

## **DON DELILLO *LIBRA* AS A SAMPLE OF POSTMODERN AMERICAN FICTION**

*Стаття “Дон ДеЛілло “Терези” як зразок американської літератури постмодерну” присвячена аналізу тексту роману “Терези” маловідомого в Україні американського письменника Дона ДеЛілло. Послугуючись термінологічним апаратом, запозиченим з книги британського дослідника Крістофера Неша “Світова постмодерністська література. Довідник”, автор статті спробувала шляхом детальної деконструкції текстового каркасу, дослідити особливості творчого методу ДеЛілло в світлі постмодерністської літературної критики. Роман, в основу якого покладено невігадану подію вбивства американського президента Дж.Ф.Кеннеді у 1963 році, просякнутий таємницею не лише щодо цього вбивства, але і щодо призначення сучасної людини у світі. Серед прийомів, якими користується ДеЛілло для творення глибинних смислів простого на перший погляд детективного роману, у статті виділено двозначні символи, повтори, містифікацію імен героїв, німі діалоги, відтягнення ключової події, орфографічні помилки тощо.*

*The article is dedicated to the text analysis of the novel “Libra” by an American author Don DeLillo who is little known to Ukrainian reader. With the bulk of terminology borrowed from Christopher Nash’s book “World Postmodern Fiction. A Guide”, the author of this research tried through the deconstruction of the textual carcass to investigate the peculiarities of DeLillo’s artistic method in the light of postmodern literary criticism. The novel which pivots on a non-fictional event of the assassination of the American President J.F.Kennedy in 1963 is saturated with mystery not only in regard to this assassination but also in regard to the place of a contemporary human being in this world. Among the tricks which are used by DeLillo for creating deep senses in the simple from the first sight detective novel, are multilayered symbols, repetitions, mystification of the names of main characters, postponing of the key event till the end of the novel, spelling mistakes, etc.*

Don DeLillo is one of the writers who represent the recent tendencies characteristic of the USA contemporary literature, and that is so not due to the number of books and critical articles written on his fiction but rather vice versa. The list of researchers who did try to have a deep look at his works is hardly twice as long as the list of his novels. For literary process of the end of the 20th century Don DeLillo has only started to emerge as a distinctive, original novelist on a rather indefinite and flexible background of the present-day literary criticism.

Even each of his novels taken apart leaves the taste of uniqueness in both – the topic and the personal method of delivering it to the reader. There are quite enough critical expressions about Don DeLillo’s particular novels in American press, literature magazines, collections of critical essays, etc., but too few books are dedicated to the characteristics and thorough analysis of DeLillo’s place in the American fiction, taking into account all of his works, comparing him as a writer with other novelists. The first steps towards new criticism are seen in the

works of Russian researchers who continue an old and very strong tradition of American literature criticism (A.Zverjev, O.Osovsky, A.Muliarchyk and others). Following attentively the latest changes in literature they are trying to find a new approach to analysis of recent products of literature, a new method of analysis.

*“There are different writers in literature: some are “unfastidious reader”-oriented, others are strictly “intellectual elite”-oriented while the third try their best to meet the demands of the both. Don DeLillo (born 20.11.1936), the author of nine novels, published since early seventies, searches his own way, which doesn’t always fit into either of the mentioned above models. And he has managed to preserve distinctiveness during the period of more than two decades, the latter not necessarily implying that the writer hasn’t undergone certain evolution. A prominent American literary scholar and critic John Oldridge once said that DeLillo stands on one level with Thomas Pynchon and William Gaddis, but only he “excels them at figurativeness, ambiguity and colourfulness of imagination” [6, 115] – with such words O.Osovsky begins his article where he tries to summarize his impressions from the four novels by Don DeLillo, namely, “RUNNING DOG”, “THE NAMES”, “WHITE NOISE”, “LIBRA”. The last one will be the central object of analysis in this article.*

Though almost no American literature on Don DeLillo is yet available in Ukrainian libraries it is worthwhile to mention that his biography and literary works are being widely researched and studied by both graduate and postgraduate students, for instance in the Cherkasy Engineering-Technological Institute. A number of publications appeared during the last years, including the Ph.D dissertation by Tamila Kravchenko under the title “Don DeLillo. The Peculiarities of Creative Search of the Novelist”, where the author emphasizes the importance of monographic works which describe *“the brightest and the most talented creative individuals instead of searching some trade schools in the present-day literature process.”* [4, 1] The thesis embraces a scrupulous description of 10 novels in the aspect of their tight connection with postmodern American fiction, the latter, though, being hardly seen from the way the novels were analyzed.

