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FEAR OF DISPLACEMENT: DISRUPTION IN PLACE ATTACHMENT IN DON DELILLO'S *WHITE NOISE*

Abstract

Spatial criticism is an attempt to study environmental literature to demonstrate relationships between physical spaces and identity. Place attachment is a concept of environmental psychology that deals with the emotional bonds between individuals and the environment in which they feel secure. It is through the concepts of place identity and sense of place that scholars bring to the fore the concept of place attachment. Extending this thinking, the present paper seeks to propose place attachment and fear of disruption in attachment as the main reason for Jack Gladney's fear of

death. The protagonist of Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (1985) has developed a strong sense of place, identity and belonging to the space of town, supermarket, and his house. Jack's obsession with the cyberspace of TV and its psychic data is also examined in this paper. The aim of this paper is thus to study the formulation of the sense of place in Gladney. His place attachment and the fear of disruption are also studied at the crossroad of spatial criticism and trauma theory. The paper concludes by demonstrating how the fear of displacement causes haunting fear and anxiety in Jack Gladney.

Keywords: place attachment, disruption in place attachment, trauma, cyberspace, Don DeLillo, *White Noise*.

Introduction

The concept of human geography is recently being discussed in scholarly papers as the main issue in human life, which is directly related to the main universal issues of society, culture, psychology, economy, and politics. The word geography is defined as "the relationship of an individual, human, or other, and its interactions with the environment around it, allowing one to recognize realities, spaces, boundaries, and the interplay between them, on a scientific or a cultural fashion" (William D. Pattison 202). This definition fuses physical and psychological aspects of place. According to Eric Cain, "in the physical space, one could describe and make sense of a physical landscape" (121), for example every one of us have a sense of our neighborhood and its all-physical spaces and places but when we identify with our neighborhood and comment on its physical aspects we transfer this physical space into the space of our psyche and in higher levels after processing in the psyche we get attached to. Thus, it is impossible to separate time and space if one wants to do justice to spatial research and "in trying to understand the identity of a place we cannot or perhaps should not separate space from time or geography from history" (Massey 187). Without time, spatial elements are meaningless. Imagine a house with three bedrooms and two bathrooms and a yard. These spatial elements will be meaningful when used by a human being over the course of time. Space is understood through interactions, relations, and movements that happen over time and definitions of both concepts require the other in order to imply the spatial-temporal understanding "space often being defined by the time it takes us to cover it, and time being understood in terms of containers and expanses" (Habermann and Keller 1).

It was not just geographers and cartographers who had shown interest in the globe and its space. The concept of space was of equal interest among philosophers, mythology scholars, and literary thinkers. For some, setting is the protagonist of a literary work as the “characters cannot . . . float in place, nor stay put and silent; there must be a dialogue made up between sites and people” (Cadden 349). A literary work gets its significance when space is treated as alive and dynamic in the course of the work. The present paper seeks to study the “subjective dimension of place, which gives rise to expressions like ‘a sense of place’ and has an inherently experiential dimension” (Tally Jr. 15) in Don DeLillo’s thanatophobic novel *White Noise* (1985).

White Noise, Don DeLillo’s 1985 novel, has usually been analyzed by looking at the themes of media, catastrophic events, middle age crisis, and the psychology of death. However, the present study seeks to explore space and place attachment as a conceptual framework to understand the fear of death of Jack Gladney, the protagonist of the novel, for whom death is “the end of attachment to things” (DeLillo 15). It is intended to show that place attachment and fear of displacement to an unknown world is the main reason of Gladney’s fear of death. In the following chapters, the formulation of this attachment and the fear and probable trauma of displacement will be discussed. As a middle-aged protagonist, Gladney is developing a powerful relationship with the world because “the essence of movement from immaturity to maturity is movement from a sense of oneness with the world to an increasingly meaningful relatedness” (Chawla 71).

Sense of Place and Attachment

In the field of spatial criticism, much of the work on place attachment has remained wedded to the concept of sense of place. According to Robert Hay, sense of place is developed under three circumstances: “residential status in the place, . . . age stage . . . and development of the adult pair bond, most often in marriage” (5). Gladney’s longtime residences in Blacksmith, his commitment to his job as a university professor in town, his happy marriage to Babette, and his happy life with his children in his blended family were the factors that created a unique sense of place in him. Gladney’s emotional bond with the place cumulated in his middle age fear of death and displacement. Hay further explains that people are attached to the place in which they are born, brought up, lived, and married. Therefore, the formation of place attachment is based on several factors; According to Robert Hay, individuals can be attached to “restricted or

vast places of very different characteristics, but place attachment arises, among other variables, from mobility, length of residence, shared meanings and social belonging” (qtd. in Hernandez et al. 310). In order to clarify the way Gladney is attached to his residential space, it might be helpful to study the development of place identity and sense of place in his home. As Gladney is very much attached to the space of Blacksmith village and particularly to the space of his house and the supermarket, it is first essential to discuss the town in which Gladney lives. Suffice is to say that “reading the city involves the spatial representation and interpretation of its key socio-economic, cultural, and geographical aspects” (Ar-efi 103). The novel commits very well to this notion by initially portraying the spatial elements of Blacksmith:

