had to stay absolutely passive, unable to change the situation humiliates his ego and when he gets home, he "bursts into tears. (71)

Everyman's emotional outpouring speaks of his angst over human misery and echoes recognition of Man's suffering from humiliation.

The year he had an "angiogram," Everyman describes his altered alienation from his own body, which has become a site of many surgeries. In the operation room he articulates his very estrangement when he says that from the table he "could watch the catheter being wiggled up into the coronary artery—he was under the lightest sedation and able to follow the whole procedure on the monitor as though *his body were somebody else's*" (emphasis added 72). Silvan Tomkins explains that "the body is also a source of shame insofar as it fails to support interpersonal communion or self-regard. If the body is considered unattractive, the individual may feel ashamed because of the attenuation of his interest and pride in his own body, and because his body may fail to sufficiently excite others to maintain desired interpersonal relationships" (392).

In accordance with this, because Everyman's self-confidence has been shattered and the emotion of humiliation has already penetrated his heart, he turns into a very sensitive person.

Therefore, when he finds out that the nurse "did not bother" to pull off the EKG electrodes or the IV feeding needle from his chest and forearm to "throw them to the garbage" (74), he considers that she underestimates the merit of his body and considers it worthless of careful care. Perhaps, the intention of the nurse is different; yet, the humiliation which sank deep in Everyman nurtures doubt and shatters his self-esteem. As a consequence, though the man had various marriages and all the mistresses he wanted, in addition to a successful carrier, now "the productive, active way of life was gone. He neither possessed the productive man's allure nor was capable of germinating the masculine joys… he was in the process of becoming less and less" (71). Having sensed the injury of his masculinity, he succumbs to the terror of watching his "aimless days through to the end" (161).

Everyman's journey of pain, psychological conflicts and loneliness result from the long process of medical procedures and hospitalizations which change his personality into a very introvert one. This is clear in the following passage:

> all these procedures and hospitalizations had made him a decidedly lonelier, less confident man than he'd been during the first year of retirement. Even his cherished peace and quiet seemed to have been turned into a self-generated form of solitary confinement, and he was hounded by the sense that he was headed for the end. But instead of moving back to attackable Manhattan, he decided to oppose the sense of estrangement brought on by his bodily failings and to enter more vigorously into the world around him. (79)

Everyman's deteriorated health and advanced age allow him to recognize the inevitability of death. When he understands that, he isolates himself in Starfish Beach and after a while he abandons his art classes and stops all other activities in his life. In this context, Frederick Nietzsche claims that knowledge of the terrible truth of existence prevails

over the motive and ability for action when he writes that "knowledge kills action, for action requires a state of being in which we are covered with the veil of illusion" (*The Birth of Tragedy 40*). It is the same knowledge which Heidegger interprets as awareness of life as "being-toward-death." Hence, having glimpsed the truth, Everyman now senses the horror and absurdity of existence.

From another perspective, for Carl Jung, a main factor which plays a significant role in determining the "introvert" and the "extravert" is that of activity. The introvert appears to be more "mobile, more full of activity than that of the introvert. This feature is highly associated with the phase in which the individual finds himself with regard to the external world making therefore, "an introvert in an extroverted phase" to appear active, and "an extravert in an introverted phase [to] appear passive." Following this, activity itself, as a fundamental trait of character, can sometimes be introverted; it is then "all directed inwards, developing a lively activity of thought or feeling behind an outward mask of profound repose. Or else it can be extraverted, showing itself a vigorous action while behind the scenes there stands a firm unmoved thought or untroubled feeling" (138).

In fact, in as much as Everyman reflects the explanations of the introvert which are provided by Jung, he displays resemblance to Jeffery, Don DeLillo's protagonist in *Zero K*, who decides to shun social life in the same way, choosing to be in the house of "eat dinner alone" (269). After the technological death of his father and step mother, he loses "the craving" for any beautiful sensations. He says that "the craving is gone and maybe this is what reduces me" (269). Upon his return from the Convergence, Jeffery turns all his psychic energy inward and avoids any exteriorization that even in elevators he avoids any contacts with others "on public elevators I direct a blind gaze precisely nowhere, knowing that I'm in a sealed box alone with others and that none of us is willing to offer a face open to inspection" (272). Introverted feeling, explains Jung, manifest themselves very often "negatively" in the

person. The intensity of this feeling, he pinpoints is difficult to grab, one can only guess it (357). The object (external one) stimulates the "inner intensity" of the feeling, an intensity which can only be "guessed" and not grasped. The feeling admittedly makes people "silent and difficult to access" shrinking back in paralysis.

Gradually, the internalized self-deprecation of Everyman reawakens evil nature and dark desires in him. Thus, despite his love for his brother, Howie, when they were young, Everyman confesses later on that he hates and envies him. He detests him because "he'd never in his life been a patient in a hospital, because disease was unknown to him, because nowhere was his body scarred from surgical knife …" (99), and because Howie inherited "the physical impregnability and he [Everyman] the coronary and vascular weaknesses" (99). The changes inflicted on Everyman's body by illnesses, then, not only estrange him but push him to feel less valuable than any other fit human. The hatred of the brother reflects the destructive effects of humiliation. The irrational envy goes further to wish his brother to lose his health in an unconscious desire to "regain" his own. Soon later, the envy diminishes with the realization that "nothing could restore his health, his youth, or invigorate his talent" (100). He then recognizes that everything is meant to end and death inevitably awaits him.

The hatred of the brother, in psychoanalytical terms, is a mechanism of "displacement" of the unbearable hostile feelings toward himself as a vulnerable old man. To protect his ego from falling apart by self-hatred, the man displaces his shame toward the strong brother, "displacement refers to altering the target of an impulse. Displacement qualifies as a defense mechanism if the original unacceptable impulse were prevented from causing some damage to the self-esteem" (Baumeister et al. 1095). Following Freud's *The Uncanny*, a person can also be uncanny "when we credit him with evil intent" (149). This implies that when Everyman is alienated from his body and human nature, even people around him turn to be unfamiliar and

strange. The external conflict he has with Howie is, in this sense, an extension of the internal instability which keeps him anxious about dying.

Furthermore, it is significant to underline that Everyman's hate for his brother is also grounded in the need for "negative" or "hate" transference of his anxieties and worries. Ernest Becker explains that the type of transference "helps us to fix ourselves in the world, to create a target for our feelings even though those feelings are destructive… In fact, hate enlivens us more, which is why we see more intense hate in the weaker ego states" (144). The hate he fixes on Howie, following Becker, allows him to keep relating to the world, feel real and protects him "from bogging down in desperation of complete loneliness and emptiness" (Szaks qtd in Becker 144). Therefore, Howie becomes the object on whom Everyman tries to fix all his worries, anxieties, helplessness, and thoughts of an impending death.

Everyman is trying to avoid the worst forms of humiliation. He considers that an eye witness to his decay may embitter further his sense of dishonor. He fights his flaws with fake pride which emanates from fear to show weakness basically in front of his vigorous brother. When he is at the hospital and gets a visit from him, Everyman mysteriously thinks "I cannot die while Howie is here" (39). Everyman is concretely ashamed to show his failing in front of death in the presence of the robust brother whose "appetite for life" has always inspired him to survive longer (101). Even in front of his beloved daughter, Nancy, he starts gradually to feel ashamed to confess his weaknesses as it happens when he has to tell her that he lost the buoyancy and the strength to surf (107).

In "The Rituality of Humiliation: Exploring Symbolic Vulnerability," Hannes Kuch traces the "dependency on recognition" back to its roots in Hegel's "struggle to death" (37).According to him, while self-respect refers to an internal relation of a person to herself, dignity is the external, "lived" embodiment of self-respect"(42). So, while he has already lost

his self-respect, Everyman is trying to protect what remains of his dignity and not lose the respect of others. The situation recalls "longing for recognition" in order to gain dignity because losing it may cause serious humiliation (Kuch 37).

For Everyman, hence, recognition and attention from other people bring about relief in face of life and death. Misrecognition and humiliation, by contrast, enhance terror of death. As such, even when he opens the art school, all he hoped for was human connection and recognition, basically from women;"he had been hoping there would be a woman in the painting classes in whom he might take an interest—that was half the reason for giving them. But pairing up with one of the widows his age toward whom he felt no attraction proved to be beyond him" (102). Everyman's search for relations with young women and avoidance of any connections with widows of his age hits at the uncanny feelings they arouse because they project a similar image of vulnerability and death, believing that they share the same fate of suffering and humiliation because they represent his "double."

Relying on E. T. A. Hoffman's "The Elixirs of the Devil," Freud writes that the 'double' (the *Dopplegänger) "in all its nuances and manifestations"* is an important motif which produces the uncanny effect. Freud identifies the double as "the appearance of persons who have to be regarded as identical because they look alike" (141). The concept of the double in its widest scope and chooses its element of likeliness not in terms of physical appearance but mental and experiential ones, or what Freud calls as "telepathy" (141). In "The Uncanny," he explains that the relation between the doubles can be intensified "by the spontaneous transmission of mental processes" from one to another. As a result, one becomes "the owner of the other's knowledge, emotions and experiences" (141-42). He adds that, identification with the other person may take place leading to the first being unsure of his true-self. Hence, to fend off the suffering of illness and old age, Everyman avoids the double

and longs to seduce the energetic young ladies. As a case in hand, he qualifies the affair he had with Maureen Mrazek, as "the sublime experience" (16). He says that this affair is one he could not resist because it has the ability to "rejuvenate the sick aged man he becomes" (50).

In addition, and drawing on Carl Jung, Becker explains that an individual always longs to overcome undesirable feelings by projecting them on "an object" (143). This object is the human partner in whom a person seeks power because he (the partner) is "compounded of all the qualities we have failed to realize in ourselves" (143). As such, Everyman's third marriage was based, not on love, but on desire to play a "young man's game," seeking in the woman what he lacks. Yet, as claims Victoria Aarons, "his attempts to reinvent himself with each new encounter are nothing more than self-delusion, a response to ill-defined fear, and thus leave him mired in the same condition from which he so rashly fled. And his fleeing reveals his desperation, his nagging sense of incompletion, of life and opportunity slipping away" (Aarons 120).

2- Reunion with the Feminine: Rehabilitating Dignity and Alleviating Anxiety of Death

Death is the true lord in the master-slave dialectic of Hegel in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (Hegel 262). According to Gregory Alan Phipps, the "struggle for death" in Hegel's work is a struggle of a man against another man with complete absence of women. He claims that he notices that the terror of death is enhanced by "the lack of any female presence in the master-slave confrontation" (233). This suggests that women have the power to alleviate fear of death and that men always attempt to "appropriate the divine law that women preserve in order to mitigate the fear of death" (234). In his review of the feminist reactions to the presumed association of women with the slave in Hegel's work, Phipps reports that nature assigned a completely different relation to death for women than the one described in the

master-slave dialectic (234). Women undertake an important role "to repel the terror of death" because female relation to death, as described by Hegel, can be understood in terms of "resignation and duty to the death of others, not an overwhelming fear of her own death" (234).

While mortality, perceived as "what has *naturally and immediately* come about and not something a *consciousness* does" (Hegel 260), threatens to make one's death a "non-rational" natural event, the family members play the role of rendering death an "act of consciousness" and "*something done"* by the individual. Death then is "the highest work the individual as such does for the polity" i.e., for the family (Hegel 206). The last ethical duty of the family is that it elevates the being of the individual from "the powerless pure *singular* singularity" to "*universal individuality*" (206). Seen from this perspective, Everyman's longing for women is grounded in his search to soothe his anxiety of death. Therefore, after his failure as a painter, he longs thirstily to have a relationship with the jogging girl he sees on the beach and when she shuts him out he think immediately to sell the condominium and move back to New York to live close to his daughter, Nancy. He finds the plan of living with her and her twins worthy of an effort because he was "hungering for the company of an intimate to whom he could give and from whom he could receive, and who better in the world than Nancy?"(135).

According to Gregory Alan Phipps, the woman and the family can create the conditions by which death is perceived as "the supreme work" of the individual. In addition, the daughter views the death of her parents with "ethical resignation" as she prepares to be a mother and a wife. Only the "guardians of divine law," as Hegel calls female relatives, can make death meaningful while men have no conception of death beyond the absolute terror it brings (239). Consequently, for Hegel, only women are capable of alleviating the terror of mortality. Because of all the above-given facts, Everyman participates in his own battle for recognition,

and the threat of death toughens his need for "the guardian of the divine" law to save his miserable life which approaches death.

For instance, when his art and painting fail to console him, throwing him once again into desperation and thought of death as a dark path to "nothing," he calls for his daughter, Nancy, to appease the soreness of existence. Along their discussion he feels "strange—all the comfort he was taking from her words and yet he wasn't convinced for a second that she knew what he was talking about. But the wish to take comfort, he realized, is no small thing, particularly from the one who miraculously still loves you" (107). Nancy helps him restore his equanimity each time he faces health or existential crisis. Hence, after spending few months detached from the life of "Everydayness" without the help or the tranquilization that the "other" offers him, to borrow from Heidegger, Everyman realizes the existential emptiness of his life. He turns into a suffering human especially after he loses his mother and Phoebe, whose "devotion had been the underpinning of his strength" (119).

In addition, to release his anxieties and import joy, Everyman has always searched for "the intoxicated" sex. In the words of David Kepesh, the protagonist of the *Dying Animal*, sex, which is based on "physical being, in the flesh that is born and the flesh that dies" is not "just friction and shallow fun. Sex is also the revenge on death. Don't forget death. Don't ever forget it" (69). *The Dying Animal* explores the strong connection between death and desire. David Kepesh who goes to visit his sick friend, George, whose health is seriously degrading after a stroke, becomes a witness of weird behaviors of the sick man George, who in a desperate gesture, tries to kiss everyone in the room before he attempts to undress his wife. David interprets the strange behaviors as the man's last begging "Don't let me go. Do everything you can to save me" (120), as if physical intimacy with people, and with the feminine in particular, can serve as a shield against death.

Search for youth and beauty in women admittedly reflects Everyman's attempt to alleviate his terror of death. In the same context, Jonathan Dollimore claims that beauty is not only "life-affirming opposite of death, but its mask- a mask allowing for an insecure translation of anxiety into desire" (xxvii). Overwhelmed with an unbearable anxiety, Everyman unconsciously seeks desire hopeful the latter can be stronger than terror and conceal it. Unfortunately though, he always expects these women to reject him and refuse any contact with him. The women, he thinks, "were sufficiently lacking in common sense to exchange with him anything other than a professionally innocent smile. Following their speedy progress with his gaze was a pleasure, but a difficult pleasure, and at bottom the mental caress was a source of biting sadness that only intensified an unbearable loneliness" (102). Consequently, the rejection with which he is met exerts upon him more pressure, fear and estrangement.

When a young woman stops to converse with him, he made a tremendous effort to obliterate the surmounting desire he has toward her; thinking that thirty years ago, he would never have distrusted the result of pursuing her, young as she was, and "the possibility of humiliating rejection would never have occurred to him. But lost was the pleasure of the confidence, and with it the engrossing playfulness of the exchange" (133). The burden is too heavy to hold on for the man who used to confidently swim across the Atlantic. Therefore, his afraid-of- humiliation ego falls to anxiety, sense of futility of action and even feeling of insignificance which he hides from the girl in order to save his respect (133). This uncanniness of the old weak body is antithetical to his high life energy and passion "Eros" which pushes him ahead toward embracing life and pleasure. It is significant to explain that "Eros is directed toward life, love, and activity while "Thanatos" draws toward cessation and death. These instincts, though oppositional, work in tandem. It can then be inferred that

humiliation does in fact stimulate Thanatos and make the powers and workings of "Eros" so weak.

The girl takes the phone number that Everyman writes to her in a piece of paper and went away laughing at him in "a catlike smile" (133) which connotes disconcert or wickedness. However, Everyman creeps to fantasy and self-deception when he imagines that she wants to be with him. The fantasy rewards him with feelings of grandeur "as though he were fifteen. And feeling, too, that sharp sense of individualization, of sublime singularity, that marks a fresh sexual encounter or love affair and that is the opposite of the deadening depersonalization of serious illness"(133). It is only when she never called or showed up in the surroundings that he realizes that she does not want any relation with him "thereby thwarting his longing for the last great outburst of everything"(134). At the apogee of his humiliation, Everyman starts to doubt his worth and humanity too. So, though the woman brings him consolation, her rejection raises his lamentation: "My God, he thought, the man I once was! The life that surrounded me! The force that was mine! No "otherness" to be felt anywhere! Once upon a time I was a full human being" (130). His grief extends from feeling imperfect to declining into alienation and homelessness and decides to leave the town and return to New York. Silvan Tomkins, explaining the unbearable effects of shame, writes that it is "felt as an inner torment, a sickness of the soul. It does not matter whether the humiliated one has been shamed by derisive laughter or whether he mocks himself. In either event he feels himself naked, defeated, alienated, lacking in dignity or worth"(351). Everyman's decision is based on the paradigm of his shame and humiliation.

As his body deteriorates, Everyman increasingly becomes paranonid. He is troubled by his health decline, and "now eluding death seemed to have become the central business of his life and bodily decay his entire story" (71). The body's proximity to death and the latter's control over corporal entities extends to feeling of uncanniness as seen in the scene when he

becomes immensely terrified by darkness; symbolizing the fear of an encounter with the dark grave (161).

Millicent Kramer is the most promising student that Everyman has in his art classroom. She has a distinct instinctive capacity for artistic creation because of "the way she felt and perceived things" (84). Millicent is in her final stage of cancer. The woman reveals her suffering and that of her husband Gerald, who after a prosperous life as an owner, editor and publisher of a country weekly, is turned to nothing by cancer. She says that he "was himself now nothing, nothing but a motionless cipher angrily awaiting the blessing of an eradication that was absolute" (88). Pain and sickness humiliated the famous Kramer and turned him to a mere crippled dying man to whom death sounds more rewarding and blessing.

Like her husband, Millicent is crushed down by illness. Cancer reduces her activity and agility to stagnation and depression, reversed her self-pride of being the wife of the great Gerald to a humiliated woman who cannot stand one single day without crumbling with pain. She is often ashamed to fall down to the floor in the middle of crowds, not only in the art classes, but also when she is at the supermarket or other places (89). The woman, overridden by the specter of degradation and "the degeneration of an aging spine [which] took charge of her life" (92), finds that it is really "shameful" not to be able to take care of herself and to be "pathetically in need to be comforted (93). Once, in a nervous cry she tells Everyman: "The dependence, the helplessness, the isolation, the dread — it's all so ghastly and shameful. The pain makes you frightened of yourself. The utter otherness of it is awful." She makes him think that:

> She's embarrassed by what she's become, he thought, embarrassed, humiliated, humbled almost beyond her own recognition. But which of them wasn't? They were all embarrassed by what they'd become. Wasn't he? By the physical changes. By the

> diminishment of virility. By the errors that had contorted him and the blows — both those self-inflicted and those from without — that deformed him. What lent a horrible grandeur to the process of reduction suffered by Millicent Kramer — and miniaturized by comparison the bleakness of his own — was, of course, the intractable pain. (93)

Impotent to take anymore pain or disgrace, Millicent eventually puts an end to her life only ten days later. She killed herself with an overdose of painkiller pills; implying that suicide is the solution for the angst and the debased woman she becomes. According to Silvan Tomkins

> there is no claim which man makes upon himself and upon others which matters more to him than his essential dignity. Man above all other animals insists on walking erect. In lowering his eyes and bowing his head, he is vulnerable in a quite unique way. Though not so immediately strident as terror, the nature of the experience of shame guarantees a perpetual sensitivity to any violation of the dignity of man. (358)

Tomkins thinks that Man has always displayed tendencies to escape shame including exposure to real threats of danger and suicide to save their dignity and pride. In this sense, fear of humiliation which permeates Millicent's later life is the core agent behind her choice of suicide. Her action, which is strikingly the complete opposite of Everyman's, displays preference of death over shame. The claim discusses David J. Zucker's assertion that death is exclusively given the shocking aspect in the novel when he claims that Roth's novel broadens the definition of death and associates it with "obscenity" and "shock" which were attributed only to pornography. He writes "what happens to our bodies—death—is seen as something obscene/shocking/pornographic… death is not dignified" (139).In fact, Roth's narrative illustrates that old age and sickness are by the same token deplorable and awful.

Millicent's act of suicide, when understood from a Hegelian point of view, is an existential manifestation of her engagement in self-freedom: "it is only by putting himself as well as others in danger of death that man demonstrates his capacity for freedom" (Hegel qtd in Kuch 39). From this standpoint, man's ability to be free is existentially shown by one's struggle for death. Hegel goes further as to claim that the struggle for death stems actually from "need for recognition." In this respect, "If the other, in the struggle to death, proves to be willing to risk his own life, we acknowledge or recognize this other as an equal human being" (Kuch 39). For him, only this way can the demand for recognition be answered, and dignity be gained.

When Everyman made various calls to check on his friends, he was not expecting to hear such horrible stories of man's suffering. Despite all that everyone has endured because of age and sickness, Everyman still considers that death is the worst reality:

> What he had learned was nothing when measured against the inevitable onslaught that is the end of life. Had he been aware of the mortal suffering of every man and woman he happened to have known during all his years of professional life, of each one's painful story of regret and loss and stoicism, of fear and panic and isolation and dread… he would have had to stay on the phone through the day and into the night…. (156)

The passage suggests that the people he called have opened up for him and shared with him the process of deprivation and destruction before submit to death.

During the few hours before he undergoes the surgery that will eventually kill him, Everyman is consumed by grief and sorrow at the humiliating realization that he had now physically "diminished into someone he did not want to be, he began striking his chest with his fist, striking in cadence with his self-admonition, and missing by mere inches his

defibrillator" (158). The use of the word "diminish" to describe his new situation connotes the feeling that he is shrinking in value and to borrow, from Tomkins, he cannot enjoy or love his new self. He has become, therefore, "stranger to it" (362). The annihilated Rothian protagonist, unlike DeLillo's characters who are filled with self pride and hubris, fights less the possibility of death when he suffers the dishonor of old age, sickness alienation, rejection and even loneliness.

By voicing the ugly processes of aging and dying and by opening up for the mourning of Clarence and Millicent for their husbands, the novel breaks the silence and the taboo aspect of death which is found in DeLillo's contemporary fiction. According to Kaczmarek when mourning was worked out and chronicled "the intimacy manifested– contrary to silence that in the contemporary world follows death – seems to be a sign of contestation, a symbol of breaking away from silence and secrecy, which have become the only acceptable companions of dying nowadays"(25). The novel, then, restores to death its place in the culture which attempted for long to deny and marginalize it; reaffirming its certainty and integrity to life. Roth, by means of characters who do not consider it offensive to talk about death and mourn the dead breaks a different ground from DeLillo's fiction where death is denied and undergrounded.

