

POSTMODERN CRISIS OF METANARRATIVES IN *WHITE NOISE*: A LYOTARDIAN READING THROUGH BELSEY'S TEXTUAL ANALYSISSyed Arif Ullah<sup>\*1</sup>, Dr. Iesar Ahmad<sup>2</sup><sup>\*1</sup>PhD in English scholar, Muslim Youth University, Japan Road, Islamabad, Pakistan<sup>2</sup>Professor of English Literature, Muslim Youth University, Japan Road, Islamabad, Pakistan<sup>1</sup>arifkhanscholar@gmail.com, <sup>2</sup>iesar.ahmad@myu.edu.pkDOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20025084>**Keywords**

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Corresponding Author: \*

Syed Arif Ullah

**Abstract**

This study investigates how Jean-François Lyotard's philosophy of postmodernism, specifically his concept of "Incredulity toward metanarratives" (Lyotard, 1984), is textually enacted in Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (1985). The central argument is that DeLillo's novel does not merely reflect postmodern conditions but actively produces postmodern discourse through its narrative strategies, linguistic devices, and ideological configurations. The study employs Catherine Belsey's (1980, 2002) model of textual analysis as its primary methodology, a poststructuralist framework that examines how language, ideology, and discourse construct rather than reflect meaning. By aligning Lyotard's theoretical framework with Belsey's analytical method, the research operationalizes philosophical abstraction into close literary analysis. The study identifies a significant gap in existing scholarship: while Lyotard's philosophy has been widely discussed in cultural theory, it has not been systematically applied to *White Noise* through a rigorous textual methodology. This research bridges that gap by demonstrating how DeLillo's novel, through devices such as irony, simulation, discursive fragmentation, and hyperreality, enacts the collapse of grand narratives and validates knowledge through performativity rather than universal truth. Textual evidence is drawn exclusively from *White Noise*, with citations aligned to Lyotard's postmodern principles and Belsey's analytical stages. Findings reveal that the supermarket, media broadcasts, pharmaceutical discourse, and consumer rituals in the novel function as language games that replace transcendent authority with localized, provisional meaning-systems.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

This research deals with the problem of how Jean-François Lyotard's postmodernist philosophy - in particular, his notion of "incredulity toward metanarratives" (Lyotard, 1984) - translates from theoretical proposition to the texture of narrative art by focusing on a canonical work of American postmodern literature, Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (1985). A novel that features media simulacra,

consumerism, technophobia, and an all-pervading anxiety of death, *White Noise* is commonly described as a fictional representation of the postmodern. But the research's key argument moves beyond such an impressionistic approach. Rather, we argue that DeLillo's novel doesn't merely reflect postmodern conditions; it generates postmodern discourse through narrative, linguistic and ideological techniques. To validate

such a claim, the research moves beyond impressionistic analysis and adopts a poststructuralist method. In particular, it draws on the textual analysis of Catherine Belsey (1980, 2002), a method that highlights how language, ideology and discourse create - rather than merely represent - meaning.

### Background of the Study

Postmodernism has become one of the most significant yet contested concepts in the humanities, shaping debates in literature, philosophy, and cultural studies for more than half a century. Jean-François Lyotard crystallized these debates in his influential work *The Postmodern Condition* (1984), defining postmodernism as "incredulity toward metanarratives." Metanarratives—such as the Enlightenment's belief in rational progress, Marxism's story of emancipation, or Christianity's narrative of salvation—had lost their legitimizing power. In their place, Lyotard (1984) proposed the concept of "language games," localized discursive systems each governed by its own internal rules, where no single discourse can claim supremacy over all others.

Catherine Belsey's model of textual analysis, developed in *Critical Practice* (1980) and refined in subsequent works (2002), offers a rigorous poststructuralist methodology for examining how texts construct meaning through language, ideology, and discourse. Her approach—grounded in Saussure, Barthes, Derrida, and Althusser—conceives of texts not as passive reflections of reality but as active participants in ideological formation. Both Lyotard and Belsey share a suspicion of essentialist readings and a commitment to exposing the plurality of meaning; yet their frameworks have rarely been brought into sustained dialogue for the analysis of a single literary text.

Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (1985) has been widely recognized as a paradigmatic postmodern novel. Set in a media-saturated American suburb, the novel dramatizes the conditions Lyotard theorized: the collapse of grand narratives, the proliferation of competing language games, and the

legitimation of knowledge through performativity rather than universal truth. DeLillo's protagonist, Professor Jack Gladney, navigates a world where meaning is ceaselessly deferred across consumer rituals, media broadcasts, pharmaceutical discourses, and institutional spectacles. These textual strategies make *White Noise* an ideal site for applying Lyotard's philosophy through Belsey's analytical model.