There are houses in town with turrets . . . There are Greek revival and Gothic churches . . . There is an insane asylum with an elongated portico . . . [we] live at the end of a quiet street . . . There’s an expressway beyond the backyard now . . . At Fourth and Elm cars turn left for supermarket. (DeLillo 1)

This spatial opening of the novel also foregrounds the places that the characters will be obsessed throughout the novel as Gladney’s sense of place identity is developed in Blacksmith and the disruption in this identity led to a loss of identity, split self, and a haunting fear. According to Erving Goffman there are three types of identity: personal identity, social identity, and felt identity. Social identity in space is developed once people refer to themselves as New Yorkers, for instance. In this case, place will be very much fused with social identity and leads to an individual’s social identification with place. Social identification is defined as “identity contingent self-descriptions deriving from membership in social categories (nationality, sex, race, occupation, sports teams . . .)” (Hogg and Abrams 25). Common social identity is acquired by sharing a common location. The town college and the supermarket are the examples of those places that serve as a location for sharing common social identifications for Gladney. On the other hand, Gladney experiences a kind of *felt identity* in relation to space. Erving Goffman defines *felt identity* as a person’s “subjective sense of his own situation and his own continuity and character that an individual comes to obtain as a result of his various social experiences” (qtd. in Milligan 383). The novel abounds in Gladney’s various social experiences inside the space of Blacksmith as “[p]lace attachment links felt identity to experience in the built environment” (Milligan 383). The family’s frequent visits to the supermarket are

instances of such interactions that give meaning to Gladney's sense of self and subjectivity. Gladney relies on the space for constructing his felt identity.

After a detailed geographical description of Blacksmith, Gladney takes us into his house and describes its spatial features in relation to the objects inside. Bachelard emphasizes the significant role of objects in a space by stating that “[i]t is impossible to dream of an old house that is not the refuge of old things” (142). In the field of psychoanalysis, much of the work on attachment is discussed as a sub-branch of object-relation theory. Object-relation is widely studied in child psychology and is defined as “developing child's external and internal, imagined relations with significant people and things” (Chawla 69). Furthermore, Ernest G. Schachtel singles out the *allocentric* connection to the world in theories of object-relation and attachment: this is a kind of “other-centered perception, which opens itself to an object, trying to discover the characteristics that define its general form and its unique identity, which brings an intellectual pleasure” (qtd. in Chawla 70). In the novel, Gladney dedicates some space of his house to storing objects from the past; “furniture, toys, all the unused objects of earlier marriages and different sets of children, the gifts of lost in-laws, the hand-me-downs and rummages. Things, boxes” (DeLillo 2). Yet why are all these objects significant to him? All the spaces in the world are filled with objects that remind people of the past and un/pleasurable experiences that happened in that space. As if there is “a darkness attached to them, a foreboding” (DeLillo 2), Gladney stores them away from the heart of his house i.e., the kitchen. When Gladney thinks about these objects, they remind him not of his personal failure but of “something large in scope and content” (DeLillo 2), something that creates this bond. The objects to which individuals are attached do not exist in a vacuum; “the meanings of the things one values are not limited just to the individual object itself, but also include the spatial context in which the object is placed” (Rochberg-Halton 352), this is the space that relates the objects to their memories. Gladney implores about his attachment to the memory of these objects and tries to put them away because his attachment to these objects makes him much more frightened of death and the eventual displacement to another unknown world. Moving inside Gladney's house one might conclude that one of the main reasons why he is attached to the house is the fact that the house is “one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories, and dreams of mankind” (Bachelard 6). Gladney frees himself from the disturbing thoughts of death by attaching himself to the memories that he has kept from the past. How-

ever, towards the end of the novel and after their initial displacement, Gladney throws all the old objects away:

I started throwing things away. Things in the top and bottom of my closet, things in boxes in the basement and attic. I threw away correspondence, old paperbacks, magazines I'd been saving to read, pencils that needed sharpening. I threw away tennis shoes, sweat socks, gloves with ragged fingers, old belts and neckties. (DeLillo 100)

He does this with the hope of reducing his attachment to the place. Since he is shattered by their temporary displacement, Gladney attempts to efface anything that attaches him to the world.

Freud elaborates more on object-relation by stating that "relations with places and things mask repressed human interests" (Chawla 69). Similarly, both Gladney and his wife want to repress their fear of death by attaching themselves to objects and places such as the supermarket or stadium. In a conversation between Gladney and Babette about fear repression, Babette asserts that everyone has to face their fears instead of repressing them. Gladney, however, is of the opinion that "getting in touch with death is not what they had in mind. Death is so strong that we have to repress" (DeLillo 134) it. That is why he has repressed his fear of death by making a strong relationship with the places around him, by seeking tranquility in special places. If the house is a space for physical recharge, the supermarket operates as a place for spiritual recharging: "This place recharges us spiritually, it prepares you, it's a gateway or pathway" (DeLillo 16) to tranquility of mind. Once Gladney becomes aware of his wife's cheating on him, he symbolically separates from her by pushing his own cart in the supermarket: "Babette and I moved down the wide aisle, each with a gleaming cart" (DeLillo 99). The space of the supermarket becomes a world in which he is separated from his love. Gladney's search for peace of mind in space becomes much more obvious once he is diagnosed that he has a nebulous mass caused by being exposed to toxic chemicals at the onset of the disaster. At first, Gladney postpones his doctor appointment but finally decides to confront reality by entering the non-place of the clinic: "They scanned and probed in room after room, each cubicle appearing slightly smaller than the one before . . . emptier of human furnishing" (DeLillo 124). These rooms are lacking time or identity; they present themselves as "transitory, discursive spaces that block out perceived excesses of time, space, and identity" (Hughes-Warrington 62).