3- **Affirmation of the Certainty and Inevitability of Death**

Everyman goes beyond the ordinary view of the relationship between life and death to advance the belief that they are existentially and ontologically interlinked because death continuously plays an active role in one's life. The interplay of the two forces (life and death) is embodied in both the story events as well as its plot structure. The latter unusually starts with the Protagonist's death and ends with it as well. This shows that death is a fate which cannot be overcome and that Everyman is inevitably doomed to be dead before the beginning

of his life. In the novel, death is more than an idea spectre which haunts the characters but is made more realistic by the fact that it occurs before the narration of the other stages of the life of the protagonist. The narrative starts "around the grave in the rundown cemetery" where family and friends meet to beg farewell to the man who had a "turbulent life" (1), a life which Roth writes from the end to imply that a man's life is structured with death which inescapably waiting at the end of the road. This echoes Heidegger's saying that "as soon as a man comes to life, he is at once old enough to die" (257).

In addition, Roth does not give the protagonist a private personal name, making of his condition of mortality a universal one. We understand him, then, as the Everyman of the title, and "his obsession with death as the comforting elegiac notion of "the human condition" (Aarons 117). His mortality therefore, is conceived as the condition of all the creatures of his kind and his death affirms but a similar fate for them all. The situation illustrates man's most tragic vulnerabilities and throwness into a difficult existence. Old age, loss and illness affect his understanding of life and death. This altered perception, in its turn, affects conceptualisation of self, the meaning of life, and the value of action and choice. This is the reason why Everyman's life is narrated from its end and backward to his death and childhood. The man's life of upheavals enhances awareness of the ontological role of death in "being." The novel, therefore, opens a new territory for understanding the human condition of the American citizen away from the one given by DeLillo of people longing for money and technology because Roth's desperate characters aspire only for good health.

The organization of the funerals and the coming of people to the cemetery to beg fare-well to Everyman is another act of affirmation of death, as opposed to its relegation to the margins by solitary burials. Following Kaczmarek, the silence which characterises attitudes to death in modern times is featured by banishing funerals from the public sphere. In fact, she claims that "the disappearance of religious practices and the acceleration of secularization

have also resulted in the elimination of rituals which might have involved people in eschatological discourse (26). The elimination of death from life and public discourse implies, according to Baudrillard (1993), a disruption of the chain of "symbolic exchange." As he puts it, death has become only an individual experience, devoid of a social framework and public status. It is now set only in the context of biological and anthropological laws, which "by nature are scientific, and thus not linked to group sensitivity. Though it is still a universal experience, it is perceived as an individual, solitary one" (qtd. In Kazmareck 27). All in all, by organizing the funerals of her father, Nancy seeks to engage people in a speech about him in order to bring his memory and the idea of death to public discourse in which she may have noticed its trivialization.

To reaffirm the inevitability of death and its naturalness as well as insuperability from the long course of life, Roth writes that the funeral of Everyman was one among "five hundred funerals like his, routine, ordinary ... no more or less interesting than any of the other. But then it's the commonness that's most wrenching, the registering once more of the fact of death that *overwhelms everything"* (14). The quotation considers that death strongly intertwines with the events of life, illustrating that it is a force which makes all humans equal; in death no person has more importance or value than another. In the previous chapters I have shown that DeLillo attacks class inequality that expends to include the possibility of buying technological immortality for the most privileged people. In contrast, *Everyman* looks at death as the supreme power which defeats money and technology.

Death certainty is also affirmed when recounting the first experience of Everyman with death after the hernia surgery he has undergone as a young child in 1942. He recalls that he was alone in a bus with his mother "and they were headed for the hospital where he had been born, and she was what calmed his apprehension and allowed him to be brave" (16). By the presence of the mother, the thought of birth and the hospital as being both the place of birth

and possible death, Philip Roth argues that man's first confrontation with death comes right after one's birth, or, to use Heidegger's terminology, right after one's "throwness" into existence. It suggests that Man, after the moment of his birth is possibly old enough to die. Death, wherefore, is a force which interferes in one's life at birth.

Everyman lived an entire life believing that death is the powerful reaper which will attack sooner or later. He stays anxious about it and tries to forget it but never denies it as he is convinced that immunity against death is an illusion. This is why Everyman who has always been anxious is said to be afraid at the end when he faces death. In fact, fear is possible when the person is anxious because, as writes Heidegger, "what is based on anxiety makes fear possible" (180). It should be made clear, though, that the protagonist's anxiety of death does not mean that he embraces an understanding of the existential significance of finitude. He never stops considering it as the most brute act and event of life, and as the least favourite truth about existence. He even repeats his mother's words that "death is just death—it's nothing more" (119). This explains his alienation from the ontological significance of death.

At the hospital, the boy undergoes various other private encounters with death at an early age. At the age of nine, he undergoes a surgery of appendices and sees a Yiddish boy dying on a bed near to his following a stomach surgery. As long as he was alive, the reminiscence disturbs him. Everyman hides the feeling of fear he experienced that day, yet, the scene is engraved in his unconscious and keeps frightening him even as an adult.

The second hand-encounter with real physical death comes when he saw a dead body in the beach the summer which preceded his hernia surgery: "it was the body of a seaman whose tanker had been torpedoed by a German U-boat… and now, in the hospital, he couldn't get the word "graveyard" to stop tormenting him, nor could he erase from his mind that bloated

dead body that Coast Guard had removed from the few inches of surf in which it lay"(25). The impact of the memory of the dead man is paranoiac that whenever "oil from torpedoed tankers clotted the sand and caked the bottom of his feet as he crossed the beach, he was terrified of stumbling upon a corpse" (26). At the hospital, therefore, he associates the dead body with the Yiddish lying in bed besides him. As such, he spends that night waiting for him to die.

In *Unclaimed Experience Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), Cathy Caruth explains that people who went through traumatic experiences are very likely to re-live the experience. She advances that the meaning of the word 'trauma' corresponds, in Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, to "wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind" (3). The sort of wound that trauma inflicts on people continues to chase them, though it is not recognized immediately by the human conscious until "it returns to haunt the survivor later on" (4). In this sense, Everyman's repeated nightmares and memories of the dead body reflect the traumatic shock that was imposed on him by the undesirable sight of the corps. It also calls for his need for help to be healed from the wound in order to be able to enjoy a healthy psychology once again.

The other various operations he undergoes reveal to him the human life as being inevitably finite. This being the case, he lives in constant anticipation of his ending. The emphasis on the transience of life and humans' constant exposition to danger can be noticeable in Everyman's saying, after "sometime in the night, however, he was awakened to discover his bed surrounded by doctors and nurses, just as the bed of the boy in his room had been back when he was nine. *All these years he had been alive while that boy was dead—and now he was that boy*" (emphasis added 43). From that day on, death becomes the disaster which he tries to spare continuously because he does not want to be like the boy who perished next to him. He walks out of the hospital safe after the successful surgery; however, having

remembered the experience sixty years later suggests that it is a traumatic event which returns to haunt him. His story is what Caruth calls "the story of trauma" which, as she clarifies, is "far from telling of an escape from reality—the escape from a death, or from its referential force—rather attests to its endless impact on a life"(7). As such, the childhood memories of death chase Everyman all over his life and make his forgetting of death unattainable.

Everyman's constant "anticipation of death" is also emphasized by his obsession with time and time passing. This obsession begins at an early age when he used to go to his father's jewellery store to listen to "watches tick" for long hours (7). On the other hand, the obsession with watches reminds Howie that all his life he works in the business of watches but forgot to pay attention to the preciousness of time. It is the death of his brother that makes him realize that time passes and moves death-ward. At his father's funeral, Everyman asked for the Hamilton watch his father used to wear all his life. He could have asked for "the jeweller's loupe" or the "diamond carrying case" instead (11), yet, the watch is more valuable because it reminds him that time and lives are conditioned by finitude because his father, who wore it all the time, is no longer alive. The only time Everyman does not wear that watch is before undergoing the surgery that kills him (12). After that, Nancy decides to take it "and tell time by" (13). As such, the watch all humans end up in the grave and affirms that, as time and change "drive us towards a horizon of oblivion" (Dollimore xvi). Though the idea is terrific for all of them, they wear the watch to live in constant expectation of death which they regard as "our species' least favourite activity" (15). As such, they favour anticipation over tranquilisation and running away from the inevitability of death and its possibility at any moment and age. The use of the word activity to describe the expectation of death explains their consideration of it as an "external event closed off to existence" rather than an "existential structuring Dasein" (Havi 112). This conceptualisation of death drives them away from authenticity and free "being."

In *Everyman*, technology is not depicted as a new god; it is not a divine vigour which plays in the ground of desperate people to teach them to wait for an invention of immortality. In a completely different stand to that adapted in DeLillo's *Zero K*, *Everyman* exposes a more suspicious vision of science and medicine. In fact, the passages which narrate the young boy's experiences at the hospital express mistrust rather than faith in science's ability to manipulate death. When he awakens in the hospital and finds that the Yiddish boy is no longer in his bed, the boy realizes that he died and suspects that the doctors have contributed to his death. He says:

> Memorable enough that he was in the hospital that young, but even more memorable that he had registered a death. The first was the bloated body, the second was this boy. During that night, when he had awakened to see the forms moving behind the curtains, he couldn't help but think that the doctors "*are killing him*". (27-8)

The passage depicts the doctors as assassins. In one other occasion, he perceives of the doctors who wear masks and prepare for his surgery as "terrorists (70). The approach to science as being feeble in the face of death, or perhaps a creator of it, shows a sharp difference from DeLillo's characters' view. The latter instead do put heavy reliance on it to suppress death.

As for reliance on science to heal humans from death, the novel entails that it is mere business to make more money as it is shown in the scene when Everyman, as a child sees his doctor wearing "business suit rather than a white coat" (25). So, in contrast to Ross Lockhart and Artis Martineau who investigate all their money in seeking immortality by technology in *Zero K*, Everyman has no faith in modern science. Lastly, it may be claimed that Roth's

protagonist has met existential freedom by his consensus with the inescapability of death and his conviction that even science is not powerful enough to illuminate it.

In this context, it can be claimed that, differently from Don DeLillo who reflects the American cultural denial of death, Roth's fiction tends to affirm a natural stand which affirms death as inescapable. It is assumed, therefore, that the source of denial of death in DeLillo is purely cultural. This reasoning reflects Nietzsche's view in *The Birth of Tragedy* when he says "the contrast of this real truth of nature and the cultural lie which behaves as if it is the only reality is similar to the contrast between the eternal core of things, the thing-in-itself, and the total world of appearances" (41). Denial of death is perceived as a cultural lie by Roth and though it is accepted by his characters, DeLillo warns about the bad consequences of the lie.

If we interpret the passage from the novel in light of Nietzsche's view of the illusionary impacts of culture which seeks to reform nature, it can be claimed that Roth's Characters are independent from the cultural dominance that haunts the characters of DeLillo whose entire lives, psyches and perspectives are dependent on postmodern cultural discourses of power and dominance of technology. Therefore, differently from DeLillo's *Zero K* and *White Noise*, *Everyman* shows a Dionysian drive toward life and death. DeLillo's narratives shed light on a postmodern society which relies more on reason, knowledge and rationalism which it inherited from modernity. In the introduction to Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*, Raymond Geuss writes that "Socratic rationalism upsets the delicate balance on which tragedy depends, by encouraging people not to strive for wisdom in the face of the necessary unsatisfactoriness of human life, but to attempt to use knowledge to get control of their fate. 'Modern culture' arises in direct continuity out of such Socratism" (xi).

Everyman echoes a Nietzschean acknowledgement of the limits of this modern ideal of rationalism (which continued to exist during postmodernity) as a guiding principle toward

life, death, and existence in general. Roth attempts, just like Nietzsche did centuries ago, to rediscover and revive the Dionysian principles of "suffering, pain and horror" (*The Birth of Tragedy*16). To conquer the drive to descend into the abyss of meaninglessness which results from the heavy reliance on technology and rationalism, the Dionysiac is revived by Roth's aged characters who refuse to play the roles assigned to them by the culture and society. Instead, they strive to reaffirm their individual engagement in the dissolution of boundaries and transgression of imposed limits and roles.

The significance that this argument holds for the major claim of the chapter is that the tranquilization that science represented for DeLillo's characters alienated them from the authentic stand toward death and existence. However, mistrusting science and belief that it cannot change the inevitability of death unchains Roth's characters from denial and enhances their anxiety and anticipation of death. Again, Raymond Geuss affirms that

> Archaic Greek society, Nietzsche claims, is different from and superior to the modern world because archaic Greece was an *artistic* culture, whereas modern culture is centered on cognition ('science') and 'morality'. It was not just 'artistic' in that it produced a lot of excellent art, but it was in some sense fundamentally based on and oriented to art, not theoretical science or a formally codified morality. (xiii)

Following this, it can be asserted that in their engagement with art besides their affirmation of mortality, Roth's characters[33] are much superior to DeLillo's characters whose engagement with science and rationalism throw them into the illusion of conquering death. Unlike Ross Lokhart whose faith in posthuman technology is important, Everyman is not

[33] In addition to Everyman, David Kepesh (the protagonist of They Dying Animal) and Nathan Zuckerman (the protagonist of Exit Ghost) also display interest in art and give it central part for it in their life.

engaged in an attack on nature and is not, to quote Freud, “forcing it to obey human will under the guidance of science” (“Civilization and its Discontent” 30-31).

The question of death anxiety, as experienced by Everyman invites existential and psychological considerations. It is therefore important to put emphasis on the centrality of the issue of death to the psychology of the man and show that it is in fact the framework within which his projects and actions take place. To begin with, anxiety, notes Havi Carel, is a revelation of the disappearance of the concrete everyday world and the uncanny character things take on. The withdrawal of the familiarity of the everyday world exposes Dasein to being “alienated, not at home and unable to be. The totality of involvements that creates meaning, the projects and possibilities of Dasein lose their meanings.” As a result, the world and the life of Dasein collapse and lose meaning (*Being and Time* 180). In the case of Everyman, anxiety rises early in his life when he starts feeling anxious and worried about the oblivion at the age of thirty four: “terrifying encounters with the end? I’m thirty four! Worry about oblivion, he told himself, when you’re seventy-five! The remote future will be time enough to anguish over the ultimate catastrophe! (32).

The old man’s attempt at “tranquilization” and “fleeing” in the face of his anxiety, as it is shown in this quotation and which would be seen from a Heideggerian perspective as a *“flight* of Dasein from itself as an authentic potentiality for being” (178), fails because he stays assailable, vulnerable and confused by illness. Very soon after his decision not to worry about oblivion, he feels sick, “dying” and undergoes a surgery of appendix which made him even more anxious (34).

According to Heidegger, in anxiety “the threat does not have the character of a definite harmfulness which concerns what is threatened with a definite regard to a particular factical potentiality for being. What anxiety is about is completely indefinite… nothing which is at hand and present within the world functions as that which anxiety is anxious about… in

anxiety we do not encounter this or that thing which, as threatening, could be relevant"(180). In this respect, Everyman's haunting anxiety of death seems to be tamed from the years which span from his surgery till the age of thirty-four when he starts to have serious psychological melancholies and malaise following a vacation at the Jersey Shore. Once there, and though he succeeds to enjoy his daytime at the beach with the soon-to-become his wife, Phoebe, he experiences the exact opposite of anxiety and angst at night. He says:

> The dark sea rolling in with its momentous thud and the sky lavish with stars made Phoebe rapturous but frightened him. The profusion of stars told him ambiguously that he was doomed to die, and the thunder of the sea only yards away—and the nightmare blackest blackness beneath the frenzy of the water—made him want to run from menace of return from menace of oblivion to their cozy, lighted, underfurnished house ... he could not understand where the fear was coming from and had to use all his strength to conceal it from Phoebe.(29-30)

The passage elucidates that Everyman does not know what he is anxious about and cannot understand what causes his angst. In contrast, when someone is afraid, the object of his fear is specific. This means that anxiety is anxious about the world itself and not something which exists in the world (*Being and Time* 181). It is important to note in this context that the existential truth that anxiety does not appear on demand "it appears in the most unpredictable places and moments: including the safest and most familiar ones, the most harmless and innocuous situations" (182).

When Everyman wonders a lot and seeks desperately to understand what may have led to this terror while he is young, healthy and "the master" of life, he fails to uncover the reasons. He falls short to enjoy any tranquillity or put aside the inner voices which tell him that he is "on the edge of extinction" (0). In fact, in anxiety one has an *uncanny*

[*"unheimlich"*] feeling" (182). Therefore, Everyman does not find a source for his state of anxiousness, this spreads to feeling unhomely in the place and "not-being-at-home" (*Being and* Time 182). He falls into dissolution of familiarity, estrangement and darkness with everything around him. Following Heidegger, anxiety and the uncanny feeling it generates frees Dasein from his being absorbed and entangled in the everyday world of the "they" because Dasein is individualized "as being-in-the-world" only when "everyday familiarity collapses" (182-83).

The indicated other effect can in itself be a result of anxiety perceived in psychoanalysis as a signal of danger. At this early age, Everyman is haunted by thoughts of death because he is back to the same shores of New Jersey where he first confronts real death. It is somewhere near this place that he, as a very young boy, sees a dead man for the first time in his life. So, throughout the previous years, the images and the thoughts of this corpse have been repressed and put down to the unconscious realm, the return to the shores seems to re-awaken the memory. Despite the fact that he is unconscious of it, it starts working underneath to remind him of the inevitability of death and dying. It follows from all this that the uncanny element is actually nothing new or strange, but something that was long familiar to the psyche and was estranged from it by only through being repressed" (Freud, "The Uncanny"148).

In fact, while Heidegger's philosophy dismisses the answer to the question of what causes anxiety, a critique to Freud by Klein claims that humans' anxiety is about "a threat to existence" because the ego fears annihilation (Razinsky 107). In this sense, psychoanalysis fills the gap in Heidegger's philosophy by claiming that fear of death results from the ego's attempts at self-preservation (Razinsky 110). The assumption that the ego gets anxious when sensing the danger of annihilation and extinction signifies that it has sensed death which, says Freud, is inaccessible. This also displays the pure materialistic perception of death which excludes its existential significance.

Uncaninness about existence persists with Everyman till 2003 when the 9/11 events fortify his estrangement from the world that he decides to move from one city to another seeking relief. However, even in the other city the feeling of alienation persists and the man continues to experience loneliness in what felt like its purest form (128). In fact, the WWI which sent the corpse into the shores of his town to traumatize him since childhood through adulthood comes back in the form of the traumatic 9/11 terrorist attacks. Everyman's inner conviction that technology cannot defy death blends with the occurrence of terrorism to enforce his conviction that death is unavoidable. This comes in complete opposition to Freud's declaration that "no instinct we possess is ready for a belief in death" (22).

When Everyman realizes that retirement and painting will mark "the beginning of his vulnerability and the origin of his exile" instead of being his greatest opportunity for big change (135), he decides to sell his condominium and go back to New York to ask Nancy and her twins to move in and live together. His decision echoes a desire to rejoin the world of the *das Man* where to find consolation from anxiety. Yet, to his misfortune, Phoebe had a stroke and decides to move in with Nancy; putting an end to his dream. Everyman then returns back to his anxiety, loneliness and unbearable solitude. Worse than this, nightmares start to pervade his nights ever since as a result of an anxiety which intensifies when he gets 70-years old and knows that it is the remote future he once perceived as the right time to worry about oblivion (161). The states of anxiety and the anticipation of death that it generates in the person of Everyman are accompanied by depression, suffocation and instability and the feeling of not being at home pursues him constantly (163). In fact, explains Heidegger, anxiety is an underlying permanent feature of Dasein's existence that is more primordial than feeling at home (*Being and Time* 182). The more his anxiety intensifies, the more Everyman fails to unchain himself from the feelings of remorse, reproach and desire for being pardoned and remembered by his relatives, basically his two sons who loath him extremely (157-58).

Confirming the conceptualisation of death as an uncanny experience is Everyman's imagination of his dead father as being suffocated by the dust thrown on his coffin during his funerals. The example hints at the nature of death as being abstract and difficult to conceptualize which, therefore, makes it inaccessible to consciousness. The reasoning testifies for Freud's claim that every human being in internally convinced that he is immortal. In fact, while DeLillo's texts demonstrate that attitudes to death are "cultural-conventional" Everyman makes it hard to exclude that it is psychologically imposed too. It is not easily excluded from the psyche as Man may face a serious failure to shut it out from consciousness.

Again, unlike the beliefs of the characters of *Zero K*, Everyman deconstructs the conviction of the body as a reliable site for fight against mortality. It shatters optimism that it can, in any sense, amount to a site free from the signs of inevitable death. The text's preoccupation with death is equal to its interest in the body. An exemplary case of this is when he says, "merely standing there absorbing the blow that is the death of a father proved to be a surprising challenge to his physical strength—it was a good thing Howie was beside him on the left" (54-5). The death of the father is qualified as a frightening uncanny experience which acts negatively on both his psyche and physiology.

The eerie description of his father's lying in the coffin arouses the impression of the uncanny in the reader too, and the scene opens for the possibility of hearing the echoes of Everyman' existential cries and suffering:

> his father was going to lie not only in the coffin but under the weight of that dirt, and all at once he saw his father's mouth as if there were no coffin, as if the dirt they were throwing into the grave was being deposited straight down on him, filling up his mouth, blinding his eyes, clogging his nostrils, and closing off his ears. He wanted to tell them to stop, to command them to go no further—he did

> not want them to cover his father's face and block the passages through which he sucked in life. I've been looking at that face since I was born—stop burying my father's face! (59-60)

The terrific suffocation Everyman imagines his father to be going through refers to the terror and awfulness he associates with death, burial and their mysterious nature. Roth's protagonist thinks of death as being so frightening because it is unknown and of an ambiguous nature to him. He is incompetent to understand the state of his dead father who is in the coffin which calls for the rise of the uncanny. Relying on Jentsch, Sigmund Freud claims that the essential condition for the emergence of the uncanny is "intellectual uncertainty" (125). He states in this context that "the uncanny would always be an area in which a person was unsure of his way around: the better oriented he was in the world around him, the less unlikely he would be to find the objects and occurrences in it uncanny" (125).

Continuing to describe the burial of his father, Everyman says "I've never seen anything so chilling in life" (61). After leaving the cemetery, he confesses that "he could not begin to empty himself of all that he'd just seen and thought, the mind circling back even as the feet walked away" (61). This suggests that the burial of the father installs the thought of inevitable death because though he is physically away from the cemetery, the idea is inside his thoughts.