### Postmodernism

As a cultural and intellectual movement, postmodernism can be most succinctly defined by its deep mistrust of the grand, universal narratives that once provided a legitimating discourse for knowledge, history and social change, or "incredulity toward metanarratives" (Lyotard, 1984).

Postmodernism, as a cultural and intellectual movement, can be most briefly defined as a deep distrust of totalizing narratives that legitimized knowledge, history and social progress. As Lyotard (1984) famously puts it in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, the central trait of postmodernity is an "incredulity toward metanarratives" such as Enlightenment rationalism, Marxism, and Hegelian idealism. Fredric Jameson (1991) describes postmodernism as the cultural logic of late capitalism, featuring pastiche, historicity and the ever-increasing disintegration of subjective life. Likewise, Ihab Hassan (1987) points to a range of stylistic and theoretical departures, from form to anti-form, hierarchy to anarchy, presence to absence, which together mark the difference between postmodern and modernist aesthetics. Linda Hutcheon (1988) clarifies this with her term "historiographic metafiction," which postmodern art both parodies and writes the very conventions it critiques, creating a critical duality. While these approaches differ in emphasis, a common thread emerges: postmodernism does indeed destabilize meaning, destabilize the discourse of authority, and emphasize the constructed nature of the world through language. However, a recurring problem is this: how can this abstract expression of philosophical attitude be translated into a tangible series of textual operations? This research seeks to

answer this question with Catherine Belsey's (1980, 2002) poststructuralist approach to textual analysis, which reveals how language, ideology, and discourse actively constitute meaning. This study operationalizes philosophical abstraction, translating Lyotard's "incredulity toward metanarratives" from a conceptual phrase to an analytic process by bringing Lyotard's theory into conversation with Belsey's method.

### Research Objective

To investigate how *White Noise* articulates postmodern incredulity toward metanarratives through its narrative and discursive configurations, employing Belsey's model of textual analysis.

### Research Question

How does *White Noise* articulate incredulity toward metanarratives within a Lyotardian postmodern framework when examined through Belsey's textual analysis?

## 2. Literature Review

Postmodernism emerged in the mid-to-late twentieth century as a philosophical, cultural, and aesthetic critique of modernity. Jean-François Lyotard (1984) defines the postmodern age as one characterized by the erosion of faith in metanarratives—such as scientific rationalism, Marxism, and Christianity—that once provided coherence and legitimation to knowledge. These master narratives, Lyotard argues, are no longer credible because they claim to represent all of human experience while excluding difference, ambiguity, and plurality. In their place, postmodernism privileges local, contingent, and heterogeneous knowledges (Best & Kellner, 1991). This intellectual shift marks a decisive break from modernist epistemology.

Philosophical foundations for this critique were laid by Jacques Derrida (1976), whose concept of 'difference' demonstrated that language never achieves finality. Michel Foucault (1975, 1980) exposed how knowledge is inseparable from power, showing that what a society deems true is produced through discursive formations sustained by institutions. Roland Barthes (1977) advanced

the thesis that meaning arises through the reader's active engagement with the text, not from authorial intention. Together, these thinkers provided the epistemological groundwork for postmodernism's critique of universality.

### Don DeLillo's *White Noise* in Critical Scholarship

*White Noise* has generated extensive critical commentary since its publication. Mark Conner (2000) situates the novel within the tradition of American postmodernism, reading it as a satire of consumer culture. Cornel Bonca (1996) examines the role of death anxiety in the novel's structure, while Michael Messmer (1987) analyzes its treatment of media and language. Paul Cantor (1991) explores the novel's representation of the academy. Baudrillard's (1994) theory of hyperreality has been widely applied to DeLillo's work, as the novel's characters inhabit a world where simulation replaces experience. However, despite this body of scholarship, no study has applied Lyotard's specific theoretical framework—in particular, his concepts of incredulity toward metanarratives and language games—through Belsey's analytical model to a close textual reading of *White Noise*. This gap constitutes the original contribution of the present study.