The English Department at the University of British Columbia (Canada) are running a website on Don DeLillo [18] as a part of the ongoing research project in order to provide updated information on the writer’s fiction. The site gives a full list of his works<sup>1</sup>.

The number of publications in Northern America pertaining in this or another way to DeLillo pleasantly surprises, although judging from the titles too few of them dedicated much attention to a postmodern critique. Thus, the problem of the article is two-way actual: to show what typical features of postmodern fiction are present in Don DeLillo’s “Libra” on one side, and what allows us to say that DeLillo himself is one of the creators of contemporary American postmodern fiction cliches. The researchers who tried to analyse DeLillo’s novels are quite like-minded.

T.Kravchenko devoted the first chapter of her dissertation to *“elucidation of the problems connected with DeLillo’s evolution as an original American writer-postmodernist, which is clear already from his early novels”*. [4, 6] But the researcher does not show any signs of reasons for such an assumption, i.e. she does not analyse the novels in the way postmodernism demands. On the contrary, the thesis is written in a conventional for the realistic tradition way. *“The leading theme of the early novels by DeLillo was the life of America, of ordinary Americans. The theme is certainly not new for the American literature: every earnest 20th century USA writer touched upon it. But in case with DeLillo this statement hides an important artistic and aesthetic principal of his further creative work. The writer claims that he doesn’t shun wide in size and significance themes, since he believes that at the end of the 20th century he has no right to “exchange” global and universal problems of human existence for trivial and casual themes.*

*The first big piece of prose by D.DeLillo – the novel “Americana” (1971) – proved that non-ordinary and interesting author had entered American literature. The title itself showed a directive for ambiguity. Above all, it is a story of America, its life, problems and, certainly, people, who populate the country. This wide idea of creating a huge epic canvas was connected with the author’s desire not to limit the novel by a pure sequence of events... but to try to expose the inner world, to outline the connection with history.”* [4, 6]

T.Kravchenko embraces the bulk of DeLillo’s artistic creations and that’s why due to the broad scale of the work it lacks depth, namely, the investigation of the text. In the introduction to the dissertation T.Kravchenko says that she shares with U. Eco the idea of postmodernism being *“not a fixed chronological phenomenon, but a certain state of mind”*, although deals mainly with chronology and characters, psychological motivation of events, the actuality of problems, etc. Such history-typological

<sup>1</sup> NOVELS *Americana*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971 *End Zone*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972 *Great Jones Street*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973 *Ratner’s Star*. Knopf: New York, 1976 *Players*. New York: Knopf, 1977 *Running Dog*. New York: Knopf, 1978 *The Names*. New York: Knopf, 1982 *White Noise*. New York: Viking, 1985 *Libra*. New York: Viking, 1988 *Mao II*. New York: Viking, 1991 *Amazones* (written as Cleo Birdwell). Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1980 NOVELLAS *Pafko at the Wall*. Harper’s. October 1992. 35-70. PLAYS *The Day Room*. New York: Knopf, 1987 SHORT FICTION *The Ivory Acrobat*. Granta 25. August 1988. 199-212. *Videotape*. Harper’s. December 1994. 15-17 OTHER *American Blood: A Journey Through the labyrinth of Dallas and JFK*. Rolling Stone 8. December 1983:21-22,27-28, *DeLillo, Don. “The image and the Crowd.”* Creative Camera 231 (April 1993): 72

methods of characteristics from the content-centred point of view reveal DeLillo rather as a realist than as a postmodernist.