The restlessness of Everyman stems from both fear and uncertainty as to whether the father, the corpse he has turned into, is alive, animate or inanimate. The confusion of the dead with the living is related to his response to death as something shocking and brutal. Following Freud's "The Uncanny," intellectual uncertainty is aroused to whether "the lifeless bears an excessive likeness to the living" (141). In another instance of uncanniness and confusion of the dead with the living occurs when Howie declares that his young brother insisted to put the loupe in his father's eyes; "he always kept the loupe in one pocket and his cigarettes in the

other, so we struck the loupe inside his shroud. I remember my brother saying 'By all rights we should put it in his eye' (12). Again, drawing on Freudian perspectives, anything which has to do with death, dead bodies or revenants represents the peak of the uncanny. Therefore, Everyman's position toward the corpse of his father illustrates the apogee of his estrangement. It suggests that the protagonist's refuses to accept that the strong father he once had, is now emotionless. Old age, illness, dying, the specter of death and finally death itself fill the pages of *Everyman*. The decaying body makes the protagonist anxious about his death, yet the death of his father makes him in direct confrontation with his demise and physical extinction.

4- Art: between the Revival of the Dionysian and the Construction of the *Causa sui* Project of Immortality

In contrast to DeLillo's *Zero K* and *White Noise* which rely on reason, knowledge and rationalism on which modernity is based, *Everyman* shows a Dionysian drive toward life and death. In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche implies that because human life is, by necessity, not always a happy one, the individual should seek wisdom to face its undesirability. However, the ideal of rationalism and its method of elimination of non-satisfactory possibilities, gives the illusion of controlling life through knowledge, an ideal which has become one fundamental constituent of modernity (xxv).

Philip Roth acknowledges the limits of the modern/ postmodern urge for rationalism as a guiding principle toward life, death, and existence in general. He attempts, just like Nietzsche did many centuries ago, to rediscover and revive the Dionysian impulse. In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche stipulates that, differently from the Apollonian impulse which displays "order, limitation and tamed impulses," the Dionysian encloses "the principles of suffering, pain and horror" (16). He puts forward that humans end up recognizing that "everything which comes into being must be prepared for painful destruction; we are forced to gaze into the terrors of individual existence- and yet, we are to freeze in horror" (80).

In Roth's novel, lust for life, bound with the agony of vulnerability, eventually reveals to Everyman that everything is meant to be destroyed. The human nature receives him once for all and allows him to see life as it really is without illusions. He sees its tragic facets and constantly lives within the walls of frustration. It is true that Everyman does not attend any theater to watch performed tragedies, but tragedy is played to him in his own existence as he lives constantly the basic horrors of life because of his age, health condition and insecurity. The novel captures the very tragic aspects of humanity. For example, when Everyman undergoes his surgery for a major obstruction, he meets a man whose life turns so tragic in a short period of time when he loses his mother, his father, his sister and all his money, before his health degrades. The experience increases the man's despair and pessimism. He therefore falls into hallucination and gloomy imagination and says: "and that's how I began to imagine someone coming to me and saying, "Now we're going to cut off your right arm as well. Do you think you can take that? … and all the time I was thinking … when is enough enough? that was how I lived with my grief for ten years. It took ten years. And now the grief is finally over and this shit starts up" (69). The passage suggests an absurdist understanding of the human situation.

In Nietzsche's account, if one can tolerate the horrors produced by tragedy, the result is "an increase rather than a decrease in one's ability to live vividly" (Introduction xxv). Because he has witnessed the horrors of existence and understood the inevitability of his finitude, Everyman calls upon the Dionysian power of art to heal his shattered optimism; announcing that his unconscious unleashes attempts at sublimation through art. In this context he says: "it was as though painting had been an exorcism. But designed to expel what malignancy? The oldest of his self-delusions? Or had he run from painting to attempt to deliver himself from the knowledge that you are born to live and you die instead? (102). The quote shows that Everyman wants art to relieve him from the bitter truth that he is inevitably

running toward death despite his strong will to live. Therefore, he attempts to revive the impulse of life through artistic creation. In fact, the heavy reliance on technology and rationalism driving humanity to the abyss of meaninglessness should be conquered by the Dionysiac which is revived by Philip Roth's aged character, who strives to reaffirm individual engagement in the dissolution of boundaries between man, life and finitude.

In *Psychological Types,* Carl G. Jung reworks the opposite psychical conflicts; Apollonian which refers to the psychological state of "dreaming and the Dionysian which refers to "intoxication" (127). They explain that the Apollonian impulse signifies "limitation and subjugation" while the Dionysian stands for liberation of "unbounded instinct, the breaking loose of the unbridled dynamism of animal and divine nature" (127). Accordingly, Everyman from the time he was in high school he had an appealing urge to Dionysian artistic creation and painting. After his retirement and great suffering with the fear of death and malaise of sickness, he devotes his entire time to painting. The Dionysian impulse shows previously in his unrestricted sexual relationships with many young women—which ultimately ruined his marriages. However, as he grows old and becomes shunned by women, he surrenders to art to fulfil the delight of intoxication with life and joy. About the pleasure of the intoxication David Kepesh, in *The Dying Animal*, maintains that music and piano "it was pleasant then to play for her. It was all part of the intoxication for both of us" (21). Everyman and David Kepesh's extreme Dionysian lack of restriction and containment of wild, untamed desires stand in opposition to the Apollonian order and its reasoning and scientific thinking as a solution for death adopted by DeLillo's characters.

Roth's Everyman, attempts to alleviate anxiety through artistic creation and puts his Dionysian imagination at the service of his thirst for life despite the conviction that death is inevitable. His awareness of death impacts him positively at this stage in the sense that his anxiety stimulates creation (artistic one) rather than destruction. In fact, the need for painting

means that the suppression of anxiety of death through sexual commitment was at once impossible and unsuccessful. Moreover, Roth's male characters turn to art to create symbolic immortality after recognizing that the physical one is impossible. Everyman longs to come alive with each sight of a painting of his in the near and far future. In addition to painting, writing is a psychologically healing strategy and a whole *causa sui* project of immortality in the novel. Hence, following the death of Clarence, the hospitalization of Brad as well as the stroke of phoebe, Everyman is overwhelmed with sad feelings that he decides to make phone calls and check on his acquaintance. He called Ezra Pollock and expected him to be depressed due to his bad health conditions, yet to his surprise, the man seems to be elated. The reason, as he says, lies in the healing capacity of writing: "I don't have time to be depressed. I'm all concentration... I see through everything now [myself included], believe it or not. I've stripped away my bullshit and I'm getting down to brass tacks at last. I've begun my memoire of the advertising business" (152). Ezra dies very soon after that phone conversation with Everyman, which suggests that writing does not take his dying away, but it gave him psychological relaxation and courage to face illness. In the same context, Kaczmarek puts forward that "writing a diary is like talking about oneself, almost like going through a psychoanalytic process of adaptation whose aim is his accommodation to new circumstances" (36).

Moreover, that Roth's characters look for meaning, self-renewal and reinvention in the very transient sexual acts replicates an expression of the Dionysian view that "the destructive primitively anarchic forces are part of us…" and that the pleasure we take in them is real and needs not to be denied. David Kepesh, Mark Zuckerman and Everyman do not attempt to repress or eliminate these pleasures but they embrace them to sublimate their anxiety. Everyman and David give themselves for the Dionysiac which renews the bound between

human beings and also nature which celebrates once more her festival "reconciliation with her lost son, human kind" (18).

Everyman, like the Hellene man, is, as says F. Nietzsche, so capable of "the most exquisite and most severe suffering for he has gazed with keen eyes into the midst of the fearful, destructive havoc of the so called world history, and he has seen the cruelty of nature." Therefore, he longs for salvation only through art hoping that "through art life saves him for itself" (*The Birth of Tragedy* 39-40). In addition to Everyman, Roth's other old men think that art is their saver, not from physical death but from the oblivion of meaninglessness and forgetfulness. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche describes art as the gate-way to a world beyond death "art approaches as power to heal" from existential angst. Art alone, he writes, "can re-direct those repulsive thoughts about the terrible or absurd nature of existence into representation with which man can live" (40). One can assume that since that confrontation with death came at an early age, and his anxiety has started since then, Everyman's choice of a professional career as a commercial artist is anchored in his unconscious longing for relief from the thought of death.

In fact, art was his refuge early on in his life, but as he approaches his 72, he starts feeling ridiculous and worthless even when he paints or reads art books because "the delusion—as now thought of it—had lost its power over him." Consequently, his attempts at discharging his disgust at the absurdity of existence by art fails him too as the power of the thought of death unravels as being more powerful than any others. He is obsessed with the thought of dying and leaving Nancy and life behind "Leaving—the very world that had conveyed him into breathless, panic-filled wakefulness, delivered alive from embracing a corpse" (165).

Unfortunately, after the failure of transference of anxieties toward external objects or persons, he is faced with the failure of his painting only to deteriorate more his pride and self-assurance. The pleasure principle in the man's mental apparatus turns into "the more accommodating reality-principle" of failure and despair (Freud, "Civilization and Its Discontent" 30). His anxiety can no longer turn to a productive behavior. Therefore, unable to find solace in painting, he seeks relief in the company of the residents of Starfish Beach. However, to his misfortune, in their company he sometimes experiences another pure form of loneliness. He realizes the mistakes he made by displacing himself from New York when what age most demanded was for him to be "rooted" as he'd been for all those years he ran the creative department at the agency:

> Always he had been invigorated by stability, never by stasis. And this was stagnation. There was an absence now of all forms of solace, a bareness under the heading of consolation. And no way to return to what was. A sense of otherness had overtaken him—"otherness," a word in his own language to describe a state of being all but foreign to him. (128)

In the passage, Everyman best bemoans his conditions of alienation, estrangement and unfamiliarity. He, then, endures inertia and becomes unable to move forward with his life as he wished from the start (130). The new condition makes him feel himself incomplete, and less than human. The stagnation that he senses echoes the realization that overcoming the ephemerality of human life is illusionary and that he is thrown into a pre-defined finite existence.

Heidegger's conception of anxiety fits to explain the bitterness and awkwardness that, at a certain point in his life, Everyman cannot help undergoing, especially when his body, youth, family, work and passion for painting all fade away. From the same existential perspective,

then, Everyman is left essentially anxious and free from the world of the "they" to jump freely into "an impassioned freedom towards death—a freedom which has been released from the illusions of the "they," and which is factical, certain of itself and anxious" (311). The world constituted by society and other people is the false world of sociability and "average everydayness" which compels to perceive death as a complete negation of human freedom while anxiety and alienation reveal it as rather what "makes freedom possible" (Dollimore 162).

5- The Postmodern Meaninglessness of Death and Parody of the Medieval Religious Discourse

In *Everyman*, Philip Roth voices the human needs which remained silent and at the attic in previous centuries by dialogizing the discourse of the medieval morality play, "The Summoning of Everyman," which permeates only a discourse of the church, salvation and after life. The play influences the novel by difference as both clash on the grounds of religion, salvation and belief in the afterlife. "The Summoning of Everyman" stands as a late example of the medieval genre known as the morality play, which evolved side by side with mystery and miracle plays. It was written near the end of the fifteenth century and critics claim that it may be a translation of a Flemish play. Typical to morality plays is their religious purpose as they address "the ultimate fate of the soul" (*Norton Anthology* 463). These plays, then dramatize allegories of spiritual struggle. Typically, a person named Human or Mankind or Youth is faced with a choice between pious life in the company of such associates as Mercy, Discretion, and Good Deeds and a dissolute life among riotous companions like Lust or Mischief (463). In brief, Everyman is a play about the Day of Judgment that every individual being has to face eventually. The play opts for allegorical representations of the forces at work to save or lure the protagonist Everyman against salvation. The play, then, centers around the figure of Everyman who is called into reckoning by the ultimate God. It

dramatizes the haste with which Everyman tries to find company and prepare his book of reckoning.

Roth's *Everyman* and *The Summoning of Everyman* are bound by the narrative pattern and the treatment of the subject of death in relation to an old man. According to Mikhail Bakhtin, the novel, which has the capacity to enter into dialogue with other novels or genres, is the "polyphonic novel." The latter, with its dialogic nature, may re-write, transform or parody other texts. He explains that in hidden polemics, the discourse of the author is set against the other's discourse through the same object, aiming to reform it. In the technique of hidden polemic:

> the author's discourse is directed towards its own referential object, as is any other discourse, but at the same time every statement about the object is constructed in such a way that, apart from its referential meaning, a polemical blow is struck at the other's discourse on the same theme, at the other's statement about the same object. A word, directed toward its referential object, clashes with another's word within the very object itself. The other's discourse is not itself reproduced, it is merely implied ...The other's thought does not personally make its way inside the discourse, but is only reflect in it, determining its tone and . (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 195)

Bakhtin pinpoints diversity as a characteristic of the parodistic discourse "One can parody another person's style as a style; one can parody another's socially typical or individually characterological manner of seeing, thinking, and speaking" (Rose 129). In the same context, and hand in hand with the loss of religious faith, Philip Roth parodies the medieval play's thematic concern and belief in life after death, immortality of the soul and punishment by hell or reward by heaven. His dialogic vision of death is based on the niche that life should be

lived to the fullest before death. For Roth, therefore, death is the end of life and there is no perpetuation after it.

Philip Roth parodies the major themes governing the religious discourse of the Medieval play "Everyman" despite the fact that their interest in the theme of death pulls in the same direction. Much of Roth's novel can be read as an attempt to create a new narrative space for the representation of the recurring referent of medieval morality play, death, the so called "black reaper" and "dance macabre." It privileges the representation of the speaking human voice as opposed to the divine dominant one in the anonymous play. In contra-distinction to the morality play, *Everyman* shows that the religious man can no longer monopolize the power and the meaning of death, attacking the dominant perspective that death is the reminder of heaven and repentance.

Roth employs parody to analyze the subject of death. The technique employed, thus, meets Bakhtin's definition of parody in which the author employs the speech of another, but he introduces into that other speech "an intention which is directly opposed to the original one. The second voice, having lodged in the other speech, clashes antagonistically with the original, host voice and forces it to serve directly opposite aims. Speech becomes a battlefield for opposing intentions" (Bakhtin, *Problemsof Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 193). The opposition of intentions between the two texts is noticeable from the beginning. In fact, the medieval play begins with God "The High Father of Heaven" who sends Death, the most powerful messenger, to summon Everyman to give a reckoning of his life on earth. Right before that, a Messenger appears to call the audience to pay attention to the moral lesson of the play which promises to tackle an issue of great reverence regarding the transitory nature of human life; reminding how all earthly strength and pleasure will eventually fade away and the body is inevitably going back to the "clay" (15).

Differently from this narrative pattern, Roth's novel starts with the protagonist already in the grave though his life is not yet known to the reader, hinting that the forthcoming narrative does not deny the unavoidable nature of death. The immortality which is sought in postmodern times is subverted from the very first page of this novel which is set at the cemetery and ends at the hospital with the death of the protagonist. This being the case, the novel defies any possible expectation of scientific or medical triumph over death. The reader, whenever he reads about another operation of the already dead man throughout the text knows he will inevitably die during one of the surgeries. According to Victoria Aarons, "The protagonist's death provides closure neither to the life of the character nor to the novel. In something of a Talmudic riddle, there is no closure here, neither in life nor in death" (117).

The novel resists the religious autonomous meaning of death and the human life on earth as well as the fate of the soul after death. Roth's novel, in contrast to the medieval play, allows the human to shock and subvert nature and religious men. It allows consciousness to speak for itself instead of submitting to the monologic discourse about transcendence which monopolized thoughts about life, death, and man's needs during the middle ages. Roth dismisses any possible blame from the ultimate God as it portrays a godless universe where the characters are blind to all religious matters. They, to quote from the morality play "in all worldly riches is all their entire mind… they use the seven deadly sins damnable ..." (26-37).

Everyman's father, who spent his entire life selling jewelry, had become religious only in the last ten years of his life. After the loss of his wife, he asks "his rabbi to conduct his burial service entirely in Hebrew, as though Hebrew were the strongest answer that could be accorded death" (51). In contrast, Everyman, the father's youngest son, has abandoned religious beliefs at the age of thirteen

> He'd even left the space for religion blank on his hospital admission form … religion was a lie that he had recognized early in life, and he found all religions offensive, considered their superstitious folderol meaningless, childish, couldn't stand the complete unadultness—the baby talk and the righteousness and the sheep, the avid believers. No hocus- pocus about death and God or obsolete fantasies of heaven for him. (51)

Everyman, hence, has a different philosophy in life; it is an existential philosophy of the body as being in control and if he ever thinks to write an autobiography he would have called it *The Life and Death of a Male Body*. He says, in this respect, "there was only our bodies, born to live and die on terms decided by the bodies that had lived and died before us" (51). The absence of any safe (spiritual) haven makes Everyman's life a degenerate life of bodily pleasures which extinguish all spiritual meaning.

At the level of characterization, Roth's novel portrays characters who, unlike the medieval protagonist who is surprised by death which he has always forgotten, are always anxious about death. He is eventually frightened and troubled by death which comes suddenly to ask for his soul. The following quote expresses Everyman's unreadiness when death comes to him "What desireth God of me? This blind matter troubleth my wit" (103). These two verses from the play explain the tranquilization of Everyman toward the reality of death when ignoring or simply forgetting its certainty and inevitability. He openly expresses this when he says: "O Death, thou comest when I had you the least in mind" (120).

Roth's novel which utilizes hidden polemics and treats with antagonism the pure emphasis on the needs of the soul at the expense of the body. So, it draws a clear-cut boundary between the needs of the medieval and the postmodern man. At the same time, Roth's novel addresses the postmodern issue of lack of faith and belief. The interaction of the discourses between the two novels reveals the truth that there is no single meaning to be

found about the epistemology of death, but a vast huge amount of contesting meanings. The human relation to his death, then, is more profound than is mentioned by the medieval play, it is more than a mechanical one which starts from the moment death comes to takes one's life, it rather starts long before and perhaps last longer than that.

The disparity between the two works has a great significance. In *The Summoning of Everyman*, there appears a moral experimentation with the idea of death. However, Roth's novel experiments rather with the psychological and existential impacts of the inevitability of death. According to Bakhtin "Parody here was not, of course, a naked rejection of the parodied object. Everything has its parody, that is, its laughing aspect, for everything is reborn and renewed through death" (*Discourse in the Novel* 127). Seen from this standpoint, Roth's novel can be said to be parodying the excessive morality of the medieval man, which does not give any importance for the psychological or existential state of Man by focusing only the right and wrong conducts of people before death. Parody then becomes an integral element in his novel.

Roth satirizes the idea of bribery of death which sounds intertextual enough with Don DeLillo's narrative text where people attempt to bribe death by money and scientific achievements. Roth revisits the morality play in order to convince the contemporary man of the uselessness of delay or suppressing death. In "The summoning of Everyman" the protagonist proposes to Death the following:

> In thy power it lieth me to save:
>
> Yet of my good will I give thee, if thou have—
>
> And defer this matter till another day.

Death's answer does not satisfy Everyman, as he hears it say:

Everyman, it may not be, by no way.

I set nought by gold, silver, nor riches,

Nor by pope, emperor, king, duke, nor princes.

For, and I would receive gifts great,

All the world i might get.

But costum is clean contrary: give thee nor respite.

Come hence and not tarry! (124-130)

Furthermore, through the allegorical figure of Goods, The Summoning of Everyman displays the failure of all worldly treasures of material possessions or knowledge in delaying or suppressing death. *Everyman* shows that there is much worse than being abandoned by one's goods and riches because the deception of the aged body when it decays is the worst of all deceptions and punishments (144). In *The Dying Animal*, David Kepesh gives a more disparaging definition of old age when he says it is the cessation of being:

> Being old means you've been. But being old also means that despite, in addition to, and in excess of your beenness, you still are. Your beenness is very much alive. You still are, and one is as haunted by the still-being and its fullness as by the having-already-been, by the pastness. Think of old age this way: it's just an everyday fact that one's life is at stake. One cannot evade knowing what shortly awaits one. The silence that will surround one forever.(31)

David understands the being of an old man the same way Jeffery understands the meaning of human existence without death and natural flow of time. So, for David, old men, to cite Jeffery, who borrows from Heidegger, "are, but they do not exist" (*Zero K* 213). Roth

implicitly claims that what Heidegger does not say; that waiting for death can be worse than death itself, mainly when the power of the body abandons the person.

Immediately after his summoning, Everyman (in the medieval play) starts a sudden journey of self-purification and salvation. After confession, penance and repentance, he is ready to pay his debts to the almighty God as he redeems his Good Deeds which promise to speak for him in front of God. Therefore, he goes to the grave with a relieved heart saying "into thy hand, Lord, my soul I commend:/ Receive it, Lord, that it be not lost" (880), because he made his reckoning "crystal clear" the Angel promises his soul to go to the heavenly sphere. In contrast, the end of Roth's protagonist is very meaningless and empty of many considerations. When he enters the operation room he does not evoke any thinking of God or religion. Instead, he prefers to escape from his fear to memories from the past when he used to ride the Atlantic waves. The reminiscence fulfils him with the same sensations of buoyancy and invincibility he used to enjoy. He then dies with these thoughts in mind and never wakes up: "He was no-where Cardiac arrest. He was no more, freed from being, entering into no-where without knowing it. Just as he feared from the start" (182). Following Heidegger, Everyman has completed his being in life by accomplishing the last part of the process of being-toward-death.

Concluding Remarks

Through the stories of people ravaged by health sickness, or by the natural outcomes of aging, Philip Roth allows insight into the very fundamental human fate of suffering, decay and death and frees the characters from the illusions of postmodern promises of immortality. He allows them Dionysian recognition of the other side of being with suffering showing that life is metaphysically complex to be analyzed, understood or altered by science or technology. Roth's fiction invites extraction of pleasure, or at least acceptance that human life heads

toward dissolution. The characters find themselves contemplating their own life and mortality side by side, rejecting any possible view of life and death as being separable. Nietzsche's claim that "from the smile of the Dionysian, the Olympians are born, from his tears human beings" fits to describe the thematic concern of *Everyman* because it explains how tears and suffering are very characteristic to Man's conditions (*The Birth of Tragedy* 52).

It has been argued that differently from DeLillo's novels which respond to the geo-politico-cultural updates of the American culture, Roth's novel is more parodist to previous literary discourses of death and religious interpretations of it. Roth fights against one perception or single point of view about death. It attacks the religious monologist opinion and position toward death and stresses the contemporary times' profanation of all that is sacred in search for the space for individual psychological and existentialist experience. In the novel, Philip Roth's rhetoric of death redirects attention to the anxiety of death which unveils to Everyman the inevitability of finitude. The novel does not leave any space for an authentic life for Everyman because his anxiety resides in conceptualizing death as demise, an act of physical perish rather than an existential possibility or an ontological condition of being in the world. The type of anxiety unveils to him the world as an unfamiliar place, leaving him psychologically paralysed and existentially alienated. If anxiety in face of death is, according to Heidegger, the way to authentic being, it is nevertheless a mood which throws one to constant fear of annihilation; estranging him from tranquil life.

It has been demonstrated that while DeLillo's characters favor the Apollonian principle of intellectual order and faith in scientific knowledge, Roth's protagonists follow the complete opposite Dionysian disruption of order, knowledge and the intellectual. The Apollonian appeal for "logic" melts in the irrationality of sexual drives and artistic creation which manifest as protective shields against the chaotic anxiety of death. The old men unleash the

Dionysian appeal to instincts in contrast to *White Noise* and *Zero K* where the characters pride themselves on scientific control of death via technology.