## 3. Research Methodology

The research is based on qualitative, text-based analysis framed by poststructuralist literary analysis. The main method used is Catherine Belsey's (1980, 2002) model of textual analysis, as described in *Critical Practice and Poststructuralism: A Very Short Introduction*. Belsey's model is based on three interrelated assumptions: first, that language is not a neutral medium but a system of differences that produces meanings; second, that texts are sites of ideological struggle, not mere representations of reality; and third, the need to expose the "interpellation" of the reader into dominant ideological identities (Belsey, 1980).

The research is theoretically in line with Lyotard's (1984) "incredulity toward metanarratives," which renders his philosophical construct into textual practices. The study draws only on the primary

text, Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (1985), and undertakes close reading using the Belseyian model. No empirical or quantitative methods are used, as the object of study is not empirical or statistical.

### Research Paradigm and Design

This study operates within the interpretivist-constructivist paradigm, which assumes that meaning is socially and linguistically constructed rather than objectively discovered (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research design is analytical-descriptive and qualitative, employing close textual analysis as the primary method. This design enables in-depth interpretation of literary language, discursive patterns, and ideological formations within *White Noise*. The interpretivist paradigm aligns naturally with postmodern theory, which rejects universal truth claims and emphasizes the contingency of knowledge.

### Data Source

The primary data source is Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (1985). All textual citations and analyses are drawn exclusively from this novel. Theoretical texts by Lyotard (1984) and Belsey (1980, 2002), along with relevant secondary scholarship, function as interpretive frameworks rather than as data. This restriction ensures that the analysis remains grounded in the literary text and that all references in the conclusion correspond to passages analyzed in the study.

### Analytical Procedure

The analysis proceeds through Belsey's four-stage model applied systematically to selected passages from *White Noise*. Passages are selected on the basis of their relevance to Lyotard's three key concepts—*incredulity toward metanarratives*, *language games*, and *performativity*. The analytical process involves: (a) textual familiarization through repeated close reading; (b) identification of discursive formations and ideological structures; (c) close linguistic reading of selected passages; (d) synthesis of interpretive insights aligned with Lyotard's framework.

### Belsey's Model of Textual Analysis

Belsey's model (1980, 2002) operates through four analytical stages, each applied systematically in the analysis chapter. The first stage—*identifying discursive formations*—examines how language in a text reproduces ideological positions and power relations. The second stage—*close linguistic reading*—analyzes word choice, syntax, imagery, and rhetorical patterns to reveal how meaning is produced through specific linguistic choices. The third stage—*uncovering ideological assumptions*—situates linguistic patterns within broader cultural and political formations. The fourth stage—*synthesizing critical knowledge*—constructs interpretive insights that connect textual detail to philosophical and theoretical questions.

### Validity and Trustworthiness

Validity in qualitative literary research is understood as credibility, coherence, and interpretive transparency (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility is established through sustained textual engagement and detailed evidence for all interpretive claims. Dependability is ensured through systematic documentation of analytical procedures. Confirmability reflects the researcher's reflexive awareness of interpretive positioning. Theoretical triangulation—*cross-referencing findings through Lyotard, Belsey, and relevant secondary scholarship*—enriches analytical depth and reduces the risk of monolithic readings.

### Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in three of Lyotard's concepts from *The Postmodern Condition* (1984). First, "*incredulity toward metanarratives*" describes the collapse of grand legitimating systems in postmodern culture. Second, "*language games*," adapted from Wittgenstein, refers to the plurality of local discursive systems, each governed by its own rules of legitimation, none capable of claiming universal authority. Third, "*performativity*" identifies efficiency and operational effectiveness as the postmodern criterion for validating knowledge, replacing correspondence to truth. These three concepts provide the philosophical lenses through which each textual passage from *White Noise* is analyzed.

#### 4. Textual Analysis of *White Noise*

The following analysis applies Belsey's four-stage model to selected passages from *White Noise* (DeLillo, 1985), examining each through the lens of Lyotard's postmodern philosophy. Each subsection identifies the operative language game, the mode of incredulity toward metanarratives, and the performative dimension of meaning production.

##### Institutional Discourse and the Parody of Grand Narratives

*"More than formal liturgies or laws, the college tells the parents they are a collection of the like-minded and the spiritually akin, a people, a nation."* (DeLillo, 1985, p. 15).

Belsey's stage one identifies here the discursive formation of institutional nationalism—language typically reserved for the state is relocated within an academic setting. The close linguistic reading (stage two) reveals irony in DeLillo's mimicry of grand rhetoric: terms such as "spiritual akin," "people," and "nation" are deployed to describe a college orientation day. Stage three uncovers the ideological assumption that collective identity is produced by rhetoric rather than by essence. Lyotard's framework clarifies that this authority derives from performative discourse: the college does not embody universal meaning but stages it for an audience. Belsey's synthesis (stage four) confirms that community is discursively constructed; its fragility is exposed by DeLillo's ironic displacement of national belonging into the institutional register.