Since postmodernism is closer rather to realistic tradition than to modernism – which is historically logical: it rejects the preceding literary method (although borrows a lot from it) creating the new version of an older one – it is not surprising that the novels by DeLillo can be as well treated within the frames of realism. Moreover, a non-attentive reader who would blindly hunt for the plot and manage to reach the end of the book might say that it is a breath-taking fiction like the ones that overcrowd the shelves of book-stores. This feature of DeLillo's works was mentioned by the "Times" magazine where it was underlined that a novelist used to be a kind of 'writer for news-paper reviews'.

*"LIBRA operates at a dizzying high level of intensity throughout; it's that true fictional rarity – a novel of admirable depth and relevance that's also a terrific page-turner" ('USA Today').*

Since DeLillo's novels are full of speculations, static pauses and philosophical implications, T.Kravchenko mentions 'deep psychological pits' in the narration but doesn't refer them to the peculiarities of the text. She explains the phenomenon again in a pure realistic tradition though speaks about postmodernistic qualities:

*"...it should be taken into account that we deal with a postmodernistic artist who bravely experiments on the level of form for the sake of delivering the idea to the reader. But the effect side is not dominating in his creations; the problem of immersion into the life of a casual American is more important for him... the psychology of a personage is exposed by DeLillo in a postmodernistic way; the inner world of a human being is formed in his novels as a result of interjection of fragments, pieces of events and life endeavours which influence a personality." [4, 19]*

Much more interesting in this respect is the article by O.Osovskiy [6] who also puts DeLillo onto the list of postmodernists. Between the descriptions of characters, retellings of plots and pointing out problematic aspects we can find vague inserts of speculations over the author's method. He notices important peculiarities one after another:

*"...many personages...remind rather some phantoms, purely signifying, but not exposing certain personality characteristics... [6, 117]...The author stays away from the described events, his 'outsideness' is obvious... [6, 115] we...see not life, but rather a relative model of life in its natural size on the pages of novel." [6, 115-6]*

The same as T.Kravchenko, O.Osovskiy speaks of realistic psychologism in DeLillo's method of creation of characters, motivation of their behaviour, ballancing between realistic and postmodernistic tradition. The article is also valuable because it gives a general idea about DeLillo's world as a writer – real American novelist of his time.

Without the experience of reading DeLillo's novels one can think that it is a pure detective fiction, but there are things that allow us to speak of a higher level of understanding from which the dynamics of events would seem to be only a means of implementing author's plot.

Since the critics unanimously place DeLillo in one row with postmodern writers (Joseph Heller, Vladimir Nabokov, Thomas Pynchon, Italo Calvino, John Barth and others) the main task of ours is to find the proofs of such an assumption. Placing his creation into the frames of postmodern literature we shall try to prove or reject the statement that DeLillo is one of its typical and at the same time distinctive representatives.

The novel "Libra" is based on a real historic event – the assassination of the 35<sup>th</sup> American president John F.Kennedy which took place in Dallas in 1963 and remained one of the most resonant events in the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and an inalienable part of the American psyche. We cannot know exactly what attracted author's attention to it but one of the reasons we can rely on without doubt is *the mystery* and the multitude of versions explaining it. Everybody knows that the assassination did happen but nobody knows yet how it happened. This very fact provokes to invent reality with documentary illusions.

*"This is a work of imagination. While drawing from the historical record, I've made no attempt to furnish factual answers to any questions raised by the assassination. Any novel about a major unresolved event would aspire to fill some of the blank spaces in the known record. To do this, I've altered and embellished reality, extended real people into imagined space and time, invented incidents, dialogues and characters." [Author's note]*

Another reason may be that mentioned by O.Osovskiy: *"It is clear now, that the author's interest in Lee Harvey Oswald [the leading hero] is not accidental; the memory of Kennedy's assassinaton is subconsciously present in majority of his works written between 70's and 80's. For instance, Persyval's first wife ['RUNNING DOG'] studied persistently all the 20 volumes on Warren's commission report and the editor of "Running Dog" asked her old friend Lomaks during their dating to tell 'how everything happenen in Dallas'. This tragic event is mentioned as well in 'THE NAMES', 'WHITE NOISE'. Therefore, there is no puzzle in the fact that DeLillo finally decided to model an answer to the question disturbing him for so long." [6, 119]*