Roth's focus on individual experiences related to the process of dying restores the dignity of the human which is lost in *Zero K* by reducing Man to a mere subject for scientific experimentation to be freed from death. The restoration of the subjectivity of the dying person (Everyman), who is given a space to talk of his death and mourn the slow process of his dying elevates him from the status of denigration, denial and silence which surrounds death in modern times. Roth's reflection on life as tragedic literally opposes the delirium of DeLillo's characters and their hope for reason and science to wipe out the tragic side of life. Roth unmasks the truth and liberates the human from illusion by sending the message that man needs to be strong enough to "affirm life as such" and to give it meaning the way it is rather than trying to deny its grim side" (Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*).

Chapter Two:

Death by Epidemics: Tragedy and Ethical Engagement with the Death of the Other in Philip Roth's *Nemesis* (2010).

All droops, all dies, all trodden under dust;
The person place, and passages forgotten;
The hardest steel eaten with softest rust,
the firm and solid tree both rent and rotten…
(Sir Walter Raleigh 'The Ocean to Cynthia')

Introduction:

In a time when the world lives under the threat of the Corona Virus, a study of the representation of death in Philip Roth's novel, *Nemesis* (2010), depicts a life under polio which reminds us of the Covid 19 pandemics. *Nemesis* depicts the days of a Jewish community living in Weequahik, Newark, under the horrors of polio, which affected children and left them completely disabled or dead. The virus cripples the neighbourhood and spreads horror over simple acts in life; like shaking hands and eating outside. In this chapter, I intend to investigate into the conceptualization of death when it comes in the form of a threatening epidemic, arguing that the menace of collective death by virus refashions thinking of finitude and revives the rituals of death (like funerals, prayers, and mourning). I intend to show that *Nemesis*restores the spirit of community by enhancing the significance of death at the communal level and bringing it out of the realm of privacy, silence and taboo to public spheres like the playgrounds, summer camps and schools. By so doing, I argue that Roth realizes that there is no escape from death and its discourse should return to the public life.

I seek to show that death in the form of an epidemic resists marginalization, defies denial and affirms its inevitability regardless of age, sex or social class. By fictionalizing the viral death of children, Roth satirizes the appellation of the twentieth-century as "the century of forbidden death," during which children were protected from awareness of death because it is considered as cruel (Aries 85). In that way, the study investigates into the novel's meeting with postmodernism as a style of thought which is "suspicious of classical notions of truth, reason, identity and objectivity, of the idea of universal progress or emancipation, of single frame works, grand narratives orultimate grounds of explanation"(Eagleton vii). It affirms that modernity, with all its progress, failed to conquer the evil of death and the suffering of innocent people. As such, it locates contemporary strangeness in past events and mayhem.

Relying on some revisions of Martin Heidegger's ideas by Emmanuel Levinas and Havi Carel, I intend to show that *Nemesis* foregrounds the inevitability of considering the social dimension of death in assessing understanding of mortality. Hence, relying on Carel's perspective, I seek to show that not only individual experiences of death can provide possible ways to uncovering finitude. I argue that in *Nemesis, das Man,* or "the they" does not meet the definition of "*conformism"* or the force which "tranquilizes" or limits Dasein's understanding of itself or mortality, but reflects the possibility of an intelligible meaning of mortality— via the death of the other (Carel 94).

By so doing, I chart a new territory to conceptualizing the meaning of death via the ideas of the philosopher of ethics and otherness, Emmanuel Levinas. The latter are relevant given that *Nemesis* is less concerned with the death "de soi" than with the death "de l'autre" and because it is the loss of "another" which puts forward the events of the story. In fact, I will show that the novel affirms the inevitability of death by following three different trajectories to the grave; the death of a mother at child birth, the death of a grandfather at an

advanced age and finally the sudden viral death of the children by polio. So, by using Levinas' theories of death, God and the other, the study examines the existential implication of the death of the other for the individual. It proposes that, contrary to what is assumed by Heidegger who refuses to allow certitude to come from the experience of the death of "another," the latter can uncover anticipation of life as being finite. It is important to mention here that by the relation to the death of the other, Levinas refers to the emotional, psychological and even existential relation to that death (*God, Death, and Time* 16). He explains the idea by saying that when men die, the experience is not only the physical dissolution and ending; it is also a change in the lives and relationships of others, "the paradox of 'we die alone' or 'man dies alone' is then important and remarkable" (*EntreNous* 182).

In addition, by accounting for Levinas' claim that "it is in the relation with the other that we think death in its negativity" (*God, Death and Time* 9), I highlight the concept that attitudes to death in contemporary literature are not static but shift from individual reactions to the death of the self to the more complex concern for collective/mass death and the death of a loved person. The chapter analyzes *Nemesis* as a novel where the human is valued over the divine, relying on Levinas's assumption that "the path of the return of wisdom from heaven to earth comes from and searching and finding "the human" or (interhuman) plot" (*Entre Nous* 221). In due course, the novel reflects on the postmodern lack of confidence in the redemptive powers of individualism (Rowe 191).

As such, I aim to show that, in *Nemesis,* death gradually becomes a secular moment of anger against the divine force that allows its spread among the innocent. Analysis of the novel's nihilistic image of God and religion will draw attention to Roth's suggestion that myth is still an available medium through which to look at attitudes to death in a godless age.

As the novel evokes the myth of Heraclitus and associates his power with that of the protagonist Bucky Cantor before the influx of polio, it is worthy to reflect on the change in his fortune from an "invincible" man to a possible healthy carrier of polio which kills the children, a change which humiliates Bucky and alters his attitudes to both God, death and social relations.

It is worth mentioning here that the study considers the heteroglot aspect of *Nemesis* by showing that it attempts to unveil the significance of the contemporary individual experiences through past collective endurance of war and epidemics, provided that heteroglossia implies a dialogue between the past and the present, drawing attention to the need to "recover" that past to make "the present meaningful" (Crews 23). It should be emphasized that because the past he revives is one of war and destruction, the study shows that he is nostalgic to the spirit of community, collective experience and responsibility for the suffering of the other when refuting the ego-centrism of the 21st century American culture.

In this study, I seek to redeem Bucky Cantor's agony by giving his suffering moral assessment. By relying on F. Nietzsche's interpretation of morality as "the only scheme of interpretation by which man can endure himself-a kind of pride," I intend to examine Bucky and his "moral idiosyncracy" and "will to power through morality" as attempts at overcoming humiliation by restoring self-value (*The Will to Power* 156). Finally, I intend to shed light on Roth's intention to draw the contemporary individual to accept the tragic fate of contemporary times. In the due course, he provides a contrastive vision of the techniques of empowerments which are venerated by DeLillo's characters, including the power of money, the open horizons of capitalism in addition to, perhaps above all, the powerful technological enhancement of modern times.

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, says Raymond Williams, Nietzsche has affirmed that tragedy and myth disappeared from the Greek world with the rise of the "Socratic Spirit" which considers knowledge as the true "panacea" for all evils. Therefore, Nietzsche thinks that a rebirth of tragedy is possible only when science is forced to acknowledge its limits and forced "to renounce its claim to universal validity" (64). It is from this point that the idea of tragedy is relevant to the whole concern of this research. Following the previous claim, the chapter examines *Nemesis* as a critic of the assertion of absolute truth by postmodern science; affirming that the world is moving backward to an age of tragedy because of the limits of science. The assumption that *Nemesis* displays tragic thinking, discusses George Steiner's supposition, in *The Death of Tragedy*, that the socio-cultural ideas of the enlightenment shut out any possibility for a tragic thinking after that (qtd. in Williams 12). Therefore, it goes further in its assumptions claiming that the possibility of the tragic is valid even during postmodern life because, despite all the claims for human welfare, justice, individual freedoms and unlimited horizons of possibilities, suffering and death are inevitable.

Nemesis portrays a young man with a high sense of morality, responsibility and community-love. The protagonist Eugene Cantor, surnamed Bucky, is a Jewish orphan who loses his mother at child birth to be raised by his maternal grandparents (19). Though endowed with a strong fit body, Bucky suffers from eye sight problems which oblige him to wear thick glasses. His grandmother, a lovely responsible woman, devotes most of her time to his welfare when the grandparent, a rigorous strong man, assigns his efforts to Bucky's masculine strength and power[34] (22). When Bucky is denied joining the American army to fight WWII, he was given a chance to work as a playground director at the Chancellor Avenue School (27). Few weeks later, the playground is swept by the news of the

[34] Roth, Philip. *Everyman.* (New York: Vintage Books) 32. Subsequent references to *Everyman* will be cited in text.

contamination by polio of two kids, Berbie Steinmark and Alan Michaels. The city enters into great panic right after that.

The incident shows that Newark is to be stricken by the paralytic deadly disease, polio, for the second time. The first time was in 1916 when the city has registered 1360 cases and 363 deaths. Polio has been identified as a very dangerous mortal disease which "left a youngster permanently disabled or deformed or unable to breathe outside a cylindrical metal respirator tank know as an iron lung—or that could lead from paralysis of the respiratory muscles to death (2). The danger represented by the illness disturbs the peace of mind of both children and parents. What complicates and compounds the fear is science's failure to provide any medicine to treat the disease or "vaccine to produce immunity" (3).

Nemesis provides interesting insights about reactions to death and sustains that in the presence of death and mortality, individual choices should be more meticulous as their consequences can be so dire. This is clear in Bucky's choice to leave the city of Newark, which was ravaged by polio, and join his fiancée, Marcia, in the Poconos. When he leaves, he forgets to consider the possibility of being a carrier of the virus which eventually kills some kids and causes the paralysis of many others. Bucky considers what happened as a tragedy for which he is the cause. When the narrator, Arnold Mesnikoff, meets him 27 years later, he was a crippled himself. The signs of psychological paralysis surpass the physical ones as he is debased by shame, consumed by guilt, lost faith in God, and became isolated from everyone he loves. The novel closes with the reminiscence of the golden days of Bucky when he was an exemplary javelin thrower.

In "How to Forgive, and Whom: Roth's N*emesis* and *Moby-Dick,"* James Dubanprovides an interesting reading of the importance of Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* to Philip Roth's *Nemesis*. It explores the similarities in the attitudes toward God by Ahab (the

protagonist of *Moby Dick*) and Bucky as being the opposite of the attitudes shown by Arnold Mesnikoff and captain Boomer. Duban demonstrates the obvious contrast between the polio victims Arnold and Bucky and argues that both their attitudes echo some temperaments anticipated in *Moby-Dick* by saying that Arnold plumbs for "good cheer and equanimity" which resonate with Captain Boomer "far healthier, if not cheerful, response to tragedy" (73). In contrast, Ahab and Bucky come to believe that God is a criminal because he bestows death and suffering. In this case, Bucky submits to an Ahabian temperament of hatred to God (73). In contrast to this claim and by utilizing Emanuel Levinas' ethics of otherness, I tempt to show that the attitude of cheerfulness and equanimity to the death of people by polio is not necessarily the healthiest and that Bucky's suffering and pessimism is justified as moral. From this perspective, Bucky's response can be better appreciated as being more ethical when contrasted to Arnold's attitude.

The importance of James Duban's study to mine lies in tackling the issue of hubris in *Nemesis*. Bucky's Ahabian hubris, according to Duban, lies in his belief that he is the cause of polio which displays lack of recognition of human limits and imperfection. This study departs from Duban's in its assumption that Bucky's attitudes rather stem from a bitter sense of humiliation for not being able to protect the children from dying.

In "Beyond Theodicy? Joban Themes in Philip Roth's *Nemesis,"* Leora Batnitzky considers Philip Roth's *Nemesis* as an interesting meditation on the book of Job. She claims that Roth's work considers religion a mere part of the ruins of the past and that *Nemesis* bears more similarities with Greek tragedies than with biblical literature (216). Batnitzky reflects on Bucky as a "modern day Oedipus" who ignores his true crime and considers himself guilty of infecting people with polio, and like Job, he attributes his suffering to God (217). *Nemesis* demonstrates the difficulty of expressing one's suffering in front of "the prevailing dogmas of the day," highlighting that Job challenges the biblical justice of God by telling the truth of his

suffering, while Bucky defies the secularist view that "the course of a person's life is largely contingent" (222).What is important in both cases, according to the article, is the individual struggle to voice his suffering rather than a theodic attempt to justify the reasons behind the suffering of the innocents.

In "*Nemesis* and the Persistence of Tragic Framing: Bucky Cantor as Job, Hebrew Prometheus, and Reverse Oedipus" Nicholas Stangherlin highlights the factors that qualify Bucky Cantor as a modern Prometheus, Job and Oedipus who rebel against divine injustice. He supposes that Bucky's moment of "oedipal hubris" occurs when, like Oedipus who promises to stop the plague of Thebes, he decides to protect Weequahic from polio. Therefore, leaving the town stands against his Promethean mission and exposes him to nemesis. Stangherlin thinks that Bucky's defiance of God exposes him to moral hubris and that his tragic-heroic status resists Arnie's denial and attempts at deconstruction (85). In this study, I give Bucky's act of leaving the town the Heideggerian appellation of inauthentic fleeing of death while seeking "psychological comfort at an epistemic price: it covers over the truth of our groundlessness and mortality in a life of forgetful existence" (Carel 189).

In "Epidemic Judaism: Plagues and their Evocation in Philip Roth's *Nemesis* and Ben Marcus's *The Flame Alphabet*," Inbar Kaminsky looks at the novels' use of the plague as a metaphor of anti-Semitism, claiming that post-modernism challenges the symbolic meaning of the plague. According to Kaminsky, *Nemesis* alludes to Greek tragedy and its tragic heroes through Bucky's hubris which blinds him from expecting being a polio-carrier. In addition, the physical powers he displays associate him with Greek gods and tragic figures like Oedipus, Hercules and the hunters of "the cave man period" (114). His poor eyesight, on the other hand, alludes to his misconception of the limits of the human body and responsibility (114-15). She concludes that, similarly to Samuel in *The Flame Alphabet*, Bucky's hubristic identification with polio ultimately leaves him at the margins of human life.

In “Roth’s Fiction from Nemesis to *Nemesis*,” Emily Budick thinks that nemesis was the fate of all Roth’s protagonists, yet, its Greek significance as the goddess of “revenge and cosmic balance” is restored only in *Nemesis* where it stands for both mortality and the disease they try to conquer with hubris (2). In *Nemesis,* she says, the essence of humanity is inseparable from living with the fate of an Oedipus who takes responsibility for a world which cannot be changed by humans (2). Bucky’s being a healthy-carrier of polio signifies that he, like every human being, carries within him the seeds of his own mortality which cannot be recognized before manifesting in body dysfunctions. Interestingly, Budick associates war against polio with war against the Nazis in the novel, qualifying fight against them as heroic (3). She says that nemesis includes the idea of the hero as always pretending toward hubris and polio is the nemesis which corrects Bucky’s hubris.

Interestingly, Budick discusses the claim that Bucky’s escape from Newark stands for his fear of death, and relates it to his inability to accept the death and suffering of children. Besides, she considers his refusal to marry his fiancée after the contraction of polio as a symbol of his refusal of the human fate of mortality and vulnerability (60). The present chapter, relies on Emanuel Levinas’ ideas on death, otherness and “the inter-human” to examine the novel’s attitudes toward death “de soi” and not “de toi.” By so doing, It argues that nemesis does not represent death and disease only, but it emblematizes the agony which accompanies the loss of loved people, as well. Therefore, relying on Havi Carel’s revision of Heidegger’s ideas of authenticity and relational death, the study postulates that the death of children in *Nemesis* is to be considered as a disclosive experience and a lesson of morality. By so doing, it questions Heidegger’s emphasis on individuation and refusal of the relational view of Dasein, authenticity and mortality. It claims that even the death of the other allows experience of death as integral and not an external event to existence (Carel 111).

1- **Death by Polio: from Unfamiliarity to Absurdity and Social Tragedy**

In *Nemesis*, during the hot summer of 1944, death continues to show how powerful, merciless and indiscriminate it can get during epidemics and wars. The appearance of death by the virus stimulates unfamiliarity because it attacks mainly children and young adults. Besides, it generates de-familiarization because of the mystery surrounding its origins, and media of its transmission and contagion. As a result, people are in disquiet and estrangement with themselves as they fear to be the cause for the spread of the illness. So, perplexed, Bucky contests: "why is it attacking our beautiful Jewish children?... I'm not a doctor. I'm not a scientist. I don't know why it attacks who it attacks. I don't believe that any one does. That's why everybody tries to find who or what is guilty. They try to figure out what's responsible so they can eliminate it" (37-8). His cry of anger which expresses fear and guilt recalls Heidegger's call of conscience when he says that in every individual there is an inner voice—the call of conscience—which speaks of guilt (*Being and Time* 259).

Polio spreads death and with it terror, panic and hysteria, turning life upside down and haunting the familiar spaces with uncanniness. After the appearance of the first cases and the death of Alan, the Michaels' house and family become scary places to be avoided (39). Besides, the playground and the Syd's hot dog joint is surrounded with worrisome thinking that Alan has got contaminated after eating a hot dog. The sun itself was avoided and seen as strange for being a possible generator of polio and death (73). It is during Alan's funerals at the cemetery that Mr. Cantor feels the power of the sun which "at midday, in its full overhead onslaught, it seemed to have more than sufficient strength to cripple and kill, and to be rather more likely to do so than a microscopic germ in a hot dog" (73).

When Alan's casket was lowered into the ground to be buried forever and Mrs Michaels started to cry out of an unbearable grief, Mr. Cantor senses death and the latter "revealed itself to him no less powerfully than the incessant beating of the sun on his yarmulke'd head" (74). Though death which draws so many people together in collective rituals and burials revives human connection, the kid's sudden death by polio seems rather to derive Bucky insane and alien even from nature. For that reason, he can but associate the sun with cruel death. When Bucky learns of the death Herbert Steinmark, his first response was "deceased? What could that word have to do with plump, round, smiling Herbie? He was the least coordinated of all the boys at the playground, and the most ingratiating…Alan the natural athlete and Herbie the hopeless athlete…both were dead, polio fatalities at the age of twelve" (61-62). This implies that because it attacks children, people have difficulties to surrender to its naturalness. The quotation, in this sense, is compelling as it sheds light on the helplessness of the living in face of the mercilessness of death which attacks without the restrictions of gender or age. In order to alleviate the feelings of grief that invade him after the news, Bucky hysterically and maniacally opts for the disinfection of the floor of the playground.

At the funerals of Alan, Mr Cantor sees the casket but "it was impossible to believe that Alan was lying in that pale, plain pine box merely from having caught a summertime disease. That box in which a twelve-year-old was twelve years old forever. The rest of us alive and grow older by the day, but he remains twelve. Millions of years go by, and he is still twelve" (63). Bucky's encounter with the dead, Alan, in the coffin challenges significantly his understanding of death as a mode of annihilation and "a passage from being to no-longer-being, understood as a result of a logical operation: negation." It is a departure toward the unknown, a departure without return, a departure "with no forwarding address" (Levinas, *God, Death and Time* 9). In addition to its negativity, death in this case is represented as a point of stasis, a point at which one cannot make further moves.

After the news of the death of Ronnie, another kid from the playground, Bucky's grandmother calls to inform him of the death of his best friend, Jake, in action in France. Bucky meets the news with denial "I don't believe it. He was indestructible. He was a brick wall. He was six feet three inches tall and two hundred and fifteen pounds. He was a powerhouse. He can't be dead" (202). The repetition of the third pronoun along with the short sentences expresses the power of the news which makes him enable to stand indifferent. Furthermore, when thinking of Jake's death, Bucky cannot avoid thinking of his own death: "he could no more imagine Jake dead than he could imagine himself dead, which didn't serve, however, to stop his tears" (203). The death of Jake which recalls thinking of his own death takes him out of the perspective of denial and nothingness into a context of affirmation of his own mortality too. His anxiety, while contradicting Heidegger's assumption that certainty of death comes only from one's own death and not the death of the other, attests for Carel's declaration that the death of the other calls attention to finitude the same way one's own death does, and that it has "the ontological significance of uncovering finitude. Although it is not mine, it still opens the possibility of understanding annihilation and loss" (151).

In trying to explore the existential/ontological significance of the social dimension of death and the possibility of an authentic experience of the death of the other as it allows intimation of mortality, this study calls upon Havi Carel's revisionist ideas of Heidegger. In fact, Carel considers that denial of an authentic attitude to the death of the other in Heidegger's thought is a gap to be filled within his philosophy (93). She conducts her revision on the synthesis of the ideas of Freud and Heidegger to show that "the loss of a love object is also a loss of self, constituting a more intersubjective understanding of the relationship to the death of another" (148). She endeavors, as a consequence, to bring death to the social level of existence without denying its individuating effects. She explains that the strongest Heideggerian argument for the uniqueness of "my death" is that it "annihilates my existence,"

while all other experiences only occur within my existence (they do not eradicate it). Therefore, "temporal finitude" is only one aspect of Dasein's finitude because the use of the broader sense of the term death as "temporal finitude *and* as the inability to be" reveals that "the loss of self that occurs in temporal finitude is not the only intimation of mortality. Two further such intimations are anxiety and the death of others" (Carel 156).

Likewise, Levinas writes that the meaning of one's death can be taken from caring for the other. He writes that "the mortality of the other concerns the *I.* it is like a coming face to face with authority, as if the invisible death to which the face of the other is exposed were for the *I* that approached it, his business, implicating him before his guilt or innocence, or at least without his intentional guilt" (167). It is in exploring the meaning of death in relation to responsibility to the other that Philip Roth's *Nemesis* brings a new perspective about death.

Bucky Cantor, despite all the wounds of his youth and early adulthood, has decided to stay strong and face the threat of polio with vigor. After the first contaminations at the playground, he tells the kids: "while they are recovering at the hospital, the rest of us have to go on living our lives… there is no reason in the world why you can't be as active as you like all summer" (29-30). Bucky preserves his serenity because polio has not caused any death. However, when it starts taking lives, he is consumed with panic, anxiety and disquiet (101). As the numbers of cases continue to increase in the city, horror runs free in everyone's heart:

> the impact of numbers was of course disheartening and frightening and wearying. For these weren't the impersonal numbers one was accustomed to hearing on the radio or reading in the paper, the numbers that served to locate a house or record a person's age or establish the price of a pair of shoes. These were the terrifying numbers chartening the progress of a horrible disease and, in the sixteen wards of Newark, corresponding in their impact to the numbers of the dead, wounded, and

> missing in the real war. Because this was real war too, a war of slaughter, ruin, waste, and damnation. War with the ravages of war—war upon the children of Newark. (131-2)

What would Heidegger's interpretation of this be? The passage indicates that war against polio is destiny's compensation for Bucky who was deprived from fighting the Nazis. He thinks that if his friends could fight the Allied and the Germans, then surely he could face "the dangers of running the playground at Chancellor Avenue School in the midst of a polio epidemic" (133-34). However, the moment he decides to leave Newark to the India Hills, he proves that he is not brave enough to face war and death by polio. The contradiction between what Bucky thinks and what he eventually does reveals the instability and difficulty of choice under the menace of death.