Gladney is restless to leave this transitory non-place to the streets of Blacksmith, which are once again – after the detailed opening account of novel – described in spatial details by Gladney. After a walk with Murray in Blacksmith, Gladney seeks once again the final shelter in the supermarket: “I followed him into the supermarket. Blasts of color, layers of oceanic sounds” (DeLillo 131). This vast and oceanic infinity is in contrast to the small cubicle confinement of the clinic rooms. The supermarket with its physical features draws Gladney and others, thus encouraging more shopping; “the rapid, emotional and intuition-centered” system of thought “dominate[s] many of our shopping decisions—all the more so in spaces designed to encourage more buying” (Hediger 188). The physical features of the supermarket directly stimulate the emotions and intuitions, and eventually lead to a feeling of liveliness in shopping. Gladney’s description of the supermarket reflects this notion: “Everything seemed to be in season, sprayed, burnished, bright” (DeLillo 15).

The appealing power of psychic data in the supermarket can be considered from a different perspective as well. The territorized mode of thinking leads to the control of space and finally to a kind of privatization of space. Once spaces are delineated by walls, frontiers and gates, the permission of entry is given to a limited number of individuals. The construction of shopping malls is an emblem of urban and social privatization and it can be seen as “the erosion of shared urban street space and its replacement with privatized, more exclusionary spaces of consumption” (Storey 430). These spaces, like the space of the supermarket in *White Noise*, invite a group and repel the unwanted with the help of security systems. The supermarket is secured with “the doors parted electronically” (DeLillo 141). Gladney and his family are invited to the private space of the supermarket and they feel secure because “the large doors slide open, they close unbidden” (DeLillo 16). The space of such places is, however, manipulated and controlled by the authorities:

These “secure” shopping centers, office blocks and apartment buildings, complete with gates and intercom systems, exemplify a trend towards socio-spatial design whereby territorial strategies associated with crime prevention effectively exclude those not wanted. (Daniels et al. 430)

When Gladney is inside the supermarket, he feels as if the gates prevent the death from entering. For Gladney, the authorized space of the supermarket, apart from its consumerist appeal, successfully bars whatever is unwanted, even

the death. Other spaces in the novel have the same property of security and repelling of unwanted. Despite being considered as non-places by Marc Augé in *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (1995), Gladney believes that “[p]lanes and terminals are the safest of places for the very young and very old. They are looked after, smiled upon” (DeLillo 42), i.e., the protected and territorized spaces safe for weaker citizens.

When we speak about the spatial identity of Gladney’s house, it is significant to note that each part of the house resembles certain parts of the body, some of them having much more significant functions and “its own character” (Bachelard qtd. in Casey 291): “To die in an apartment instead of a house can depress the soul” (DeLillo 16). For Gladney, the kitchen and the bedroom are the core parts of the house: “Babette and I do our talking in the kitchen. The kitchen and the bedroom are the major chambers around here, the power haunts, the sources. She and I are alike in this, that we regard the rest of the house as storage space” (DeLillo 2). Gladney’s sense of home and the centrality of kitchen in home space can be related to the concept of movement, which is a complementary concept to space as “[p]lace is important, but not more than movement; movement is important, but not purposeless motion toward and from nowhere” (Cadden 349). There must be a mutual relation between movement and place; people should move purposefully in space in order to interact with it and to gain a sense of space. In the novel, home is a space in which family members move around purposefully across the rooms, therefore “home is the combination of journey, firm locations, and family members who both travel with and wait for the traveling character” (Cadden 339). Gladney’s travel through different sites in *Blacksmith* concludes in his seeking serendipity in the home, kitchen, and bedroom in which he waits for his beloved ones. On the other hand, bedrooms for the individuals of all ages are considered as “a space providing autonomy” (Rochberg-Halton 352). Gladney has control over his activities inside the bedroom and it is a space in which “autonomy itself can be cultivated through dialogues with the self, mediated by cherished possessions” (Rochberg-Halton 352). Gladney and Babette spend a lot of time in the bedroom minding different businesses, stuffing it with precious objects, and deciding on important matters: “In a stack of material I found some family photo albums, one or two of them at least fifty years old. I took them up to the bedroom” (DeLillo 13). According to Rochberg-Halton, a paradox occurs in Gladney’s attachment to the bedroom as adults prefer the social mobility of the bedroom to the secrecy and autonomy

of the bedroom. Gladney's fear of death and the apparent middle age crises lead him to a privacy of the bedroom in which he can "cultivate in the immediate environment of objects of contemplation" (Rochberg-Halton 355) the concept of death. The home-place thus becomes the site of experience for the individual in which he/she feels safe and committed but, on the other hand, develops place identity.