But did the author really intend to clarify and collect historic events and persons involved in them? Realism-centred researchers give their point of view:

*"It is impossible not to notice, that the novel is not raised by the author to the level of compiling the single true version of the assassination: the final dot is not put in the investigation of this crime. More important for him is a certain aspect of artistic "investigation" – the search for possible 'springs' of*

ideological, political and even personal events.” [4, 15]

“Despite his obvious interest in ‘Oswald-Kennedy’ case, he still escapes from global political inferences, remaining only a criminal-political chronics-writer without claiming to create an overwhelming scene of the crime.” [6, 119]

We shall only partially agree with these statements since the epigraph (which belongs to the main character) opening the first part of the novel hints that DeLillo’s interests are not limited to those mentioned above: “Happiness is not based on oneself, it doesn’t consist of a small home, of taking and getting. Happiness is taking part in the struggle, where there is no borderline between one’s own personal world, and the world in general. Lee H.Oswald. Letter to his brother.”

The matter is that the plot of the book is not so easy to retell as it may seem from the first sight. A young Texas boy Oswald who suffers from constant teasings of his schoolmates tries to find his place in the world where he definitely doesn’t fit. Preoccupied with Marxism he enters Marines, serves in Japan on a military base dreaming to become a Soviet spy. His addiction to socialistic ideas ends with a visit to the Soviet Union where he immitates suicide in order not to return. Oswald experiences KGB interrogations, an exhausting work in Minsk and finally goes back to USA with his pregnant wife Marina, a daughter of a Soviet colonel. The exaggerated ill imagination of his personality provokes Oswald to look for “great deeds”. Simultaneously, we witness another thread of narration, namely, the planning of Kennedy’s assassination which doesn’t necessarily fit into the sequence of events. The only thing needed to implement the crime is the right person who would leave no suspect on the ex-CIA organizers. They are looking for someone like Oswald. Fatal coincidences make the two threads inevitably cross and the assassination finally happens leaving us at a loss with questions about too many coincidences. The book is also about the epoch of Cold War, about Americans and Soviet people, about religion in contemporary world, about Neomaxism ideology, about FBI, about soldiers’ life, about politics, about mass media, about Jews and so on. It’s next to impossible to specify one particular topic. We only know that in time events described in the novel go back to early 60’s and the place is USA, Cuba, Japan, Mexica and USSR. Nothing (except dates and names of the cities from which every chapter begins) can assure us, though, that the events did happen even in ‘fictional’ reality. There is only the cult of assassination which developes from an idea into the fact. There are only the names of characters written on the pages of the book as if rewritten from the CIA files. We can hardly say anything about Oswald as a

personality because the author gives us nothing except pure facts. Neither can we describe his appearance, so evasive it is in the novel.

The strangest thing about DeLillo’s creation is that it’s simply frozen, deprived of any life signs. Any careful reader cannot help getting this impression. Why? The plot is more than ordinary. Everything that determines the dynamics of events is quite realistic (i.e. true to life). Moreover, the author succeeded to create a kind of aura in which the world lived during the times of Cold War and East-West tension. So, the answer doesn’t seem to be on the surface and to find it we shall deepen into the text disassembling the pyramid of signs from the top through *histoire*, *discourse*<sup>2</sup>.

## HISTOIRE

**AMBIGUOUS SYMBOLS** First what strikes the eye and cannot pass unnoticed is the atmosphere of mystery, mystification and conspiracy on each level of the text. An example to start with may be the title LIBRA. The author of this article cannot agree with O.Osovskyi who says that “*this strange at first sight title is explained very easily. It was in October under the Libra-sign when the man who was twenty years later accused of assassination, was born.*” [6, 119] Be the title used for this only reason it would have lost its main function – to make the novel monolithic and inexhaustable at the same time. In the very narration DeLillo introduces different levels of understanding Libra:

a means of peace-making, creating ballance between West and East, it is the symbol of stillness [9, 315] It is the symbol of neverending dis-balance between man and woman, individual and crowd, soul and body, right and left, death and life, i.e. all the opposites. Libra is also a ‘religion’, an art of living which is followed by Lee Oswald:

*Here is a man who wants to spy on our operations. He wants to use us but we will end up using him. Not through manipulation or political conversion. He believes in his heart that he’s a dedicated leftist. But he is also a Libran. He is capable of seeing the other side. He is a man who harbors contradictions...Here is Marine recruit who reads Karl Marx...This boy is sitting on the scales, ready to be tilted either way.* [9, 319]

The symbol of Libra echoes in the epigraph as the indefinite borderline between inner and outer world of an individual. The balance of scales when Oswald gets the satisfaction he was looking for, means at the same time his death and the end of the novel.

Another symbol is *the Agency* (Central Intelligence Agency, CIA). It does have roots in the real world but the author never describes it, he often mentions it abstractly between the sentences. The

<sup>2</sup> From now on we shall be using these terms as form of the text (*discours*) which shows us how a literary creation is written, the observer’s apparatus and content of the text (*histoire*) which may serve as a new term for plot, the observed system.

symbol emerges usually in the passages with prevailing pessimism, despair and hopelessness. It is often accompanied with positive connotations and serves in the story for something ideal, incomprehensible, an otherworldly institution that knows everything: *CIA has a picture of my prelapsarian soul in their files. They looked at it and sent me here.* [9, 20] *The Agency was tolerant of such problems. The Agency understood.* [9, 25] *The Agency understands. It's amazing really how deeply they understand. This is why some of us see the Agency in a way that has nothing to do with jobs or institutions or governments. We are goddamn grateful for their understanding and trust. The Agency is always willing to consider a man in a new light. This is the nature of the business. There are shadows, there are new lights. The deeper the ambiguity, the more we believe, the more we trust, the more we band together.* [9, 259] *The Agency forgives.* [9, 363]

We may decode Agency as the author's implementation of the idea of heaven:

*He [Parmenter] was never more surely an Agency man than in the first breathless days of dreaming up this plot.* [9, 364] At the same time somehow the symbol is not deprived of tight connection with the fictional reality: *Laurence Parmenter booked a seat on the daily flight to the farm, the CIA's secret training base in Virginia. The flight was operated under military cover and used mainly by Agency people with short-term business at the base.* [9, 117]

There are places in the text where the author hints on the meaning of the symbol with disguised signs. On the one hand, it is the implementation of the idea of God, on the other – the centre of the world of ideas, another transcendental level of existence which goes parallel to reality: *Central Intelligence. Beryl saw it as the best organised church in the Christian world, a mission to collect and store everything that everyone has ever said and then reduce it to a microdot and call it God.* [9, 260]

According to the text, the reader should understand that all the characters and events come from the Agency. This is 'the place' where everything is planned and foreseen. In fictional reality, the corresponding subordinated 'place' is Alpha – the organisation that "designed" Kennedy's assassination:

*He [Mackey] would limit his contacts to one or two men in Alpha. They would not know his real name or his position in the Agency. There's always something they aren't letting you know. Alpha was run like a dream clinic. The Agency worked up a vision to make it come true.* [9, 304]

DeLillo has built simultaneously two worlds giving to every sign (be it a word, a phrase, a character, an event) the essential ambiguity. Even simple things gain additional and, often, mysterious

meaning due to the way **how** they are exposed in the text. There are places within the *histoire* (they make the majority of the text) where we can read easily two meanings: one – real, another – ideal, subconscious. Thus, for instance, every night before going to bed Larry Parmenter who works for the CIA office checks the oven in his house. By constant repetitions of the fact that checking the oven downstairs is crucial, the author attracts reader's attention and the word itself becomes mysteriously symbolical: [9, 75], [9, 147]. Again, the second metaphorical meaning of the sign is disguised and the reader is supplied only with a vague hint after a big portion of pages: *He stood at the side of the bed in his pajamas. He'd forgotten to register the fact that the oven was off. He would have to go back downstairs to check the oven. Mary Frances lay in the dark, already sleep-breathing, deep and even. He has to see that the oven is off and has to register the fact. This means they are safe for another night.* [9, 364]