Roth returns to the spiteful events of the twentieth-century, and imagines an outbreak of the polio epidemics only to associate it with the war on the Nazis and its invention of the holocaust. The paralysis and cruelty of polio are equivalent only to the paralysis of the world in front of the threats of these historical events. Consequently, the novel pictures people who are powerless in hospital beds while the whole world was falling frenziedly into tremendous change. The idea is echoed in the narration of the doom of Bucky Cator whose contraction of polio has left him outside the mainstream of social, political and national life as he becomes, in his own perspective, a useless body

> at the Kenny institution when the President Roosevelt unexpectedly died, in April 1945, and the country went into morning. He was there when defeated Germany surrendered in May, when the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August, and when Japan asked to surrender to the Allies a few days later. World War II was over, his buddy Dave would be coming home unscathed

> from fighting in Europe, America was jubilant, and *he was still in the hospital, disfigured and maimed*. (240)

It is significant that Bucky stays paralyzed while the whole America was becoming jubilant. This suggests that because the jubilant America has caused the out-most destruction of other countries in the world (Japan for instance) as it was protecting its interior peace and stability, Philip Roth in *Nemesis* does these countries some justice by throwing the secure America into a deadly war against natural sickness and epidemics. As such, this study partly considers the virus which attacks the Jewish community in the novel as similar to the virus of human wickedness[35] which caused WWII, the Holocaust, and the atomic bomb.

Once in the Poconos, Donald Kaplow's infection raises suspicion that Bucky is a healthy-infected carrier of polio though in normal situations, and often than usual "the carrier stage coincides with the clinical stage" (236). To his misfortune, the results of the spinal tap administered at Stroudsburg Hospital came back positive, before the beginning of the cataclysmic "monstrous headache, the enfeebling exhaustion, the severe nausea, the raging fever, the unbearable muscle ache, followed in another forty-eight hours by the paralysis" (238). The distress over being the cause of the death or paralysis of many people has weakened Bucky who is demoralized by shame. In Bucky, the death which is feared and abhorred is the death of the other and not that of the self.

For Marcia, on the other hand, it is very weird that even in the woods of the Poconos the kids could not hide from polio "how could it possibly hunt them down here?"(229). Once again, death proves to be immensely strong and present in the most unexpected moments and places. Death by polio comes to awaken Marcia, her father, and the parents who think that their children in a place which cannot be reached by death and breaks their tranquilization and

[35]This study will reflect on the intertextual roots of the idea and show that it is borrowed by Roth from Albert Camus' *The Plague* (1948).

asserts the certainty of death. Aghast, panic and distress are theirs after they were Bucky's during all summer.

When Bucky and Marcia meet in the island near the camp to discuss Donald's contamination, the first signs of alienation from one's self started to show off in Bucky who becomes afraid to approach his fiancé trying not to infect her. The agitated Bucky starts to see himself weird, a threat and a harbinger of death. As a consequence, "the birch of trees encircling them looked in the moonlight like a myriad of deformed silhouettes—their lovers' island haunted suddenly with the ghost of polio" (228). The deformation of nature in this example stands strongly for his humiliated and deformed psychology, and its being haunted connotes concern over being the one who has brought death to the place. Assumedly, the reaction is a consequence of what Richard Tarnas calls "destructive relation to nature" (393). Nature here is taken to mean not the physical environment only but the essence of things which falls under the endless series of forms of debilitation which befell the modern man (Tarnas 393). Seen from this point of view, Bucky's estrangement from the human limits and the power of fate leads him to believe that he is the cause polio.

He then considers that, because he is the one who brings the disease to the Poconos, and perhaps even to the playground of Newark, he deserves to be "killed" (230). Bucky as such, affirms his conceptualization of death as punishment. After he considers that it is God's undeserved punishment of innocents like his mother, his grandfather and the kids of the playground, he now sees it a deserved punishment for the one who is at the origins of death. In this sense, *Nemesis*, in contrast to *White Noise*, *Zero K* and *Everyman*, includes death not only as an idea but as an event which impacts the life course of the living.

Parodying the conceptualization of old age as a factor of death in *Everyman*, *Nemesis* asserts that death is not stopped by young age, suggesting that there is too much which

confirms the inevitability of death in life and the meaninglessness of its denial. In this respect, *Nemesis* affirms the certainty of death and reminds the uselessness of the "zero death" ideal which is promised by modernity. In fact, not so long after the publication of *Nemesis* came the outbreak of Corona virus to remind the contemporary man of his frailty, weakness and mortality, making the omnipresence of death stronger than it has been for years.

2- Turning the Social Tragedy into a Personal One

Following Raymond Williams, modern literature faces a profound crisis resulting from breaking up experiences into social and personal categories. The division has predictably shaped tragedy too. He says in this context:

> there is social tragedy: men destroyed by power and famine; a civilization destroyed or destroying itself. And then there is personal tragedy: men and women suffering and destroyed in their closest relationships; the individual knowing his destiny, in a cold universe, in which death and an ultimate spiritual isolation are alternative forms of the same suffering and heroism. (Williams 149)

In tragic works such as Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* and Lawrence's *Women in Love*, according to this critic, the reasons behind the tragic experiences are explored in individual lives (that's at the personal level), however, the social element is always undeniably present.

In *Nemesis*, it is via the life of Bucky, the "hero," who is created only to be destroyed by tragedy that Roth looks into the horrors of social death and its impacts on personal stability. Eugene Cantor's life is defined by death, and absence. He loses his mother at childbirth and his father for misbehaviors to be elevated by his maternal grandparents. After the attacks on Pearl Harbor 1941, he went off to the recruiting station seeking to join the fight. However, because of his eyesight problems, he was classified 4-F and asked to go back home. The thought that started to torment Bucky is that he failed his grandfather who always expected

him to be manly enough to be a soldier or a marine. At this point, Bucky starts losing admiration of his athletic body. He is haunted by belief that while he is still walking the streets, “all the able-bodied men his age were off training to fight the Japs and the Germans among them his two closest friends from Panzer”(27). Henceforth, shame becomes his mare companion: “he felt the shame of someone who might by himself have made a difference as the U.S forces in the Pacific suffered one colossal defeat after another” (27).

Having lost the chance to make his dead grandfather proud of him, Eugene attempts to perpetuate his ideals in the kids at the playground: “he wanted to teach them what his grandfather had taught him: toughness and determination, to be physically brave and physically fit, and to never allow themselves to be pushed around or, just because they knew how to use their brains, to be defamed as Jewish weaklings and sissies” (28). When Polio strikes and he finds himself losing the kids, unable to protect them and the first case of polio appeared in the woods few days after his arrival, Bucky is shaken off by the bitterness of shame and suffering.

Eugene Cantor’s life story which is overwhelmed by the crucial choice he makes to leave the playground echoes of Raymond Williams’ explanation of tragedy as “the change from prosperity to adversity, determined by the general and external fact of mutability. As such, and in spite of the differences we must later observe, it has at first sight more in common with the Greek idea of tragedy than with any later versions (42-44). It is clarified from the above quotation that one does not choose the tragic and that the latter appears as a result of some external forces that interfere to change the condition of the life of the individual to the worst. For that reason, Raymond Williams understands tragedy in the inconsistency of human will with the worldly forces just like it happens with the once hopeful dynamic Bucky Cantor, whose life turned into an unbearable absurdist terrific existence over summer time.

The decision that Bucky takes when leaving the playground to the Poconos in the middle of the epidemics constitutes a dreadful reversal in his fate and the fate of the children at the Indian Hill. The contamination of the seventeen-years good looking and physically fit Donald Kaplow violently pushes Bucky to ask the inevitable question "who brought polio here if not me? (224). The incident makes him consider himself the curse which befalls every one that he loves, cares for or gets close to: "all at once he heard a loud shriek. It was the shriek of the woman downstairs from the Michaels family, terrified that her child would catch polio and die. Only he didn't hear the shriek—he was the shriek" (225). The existential agony into which he falls is so difficult to handle and live with. Sublimating that sense of woe, distress and guilt of being an epitome of mortality and harbinger of death is not possible for Bucky who spends the whole evening at the pool performing every single dive that he knows (224-25). The feelings and conditions through which he goes reflect Heidegger's assumption that guilt "(*Schuld*) expresses the ultimate nullity and lack of ground of Dasein. This lack indicates that all of Dasein's commitments and projects are conditional and none can be justified beyond their contingent value. They are all ultimately grounded in Dasein's thrownness, which is itself contingent" (Carel 144). Guilt, from this perspective, is what indicates the human ethical bond with the other. As for that reason, Bucky's diving into the deep water is metaphoric for the human existential condition of throwness into things beyond one's control.

Moreover, Williams asserts that when pain and misery are assimilated with a human being, the dimension of tragedy is approached: "where the suffering is felt, where it is taken into the person of another, we are clearly within the possible dimensions of tragedy" (72). The assumption then, helps build the tragic dimension of Bucky's act and choice. Yet, the transmission of polio to the children who have left Newark early in that summer seeking relaxation, refers to another dimension of the act which is rather ethnic and racial. It suggests

that the Jews of America during the 1940s had nowhere to flee from atrocities. Emily Budick classifies it as a product of the American fantasy "in which US-Americans, even its Jews, imagine themselves primitive natives of the land, living in a kind of Edenic bliss threatened only by forces of nature like the bear, which they can defeat (the bear's defeat is already implicit in the fur coat)" (13). However, she says, the arrival of polio to the camp affirms that there is actually no paradise in which humans are untouched by the onslaughts of disease or death, arguing that "the Native Americans were, of course, decimated by the small pox virus, which the white settlers introduced into Eden and which, like the polio virus, would one day become a preventable disease" (Budick 5).

Following Williams, the twentieth century version of Greek tragedy stipulates that "the tragic hero, whose inner conflict is the whole tragic action, and whose crisis and destruction can be seen (making allowance for the generality of myth) as the ritual tearing to-pieces and sacrifice for life" (67). From this angle, Bucky's strong body and responsibility as a care-taker of the kids are his good fortunes which he fails to appreciate. Therefore, he takes a decision which leaves him torn apart by an internal conflict. Nemesis, in the form of polio, humiliates him for attempting to flee death. The paralysis and everything that came in the wake of polio had irreparably damaged his assurance as a virile man, pushing him to completely withdraw from that whole side of life:

> The havoc that had been wrought both on the Chancellor playground and at Indian Hill seemed to him *not a malicious absurdity of nature* but a great crime of his own, costing him all he'd once possessed and wrecking his life. The guilt in someone like Bucky may seem absurd but, in fact, is unavoidable. Such a person is condemned. Nothing he does matches *the ideal in him*. He never knows where his responsibility ends. He never trusts *his limits* because, saddled with a *stern natural goodness* that will not permit him to sign himself to the others, he will

> never guiltlessly acknowledge that he has any limits. Such a person's greatest triumph is in sparing his beloved from having a crippled husband, and his *heroism consists of denying his deepest desire by relinquishing her*. (273-74)

In fact, though Bucky pretends to be Stoic and Senecan in his acceptance of suffering and endurance of misfortune with bravery, the uncanniness, isolation and introversion to which he turns signify that he unconsciously perceives the events as tragic. In a way, Bucky's withdrawal from social life into a secure zone with himself reflects the strong grief he feels after the resentful summer experience. In this sense, it can be claimed that Bucky Cantor is "psychologically trying to live beyond his means" (Freud, "Thoughts on War and Death" 24), as he does not acknowledge his limits and refuses to accept loss and transience. Bucky's behavior rather sheds light on an anxiety of death raised in him by the death of others. In anxiety says Havi Carel, "the totality of involvements that creates meaning, the projects and possibilities of Dasein lose their meanings. Dasein's world collapses and becomes completely lacking in significance … the result is either understanding of life as such or a return to the inauthentic everydayness" (86). In Bucky's case, it seems that he understands life as insignificant and never goes back to social involvements or being with others.

Schopenhauer, claims Raymond Williams, forecasts the idea of tragedy as being the "action and a suffering rooted in the nature of man" while "historical and ethical considerations are not merely irrelevant" but, also "non-tragic." Schopenhauer insists that in tragedy we see "the unspeakable pain, the wail of humanity, the triumph of evil, the scornful mastery of chance, the irretrievable fall of the just and innocent"(59). Looking at *Nemesis* from this point of view reveals that historical and ethical considerations cannot be excluded from being "tragic." In *Nemesis,* the tragedy which hovers over Bucky's life and the city of Newark in general results from WWII which generates not only personal but also social tragedies. As one case in point, when he goes to pay condolences to the Michaels, Mr. Cantor

learns from the father that the family has sons in the army, which already keeps them in constant panic expecting to hear the worst news of their loss in one of the fights. Though the sons in the army have survived, an unexpected sudden attack of polio brings down the youngest boy Alan at the age of twelve only. The father, overridden by grief and sadness over his loss, agonizes about the impact of the news on the other sons in the army. The combination of the threats of polio, those of the war in addition to the moral responsibility over protecting his sons irks the man heavily.

At the Indian Hills summer camp, Bucky meets with his existential uneasiness once again as the sight of healthy children reminded him of the ones attacked by polio and left either dead or paralyzed. Bucky attributes their death to worldly injustice and inequality of chances which did not allow them to spend summer at Indian Hill and flourish like Sheila and Phyllis—the Steinberg girls who have the same age. He then started thinking of "Jake and Dave, who were fighting the Germans somewhere in France, while he was ensconced in this noisy funhouse of a summer camp with all these exuberant kids" he was reminded of the naturalistic determinism and lack of free choice in front of the environment and human nature. He was surprised by how lives differ and by how powerless each of us is against the force of circumstance. He also asks: "where does God figure in this? Why does He set one person down in Nazi-occupied Europe with a rifle in his hands and the other in the Indian Hill dining lodge in front of a plate of macaroni and cheese? …there was now much that was inexplicable to him about why what happens, happens as it does" (154). In this passage, the prosperity of the summer camps is contrasted to the hellish death scene in Newark as well and the fiendish onslaughts of the Germans. The contrast is considered by the protagonist as godly injustice.

In *Nemesis,* therefore, Roth puts tragedy against the complicated process of secularization and loss of faith in God. Therefore, it should be emphasized that the death of God for Bucky Cantor calls for the necessity of an emergence of new moral and metaphysical

convictions. As it is shown above, the protagonist relates suffering to a failed moral accomplishment toward his kids and town. The whole response to death as tragic and the impossibility of self-forgiveness are engendered by Bucky's conviction that he made a moral error somewhere and self-punishment unravels as his solution toward redemption. Following Frederick Nietzsche, it is so naive to believe in morality if the God who sanctions it is dead and no longer exists (*The Will to power* 147). In that sense, one's moral judgments prepare for pessimism and disbelief in life (149). Bucky's extreme self-punishment displays that morality, which is perceived by Nietzsche as a principle of preservation from suffering, generates counter effects of torment and misery (153).

When they meet in 1971, Arnold explains to Bucky that "God [is] the great criminal. Yet, if it's God who's the criminal, it can't be you who's the criminal as well" (264). The assertion does not seem to assuage Bucky's severe self-accusation that he is "a medical enigma." Yet, for Arnold, Bucky's answer may have a deeper implication, as he says: "did he mean perhaps that it was a *theological* enigma? Was this his Everyman's version of Gnostic doctrine, complete with an evil Demiurge? The divine as inimical to our being here?" (264-5). The claim suggests that if there is mystery in Bucky's story, it must rather be a theological one stemming from a misunderstanding, perhaps even non-acceptance, of the nature of the divine. Arnie's dialogue recalls both theological and Gnostic understanding of the world, the creator, good, evil etc. He considers that Bucky has gone so far in his defense of the free will doctrine. One Theological explanation of free will is that God gave humans the freedom to act according to their "judgments and priorities" and empowered them to be agents, to bring things to pass. In that way, we must accept the good with the bad" (Byrne and Houlden 479). According to this perspective also, the freedom which is given by God can end either in "response" or non-response to his love (480). In other words, they may love God despite all that happens(good or bad) as they may turn to hate him for the evil that befalls them.

Seemingly, Bucky and Arnold fall under the second category which hates God after the evil of polio. According to Arnold, then, Bucky should put the whole blame on the criminal God as being the evil Gnostic demiurge who does not intervene to change the course of events and protect the humans from disease and death[36]. He says that:

> Only a fiend could invent polio. Only a fiend could invent Horace. Only a fiend could invent World War II… Bucky's conception of God, as I thought I understood it, was to be adduced not from doubtful biblical evidence but from irrefutable historical proof, gleaned during a lifetime passed on this planet in the middle of the twentieth century. His conception of God was of an omnipotent being who was a union not of three persons in one God-head, as in Christianity, but of two—a sick fuck and an evil genius. (264-5)

For Arnold then, if polio and war are the basic factors of Bucky's tragedy, God is the only evil responsible for their existence. Unlike these two characters, some theologians redeem evil because it is what makes "possible future good" (Hink qtd. in Houlden and Byrne 482). What this means is that " Natural evils are the occasion for the making of choices which can lead to the acquisition of traits of character and dispositions which in turn fit us for this relationship" (482).

Bucky's misery stems from his insistence to "convert tragedy into guilt: "He has to find a necessity for what happens. There is an epidemic and he needs a reason for it. He has to ask why. Why? Why? That is pointless, contingent, preposterous, and tragic will not satisfy him"(265). Arnold qualifies Bucky as "the maniac of why who finds the why in God or in himself or "mythically, mysteriously, in their dreadful joining together as the sole destroyer…

[36] Leslie Houlden and Peter Byrne state that in the Gnostic teaching God is the maker of "matter and material world" while evil is an "independent divine power which came into the world through the sins of Adam" (61).

this is nothing more that stupid hubris of fantastical, childish religious interpretation"(266). On the other hand, Bucky's reaction reveals the intense emotional feeling that the death of the other raises in him. Besides, his inability to stand careless about the death of the children, when interpreted from Havi Carel's revisionist ideas of Heidegger's reflection on the death of the other, is a reminiscent of his consideration of the death of the other as his own too. The analysis above shows that tragedy frames the contemporary world. In *Nemesis*, Roth revisits the 1940s and explores the causes of tragedy as being located in the brutalities of war and the limits of science in creating a utopian world; leaving the individual in confrontation with loss and mass death.

3- The Slave Morality, the "Ascetic Priest "and the "Life Negation Instinct"

Bucky's life is invaded by absurdity and meaninglessness, shame and humiliation since the day he left the playground. He was afraid of polio and death that "he had betrayed his boys and betrayed himself" (176). He starts to undermine himself to have quitted the war zone. Heidegger affirms that the phenomenon of guilt reveals the structure of Dasein as "being-the-ground of nullity (Nichtigkeit)" (272). The call of conscience, he asserts, is what summons Dasein to return to its authentic being (277) and "wanting to have a conscience is rather the most primordial existentiell presupposition for the possibility of factically becoming guilty" (276). In *Nemesis*, the call of conscience in Bucky is the voice of the other which calls for his responsibility, drawing attention to the social dimension of both the call of conscience and mortality.

After these tragic incidents, Bucky shuns life returned to total isolation and introversion; restricting his activities to going to movies, sitting in the park, and watching TV (269). He stands as another Rothian humiliated man who opposes many of DeLillo's characters who

aspire for the status of the superman, representing instead the common man of the "herd." *Nemesis,* in this respect, demonstrates that a man with less than a mentality of a superman is easily torn to pieces by guilt, shame and self-loath. In fact, this is what Nietzsche has named "ascetic ideals" which culminate in self-denial, self-blame and punishment. Bucky could possibly do otherwise by affirming the inevitability of what happened as part of a larger universal design beyond his power. In a similar context, Havi Carel, explaining Adam Philips says that "that with which we must live – mortality, suffering and death – can be the point of departure for a self-conception that is not burdened *a priori* with guilt, shame and sin" (134).

Bucky's exercised self-punishment made him lose the love of the woman, Marcia, who has once made him unstoppable and made him feel at home. After the paralysis caused by polio, Bucky could not forgive himself for being the healthy carrier and refuses to accept that he was not at the origin of the death and paralyses that occurred at the playground and the camp. For that reason, he punished himself so severely and pushes away Marcia, to live in an eternal unhomeliness, loss and suffering without her.

C. G. Jung asserts that it is possible that in the case of the introvert "personal feeling may, for various reasons, be pushed into the foreground and will subordinate thinking, so that his thinking becomes negatively critical"(33). This applies to Bucky Cantor, who after his contamination with polio and his belief that he is at the origins of the spread of the virus among the people at the Indian summer camp, he becomes critically harsh and negative. He, therefore, cuts all relationships and shuts out his heart for love. So, instead of allowing himself to enjoy the love Marcia has for him, he accuses her of irresponsibility and attempts at being the heroine to save him. Though she insists that nothing has changed about their relation and her love, the introvert person he has become cannot see any other truth except that things are no longer the way they were before (259). The negative thinking which pervades Bucky makes any possible affection and love so painful for him. He therefore

shrinks from everyday social life and becomes subject to a certain feeling of inferiority that is characteristic of the introvert (Jung 84).

Bucky gradually loses himself in this inferiority. Arnie says that "the only way to save a remnant of his honor was in denying himself everything he had ever wanted for himself—should he be weak enough to do otherwise, he would suffer his final defeat"(262). When Arnie asks him about his social activities he does not hesitate to admit that he is "not much of a socializer" (269), explaining that he has renounced life. The more introvert he turns, the bigger his fear "of objects develops into a peculiar kind of cowardliness; he shrinks from making himself or his opinions felt, fearing that this will only increase the object's power" (Jung 350). At that time Bucky was too tired for life:

> He smiled for one of the few times during our talks, a smile very like a frown, denoting weariness more than good cheer. There was no lightness in him. That was missing, as were the energy and the industry that were once at the center of him … it wasn't only an arm and a leg that were useless. His original personality, all that vital purposefulness that would hit you in the face the moment you met him, seemed itself to have been stripped away, lifted from him in shreds. (256)

The abyss of wretchedness and melancholy into which he succumbs after polio challenges Heidegger's restriction of Dasein' s experience of the death of another to its being "alongside" the dying person. Bucky's condition captures the death of another as "an experience of loss *par excellence*. And it is not just a loss within being; it is a loss of part of one's being" (Carel 153).