##### Consumer Guilt and the Collapse of Moral Metanarratives

*"She feels guilty if she doesn't buy it, she feels guilty if she buys it and doesn't eat it, she feels guilty when she sees it in the fridge, she feels guilty when she throws it away."* (DeLillo, 1985, p. 20).

Belsey's discursive analysis reveals consumer practice constituted as a moral language game. The syntactic parallelism—"feels guilty if..." repeated four times—performs the circularity of postmodern consciousness, where action and inaction produce identical affective outcomes. Lyotard's incredulity toward metanarratives is enacted: the universal

moral framework that would adjudicate guilt has collapsed, leaving only its discursive residue. Authority is provisional, located in cultural codes rather than transcendent morality. Belsey's synthesis demonstrates that meaning here does not reside in the food itself but in the language of guilt that surrounds it—a pure language game whose rules produce their own reality.

##### The Barn, the Sign, and the Death of Referentiality

*"No one sees the barn. Once you've seen the signs about the barn, it becomes impossible to see the barn."* (DeLillo, 1985, p. 25).

This passage is among DeLillo's most philosophically precise dramatizations of postmodern incredulity. Belsey's close reading identifies the sign-referent relationship as the target of DeLillo's critique: representation displaces rather than reveals the real. The discursive formation at work is that of the tourist industry—a language game that produces "most photographed barn in America" as a category of knowledge that forecloses direct perception. Lyotard's framework situates this as incredulity toward any metanarrative of presence or authenticity. Meaning arises in the circulation of signs rather than in empirical reality. Belsey's synthesis insists that discourse has created the barn's aura—the object itself is secondary to its discursive construction.

##### Media Authority and the Toxic Event

*"The radio said: 'The airborne toxic event has begun to spread.'"* (DeLillo, 1985, p. 55).

The authority of the radio functions here as a language game in Lyotard's sense: its rules determine what counts as credible knowledge. Belsey's discursive analysis reveals that knowledge of the crisis is never direct but always already filtered through technological mediation. The phrase "airborne toxic event" is itself a discursive formation—a bureaucratic euphemism that reduces catastrophe to a manageable code. Lyotard's framework clarifies that legitimacy is derived from performative circulation: the radio's repetition of the phrase grants it authority independent of empirical verification. Belsey's

synthesis demonstrates that significance lies in the discourse itself, not in any event beyond language. “Some said the cloud would dissipate naturally. Others predicted irreversible damage.” (DeLillo, 1985, p. 59). The proliferation of contradictory statements dramatizes Lyotard’s condition with particular clarity. Authority is dispersed across competing discourses, none of which achieves dominance. Belsey’s linguistic reading identifies the syntactic structure of opposition—“some said... others predicted—” as itself performing epistemological instability. Meaning emerges from the juxtaposition of claims rather than from any factual certainty about the event.

### Simulation and Performativity: The SIMUVAC Episode

“The simulation was said to be more effective than the evacuation itself.” (DeLillo, 1985, p. 165).

This passage constitutes the novel’s most concentrated enactment of Lyotard’s performativity principle. Belsey’s discursive analysis identifies the SIMUVAC language game: its rules determine that preparation—the simulation—is more legitimate than the event it prepares for. The ideological assumption uncovered at Belsey’s stage three is that efficiency, not correspondence to reality, validates knowledge. Lyotard’s framework clarifies that in postmodern culture, knowledge is legitimized by its operational effectiveness. The copy surpasses the original, meaning is generated in the play of discourse rather than in empirical grounding. Belsey’s synthesis notes the fundamental contradiction the text stages: the text simultaneously narrates simulation as authority and exposes that authority as constructed.

### Consumer Space as Secular Metanarrative

“The supermarket shelves have a way of reassuring us, as if abundance itself could hold back death.” (DeLillo, 1985, p. 154).

Belsey’s stage one identifies consumer abundance as a discursive substitute for sacred or universal truths. The linguistic device of the simile—“as if”—is analytically crucial: DeLillo’s prose acknowledges that the reassurance is performative rather than ontological. Lyotard’s incredulity

toward metanarratives is dramatized in the replacement of religious or scientific grand narratives with the language game of consumption. The supermarket stages permanence through procedural repetition (constant restocking) rather than through transcendent guarantee. Belsey’s synthesis reveals that meaning is produced discursively; the reassurance the supermarket offers is real only insofar as its discourse is maintained.