Oswald is also to some extent a symbolic character. He is a defector who rebels against the world, who searches satisfaction of his ambitions and the author implicates that he plays the role of the novel's Jesus Christ – so evasive and anomalous is the very appearance of his: *Oswald's eyes are grey, they are blue, they are brown. He is five feet nine, five feet ten, five feet eleven. He is right-handed he is left-handed. He drives a car, he does not. He is a crack shot and a dud. ... He is solid, thin-lipped, broad-featured, extroverted, shy and bank-clerkish, all, with the columned neck of a fullback. He looks like everybody.* [9, 300]

There are other symbolic things in the novel – Weird Beard (radio DJ), Isolation (the name of the Farm which is the CIA's secret training base in Virginia), etc. Only once DeLillo describes a strange structure called *SE Detailed* and intensifies its mystery with symbolic figures and four-stage construction of the committee. [9, 20]

**TRANSCENDENTAL REALITY** This effect is achieved by using the device of constant mixing normal and abnormal things. The idea of the other world penetrates everything. This is where the mystery comes from endlessly. All of the characters (except, probably, T-Jay Mackey – the agent who works for Banister's office) originally come from "nowhere" and therefore the events happening to them are partially fabulous and remind the atmosphere of "Alice In Wonderland"<sup>3</sup>. Here are two examples from the text:

*Dave Ferrie had this routine about a tumor growing on his brain. But it was Banister who had blackouts and dizzy spells, who sat at his desk and watched his hand start trembling, way out there, as if it belonged to someone else.* [9, 139] *Win Everett was in his daughter's room listening to her read from a book of stories with pop-up figures. ...They*

<sup>3</sup> While characterizing DeLillo's "Ratner's Star", T.Kravchenko says that the novel by its structure is akin to L.Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland". Probably, this trait was more evidently present in DeLillo's early works.

were alone in a room that was itself alone, a room that hung above the world. [9, 220-1]

Things are so obviously inanimate, lifeless, non-material and the author says about this directly within the *histoire*: ...included a fragment from the psalmbook, **not known to the outside world**. [9, 138]...shoot at **silhouettes**. [9, 145] ...the rain fell on **empty streets**. [9, 277]

All the events are meant to be happening in the minds of the characters, they are described through the subconsciousness, dreams and impressions. The author himself on purpose gives the prompt:

*The Curator sends a special FBI report that includes detailed descriptions of the dreams of eyewitness following the assassination of Kennedy and the murder of Oswald.* [9, 441]

Within the world of pure ideas there is a world of papers – another level of understanding the novel. The things are prescribed, predicted by files of documents, heaps of papers: *Once he had a handwriting sample, Win would scratch onto those miniature pages enough trails, false trails, swarming life, lingering mystery, enough real and fabricated people to occupy investigators for months to come.* [9, 146-7]

*He eats most of his meals in the room. Clearing a space on the desk, reading as he eats. He falls asleep in the chair, wakes up startled, afraid for a moment to move. Paper everywhere.* [9, 184]

**MYSTIFICATION OF NAMES** The way how DeLillo invents names of characters, places, organizations and institutions is worth special attention too. Very often it is a combination of two names or words which themselves already give a necessary for the author connotation: *The two men [Laurence Parmenter and George de Mohrenschildt] who shared a table in the Occidental Restaurant had certain physical similarities. Both were over six feet tall, expensively dressed...* [9, 53]

Occidental = **Oriental** (in the text later it is mentioned that L.Parmenter spoke in the slight whine of the educated *Eastener*). Occidental = **accidental** (the restaurant doesn't actually exist, it is as phantomic as the two people who sit there).