His being alone for a long time with his own sense of things, combined with his inner goodness made it difficult to displace the sense of guilt and shame he felt in the past. Bucky changes into

> a humorless person, articulate enough but barely with a trace of wit, who never in his life had spoken satirically or with irony, who rarely cracked a joke or spoke in jest—someone instead haunted by an *exacerbated sense of duty* but *endowed with little force of mind,* and for that he had paid a high price in *assigning the gravest meaning to his story,* one that, intensifying over time, perniciously *magnified his misfortune*. (273-74)

Bucky's isolation intertwines with desire for suicide from time to time. Though Heidegger ranks attitudes to the death of another as inauthentic because they "lack any application to the self," claiming that Dasein lacks the capacity to experience mortality as "its common fate with others" and pushes Dasein to view death as a distant event that has not occurred yet (Carel 151), Bucky's experience reveals his inability to distance himself from engaging with the death of others. His attitudes to their death, therefore, intertwine with attitudes toward his own self and mortality, too (Carel 151).

Bucky, who shuns life and the will to live with love and dignity, replicates the situation of a "despiser of life" who is "decaying and poisoned" (Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*13). He is so harsh on himself, and stands as the "ascetic priest[37]" who judges his own actions (*On the Genealogy of Morals* 78), culminating in severe self-loathing. Because humans can stand meaningful but not ridiculous suffering which has no meaning (Nietzsche xxv), Bucky tempts to give meaning to his agony by convincing that it is an ethical sacrifice for the happiness and well-being of others, including Marcia.

Following Levinas, there is a concern dormant in every human, the concern is awakened by ethical duty toward the other. The latter's face, according to Levinas, reminds of the Christian teachings "thou shall not commit murder" (149). He adds that the very possibility of

[37]According to F. Nietzsche, the priests intervene in order to give the slaves "a way of interpreting their suffering which at least allows them to make some sense of it" (xxv).

uniqueness is possible only "in the desire to spare man humiliation and the sorrow of death and loss of persons (167). In *Nemesis,* Bucky's entire life and endeavor are directed toward sparing the people he loved psychological and physical suffering. Eradicating the harsh sorts of reality from the life of loved persons was part of his lifelong ethical engagement with people in his milieu. Bucky's engagement is shown in his initiative to protect the children at the playground against the attacks of the Italians and his readiness to be at the service of the tough grandfather and grandmother after his death.

Bucky's attitudes to life, death, and morality are noticeably dissimilar from the ones displayed by many characters by DeLillo. For instance, while Jack seeks a higher statue in life through commitment to studies of Hitler, Bucky craves for being at the service of the common people in his milieu and chooses to abandon Marcia, the only woman who aspires him higher being and will to a better life. Bucky's behaviors echo his refusal to accept life as being full of beauty and terror, yielding instead to negation and denial of existence. By contrast, Arnold, despite endurance of polio and paralysis, affirms himself and his will to a better being. He is therefore to be seen as "the possessor of an enduring, unbreakable will." Arnold confesses that being a polio victim is not free from psychological suffering while recounting his experience as a twelve-year-crippled who was pitied by the girls and avoided by the boys at school. He was unconsciously obliged to always "sit brooding on the sidelines" (266) and live a very painful adolescence, fearing that he will never feel delight again. The changes in the course of his life display that happiness is a choice made only by the psychologically strong people.

When he was in college, Arnold was given another Jewish polio victim to room with. The boy, Pomerantz, was brilliant, yet grotesquely deformed and consumed with hunger for the pre-polio man he was. Pomerantz's highly philosophical interpretation of the

interconnectedness of polio paralysis with spiritual and physical death is worthy of attention. He says:

> First you learn just what a cripple's life is like… that's the first stage. When you recover from that, you do what little is to be done to avoid spiritual extinction. That's the second stage. After that, you struggle not to be nothing but your ordeal all the while that's all you're becoming. Then, if you're lucky, five hundred stages later-sometime in your seventies, you find you are finally able to say with some truth, "Well, I managed after all—I did not allow the life to be sucked out of me completely. That's when you die. (268)

Apparently, Pomerantz, similarly to Bucky, is not ready to struggle for a whole life time to be congratulated at the age of seventy for having won over polio and not letting life to be taken away from him. He voluntarily decides to take his own life and commit suicide by killing himself (268).

In contrast to Bucky, Arnold incorporates the Dionysian will for "the creation of a *higher possibility of existence* and the attainment thereby of a yet *higher* glorification" (Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* 133). Because he lived through the tragic and the absurd, Arnold becomes aware of the absurdity of existence. Then, as says Nietzsche,

> at this moment of supreme danger for the will, *art* approaches as a saving sorceress with the power to heal. Art alone can re-direct those repulsive thoughts about the terrible or absurd nature of existence into representations with which man can live; these representations are the *sublime*, whereby the terrible is tamed with artistic means. (40)

The healing art through which Arnold manages to overcome absurdity and life nausea is architecture. In fact, along with another polio victim, Arnold starts a company specialized in architectural modification for wheelchair accessibility to improve the life of people on wheel-chairs (242). Arnold has shown enough strength to overcome the suffering he lived as a polio victim during childhood. Having studied architecture, a domain where an individual combines scientific knowledge and artistic crafts, is suggestive of his success to balance the Appolonian (rational) and Dionysian (artistic) impulses for a better life. Arnold is the hero who surpasses annihilation and negation and turns the tragic into an affirmation of life. Arnold therefore, has masterfully shown the mentality of the master.

The novel does not end with tragedy or tears but with a flashback to the glorious days of Mr Cantor playing the Hercules in front of the playground kids, who are amazed by the young man's physical abilities and mastery over the javelin. They recall his advice to blindly stick to the "three D's, Determination, dedication, and discipline" in order to master the throw (276). During those times, Bucky's self-esteem was high just like the javelin he watches making its flight over the field carrying away "high estimation, great admiration and limitless goals and hopes for the future of an athlete who seemed unbeatable… invincible" (279-80). This end suggests that Bucky is not weak by nature, but is made weak by his own life choices and engagements while he could have chosen to be otherwise and live otherwise. Mythology then provides Roth with the necessary framework within which to craft his discourse on death making allusions to the past experiences to comment on the present ones.

4- The Relationality of Death and Restoration of the "Interhuman Order"

In *Nemesis*, Philip Roth represents death as a medium to look at one's inner moral codes as well as outer social engagements and responsibilities. Hence, the overall tone of the

text is that of bitterness and resentment over one's helplessness while facing the implacability of one's death and the death of other people. The chapter works on the relationality of death and the I's responsibility toward the other and contrasts, in due course, between the character of Bucky, who perceives as ethically acceptable only the good actions he does to protect other people from sickness and death, and Arnold who estimates the limitation of one's power in front of such grand matters like mortality. In fact, it is by means of the latter that Roth passes the conceptualization of death as the unstoppable evil over which man has very little if not no power, confirming its certainty and inescapability. *Nemesis* convinces that death by epidemics strikes as a tragedy for which no one is to be blamed, as for that reason; one's self-value should not be measured against one's ability to stop the death of the other.

Bucky reproaches himself for the ravages of polio in Newark and the Indian camp in saying: "In my early twenties, God gave me polio that I in turn gave to at least a dozen kids, probably more—including Marcia's sister, including you, most likely. Including Donald Kaplow. He died in an iron lung at Stroudburg Hospital in August 1944. How bitter should I be? You tell me?" (263). Though no one can confirm whether he is at the origins of the transmission or not, Bucky's wonder of the self which is, to quote Levinas, revealed by his being "relieved of fear for the self" and enhanced by concern for the other is negated by walking away from the ones who are watched by death without knowing what may happen of them while being the targets of the fierce attacks of polio. Therefore, his self-hatred, emptiness and disgust for the Creator result from the failure of his ethical responsibility toward his kids.

Through the lenses of Bucky, Roth's novel explores the reactions and attitudes to the life and death of other persons as an answer to the uttered individualism of postmodern culture. Roth displays an account of the I's responsibility toward the death of the other and its role in shaping one's understanding of mortality as what Emmanuel Levinas calls "religion …

without uttering the word God" (*Entre Nous* 7). Therefore, the novel prepares for another religious revelation; that which comes from the crucial value of the "interhuman relation" (Levinas 94) through the characterization of Bucky Cantor who is psychologically, existentially and spiritually loaded with a tormenting guilt from which he fails to recover for an entire life.

The man-centered ideology of *Nemesis* criminalizes God for allowing the death of children. Said otherwise, Roth, in a voice similar to Tarrou's in *The Plague*, asserts that by his love and his responsibility, man can be the saver of another human if abandoned by God. In so doing, it fictionalizes another level of the death of God who is replaced by that of the human. For instance, the initial rage against God raises in Bucky following the first death by polio at the play ground:

> Who allowed everything, including children, to be destroyed by death. Between the death of Alan Michaels and the communal recitation of the God-glorifying Kaddish, Alan's family had had an interlude of some twenty-four hours to hate and loathe God for what he had inflicted upon them—not, of course, that it would have occurred to them to respond like that to Alan's death, and certainly not without fearing to incur God's wrath, prompting Him to wrest Larry and Lenny Michaels from them next… to be sure, he (Mr .Cantor) himself hadn't dared to turn against God for taking his grandfather when the old man reached a timely age to die. But for killing Alan with polio at twelve? For the very existence of polio? How could there be forgiveness—let alone hallelujas—in the face of such lunatic cruelty? (263)

The passage displays that the death of the children is too cruel and spiteful to handle by Mr. Cantor. Therefore, he prefers the group of people have gathered to celebrate "the unrefracted

rays of great Father Sun than to submit to a supreme being for whatever atrocious crime it pleases Him to perpetrate" (75). He considers that, for having allowed "the cold-blooded murder" of children, God does not deserve honor or celebration. In this example, polio gives perception of death as inevitable but also as being too voracious and merciless to attack children. It is therefore seen as very disturbing and pitiless (75-6).

At the same cemetery which hosts the funerals of Alan, Mr. Cantor could but remember his early childhood visits to the grave of his mother. He, despite his difficulty to believe that his mother was there, made it sure to obey his grandparents whom he used to see in constant grief over her loss. Away from the cemetery, the grandfather succeeds to deflect the anguish of the death of his daughter, Dorris, and cope with the loss only "by never speaking of her" (79). The effects of the death of the woman on her parents give evidence that the death of a loved one has strong effects on Dasein and that the social rituals designed "to cope with them also contribute to uncovering mortality. The social expression of mourning is not just a crude masquerade (although it could be that) whose only function is the narcissistic denial of one's own death," as Heidegger would portray it (Carel 153). Besides, the death of Alan uncovers certainty of death that Bucky remembers the death of his mother who died giving birth to him many decades ago. The funerals represent the social sustain for Alan's family and unmask mortality as a shared fate for all humans.

With the merciless outbreak of polio, Bucky becomes afraid of committing an intentional act of murder by carrying polio and unconsciously transmitting it to others. The fear develops intensively in the young man who came into life burdened with the death of his mother while giving birth to him. If the grandfather was the one who fosters in him the sense of high responsibility, then the sense of hysteria over loss and incapability to bear absence does obviously stem from the loss of his mother at an early age. In this context, he depicts a

childhood experience with sneaking out of the store into his grandparents' room where he runs the tip of one finger over the picture of his dead mother to trace the contours of her face:

> he did this despite its causing him to feel keenly not the presence he was seeking but rather the absence of one he'd never heard speaking his name, whose maternal warmth he'd never luxuriated in, a mother who had never got to care for him or feed him… why was the genuine tenderness of a loving mother any less satisfying than the tenderness of a loving grandmother? It shouldn't have been, and yet secretly he felt that it was—and secretly felt ashamed for harboring such a thought. (124-5)

Bucky finds in the death of his mother another reason to blame God; wondering how he allowed the death of a mother who is only two years out of high school. He admits that previously, when he was still a child he did never perceive things the same way as he considered the death of his mother a natural reason to allow him to be raised by such caring grandparents. Now, that he was no longer a child he thinks that it is because of God that things in life take that trajectory and, "If not for God, if not for the *nature* of God, they *would* be otherwise" (126).

In addition, the polio epidemics which hunts down children and kills them has inspired him a turn of mind concerning God and belief, to change him from an indifferent practitioner of religion to a completely non-believing man (126). Unsure, though, of how much he can hold unseen the anger that polio is provoking in him. He admits that "his anger provoked … not even against the polio virus, but against the source, the creator—against God, who made the virus" (127).

Bucky's attitudes to God, man, and death meets with what Emmanuel Levinas calls adherence to a new "interhuman order" (*EntreNous* 99). In fact, Levinas claims that Western

thought has sought to give the suffering inflicted on humans by wars and natural plagues some meaning induced from belief in a metaphysical order and some ethics so complex and abstract to be grasped by "moral consciousness"(*Entre Nous*, 95-6). In that sense, only the pain which stems from the divine goodness has been attributed meaning by theodicy. The latter explains the existence of evil as some necessary consequence of "a grand design" which is destined to "the atonement of a sin, or announce, to the ontologically limited consciousness, compensation or recompense at the end of time" (96). Via this reasoning, theodicy, says Levinas, attempts to redeem God's goodness and save the morality of mankind.

The twentieth century, as he writes, witnessed the quick decline of theodicy which resulted mainly from the ample contrast of its claims with the atrocities of the century[38] as well as by concern over possible return back to the same deliberate suffering which accompanied them. The death of millions of innocent people in the conflicts made it impossible to justify the affliction by references to sin. Their death and suffering was to be considered "useless" suffering "for nothing" (*Entre Nous* 99). The death of theodicy, consequently, raises a philosophical concern not only over the meaning of religiosity but also that of the "human morality and goodness after theodicy" (*Entre Nous* 99).

With theodicy at its end, the human faced the most difficult situation of estrangement from the meaning of misfortune. For being aware of the human need and search for a new modality of faith, Levinas's philosophy proposes to consider human commitment to goodness and belief in "the interhuman order" (99). It is an order which can compensate for the century's atrocities. It is, therefore, in "the interhuman perspective of [one's] responsibility for the other without concern for reciprocity, in [the] call for his or her disinterred help, in the

[38] These include: " the two world wars, the totalitarianisms of right and left, Hitlerism, and Stalinism, Hiroshima, the Gulag, and the genocides of Auschwitz and Cambodia" (Levinas, *Entre Nous* 97).

asymmertry of the relation of *one* to the *other*" that Levinas has tried to analyze the phenomenon of useless suffering" (*Entre Nous* 108).

Levinas sees the meaning of suffering in the unconditional responsibility of the one toward the other as he considers that "God is inscribed in the face of the other, in the encounter with the other" (108). Following his reflection on the inalienable nature of one's responsibility to the other, Roth's *Nemesis* is viewed as an appeal for the fear for the other and his life. It best articulates Levinas's saying: "I fear for all the violence and murder my existing—despite its intentional and conscious innocence can bring about" (*Entre Nous* 150). The quotation, while it highlights the other as a source of meaning cautions about the self as a possible threat to the other's security. Motivated by a similar reasoning, Bucky feels that he is the one who has brought polio to the ground and the Poconos, he considers himself a threat and decides to withdraw from everyone else' life, including his fiancé's.

The moral engagement and sense of guilt that Bucky carries with him to advanced age does not wane with Arnie's consolation that it was polio which did harm to all these children and that he is totally blameless. Drawing on a story told by Bill Blomback, the camp director at the Indian Hills Camp about the Indians who believed that "it was an evil being shooting them with an invisible arrow" that caused certain of their diseases, Bucky considers himself "the Indians' evil being," and the "Typhoid Mary" who spreads the infection (273). He confesses to Arnold that he never came back to Weequahic or the Chancellor Playground since he left for Camp Indian Hill in July 1944, unraveling a bitter and severe self-loathing. Throughout the thirty years he spent in isolation from people and the world, he could not change the idea or forgive himself though the logic of everyone else says it is because of misfortune that these people got polio while "twentieth-century medicine made its phenomenal progress just a little too slowly for (them)" (249); situating people defenselessness in the failure of science in finding a cure.

Bucky's reaction stems from his commitment to the significance of the other "whose alterity is the very extreme point of "thou shall not kill." He cannot avoid thinking that those he may have contaminated have powerlessly succumbed to death alone, isolated in their hospital beds or iron lungs. The value which Bucky gives to alterity shows up strongly with his concern after Mrs Kopferman's accusations of "criminal negligence" of the boys (83). For Mr. Cantor, this was "the first direct confrontation with vile accusation and intemperate hatred, and it had unstrung him far more than dealing with the ten menacing Italians at the playground" (81). In fact, Heidegger's philosophy centers on the priority of "the thought of being" (Levinas 167). However, Bucky's life rather revolves around the priority of the ethical being in relation to the other, his face and mortality which are, to follow Levinas, offended by the good conscience of being. Therefore, in *Nemesis*, the importance of being is interlinked with the importance of the being with others.

Levinas further focuses on the invocation of meaning by the other when he explains the relation of engagement which defines the other as a neighbor. Levinas speaks a great deal about the face of the other man as being the original locus of the meaningful invocation of the feeling of responsibility and the tantamount emotions that the face of the other transmits to the I and the self. The face of the other does not leave the self indifferent toward the death of the other but rather engages him toward its mortality and experience of death. He states:

> But this facing of the face in its expression—in its mortality—summons me, demands me, claims me: as if the invisible death faced by the face of the other—pure otherness, separated somehow from all unity—were "my business." As if, unknown to the other whom, in the nakedness of his face, it already concerns, it "regarded me" before its confrontation with me, before being the death that looks me square in my own face. (*Entre Nous* 146)

In this passage Levinas puts forward that the meaning of death is to be understood in the responsibility that the face of the other unleashes in one's self. *Nemesis* genuinely captures one's fear for the death of the other fellow human as the fear for the self in Bucky's acts which his community defines as heroic. The first encounter with his high sense of responsibility, courage and eagerness to protect the kids is when he fights the Italians who came to spread polio at the playground (14-15). It is the incident after which "he became outright hero, an idolized, protective, heroic older brother, particularly to those whose own older brothers were off in the war" (18). With the first death with polio, Bucky can no longer stay tranquil, even when he leaves for the Poconos, he continuous to mourn "the two boys who had died, he was still oppressed by thinking of all of his other boys stricken with the crippling disease" he "had wholeheartedly confronted a devastating challenge" in the city trembled by the disease (141). In fact, the death of the children which has unconsciously pushed him to leave the city implies that the death of the other makes one admit his own mortality.

Although it is true that the face of the other is a stimulus for the I's responsibility, it cannot be denied that his death puts the I into question and doubt. Levinas says in this context:

> The death of the other man puts me in question, as if in that death that is invisible to the other who exposes himself to it, *I,* through my eventual *indifference*, became the *accomplice*; and as if, even before being doomed to it myself, *I* had to answer for this death of the other, and not leave the other *alone in his death-bound solitude.* It is precisely in this call to my responsibility by the face that summons me, that demands me, that claims me—it is in this questioning that the other is my neighbor. (*Entre Nous* 146)

In fact, the nature of polio as an infectious illness prevents people from assisting others in their moments of death and enforces isolation of the sick from the world indulging him into lonely death. Despite this, Bucky cannot avoid considering himself an "accomplice to death" when he leaves the kids of the playground to face the threat of death alone. From the moment he promises his fiancé to join her at the camp, regret sneaks into his heart. The eventual serious consequences of the decision that Bucky takes, is hinted at by M'r O'Gara—the man who had been running the city playgrounds for years—when he calls Cantor "Cancer" (137). The naming suggests that the decision is fatal as cancer.

Mr. O'Gara's violent response to Cantor's decision burdens the latter's consciousness as he tells him that he is making free choice to flee. Mr O'Gara's words also voice Bucky's unconscious doubts and put him face to face with his worst repressed fears as he accuses him of being "an opportunist, Cancer" who flees the job to flee polio (138). O'Gara's stigmatization of Cantor for his indifference and unheroic decision to survive without contracting the virus humiliates him and pushes him to look at himself as a partner in the crimes of polio after being a man of ideals and sacrifice for others. His sense of guilt, results basically from suspicion that he, at a certain point, has abandoned the kids alone with "the mystery of death" while he accepted all "the ultimate gift of dying for the other" (Levinas 186). *Nemesis*, from this angle, affirms the stubborn domination of the "they" in the being of Dasein.

In *Nemesis,* sublimation, coping and even transference of bad feelings related to the death of the other fail. For instance, when he hears of the closure of the playgrounds and the horrible news of 79 new cases in Newark, thirty new cases at Weequahic, three new cases at the playground with two hospitalizations and one death, Bucky falls into depression and despair. His fiancée tries to console him by singing and driving him to dance with her. Yet, his spirit continues to drop further away thinking that the fact that he and Marcia do have the

love of each other does not make any difference to the dead Billy, Erwin and Ronnie. He wonders "what difference does that make to their families? Hugging and kissing and dancing like lovesick teenagers ignorant of everything—what could that do for anyone?"(200). Bucky, as says Levinas, affirms "the *I* as hostage to the other human being" which is called to answer for his death" (167).

The noticeable dissolution of narcissistic interests in Bucky reminds of the completely opposite egocentrism of DeLillo's characters in *White Noise* who opt for consumerism, buying fancy things etc, not caring about the tragedies that befall the others (). In the scene of the evacuation of Jack's family after the intoxicating smoke to another city, the narrator contrasts their miseries, fear and immersion in a human tragedy, with the carelessness of the people who, instead of offering help or solidarity, they keep going on with their commercial activities of buying fancy staff. The contrast between the two situations demonstrates Roth's rejection of the utter individualism of the contemporary American society, which he projects against the kindness of Bucky Cantor from a period of history apparently less ego-centered. The narcissistic behaviors of the characters in *White Noise* are equal only to the anti-Semite hatred which made the non-Jewish people in *Nemesis* happy that polio befalls a Jewish city and kills Jewish children. In this context, Bucky's grandmother tells him in a phone call at the Indian Hills that "the anti-Semites are saying that it's because they're Jews that polio spreads there. Because of all the Jews—that's why Weequahic is the center of the paralysis and why the Jews should be isolated. Some of them sound as if they think that the best way to get rid of the polio epidemic would be to burn down Weequahic with all the Jews in it. There is a lot of bad feeling because of the crazy things people are saying out there" (6).

Bucky's continuous sense of guilt suggests his wish that death can be avoidable by humans; the reason why he is estranged from the naturalness of death by polio. From an existentialist point of view, Bucky's life which turns upside down because of the death of the

people he loves suggests that experiencing the death of a loved one surpasses an "experience within being" as says Heidegger, and constitute "an actual loss of part of Dasein itself." Carel argues that when the loved one is gone, "part of Dasein's being is gone too, and not in a metaphorical sense. It is gone because the shared world is gone, because the meaningfulness of Dasein's life cannot remain intact in the face of such loss. Dasein's world must change and Dasein must change with it in response to the loss" Carel (154).

Through the reaction of Bucky Cantor, *Nemesis* not only redeems the "inter-human" ideal but also looks at the mortality of the other as a justifiably shaking event and not simply a sign of weakness or failure of the "superman morality." Bucky's bad conscience puts him into self-doubting and results in fearing "injustice more than death" (*Entre Nous* 148). Perhaps the injustice which he fears is that of being a polio carrier who may intentionally kill people without wanting it. About Bucky's response and loaded conscience, the narrator comments saying "We can be severe judges of ourselves when it is in no way warranted. A misplaced sense of responsibility can be a debilitating thing…you have a conscience, and a conscience is a valuable attribute but not if it begins to make you think you're to blame for what is far beyond the scope of your responsibility" (*Nemesis* 102).