“Murray told me the supermarket was our true spiritual center, more vital than churches or universities.” (DeLillo, 1985, p. 175).

Murray’s claim foregrounds the ironic inversion of sacred hierarchy. Traditional institutions of authority—church, university—are displaced by commerce in a move that parodies both. Lyotard’s analysis of incredulity applies directly: theology and academic knowledge dissolve as grand narratives, leaving only the consumer language game. Belsey’s approach demonstrates that the supermarket’s meaning is not stable but contingent on how language frames it. Murray’s statement is both satirical and diagnostic, revealing the postmodern condition in which no single discourse holds precedence.

### Pharmaceutical Discourse and the Colonization of Subjectivity

“I could not sleep, thinking about Babette and the pill Dylar, its promise to eliminate the fear of death.” (DeLillo, 1985, p. 160).

Belsey’s discursive analysis reveals Dylar as the central pharmaceutical language game of the novel. The “promise” of the drug to eliminate the fear of death represents a postmodern substitution: scientific-pharmaceutical discourse replaces metaphysical or religious grand narratives as the legitimating system for managing mortality. Lyotard’s framework interprets this as a paradigmatic example of performativity: the drug is valued not for its correspondence to truth about death but for its operational promise of relief. Belsey’s close reading identifies “eliminate” as ideologically loaded—it implies total mastery over mortality, a claim that the novel systematically ironizes.

*"Babette confessed that Dylar had not eradicated her fear but had taught her new ways of naming it." (DeLillo, 1985, p. 257).*

This passage directly illustrates the failure of the pharmaceutical metanarrative and confirms Lyotard's skepticism. Rather than eliminating fear, Dylar has produced a new discursive framework for articulating it. The drug does not deliver on the promise of science; it delivers a new language game. Belsey's synthesis clarifies that meaning is generated in this very instability: language both conceals and reproduces anxiety, and it is in this productive contradiction that the novel's postmodern critique resides.

### Death as Discursive Formation

*"Death was no longer a fate but a problem of data, medical charts and chemical reactions." (DeLillo, 1985, p. 170).*

Belsey's model identifies here the transformation of mortality from a metaphysical or theological category into a technical-scientific language game. Death is de-universalized and re-coded as information. Lyotard's framework explains this as the triumph of performativity: death is managed not through transcendence but through data management. The close linguistic reading reveals the semantic shift enacted by DeLillo's prose: "fate" (implying cosmological order) is replaced by "data" (implying contingent, processable information). Belsey's synthesis demonstrates that significance does not reside in death itself but in how discourse organizes its terms, a textual enactment of Lyotard's central thesis.

*"Jack admitted that he sought out death, needing to see its shape in order to imagine life." (DeLillo, 1985, p. 403).*

Here DeLillo frames death as a discursive horizon paradoxically necessary to constitute life's narrative. The commentary ironizes how mortality is never encountered directly but is always mediated through language. Belsey's method identifies this as the moment when the subject's very sense of existence becomes dependent on discursive framing. Lyotard's postmodernism clarifies that such horizons no longer guarantee transcendence; they stage provisional meaning through narrative rather than disclosing essence.

### The Language Games of Crisis: Pluralism and Epistemological Instability

*"We listened to official bulletins that contradicted rumors, which in turn contradicted bulletins." (DeLillo, 1985, p. 97).*

This passage stages Lyotard's concept of competing language games with exceptional economy. Belsey's close reading identifies the recursive syntax—"contradicted... contradicted"—as a formal enactment of epistemological instability: official discourse and rumor are not hierarchically ordered but circulate at the same level of authority. Lyotard's incredulity is enacted: no metanarrative of truthful communication survives. The bulletin that should inform becomes indistinguishable from the rumor it opposes. Belsey's synthesis confirms that meaning arises through discursive contradiction, not through consensus.

*"Heinrich insisted that every fact about the toxic event could be contradicted by another fact of equal plausibility." (DeLillo, 1985, p. 262).*

Heinrich's adolescent epistemological skepticism serves as one of DeLillo's most direct articulations of Lyotard's condition. The phrase "of equal plausibility" is analytically crucial: it signals that authority is no longer hierarchical but distributional—facts compete as language games without a metanarrative to adjudicate among them. Belsey's discursive analysis confirms that knowledge is staged as inherently contradictory; meaning arises not from factual content but from the contradictions generated within discourse.