In *White Noise*, it is not just Gladney who is affected and influenced by the sense of place. Babette, Gladney's wife, is a character that exhibits a very strong sense of place as well. Like Gladney, Babette is obsessed with the thoughts of death and displacement from her comfort zone – her home place Blacksmith. Blacksmith is "a unique place of familiar, known, and predictable activities, people, and physical elements" (Feldman 188); her frequent visits to the supermarket, running in the stadium, reading with the elderly, and doing the chores around the house together with the loved ones make Blacksmith a home place for Babette. Her place attachment is nourished by her social identity and interactions in the limited and simple life in Blacksmith.

Babette's social identity might be said to be created by rituals as well. To explain our statement, we have to look at Mitchell Lee's "Self and The City: Social Identity and Ritual at New York City Football Club" (2016) in which he focuses on social identity created by rituals. Lee argues that NYCFC fandom creates a kind of social identity that is "realized through ritual interaction in the form of normative group behavior" (1). In Lee's study, the ritual of singing songs by fans is considered a common point for gaining the feeling of belonging and social identity. Thus, when a group of people shares common interests and practices a special ritual in a specific space, they acquire social identity. As rituals are space related, people who share such rituals attach themselves to certain time and space. Moreover, social identity is entangled with place identity and attachment; Misse Wester-Herbert posits that "place identity would be a component of personal identity, which develops according to the elements that typify a specific area and the nature of the interactions that occur there" (qtd. in Hernandez et al. 311). space provides individuals with the capability to hold rituals and these rituals strengthen the sense of space and belonging. For example, in his study, Lee asserts that the spatial properties of Yankee Stadium with its acoustic and seating facilities made it possible for many fans to participate in the singing ritual as "a small group of committed fans created the system of 'capos' which tries to support unity of songs across the supporters' section" (Lee 3). In the novel,

Babette participates in a lot of group activities in Blacksmith – small gatherings proper to the small space of the town: “She gathers and tends the children, teaches a course in an adult education program, belongs to a group of volunteers who read to the blind” (DeLillo 2). She might not be able to attend such gatherings in a bigger city, because “[t]here is nothing for them to do in Blacksmith proper, no natural haunt or attraction” (DeLillo 26) and people occupy themselves with group activities such as the above-mentioned gatherings. Babette even used to, once a week, read “to an elderly man named Treadwell who lives on the edge of town” (DeLillo 2).

Babette’s place attachment can also be viewed from the perspective of the healing aspect of helpful spaces. Helpful spaces blend the physical properties of space with the spatial activities in order to cure mental distress. These spaces can offer “alternative social worlds where people can feel that they belong to a group and where different criteria of worth may be applied making possible positive identities and status” (Walker et al. 54). Walking in groups, yoga, cooking classes, reading for the elderly, group discussions, and other activities that Babette practices as a routine are the means for gaining control and identity by being in a setting other than your own space. In such settings, people gather and try to change the “discourses of disability, victimhood, powerlessness and dependence” into the feelings of “recognition, belonging and a sense of control” (Walker et al. 54). The distress healing mechanism of helpful spaces works as a fluid space. Simply put, helpful space is “the space in which the object of distress moves [and it] behaves rather like a fluid” (Walker et al. 59). In normal spaces like the space of a university for instance, the movement and articulation of the object of distress might not be possible whereas in the settings of mutual support groups the fluidity of the object of distress is acclaimed, which helps in the reduction of distress. The healing effects of fluid spaces, in which there is no rigidity of clinical cures, seek to “celebrate the everyday spaces, communities, organizations and encounters that allow some people to journey from misery through survival and recovery” (Walker et al. 61). There is no doubt that Babette is suffering from mental distress when she ends in drug abuse; she tries to heal this distress by involving in spatially oriented activities in public places; places in which she feels far from death.

Another spatially oriented character in the novel is Murray, Gladney’s colleague who has got very interesting ideas and attitudes toward space. Murray Jay Siskind is a new lecturer in Gladney’s college. He has moved to Blacksmith from

New York in search of a place for himself. He lacks a sense of belonging and rootedness because he spent most of his life in large metropolitan cities. Murray could not attach to those cities because “people inhabiting city districts that are endowed with more historical traces . . . will show stronger place attachment to their neighborhood... than those living in modern city quarters” (Lewicka 211). Murray also moves frequently from one place to another: “When I was a sportswriter . . . I traveled constantly, lived in planes and hotels and stadium smoke, never got to feel at home in my own apartment. Now I have a place” (DeLillo 22). The quote emphasizes Murray’s shifting notion of space and mobility, which might be a reason why he is not afraid of death. Not only is Murray not afraid of death because he believes in the reincarnation of the soul (“there is a transitional state between death and rebirth. Death is a waiting period, basically. Soon a fresh womb will receive the soul” (DeLillo 16)) but also because he is not attached to any place due to his constant spatial movement. Like gypsies, Murray is placeless; such people “are partly deterritorialized, simultaneously belonging everywhere and nowhere, their mobility juxtaposed to the settled nature of place-based communities” (Storey 427). It is also possible that Murray is not attached to any space because he mostly spent his life in non-places such as hotels and boarding rooms. The only reason that brought him from New York to a small town like Blacksmith is his wish to die in a place where his death will get noticed: “[I]n cities no one notices specific dying” (DeLillo 16). Murray wants to be remembered by others and he uses the small space of the town to achieve his aim:

Men shout as they die, to be noticed, remembered for a second or two. To die in an apartment instead of a house can depress the soul, I would imagine, for several lives to come. In a town there are houses, plants in bay windows. People notice dying better. The dead have faces, automobiles. If you don’t know a name, you know a street name, a dog’s name. “He drove an orange Mazda.” (DeLillo 16)

According to Hernandez et al., non-natives develop attachment rather than identity once they settle in a new region. Comparing the groups of immigrants and natives, they further explain that “respondents’ feeling of place attachment and place identity behave differently in both groups” (Hernandez et al. 317), with natives showing more identity in attachment. Their study confirms that “place attachment develops before place identity, at least in the case of the non-natives” (Hernandez et al. 318) and by forming place attachments non-na-

tives are willing to form a new identity. Murray's search for a calm place where his death would be recognized might be a sign of his development of place identity. Murray's attitude towards death also links place attachment to the concept of death and burial.

Murray is also aware of spatial manipulation by human beings. In the first pages of the novel, Murray and Gladney visit the famous Barn in the US that, according to Murray, changes with every photograph people take. Murray stresses the significance of natural landscape in human life and psychology as well: "The process of viewing a landscape is therefore one of careful construction, through which the indifferent or unaccommodating *space* of a site or environment is transformed into a *place*, which draws the viewer into its territory [*sic*]" (Whitehead 275). The barn as one of the rare examples of natural space in the novel; it is introduced at the beginning of the novel and again remembered during the crisis when Gladney's family and all the town residents are passing by this natural site in order to find shelter. When moving toward the camp. Gladney notices the sign: "we passed a sign for the most photographed barn in America" (DeLillo 58) and he yearns to return to that natural landscape. Not only does this site, as the most photographed one, satisfy people's psychological needs to reside in nature but also by photographing this landscape they want to own and perpetuate the nature for themselves. In addition, according to Rachel and Stephen Kaplan,

Natural settings support human functioning. They provide a context in which people can manage information effectively; they permit people to move about and explore with comfort and confidence. And, finally, such environments foster the recovery from mental fatigue. They permit tired individuals to regain effective functioning. (196)

Globalization, Cyberspace, Placelessness

Jack Gladney's uncertainties and anxiety are partially due to his place attachment; yet they are also the result of his awareness of other spatially produced obnoxious products of the new age. Besides his fear of death, Gladney suffers from several phobias related to space, one of them being fear of globalization. He keeps distance from big cities and prefers local to global: "there is much empirical evidence that people's awareness of being involved in open-ended global flows seems to trigger a search for fixed orientation points and action frames"

(Meyer and Geschiere 2). Jack's detailed description of his hometown at the beginning of the novel portrays his attachment to this place together with his awareness of globalization. Gladney describes in detail their local accessibility when he lists the names of all the important places on a ride back home: "The Airport Marriott, the Downtown Travelodge, the Sheraton Inn and Conference Center" (DeLillo 6). At the same time, the reader is, however, aware of the TV noise coming from different rooms. Gladney tries to dissociate himself from this noise; he even attempts to raise his youngest child, Wilder, without TV: "the boy is growing up without television . . . as a sort of wild child . . . intelligent and literate but deprived of deeper codes and messages" (DeLillo 22). This occurs because Gladney is aware that the excesses of modern life, and the TV images brought to the privacy of his home have not been too real for him. On the other hand, as Marc Augé asserts, he is aware of the negative effects of these images: "we anticipate perverse effects, or possible distortions, from information whose images are selected in this way: not only can they be . . . manipulated, but the broadcast image . . . exercises an influence" (*Non-Places: Introduction* 31). Jack's hatred toward TV is "timeless, self-contained and self-referring" (DeLillo 22) as TV is the outcome of supermodernity, exercising the effects of globalization on Gladney's life. He sees TV as "just another name for junk mail" (DeLillo 22).

Jill Bennet, a contemporary researcher on the aftermath of September 11, further asserts that the "contemporary environment of media and technology generates unexpected psychological encounters that we are unable to confront directly" (qtd. in Dale Pattison 9). This intruding quality of media is omnipresent throughout the novel as TV noise or white noise comes from different rooms in Gladney's house, implying that this flow of unwanted technology enslaves us unknowingly and in an uncontrollable way. In his *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, Marc Augé also points out how cunningly the TV manipulates history by giving examples of American soap operas that picture historical heroes with the familiarity of actors. Likewise, in Gladney's household TV is "a primal force in the American home" (DeLillo 22). Augé defines these soap operas as the "landscapes in which we regularly watch them [historical heroes] playing out their moves" (*Non-Places: Introduction* 32).