Nemesis marks its importance for this study as it differs from the other selected novels which depict characters who are anxious about their own death. Their reaction and conceptualization of death, as a result, is self-centered. The novel, in this sense, re-conceptualizes the meaning of being from being-toward-death to ethical responsibility for the death of the other. Equally important, it re-articulates another sense and understanding that a human being can develop ethical as well as emotional engagement with the death of the other as integral to one's feelings and emotions. *Nemesis*, therefore, considers the meaning of death not in view of one's own death and anxiety about his/ her finitude but in view of death when it befalls the other.

5- *Nemesis'* Intertextual Collision with Albert Camus' s *ThePlague* in Conceptualizing Death

In Nemesis, Philip Roth dialogizes Albert Camus's discourse about death in *The Plague (1948)*. The dialogue revolves around the heavy existential and psychological impacts of death and loss on the individual. *Nemesis* re-conceptualizes the possibility of the meaningful and the authentic in one's moral responsibility toward the other. This section looks into the resemblance of the novels' absurdism and meaninglessness with that of *The Plague*, displaying that both result in anger against God, accusing Him of allowing death to come on children.

The Plague chronicles the events happening in the city of Oran under the strike of the fatal epidemic of the plague in the 1940s. Back then, Oran, like the whole country of Algeria was under the French colonialism. In April 1945, the rats came out in large numbers and started to die in the houses and streets of the town; announcing the beginning of something weird, yet serious. The protagonist, who reveals by the end of the novel to be the narrator, registers the first case of death of the concierge M. Michel after a burning fever. After the appearance of many similar cases, Dr Rieux and his colleague Dr. Castel diagnosed bubonic plague at the time when the authorities and a number of other doctors continued to behave indifferently to the alarming situation. Soon after, the city was to be placed under the sanitary measures of quarantine to contain the ravages of the plague.

Albert Camus fictionalizes people's response to their life under isolation and the menace of the mortal disease. Father Paneloux, for instance, delivers his sermon hoping to bring relief to the hearts of people. The basic message of the first sermon was that only sinners and evil doers need to panic because of the plague which is God's punishment for the humans' offense and "criminal indifference" (88). Besides, with the beginning of the plague

arrives Raymond Rambert, a journalist sent by one of Paris's famous dailies. Due to the new sanitary conditions, he finds himself separated from his beloved wife and will be longing for reunion with her all along the events of the story before he gives up the plan when he learns that Dr Rieux too is separated from his wife who is receiving treatment at the sanatorium. Shortly after the second sermon, father Paneloux dies of what Rieux considers doubtful symptoms. Not being so sure it was plague, he classifies him as "doubtful case." In addition, when Joseph Grand, the civil servant, survives the epidemics and recovers from it, Jean Tarrou, the recorder of the plague dies fighting the pestilence. Rambert finally reunites with his wife while Rieux's spouse dies at the hospital before they could meet again.

a- Responsibility for the Face of the Other in N*emesis* and *The Plague*:

Away from the hedonism and egoism of previous fiction by Philip Roth, *Nemesis* puts forward that fear of losing a loved person is at the origins of doubting God. The novel parodies or perhaps clarifies contemporary man's tragic perception of life and the future and traces its cause back to the previous century's chaos and injuries. The reading of *Nemesis* from this perspective entails a redefinition of the meaning of the other and the impact of loss in training secularization and abhorrence of death in the now-age. It shows that the wandering of man and his hopeless search for meaning in life has started when he was threatened to lose his relation with the other fellowman i.e., when many protective shields against his relation with the others started to fall apart.

Read from Bakhtin's perspective of dialogism, Roth's discourse on death should be claimed as one which resists wholeness, finitude and authoritarianism as it draws on other existing texts to draw significance and meaning. In fact, *Nemesis* reworks many of the themes of *The Plague* while commenting on experience with death and epidemics. In Camus's text, the nature of the disease—its being contagious—and the sanitary measures it imposed on

people (being put into quarantine and isolation from each other), generated a complicated relationship between the people of Oran. On the other hand, "mistrust" keeps these people apart because "it's common knowledge that you can't trust your neighbor; he may pass the disease to you without your knowing it, and take advantage of a moment of inadvertence on your part to infect you" (173). Therefore, being a possible font of infection, the neighbor has become a source of anxiety and fear too. Yet, *The Plague*, unlike *Nemesis*, leaves space for some human self-centeredness which is articulated by the character of Rambert who longs thirstily to meet his wife careless about the risk of infecting her with the disease.

As life under the plague becomes unbearable, people are gradually overtaken by the exclusive thoughts of death "And since they could not be thinking of their death all the time, they thought of nothing…" (209). Similarly, attitudes to the death of the other are projected against the gloomy significance of the plague. These reactions are best expressed in the conversation between Dr Rieux and Tarrou who recounts childhood experiences with the death of people to which he could assist because his father is a lawyer who demands death sentence for criminals. He tells of a criminal he saw at the court at the age of 17 years old, when his father invited him to go and listen to him speak in the court. Tarrou accepted to go hoping that there he would see another version of his father.

Interestingly, the scary face of the guilty accused man takes hold of him that he couldn't see anything or anyone else. The only image he carries from that place was that of the man who was terrified by the possibility of being sentenced to death for his crime. Tarrou admits being careless of what crime the man was guilty and all that rose his concern was his humanity. He says in this context:

> Something seemed to grip my vitals at that moment and riveted all my attention on the little man in the dock. I hardly heard what was being said; I only knew that

> they were set on killing that living man, and an uprush of some elemental instinct, like a wave, had swept me to his side…felt a far closer, far more terrifying intimacy with that wretched man than my father can ever have felt(207).

The face of the prisoner when the lawyer asked of his murder shocked Tarrou and made him recognize the fake character of his father. Furthermore, his view of his mother and entire life has been impacted everlastingly: "From that day on I couldn't even see the railway directory without a shudder of disgust. I took a horrified interest in legal proceedings, death sentences, executions, and I realized with dismay that my father must have often witnessed those brutal murders" (207). Not only that but also a feeling of homelessness has invaded him that few months later, he decided to leave his home forever (207-8).

The impact of the man's face on Tarrou reflects Levinas' qualification of it as a source of meaning and philosophy in life. In *Entre Nous* he significantly writes that "*the face of the Other is perhaps the very beginning of philosophy" and that "philosophy does not begin with and in the experience of finitude, but rather in that of the Infinite as the call of justice*" (emphasis original 103). In this sense, the face of the man he sees threatened by death becomes the source of meaningfulness and "intelligibility"(Levinas 103). The whole prospect of ethics on which Tarrou's life will be built emerges from that court and that face. For that reason, his interest in life has become "death penalty" (208).

To Tarrou's judgment, the social order was based on the death sentence, and by challenging the established order (he)'d be fighting against murder (208). Saving the life of others and struggling for their own good has become his own battle which eventually culminates in adherence to the fight against the plague with Dr Rieux. Importantly, though he is a non-believer in God and religion, Tarrou aspires to be a saint, and asks about the possibility of being a "Saint without God" (212), reflecting, as such, Levinas' claim that God

is inscribed in the "Face of the Other, in the encounter with the Other: a double expression of weakness and strict urgent requirement" (108). In addition to Tarrou, *The Plague* through the character of Dr Rieux who refuses to leave the plagued city of Oran and creates the group of "true healers"to help people and fight the plague, enhances the magnitude of sympathy for humans over God. Both Rieux and Tarrou agree on the fact that being a man is much more important than any other considerations in life. Rieux says "I feel more fellowship with the defeated than with saints. Heroism and sanctity don't really appeal to me, I imagine. What interests me is being a man." (213). This implies that fighting the disease is what endows his life as a human with meaning and purpose. Therefore, standing against the evil of death and sickness can fill the void of meaninglessness and absurdity in life. Likewise, *Nemesis* treats concern with heroism and sacred powers and shows how a man's obsession with heroic powers—as represented by Bucky Cantor—can turn to be extremely destructive. It displays that when death strikes, skepticism prevails and hope wanes pushing one to live with the standards of love and struggle for the life and health of mankind.

Given these facts, Tarrou feels that the death penalties and the murders he could not help stop or to which he indirectly has contributed made him realize that he also "had plague" (210). According to him, the most eminent "plague-stricken" people are those who advance arguments in favor of death penalty. The vice in human nature and its penchant toward death and destruction is synonymous to the mortal plague, from his perspective. The realization that the modern man is a criminal who is infected by plague and continues to infect others and induce death deliberately, fills him with shame and pain. Tarrou's final resolution is that the unique hope which remains for humanity is to cease being plague-stricken. He puts that one has "to have no truck with anything which, directly or indirectly, for good reasons or for bad, brings death to anyone or justifies others' putting him to death" (210). In this sense, the

meaning of being and existence is obtained only through one's refutation of the evil of death of the other humans and engagement to stop their suffering.

b- Projection of Anger over the Death of Children against God

The epidemic which lasts several months in the city has led people to recognize that they are all prisoners and that only a "collective destiny, made of plague and the emotions shared by all" (148). The change in the behaviors of people coincided with another change in the behavior and reaction of Dr Rieux, Castel, and even father Paneloux who are shaken by the death of M. Othon's son. In fact, after having closely observed the agony of the child before his terrible death minute by minute, the men are profoundly shaken by agony. Rieux shouts at Paneloux that the innocence of the child did not help spare him by God (183).

The ruthlessness of the plague which intensified with the approach of summer pushed people to lose control and cede to violence, wishing to get out of the town's closed gates (102). The changes imposed by the plague "also had an incendiary effect on certain minds. There were frequent attacks on the gates of the town … shots were exchanged… Houses that had been burnt or closed by the sanitary control were looted…" (146-47). These acts of mayhem, while they remind of the Italian attacks on the Jewish people at the playground of Newark and the Anti-Semitist rage in *Nemesis*, also express the authorities' inability to keep people and law in times of epidemics. Therefore, incapable to stand in face of repetitive acts of violence and thievery, Oran was plunged into darkness and was turned into a "huge necropolis" after the establishment of curfew hours (147).

The odor of death, on the other hand, has made many others, like Dr Rieux, sentimental (168). However, above all the incidents cited before the suffering and then death of Mr Othon's devastated Rieux, Tarrou, Grand, Castel, Paneloux and Ramber. In fact, after having diagnosed his infection with the plague as hopeless, Dr Rieux decided to test Dr Castel's anti-

plague serum on him. The child's body showed signs of resistance before he passes away. In fact,

> They had already seen children die—for many months now death had shown no favoritism—but they had never yet watched a child's agony minute by minute, as they had now been doing since daybreak. Needless to say, the pain injected on these innocent victims had always seemed to them to be what in fact it was: an abominable thing. But hitherto they had felt its abomination in, so to speak, an abstract way; they had never had to witness over so long a period the death throes of an innocent child." (187)

The eye witness of the death and suffering of the guiltless child can but leave the audience terrified, agonized, and even angry at both God and fate. The presence of the representative of the Christian church, Father Paneloux, in the room does not ease the anguish of Dr Rieux (190). The Father's advice to accept what happened as part of the divine plan which cannot be understood by humans does not find attentive ears in Rieux who contests claiming "I've a very different idea of love. And until my dying day I shall refuse to love a scheme of things in which children are put to torture" (190). Rieux then leaves the father in concern and disquiet, contesting that there is one common cause which reunites them, it is a cause Paneloux qualifies as "human salvation" and Rieux as "man's health"; insisting that the latter is much more important than the former.

Dr Rieux's anger reminds of Bucky Cantor's attacks on God endurance. Roth's protagonist does not hesitate to criminalize God for the death that befalls them. When he meets Marcia in the summer camp, Bucky is agitated by her prayers to God in order to save him from being killed or paralyzed by the virus. She declares to him: "I thought you were going to die! I thought you were going to become paralyzed and die! I couldn't sleep I was

frightened. I'd come out here whenever I could to be alone and pray to God to keep you healthy. I never prayed so hard for anyone in my life. 'Please protect Buck? (168-69). For Bucky, Marcia' s claim that God may have answered her prayers does not prove the Almighty's good intentions.

Sooner enough, he could no longer hide his accusation of God and disputes: "Why didn't God answer the prayers of Alan Michaels' parents? They must have prayed. Herbie Steinmark's parents must have prayed. They're good people. They're good Jews. Why didn't God intervene for them? Why didn't He save their boys? (170). Bucky even wonders "how can a Jew pray to a *god* who has put a curse like this on a neighborhood of thousands and thousands of Jews?"(Emphasis added 171). In Bucky's words, God, the Almighty, has lost its capital letter and with it power and divinity to be reduced to a mere small one, as if He is no longer the only God but a member of a long family of gods. The death that befalls the children is taken by Bucky as anything but natural, acceptable or similar to other deaths. The reaction he displays toward it testifies that he relates death to advanced age, believing that children should be immunized against it. Bucky's reasoning contradicts Heidegger's assumption that "Death is a way to be" that Dasein takes over as soon as it is (*Being and Time* 246). As a result, Marcia qualifies all his behaviors, attitudes to God and death as being asinine, crazy and rude (261). This implies that both *Nemesis* and *The Plague* emphasize on the moral significance of the death as well as suffering of children. Both texts consider that a fair God does not inflict such atrocities them. Once that happens, the human being easily falls prey to anger.

Both Bucky Cantor and Dr Rieux are given a war to fight against fatal epidemics. While Rieux leads his war successfully and never gives up until the plague wanes and disappears from the town, Bucky loses his war at the very instant he leaves the playground to seek refuge in the camp at the Indian Hills. Therefore, the burden is doubled on Bucky who has to deal

with powerlessness in face of death, in addition to guilt and shame for having abandoned his war.The grandfather, then, is the delegate of the moral standards and a representative of the superego whose mission is to internalize social norms in Bucky.

In *The Plague* not only common people but also preachers are shattered by the death of children. Father Paneloux is one case in point. The latter, after having joined Dr Rieux and his group of fighters against the plague, spends a lot of time in contact with sick people and becomes aware that he is not immunized against infection or death. In fact, outwardly "he had lost nothing of his serenity. But from the day on which he saw a child die, something seemed to change in him. And his face bore traces of the rising tension of his thoughts" (192). As a result, Paneloux's thinking and direction in his last sermon which, in contrast to the first one, is attended only by few people, has radically changed. In the first sermon, he addresses the people of Oran as sinners to be punished by God. By so doing, he considers himself the representative of faith who is a saint, a blessed person who will be, accordingly, spared by the epidemics. This is seen when, instead of addressing the audience with the second pronoun, "you," Paneloux utilizes the third pronoun "we;" which indicates his involvement in the collective suffering of the people.

The father's attitude in the sermon was one of confidence. He is so certain that the innocents, including himself, are excluded from God's punishment and therefore from the plague. He advises people to rejoice despite the pestilence because it may lead to their salvation and happy eternal life (89). The discourse is particularly enriched with other morals regarding the epidemics and people's responses to it, advising them not to be in haste or seek suicide by exposing oneself intentionally to death because this does not lead to salvation but to "heresy" (89). The father's theological speech seeks to ease the pain of the people and console that God has a goal behind inflicting suffering on humans and that his divine mercy

will transform the evil of suffering into an endless reward. In this context, the narrator estimates that the town, its people, and perhaps their hearts have changed after the sermon.

In the second speech he delivers after long months of fight against the plague, in contrast, he excludes the previous thesis of the plague as God's punishment for human evil. He urges the audience to accept everything including meaningless and "needless suffering" (195). Because he fails to come out with stronger arguments, the father assumes that people, for not daring to "deny everything" should "believe everything" including the child's death. He says:

> We had Don Juan cast into hell, and a child's death. For while it is right that a libertine should be struck down, we see no reason for a child's suffering. And, truth to tell, nothing was more important on earth than a child's suffering, the horror it inspires in us, and the reasons we must find to account for it. In other manifestations of life God made things easy for us and, thus far, our religion had no merit. (195)

Father Paneloux thinks that the death of children is one difficult exercise and test of one's love for God. It is a hard lesson which may not be learnt or understood by all humans. It is therefore necessary to surrender to the love and will of God, this only can reconcile against such loss or suffering.

The father seeks to console the hearts of people by urging them to blindly accept God's Will despite its intricacy and enigma. In that sense, he urges them to will the death of a child simply because it is willed by God. He argues that although it "involved humiliation, but a humiliation to which the person humiliated gave full assent. True, the agony of a child was humiliating to the heart and to the mind. But that was why we had to come to terms with it" (188). Giving assent to humiliation is another cross road at which Roth's fiction and Camus'

intersect. Both narratives find that for either age of sickness one falls prey to humiliation. They are two factors which attack one's pride and high self-esteem in the absence of strong means of consolation and relief which Delillo's characters, on the other hand seem to find momentary in advanced science and technology.

Unlike *Nemesis,* which ends with recollection of some beautiful memories and cheerful events in the life of the protagonist, opening therefore the possibility for hope in better times, *The plague* pessimistically ends with fear and disquiet over the joy of people who think that the plague is over. Dr Rieux remains anxious as he is aware that "the plague bacillus never dies or disappears for good; that it can lie dormant for years and years in furniture and linen-chests; that it bides its time in bedrooms, cellars, trunks, and bookshelves; and that perhaps the day would come when, for the bane and the enlightening of men, it would rouse up its rats again and send them forth to die in a happy city" (254). In addition to the pessimism of Rieux, *The Plague* closes with Mr. Cottard shooting at every one from his building before the police could stop him. This may suggest that human evil is not about to end and that the wounds coming from other fellowmen are to be endured again by humans.

Concluding Remarks

In *White Noise, Zero K* and *Everyman*, the death of the other was cast as insignificant to understanding one's death. It is considered as a relief for the living who expect that the death of another may postpone one's own death. In these narratives, therefore, DeLillo and Roth react to Heidegger's view of the significance of the death of the other in unmasking death. In contrast, *Nemesis* demonstrates that intimation of mortality may come from the death of the other. In fact, it is this novel which brings about interest in moral good and evil, guilt and innocence, which are all virtues lost in *White Noise, Zero K* and *Everyman*.

The use of polio as a force which sentences children and adults indiscriminately to severe paralysis and death contributes to the representation of death as a certainty which determines the other truths about existence. The specter of polio in *Nemesis* brings the existential concern with death and questions modern man's readiness to accept his or the other person's death. With polio, people are put under constant recall of mortality, challenging, hand in hand, one's commitment to moral standards in the light of the menace of death. In both *Nemesis* and *Everyman*, Philip Roth reflects the Heideggerian perspective which goes against the Cartesian view of the "individual mind as the minimal unit of meaning" (Carel 100). For Heidegger, and apparently for Roth too, a phenomenological description of Dasein as "structured by existentiales that connect it to the world and to other Dasein, and by a projective openness and receptivity towards both world and others" is a more correct alternative to Descartes' logic (Carel 100). On the other hand, in an attitude similar to the Freudian one, Roth calls attention to the way in which "loss and transience shape life, and within this general structure singles out the death of another as the epitome of loss" (Carel 125). The assumption becomes clear in Bucky's perception of the death of the children as unjust unnecessary.

The analysis of *Nemesis* as a modern tragedy has revealed Roth's identification of the tragic element as unavoidable in contemporary world and life. In *Nemesis*, Roth locates the sources of the human suffering during the postmodern times in fate, the weakness of the postmodern individual, the reluctant God and lack of ethical considerations of the preciousness of the other and his life in the social fabric. So, while man's suffering and his alienation are technology-forged in DeLillo's fiction, *Nemesis* suggests that they are rather the product of human nature itself; offering, as a consequence, a gloomy perception of the human condition during contemporary times.

Noticeably, while technology obscures the meaning of death in *White Noise* and *Zero K*, the natural processes of aging and sickness help affirm its inevitability and certainty in *Everyman* and *Nemesis*. Anticipation of death, whether stemming from anxiety for one's own death or that of the other in Philip Roth's fiction does not grant psychological well-being. This can be explained by the fact that though there is an authentic anticipation of death and recognition of its inevitability, there is an important aspect of authenticity which is disrupted by perception of death as "demise" and bodily extinction instead of an existential possibility for individuation and wholeness. Roth's characters are anxious about death and never tranquilize themselves about its inevitability, yet, they never affirm that the meaning of "being" is existentially and ontologically made possible by its finitude. According to them, the latter connotes only deprivation, humiliation and loss.

General Conclusion

After this study has been conducted, it is possible to claim that death is an atavistic term whose validity never expires in the contemporary age which is remarkable by subversion of all traditional forms and convictions. It is an age of confusion and alienation, remembrance and rejection of death, both real and metaphorical; fluctuating from the death of the author and the subject to the death of God and certainty. These different deaths, in fact, resulted in the plurality of the conceptualizations of mortality. Contrary to what was stated by Aries and others, there is no deliberate denial of death in postmodern times. Rather, attitudes to it may shift from denial to recognition depending on one's age and health conditions in addition to cultural involvement and religious convictions.

This thesis has tackled the representation of death in selected fiction by Don DeLillo and Philip Roth; the two authors who are identified as postmodern pillars of weighty influence in the contemporary American literature. The study of attitudes to death in their respectively selected novels: *White Noise, Zero K, Everyman* and *Nemesis,* has tackled both cultural and personal attitudes to it. By so doing, it has had access to the cultural, historical and private (one's age, body and health) factors which effected the conceptualization of death. It has demonstrated that while DeLillo's novels analyse the cultural attitudes to death, Roth's texts focus on the very personal and individual reactions to it. Therefore, analyzing the characters' reactions to death reveals various realities about their culture and that the latter merges with history to foster particular estrangement from death. Equally significant, the study has plunged deeply into the influence that awareness of mortality has on one's relation to his culture, self, and existence, proclaiming the interrelatedness of attitudes to death, identity and self-esteem in addition to "being" and "dwelling" in the world.

The idea of death in the novels keeps some of its universal aspects such as mystery and terror. Yet, it is bound by the overall postmodern cultural affinities which created a fertile environment for plural rather than uniform attitudes. The intersection of cultural, historical and private dynamics with each other forms new perceptions and appellations of death as unnatural and taboo, meaningless and denied, mediated and uncanny, etc. DeLillo's characters perceive of death as an affront to the unequalled development in science and technology on which they rely to efface mortality, but Roth's fiction shows that advances in technology and changes in religious or moral orientations of the individual may be inadequate to efface or forget death. Therefore, the particular conditions of Roth's aged and sick characters bring the disgust and shame of death once again to the public realm of discussion; rejecting in due course the modern promises of progress and better life as illusionary. Differently from this perspective, DeLillo's characters are led by disgust from real and natural death to simulation of a technologically mediated one, seeking immortality and transcendence of human limits.