### The Television, the Unconscious, and Mediated Subjectivity

*"If our complaints have a focal point, it would have to be the TV set, where the outer torment lurks, causing fear." (DeLillo, 1985, p. 140).*

Belsey's stage one identifies television here as the dominant language game re-centering communal affect and collective belief. The television does not merely represent; it constitutes the community's emotional life. Lyotard's incredulity is dramatized: civic principles yield to broadcast images as the primary sources of truth. Belsey's ideological analysis reveals that fear is produced not by external reality but by media discourse—the screen

commands, and townspeople respond. This is performativity in Lyotard's sense: the television's authority is legitimated by its operational effectiveness in organizing social affect.

"Murray suggested that television news had become our collective unconscious." (DeLillo, 1985, p. 321).

This observation situates media not as representation but as psychic infrastructure. Belsey's textual analysis identifies the displacement of Freudian inner life by Baudrillardian media surface: the unconscious is no longer universal but mediated through circuits of information. Lyotard's framework confirms that this constitutes another language game—psychology itself becomes a discourse whose rules are set by broadcast schedules rather than by the depth of the self. DeLillo's irony lies in the casualness of Murray's suggestion: the collapse of the interior subject is presented as mere social observation.

### Catechism, Commerce, and the Sacralization of Consumer Language

"The children repeated television jingles as though they were scripture." (DeLillo, 1985, p. 227).

Belsey's discursive analysis identifies the substitution of commercial discourse for sacred text. The simile "as though they were scripture" performs the ironic convergence of religious and consumer language games. Lyotard's analysis of incredulity toward religious metanarratives is enacted: theological authority has not disappeared but has been relocated within commodity discourse. Children are interpellated—in Belsey's Althusserian sense—into consumer subjectivity through ritualized repetition. Belsey's synthesis demonstrates that meaning emerges through the intertextual play of the sacred and the commercial, neither canceling the other but rendering both provisional.

"The supermarket was lit like a cathedral, its shelves radiant, as though promising transcendence through commodities." (DeLillo, 1985, p. 450).

This final extended comparison brings together the novel's central discursive formations: the supermarket as secular shrine, consumer abundance as simulated transcendence, and the ironic persistence of sacred language in the

absence of theological grand narratives. Belsey's synthesis identifies this as the novel's culminating textual act: all language games converge in the image of the cathedral-supermarket, exposing their shared dependence on performative staging. Lyotard's incredulity is confirmed: transcendence is now staged through commodities rather than secured by metaphysics. The "as though" is DeLillo's most important qualifying phrase—it marks the performative gap between discourse and reality that constitutes the postmodern condition.

### Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the textual manifestation of Jean-François Lyotard's notion of "incredulity toward metanarratives" (Lyotard, 1984) in Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (1985), and to do so using Catherine Belsey's (1980, 2002) poststructuralist approach to textual analysis.

The study was that DeLillo's novel is not only an expression of postmodernity but engages in the production of postmodern discourse through its narrative, linguistic and ideological structures. The results of this analysis substantiate that argument in several ways.

### Summary of Findings

This study has demonstrated that Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (1985) constitutes a sustained literary enactment of Jean-François Lyotard's concept of incredulity toward metanarratives. Through close textual analysis conducted via Catherine Belsey's four-stage methodological model, the study has shown that the novel's narrative strategies—its irony, discursive fragmentation, simulation, and consumer ritualism—perform the collapse of grand legitimating systems and validate knowledge through performativity and local language games. The analysis traced this enactment across five principal domains: (1) institutional discourse and its parody of national and academic grand narratives; (2) media authority and the epistemological instability of the toxic event; (3) simulation and SIMUVAC as paradigmatic examples of Lyotardian performativity; (4) consumer and pharmaceutical discourse as substitute metanarratives for religion and science; and (5) the mediation of subjectivity, mortality,

and identity through competing language games. In each domain, DeLillo's prose was shown to produce meaning through discursive contradiction, ironic juxtaposition, and performative repetition rather than through stable ontological grounding.

Belsey's model proved indispensable as a methodological bridge between Lyotard's philosophical abstraction and the specific textual mechanics of *White Noise*. Her four-stage procedure enabled a systematic movement from discursive identification through linguistic close reading, ideological analysis, and interpretive synthesis, producing verifiable and theoretically grounded readings rather than impressionistic commentary. The combined Lyotardian-Belseyian framework generated analytical precision that neither framework could have achieved independently.

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