Another point to support our argument is found in Edward Relph's views on placelessness in the contemporary world. According to Relph, we sense place in two forms: *authentic* and *inauthentic*. An *authentic* sense of place is "a direct and genuine experience of the entire complex of the identity of places – not

mediated and distorted through a series of quite arbitrary social and intellectual fashions about how that experience should be, nor following stereotyped conventions” (Relph 64). In the modern era characterized by the development of mass culture, once we overuse the means that alienate us from the authentic feeling of space, we become the victims of the “less authentic attitude that is called placelessness” (Hubbard et al. 46). In the novel, mass media is a factor that blocks Gladney’s authentic and unmediated sense of space and pushes him into a feeling of placelessness.

Displacement

Displacement is detrimental; for example, when the place and soil of a plant are changed, it never grows prosperously in the new soil, or when a child is adopted, there is a possibility that he or she might develop a number of complexes. Similarly, in their 1992 paper “Disruptions in Place Attachment,” Barbara B. Brown and Douglas D. Perkins discuss the issue of spatial detachment and assert that this kind of disruption may deeply affect an individual’s everyday life since place attachment gives meaning to one’s self: “After the development of secure place attachments, the loss of normal attachments creates a stressful period of disruption followed by a postdisruption phase of coping with lost attachments and creating new ones” (Brown and Perkins 279). Brown and Perkins argue that the victims who are forced away from their attached places are always looking for a way to define their loss, just like other trauma victims who try to narrate the unnarratable stories of the traumatic moment. Their reactions are often furious including “feelings of anger, shock or disbelief and fear” (Brown and Perkins 285). In the novel, Gladney himself is aware of the issue of displacement in the world. His daughter Steffie used to collect and keep old things in order to feel attachment and belonging as this was “part of her strategy in a world of displacements to . . . keep things together for their value of as remembering objects, a way of fastening herself to life” (DeLillo 47). In the second section of the novel entitled “The Airborne Toxic Event,” Gladney and his family are forced to leave their home, or their attached space, and they come to experience displacement. According to Melinda J. Milligan, displacement usually occurs “when a site is no longer available for expected uses because of destruction, modification, or access limitations” (384). When a disruption in the attachment to a place with which one identifies happens, that individual experiences displacement and its side effects. As a result of the Toxic Event, the residents of Blacksmith experience

an involuntary displacement. Gladney and his family have to leave their house, the supermarket and even the town in order to protect themselves against “[a] dark black breathing thing of smoke” (DeLillo 49), which was toxic and caused by derailing of a tank car. Throughout the novel, the characters are suffering from the fear of displacement, but for the first time in this section the fear of displacement is really palpable: “But will we have to leave our homes?” (DeLillo 50). Gladney, however, is very much assured of the strength of their home against toxic events because it is a place to which his very self belongs. In order to calm his family, he lists the non-places like mobile homes that are vulnerable against catastrophic events because they do not have identity: “I don’t see myself fleeing an airborne toxic event. That’s for people who live in mobile homes out in the scrubby parts of the county, where the fish hatcheries are” (DeLillo 52). The people living in non-places such as mobile homes or motels are lost and isolated individuals who do not belong to a certain place, which thus does not have a meaningful role in their lives; they do not possess a place but are possessed by it. These individuals are “subjected to a gentle form of possession, to which [they] surrender [themselves] with more or less talent or conviction, [they] taste for a while—like anyone who is possessed—the passive joys of identity-loss, and the more active pleasure of role-playing” (Augé qtd. in Hughes-Warrington 74). Despite their frequent denial of the possibility of danger in their house, Gladney’s family is eventually forced to leave their secure residence. The evacuation of the place to which they are attached seems very absurd and unreal at first: “we had little to say to each other, our minds not yet adjusted to the actuality of things, the absurd fact of evacuation” (DeLillo 53), and they start their exodus to the unknown non-place of camp. Non-place is also defined as a “space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity” (Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction* 77); when Gladney enters the camp for protection, he scrutinizes spatial features of this place. He contemplates the “large grey area, dark and bare and lost to history a couple of hours ago” (DeLillo 58). The camp was once frequented for the purpose of playing or watching sports; now it is filled with bewildered individuals who have lost their sense of place, thus depriving the camp of its history. The camp is now a non-place.

White Noise continues with Gladney’s struggle with both threatening and soothing effects of non-places in his life. Non-places are the “spaces of circulation, communication and consumption, where solitudes coexist without creating any social bond or even a social emotion” (Augé, “Paris and the Ethnography” 178).

The supermarket, stadium, doctor's office, asylum, airport, cemetery, camp, and motel are among those non-places that Gladney experiences throughout the novel and towards which he has contrasting and different attitudes. It is interesting to note that the majority of non-places that Augé classifies are the "physical transit spaces such as motorways, airports, motels, shopping centers, and medical centers and hospitals" (qtd. in Hughes-Warrington 74). These non-places, which are the products of supermodernity, are the spaces in which people never develop a sense of place. Augé describes such a place as a world where

transit points and temporary abodes are proliferating . . . where a dense network of means of transport which are also inhabited spaces is developing; where the habitue of supermarkets, slot machines and credit cards communicates wordlessly, through gestures, with an abstract, unmediated commerce; a world thus surrendered to solitary individuality. (*Non-Places: Introduction* 78)

This world is familiar to Gladney since he always felt lonely and vulnerable. Furthermore, in his paper "The Pedagogy of the American City: Revisiting the Concepts of Place, Non-place, and Placelessness" (2004), Mahyar Arefi explores how the concepts of place, non-place, and placelessness intersect among school goers. Based on the students' responses, non-places have two purposes: one, they are the "means to certain ends (e.g., transportation, transit, commerce, leisure); two, . . . [they are the] conduits to connect different types of spaces and hence to facilitate individuals' interaction with the space" (Arefi 108). In the novel, the supermarket is such a non-place for Gladney as it is filled with addictive "psychic data" (DeLillo 16).