This study has observed that the answer to Aries's[39] question should come in the affirmative form because there may be a lasting relation between the individual's idea of death and oneself. The two are, as analyses of major characters in the selected novels have shown, unseparable because one's attitudes to death could define the self from being authentic or inauthentic, and personality from being introvert or extrovert. The answer to the second question, on the other hand, may come in the negative because humanity must not take for granted that it is impossible for one technological culture ever to regain the naïve confidence in Destiny. In DeLillo's novels, for instance, the defiance of fate and rejection of belief in

[39]Aries' study has left non-answered questions including: is there a permanent relationship between one's idea of death and oneself? Must we take for granted that it is impossible for our technological cultures ever to regain the naive confidence in Destiny which had been shown for so long by simple men when dying?

Destiny is casted through the technological promises of immortality which deny biological death. Through dramatizing the existential as well as the psychological plights of the posthuman technologies of eternal life, DeLillo has uncovered the tragic side of loss of naïve confidence in the fate of death by the Western contemporary cultures. For different reasons related to postmodern conditions, the human in DeLillo's novels is gradually distanced from any authentic or naïve relation to death.

Looking into the epistemology of death in their novels shows that Philip Roth and Don DeLillo occupy opposite poles as regards the encroachment of technology on postmodern lives and selves. Death provides them with strong tools to represent the individuals' conflict with or against the postmodern cultural logic. While DeLillo mediates reactions to finitude via the technological development of the West, Roth is more inclined to comment on the ethical side of the issue. It may be admitted that DeLillo's fiction is not empty of vulnerable, diseased people. However, unlike Roth's narratives, DeLillo's characters may conceal dread from death behind faith in science. Yet, it has been shown that the science which succeeded to eradicate many somatic causes of death, failed to protect the individual from psychological or existential pathologies. In this context, the post human projects could be argued to be humans' attempts to live beyond their capacities by refusing to give nature, death and life their due. They may also attest for the contemporary man's unreadiness to face death and great potential for self-destruction through alienation from human essence, with death as a necessary constituent of it.

When compared together on a larger scale, one may figure out two other major differences between Don DeLillo and Philip Roth's representation of death. For Don DeLillo, death is the source of meaning and essence in the meaningless postmodern times. His fiction illustrates that contemporary man's alienation from nature and subsequent involvement in the cultural conditions of materialism and technological progress could deprive the individual

from the existential meaning which can be restored only through reconciliation with the naturalness and inevitability of death. For Philip Roth, however, death as a human condition is inevitable though representing only loss and annihilation. Nothing can be gained in death for Roth's vulnerable male protagonists who, unlike DeLillo's, are unable to deny death or have faith in technology. Hence, the recognition of death as certain and insuperable is not followed by recognition of its value. Probably, Roth's cynical perception of mortality is not separable from his old age i.e., the older Roth gets, the closer he could feel to death and the more abhorrent he may become toward fatality. His fiction, per se, accounts for a personal struggle with the idea of death.

In *White Noise* and *Zero K*, attitudes to death, both individual and cultural may be triggered by hubris due to money and technology which gives the characters excessive pride which may convert to credence in immortality. Hubris in these narratives is connected to technology, capital wealth and consumerism. In contrast, in *Everyman* and *Nemesis*, sentiments of humiliation stem from more intimate personal factors of old age and sickness, in addition to wars and terrorism which articulate the shattered pride of the Americans. Therefore, scepticism of the limitless power of science, the American character and his power is heightened and so is the certainty of death. The doubt could be cast through death which strikes regardless of one's age and physical strength while science fails to provide a cure. In that sense, this fiction questions the modern grand narrative of progress, in general, and the American postmodern limitless reliance on science, in particular.

The representation of death, as has been illustrated by this study, covers the aspects of the Dionysian imagination in Roth's novels as opposed to the Apollonian order in DeLillo's texts. Fear and denial of death may reawaken the Apollonian faculty of reasoning in order to eliminate it in *White Noise* and *Zero K*. In contrast, bodily humiliation may lead to the triumph of Dionysian aspects of perversion and artistic imagination in Roth's *Everyman* and

Nemesis. DeLillo faces us with adherence to the rules of culture and postmodern logic, while Roth's fiction may reveal more deeply the horrors of the Dionysian suffering and terrors of life, with art as the only possible healer at the end of it.

In both DeLillo and Roth's narratives, alienation from natural death due to the imbalance of logic and instinct (Apollonian and Dionysian) in dealing with death could deteriorate the psychology of the characters and throw them into the deep hole of existential futility and emptiness. DeLillo's characters may reject the existence of mortality and consider it an unnatural suffering they are not prepared to face or accept. Their technological culture dictates that death is a break from the natural order rather than a necessary aspect of human life and existence. An opposite awareness may otherwise be reawakened only by vulnerability and exposition to death and suffering, which though adopted by Roth's characters, lacks order, restriction and reason.

Roth's characters who are exposed to physical defenselessness, old age and sickness may perceive death as an uncanny force which inescapably destroys them. Attitudes to death by these characters could reflect many steps toward authenticity as defined by Heidegger because their anxiety discloses death as unavoidable and certain. However, the meaning of death as "individuating" and completing one's "being" may not be uncovered; hindering, as such, the existential significance of finitude. Despite their differences as regards the subject of death, DeLillo's and Roth's novels may intersect in their failure to account for all the elements of authenticity, the reason why death could not be understood or approached as an inherent property of "being" by the characters who would suffer, as a consequence, unstable psychologies, turning to introvert, isolated and alienated people.

The investigation into the moods of "fear" and "anxiety," have shown that though they are considered differently by Heidegger, they produce the same unsettling impacts in the

characters. Analyzing the novels from this perspective demonstrates that beyond this perception of death as a basis for deprivation and annihilation, it may be a force that existentially structures life and could be central to the understanding of human nature. If the question is what is it to be human, then half the answer is to be mortal and the other half is to understand this mortality and live in good terms with it. In relation to anxiety, it has been argued; that as a way to authentic self, it may not guarantee the person a tranquil existence. If this is the case of people who live anxiously but authentically, then what good does anxiety bring to its beholder? Heidegger's view in this respect in not stated, and as such his position regarding the authenticity of life which is granted by anxiety can be refuted as weak and lacking elucidation.

Not apart from the moods of anxiety and authenticity, the reading of the representation of death in *Nemesis* in the last chapter has run against Heidegger's view of anxiety over one's own death as the only effective state leading to authenticity. This opens the way to other, more relational moods, such as ethical care for the other, as routes to authenticity. The claim is more applicable to this novel because several moral insinuations could accompany awareness of death while such concerns are nearly absent in Delillo's texts where obsession with death lacks any roots in ethical engagements with the death of the other. It is demonstrated from the reading of *Nemesis* in light of Levinas's ideas on death and the other that despite the social barriers preventing the individual from linking the death of another to one's own death, or utilizing it as an analogy that can give insight into one's mortality, the death of another can actually have the ontological significance of uncovering the meaning of finitude. This thesis, therefore, modestly considers the rejection of the dichotomies of one's death and the death of the other for the reason that authenticity may also be acquired from anxiety over the death of the other. In this sense, *Nemesis* above all other texts by Philip Roth, allows reading an experience of humans not fleeing finitude but mortals anticipating their

death when they are brutally faced with people dying which, to Borrow from Levinas, heightens "connaissance" of their death. *Nemesis* makes it clear that postmodern estrangement from death may not be justified by facts because the age is also an age of death invasion (the recent invasion of Covid-19 is the best illustration of that assumption).

Don DeLillo's fiction which accentuates the role of death in reestablishing meaning and reconnecting with human essence partakes more in the Heideggerian and Nietzschean logic of the ethical imperative which comes and ends in the self. Roth's latest fiction, instead, opens for the possibility of questioning the non-relationality of death and the self. It attacks the excessive individuation and individual-centered vision of both self and death to call upon the social dimension of death. For this reason, *Nemesis* displays a rather Levenisian and Freudian ethics of death when it considers the main ethical imperative in the call to prepare for the death of another. The narrative calls to authenticity and ethics by facing up to the death of another instead of one's own death. Therefore, what Roth's fiction, naming *Nemesis*, could display is that "Dasein contains otherness in it, and is not closed off by individuation" (Carel 137), as anticipation of the death of the other may solicit the authentic being true to one' self.

Roth sees that being toward death, though certain, is being toward annihilation, loss and pain. This may suggest that while for DeLillo there is a possibility of finding and remaking the meaningful during postmodern times, for Roth the meaning which is lost cannot be recovered because the meaningful may reside in the healthy moral engagement with the other. However, the 'other' is under constant threats of wars and sickness. Following Roth's perspective, the modern man's injuries could be doomed to fear without consolation and meaninglessness without medication. A spark of optimism may be sensed in DeLillo's fiction while darkness and pessimism is forced upon Roth's characters who, consequently, approach death as the dark reaper and annihilator. In that sense, DeLillo seems to be imprisoned in the modernist nostalgia and lament for the lost values, wholeness and meaning while Roth

disrupts the grand narratives of progress by parodying the enlightenment ideal of advancement through reason. Roth, accordingly, proves to be the postmodernist who repudiates belief in both science and the toppled values and meaning.

Therefore, in DeLillo's novels, there reverberate political, cultural, historical as well as contextual ideas and echoes in relation to death. However, in Roth's narratives there reverberate more philosophical, existential and literary ideas which are related to one's concern for his own life or the life of others. Hence, one author (DeLillo) attempts to transcend a cultural pathology of loss of meaning and alienation (both psychological and existential) from the significance of death and human essence, while the other (Roth) is leading a personal war against the atrocities of death; seeking to transcend a personal anxiety over an impending death after having lost virility for old age and bodily sickness. From Delillo's fiction we may conclude that the attitude of denial and attempts at redefining death from certainty to misfortune or somatic condition could be an American cultural pathology and not a natural veracity. On the other hand, its perception as a menace and grim reality may be conditioned by the personal factors of age, health and even spiritual emptiness.

The thesis has argued, in a similar context, that dread of mortality may engage the human psyches in the other Freudian defence mechanisms—sublimation, projection and transference—which were thought to protect only against anxiety over sexual drives. It can be concluded that repression is the most powerful mechanism of defense, once is it operative in the psyche, it leaves no need for the appearance of other mechanisms. However, once it fails other defense systems need to be functional. By commenting on Freud's question in "Thoughts on War and Death" when he asks: "is it not for us to confess that in our civilized attitude towards death we are once more living psychologically beyond our means[40]?" (24)

[40] By the civilized attitude Freud refers to the cultural attitude of denial of death which he opposed to the primitive/ primal attitude of confirmation of the truth of death.

the study may affirm by saying that serious psychological and existential burdens can accompany the denial of death and may make life unendurable. To ease the suffering, the contemporary man needs to reconcile with the truth of mortality in order to live a life free of illusion and psychological burdens.

Understood from a Heideggerian perspective, it can be argued, DeLillo's characters exist in a milieu which imposes contradictions and oppositions between the forces of life and death instead of accepting existence as heading deathward. Their milieu forms death as a complete negation of life and deny its value. The initiated conflicts between the forces of life and death could enhance reliance on the human body as a medium to immortality through machines. The latter reinforce the body to increase chances of survival and eternal existence; as it is seen in *Zero K*. Differently from this stance, Roth's middle class aged or paralyzed men, have lost hope in survival or life-extension. Their full attention is absorbed by anticipation of death without aspiring for immortality or investigating in life-extending technologies because their body is pictured as the strong beholder of the first seeds of immortality.

At the level of discourse, DeLillo and Roth's conceptualisation of death absorbs philosophical, literary, psychoanalytical, religious and historical discourses and dialogises them in formulating a discourse of death which challenges all the claims of authority or centrality. That is to say a prior discourse on death—being religious, literary, or philosophical— is but a point of reference in the formulation of a wider postmodern discourse. The two authors' discourse of death is taken into another realm of intertextuality with its intersection with non-literary statements including philosophical, scientific and religious ones. So, the use of Bakhtin's theory of dialogism in this thesis allows the claim that the objectification of the discourse of death does not hold a firm ground in reality because it enters in a series of interrelationships which makes it multi-dimensional and elusive in

meaning. Besides, every author's discourse merges with various other discourses when it comes to death. Importantly significant, DeLillo's fiction enters in a dialogue with context and historical events and updates while Roth's interrogates other literary texts in order to investigate contemporary attitudes to death; comparing and contrasting the epoch's image of death to previous ones, and answering DeLillo's assumptions, too.

Through reading the novels from this perspective, this study has observed that *White Noise* does not show a universal meaning of death, yet it is a space of great potentiality where various relations come together and coalesce in producing a meaning of death particular to the American society of the 1980s. The more one looks outward the text into its dialogic relations with other texts and its context too, the greater the meaning and significance one gets. *Zero K* offers a frightening glimpse into the future of humanity under the premises of post-humanism. In addition to the various factors behind fear or denial of death—ranging from weapons of mass destruction, invisible chemical substances, various forms of terrorism, information technological threats, against which man had to develop psychological mechanisms of defense—the posthuman premises of immortality enhances denial of death.

In addition, by means of their intertextual collision with other literary texts, *Everyman* and *Nemesis,* project the complex link between secularization and attitudes to death. The novels explain that in their estrangement from death the characters have failed to find an alternative in religion. To show the deprivation of the postmodern individual from any spiritual appeasement for the terror of death, Roth creates characters who live in spiritual darkness unable to find meaning for death. The spiritual emptiness of the postmodern life is casted in *Everyman* by parodying the discourse of the medieval play *The Summoning of Everyman* to claim that the religious discourse is irrelevant to postmodern times. The sharp differences in the attitudes to death, God and religion in the two texts hint at the shattered soul of the contemporary man who fails to find a cure for the terror of death.

In addition, *Nemesis* displays that the atrocious death which permeated the 20th century is the main cause behind the secularization and loss of faith which went deep in the Western cultures for the decades and centuries to follow. Through dialogizing Albert Camus' discourse about death and God in *The Plague*, *Nemesis* dramatizeshow the loss of "the other"—and mainly that of children—either because of wars or natural illnessesenhanced bitterness against God and estrangement from the idea of death, considering it inappropriate for young age and a God's crime against humanity.

In the selected novels, death appears as a live concept which never achieves a final significance. The more it interacts with other meanings and texts, the more its significance changes and enlarges. The more it enters contexts, individual consciousness and gets in contact with other social and ideological facts, the more it gets permeated with richer interpretations. Death is a complex and thorny subject. Definite attitudes to it are difficult to grasp or find, particularly in postmodern literature. It is, without doubt, existentially important, culturally present and psychologically significant, and its influence is heavy on all the aspects of individual and social lives. This study reaches an end at this point without proclaiming that it has achieved the whole speculation on the representation of death in contemporary literature. However, it is certain that the speculation about the idea of death is a continual process because perceptions and attitudes to it, like Bakhtin's heteroglossia, are unfinalizable and unfinished.

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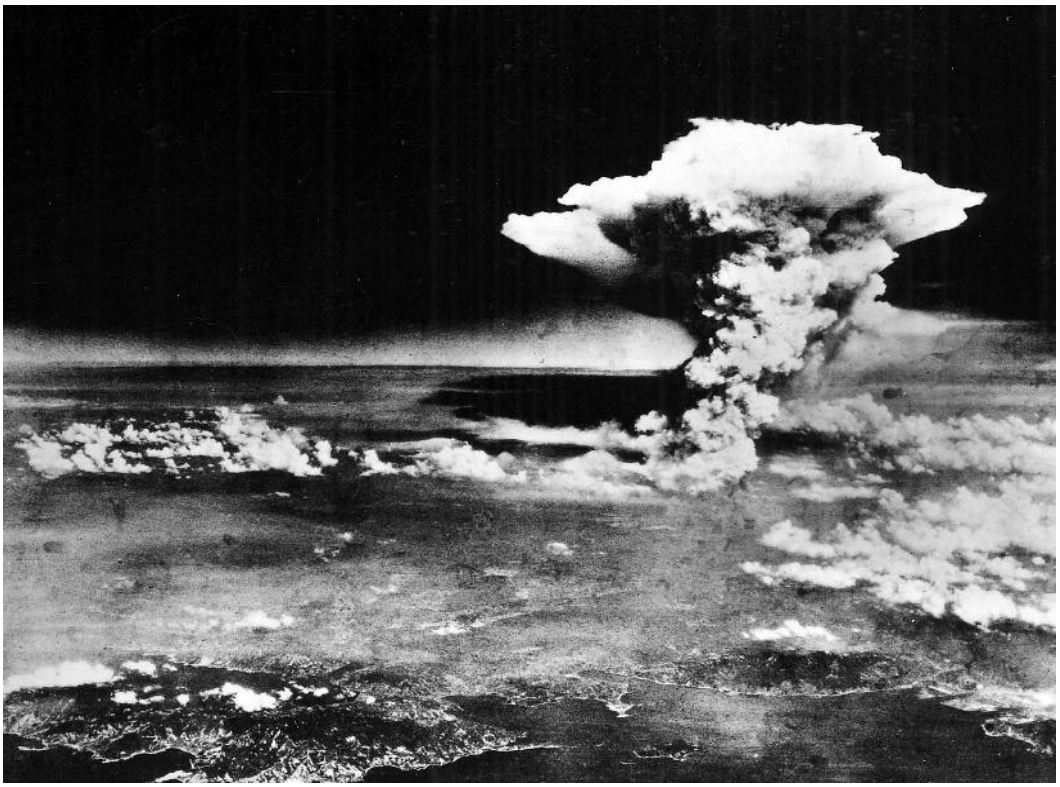
ملخص

تتناول هده الرسالة تصوير الموت في أربع روايات أمريكية معاصرة و هي الضوضاء البيضاء(1985) و زيرو ك (2016) للروائي دون ديليلو، بالإضافة إلى رواية الرجل (2006) و (2010) نيميسيس لفيليب روث. تعتمد هذه الرسالة على النظرية الوجودية لمارتن هايدغر ،أفكار التحليل النفسي لسيجموند فرويد و نظرية الحوار لميخائيل باختين لدراسة تصوير الموت في ما بعد الانسانية وتحليل العوامل الثقافية و الشخصية التي تؤثر على مفهوم و نظرية الموت فى الروايات المختارة. تتطرق هذه الرسالة إلى الأثار الوجودية ،النفسية و الروحانية للمواقف المختلفة للشخصيات اتجاه الموت والتي تتراوح من إنكار الموت إلى التأكيد على حتميته دون فهم أو تقبل قيمته الوجودية /الأنطولوجية. كما تشير هذه الدراسة إلى أن الوجود المزيف، اللامعنى الوجودي و فقدان شعور السكن بالإضافة إلى الانطواء و الغرابة النفسيين هي نتائج التصورات المختلفة للموت. هذه النتائج تدل على الابتعاد السائد في عالمي ما بعد الحداثة و ما بعد الانسانية عن مفهوم و قيمة الموت الطبيعي. لكن بينما دون ديليلو يحارب ضد الباثولوجيا الثقافية المتمثلة في اللامعنى مقترحا تصحيحه بالتصالح مع حتمية الموت ، فيليب روث يناقش مفهوم الموت و يقدم فكرة ساخرة عنه باعتباره حالة جسدية مرادفة للحرمان و الإذلال . من جهة أخرى ، اطهرت هذه الدراسة أن تصوير الموت من قبل ديليلو و روث سمح بمحاورة خطابات مختلفة من مجالات الفلسفة و الأدب، التحليل النفسي و التاريخ في تشكيل خطاب عن مفهوم الموت. هذا الحوار يتحدى سلطة أي خطاب من هذه الخطابات في تشكيل مفهوم الموت و يعتبر كل خطاب مسبق عن الموت كنقطة مرجعية في صباغة خطاب أوسع عن الموت في ما بعد الحداثة و ما بعد الإنسانية. في النهاية، أثبتت هذه الدراسة انه على عكس روايات ديليلو التي تناقش السياق التاريخي و الثقافي لنظرية الموت ، فان روايات فيليب روث تناقش خطابات أدبية من اجل البحث في المفاهيم المختلفة للموت .

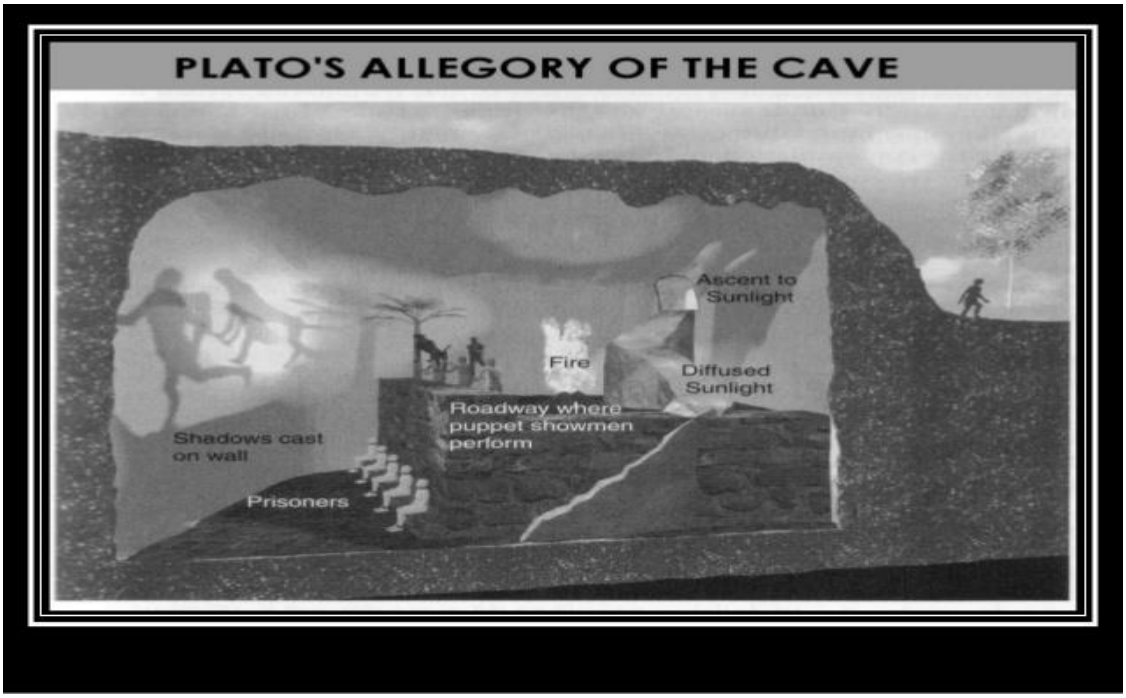
الكلمات المفتاحية: تصوير الموت ، دون ديليلو، فيليب روث، هايدغر، فرويد، مابعد الانسانية.

Appendices

App. 1: *The Triumph of Death* by Pieter Bruegel the Elder.



App. 2:A white and black photograph of the atomic explosions of the nuclear bombs on Japan.



App. 3: Plato's Allegory of the Cave