As asserted previously in the paper, the camp operates as a non-place in the novel. Gladney's symbolic displacement to the non-place of the camp foregrounds his fear of the final displacement to a place that is unknown to him. In the final section of the novel, Gladney asks the nun about heaven in search for knowledge about the place to which he will be transferred (DeLillo 143). This shifting in space disrupts his place attachment and, in this way, splits his self.

Trauma

Gladney's emotional bond and attachment to place is undeniable. Yet, it is also important to see whether or not he has been traumatized by the fear of

dislocation and detachment. As trauma and mourning are two interconnected terms – one mourns as a reaction to “the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as fatherland, liberty, an ideal, and so on” (Freud 153), the trauma of displacement or moving away from land causes mourning and loss. Gladney both experiences and foregrounds this loss and mourning throughout the novel. He fears this displacement throughout his whole life by fearing death and dislocation from this universe and later on, he symbolically experiences it—at least for a short period of time—when they were evacuated into a camp due to the toxic event. Once they are inside the camp, the fear of displacement is stated explicitly for the first time in the novel: “Look at us in this place . . . we are quarantined . . . This is the most terrifying time of our lives” (DeLillo 74). Though these words are spoken by a man in the camp, they implicitly reveal what passes through Gladney’s mind. Furthermore, the man in the camp complains of not being heard by the authorities. He claims that “our fear is enormous. Even if there hasn’t been great loss of life, don’t we deserve some attention for our suffering? Isn’t fear news?” (DeLillo 74). Like a victim of trauma who expects to be listened to, the victims of sudden displacement in *Blacksmith* believe that they deserve attention as “the attempt to express what has happened is not only directed toward the other in order to communicate or explain, but also toward the self in order to clarify the occurrence and attest to its reality” (Rogers 19). Once a person is traumatized, the “moments of the uncanny, for instance, occur as a familiar, domestic space becomes radically defamiliarized . . . this is tied to the traumatic moment of separation from the familiar space of the womb during childbirth” (Freud qtd. in Dale Pattison 7). DeLillo also implies that “we start our lives in chaos, in babble . . . Your whole life is a plot, a scheme, a diagram. It is a failed scheme” (DeLillo 132). The novel’s protagonist Gladney experiences fear and defamiliarization when he feels detached from his domestic attachments “Fear is unnatural . . . Pain, death, reality, these are all unnatural. We can’t bear these things as they are” (DeLillo 131). As a result of fear, Gladney loses the ability to think logically and implores childishly: “Don’t let us die, I want to cry out to that fifth century sky . . . Let us both live forever, in sickness and health, feeble-minded, doddering, toothless, liver-spotted, dim-sighted, hallucinating” (DeLillo 46). He could not reconcile his state of mind with his real, logical emotions. In trauma such as Gladney’s, “outside has gone inside without any mediation” (Caruth 50); therefore, the victim is not cognizant of its occurrence: “the breach in the mind—the conscious awareness of the threat to life—is not caused by a pure quantity of

stimulus . . . but by ‘fright,’ the lack of preparedness to take in a stimulus that comes too quickly” (Caruth 53). As Gladney has never been prepared to lose his love object in the form of the place, his fear of detachment from his attached space is as excruciating as the haunting of traumatic events. In a sense, he experiences a “modern death,” which, according to Murray, “has a life independent of us. It is growing in prestige and dimension” (DeLillo 68). Its mystery and disguised ubiquity might be much more haunting and tormenting because “it’s bad enough to fear the unknown” (DeLillo 129).

Fear of displacement or dissociation in place attachment might consequently be categorized as melancholia rather than mourning. Freud distinguishes between the two concepts by asserting that, unlike a mourner, a melancholic is not aware of the object of loss. In melancholia, there is an “unconscious loss of a love-object, in contradistinction to mourning, in which there is nothing unconscious about the loss” (Freud 155). In the novel, Gladney’s state of mind is rather melancholic and since he is not aware of his love object he does not know what object he is mourning for. In fact, Gladney experiences homesickness – “deliberate changes in the way we inhabit space and time” (Hediger 279) – once he has been evacuated due to the toxic event, homesickness becomes a phenomenon he has feared all his life. This is the change in which “we deliberately make room for more passive or receptive modes” (Hediger 279), meaning that passivity in time and space can lead to homesickness and fear of detachment. In the novel, a similar viewpoint is introduced by Winnie Richards, a lab technician, who has “a spacey theory about human fear” (DeLillo 103) and pictures Gladney as a passive, “confirmed homebody, a sedentary fellow who finds himself walking in a deep wood” (DeLillo 103) and who allows passivity to enter him, which results in him experiencing anxiety and fear. According to her, this is how fear is generated:

You spot something out of the corner of your eye. Before you know anything else, you know that this thing is very large and that it has no place in your ordinary frame of reference. A flaw in the world picture. Either it shouldn’t be here or you shouldn’t. Now the thing comes into full view. It is a grizzly bear, enormous, shiny brown, swaggering, dripping slime from its bared fangs. Jack, you have never seen a large animal in the wild. The sight of this grizzer is so electrifyingly strange that it gives you a renewed sense of yourself, a fresh awareness of the self—the self in terms of a unique and horrific situation. You see yourself in a new and intense way. You rediscover yourself. You are lit up for your own im-

minent dismemberment. The beast on hind legs has enabled you to see who you are as if for the first time, outside familiar surroundings, alone, distinct, whole. The name we give to this complicated process is fear. (DeLillo 103)

Thus, the self is alienated, and subjectivity leads to fear and homesickness. Gladney eventually comes to realize how he deliberately fueled this process and how the intruders in his comfort zone, whether toxic event or consumerism, benefitted from his passivity.

Babette shows melancholic attitudes as well. She has lost her self when she started using drugs to confront her fears of death and displacement: “I was remote. I was operating outside myself” (DeLillo 87). According to Freud, “melancholia does not recognize the lost object, and instead attributes the loss to some part of the self” (158). Similarly, Babette repeatedly admits her fear of dislocation to the unknown space of death: “I’m afraid to die. I think about it all the time. It won’t go away” (DeLillo 88). Both Gladney and Babette have been haunted by the fear of death throughout their lives, but this has changed into a real traumatic event after their experience of the immanency of death and displacement due to the toxic event. Babette thus experiences PTSD, which can be defined as

fundamentally a disorder of memory. The idea is that, owing to the emotions of terror and surprise caused by certain events, the mind is split or dissociated: it is unable to register the wound to the psyche because the ordinary mechanisms of awareness and cognition are destroyed. (Leys 2)

Babette’s memory has been shattered, and to forget what cannot be disciplined and regulated inside her memory she starts using illegal drugs prescribed by Dr. Grey. She does this because the fear of death is unbearable for her: “It haunts me, Jack. I can’t get it off my mind . . . What can I do? It’s just there” (DeLillo 88). Unlike Gladney and Babette, Murray benefits from space without being attached to it. “In Blacksmith, in the supermarket, in the rooming house, on the Hill,” he, as he admits, “I feel I’m learning important things every day. Death, disease, afterlife, outer space. It’s all much clearer here. I can think and see” (DeLillo 15).

Conclusion

Space is not merely a container where history happens, it is a dynamic force that envelopes an individual's life and shapes it. Place attachment is a crucial issue of the human geographers' debate where a deep immersion in space leads to strong bonds with surrounding space. Virtual space, electronic frontiers, and cyberspace are among those places that can attach an individual as well. Moreover, place attachment has a significant role in developing one's personal and social identity. Eventually, those life experiences occurring inside a specific space lead to the formulation of sense of place. When the attachment to a place is voluntarily or involuntarily shattered, the individual experiences distress of disruption and loss of identity. In *White Noise*, Jack Gladney and his wife are strongly attached to space, which contributes to the development of their sense of identity in place. When their identity in place gets shattered, Gladney and Babette experience the fear of disruption in the place attachment and eventually the fear of death. The fear of displacement haunts their life, leading to perpetual anxiety and fear, which they attempt to alleviate by drugs and other distracting activities. Even though they struggle to stay calm in a forced journey of displacement, their reactions to the threat of displacement are anger, fear, and anxiety. Thus, Gladney's obsession with the idea of death seems very much affected by his place attachment.

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STRAH OD PREMJEŠTANJA: NARUŠENA PRIPADNOST MJESTU U ROMANU *WHITE NOISE* DONA DELILLA

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Prostorna kritika nastojanje je ekokritičkoga čitanja tekstova s ciljem prikazivanja odnosa fizičkih prostora i identiteta. Privrženost mjestu pojam je ekopsihologije koji proučava emocionalne veze pojedinaca s okolinom u kojoj se osjećaju sigurno. Kroz pojmove identiteta mjesta te osjećaja mjesta, pojam privrženosti mjestu poprima značaj teme vrijedne znanstvenoga istraživanja. Nastavno na to razmišljanje, rad iščitava privrženost mjestu i strah od narušene privrženosti mjestu kao glavni razlog za strah od smrti glavnoga lika DeLilove *Bijele buke* (1985.). Jacka Gladneya karakterizira snažan osjećaj mjesta, identiteta i pripadnosti prostoru grada, supermarketa i njegove kuće. U radu se isto tako propituje Jackova opsjednutost televizijskim cyberprostorom te njegovim nematerijalnim podacima. Shodno tomu, cilj je proučiti oblikovanje Gladneyje-

va osjećaja mjesta, kao i njegovu privrženost mjestu i strah od njezine narušenosti na presjeku prostorne kritike i teorije traume. Rad će u zaključku slikovito prikazati kako strah od narušene privrženosti u Jacku Gladneyju izaziva neprestani strah i tjeskobu.

Ključne riječi: privrženost mjestu, narušena privrženost mjestu, trauma, *cyberprostor*, Don DeLillo, *Bijela buka*