Multinational roots of George de Mohrenschildt, an ex-Agency member, are already within his queer surname: "...his marriages didn't explain his apparent associaton with Nazis in World War II, his apparent ties to Polish and French intelligence, his expulsion from Mexico, his apparent communist leanings when he was at the University of Texas, his Soviet contacts in Venezuela, the discrepancies in his stated history, his travels in West Africa, Central America, Yugoslavia and Cuba." [9, 55]

Win Everett's name ('ever winning') turns out to be invented (even in the frames of the text) as well as T-Jay's and Harward Lee's names, as well as the name of the Russian KGB officer Kirilenko and many others. Moreover, the author changes spellings, playing with letters: *Heindel was known as Hidell, for no special reason.* [9, 82] *But Everett*

*was not inclined to fault the boy on technicalities (Hidell, Hideel).* [9, 180] *Hide the L in Lee. No one will see.* [9, 341] *Hidell* = 'hide the hell', 'hide it well', 'hidden hell', 'id is hell', 'hide the L', whatsoever.

Kennedy is substituted in the text by a nickname (known among CIA members for the matter of conspiracy) *Lancer*. The President's surname is used usually only in documents, news-paper reports, i.e. where the author shows the lowest layer of his plot – pure facts. Oswald's name appears in the lines of the text as different combinations of initial letters as if he is everybody at the same time: "*Oswald had names. He had his own names. He had variations of names. He had forged documents.*" [9, 180] Such 'operations' with characters' names allow the author to change easily their background, nationality, ideological and political views without saying about it directly but, rather, ironically: *...Lee Oswald would eventually be given Soviet sitizenship, become a genuine Marxist and contented worker, go to lectures and mass gymnastics, fit in, find his place in history, or geography, or whatever he was looking for. A true-blue Oswaldowich.* [9, 167]

A strange phantom of the radio DJ *Weird Beard* (who is, probably, the image of a philosopher) is dismantled on page 301: "*The Dallas disc jockey known as Weird Beard was Russell Lee Moore, who also used the name Russ Knight.*" We may only blindly guess in these combinations two English philosophers – George Edward **Moore** (1873-1958) with his most well-known work "*Principia Ethica*" and Bertrand **Russell** (1872-1970) with his "*Principia Mathematica*" (a research into symbolic logic which DeLillo definitely uses in the novel). Besides, Russ is the beginning of "*Russia*".

#### **EMPTY (PHANTOMIC) CHARACTERS**

One more device used by DeLillo within the *histoire* is making his characters 'empty', lifeless while describing them physically. The author creates an impression as if they are *ghosts*. The following samples brightly demonstrate how this effect is achieved:

*He [Wayne Elko] was never anywhere you could actually call a place. He wasn't here and wasn't there. It is like a problem in philosophy.* [9, 143] *Jack Karlinsky was in his sixties, an investment counselor who had no office, no business phone, no employees and no clients.* [9, 254] *The only thing slick about him was his shoes, which were shined into the fourth dimension.* [9, 308]

The chain of these examples can be continued since the text is overwhelmed with them. From time to time a psychological explanation of this phenomenon may be set like this one "*One wants the least possible surface to which pain and regret might cling – anyone's, everyone's pain.*" [9, 137]

**DUMB DIALOGUES** The peculiarity of dialogues in "*Libra*" is that they are *not uttered* but, literally, *thought*. There is no impression that people talk to each other. They simply express an idea

which is, as if by chance, a logical continuation of the preceding one. It is very easy to feel the presence of the author's face behind the dialogues: he only jerks threads of his phantomic characters and makes their mouths move silently. Absence of life in the speech is underlined by the absence of emotions (there are barely 2 marks of exclamation on the 456 pages of the text and they don't occur in dialogues). The phrases are very brief, author's intention to deliver them to the reader consists mainly in the way sentences alternate with each other. The latter usually remind the game of ping-pong:

*They watched TV.*

*"Dave, what do you believe in?"*

*"Everything. My own death most of all."*

*"Do you wish for it?"*

*"I feel it. My own death most of all."*

*"But you talk about it so readily."*

*"What choice do I have?"* [9, 67]

In some cases the interlocutor is not even needed and a character talks to himself: *Why are homosexuals addicted to soap opera? Ferrie said absently. Because our lives are a vivid situation.* [9, 67]

Dialogues don't describe characters in any way. Without names, titles and interests there's no difference between them. Each of them is a continuation of one and the same idea. In many cases dialogues end in a rhetoric question or a philosophical conclusion:

**OMNIPOTENT AUTHOR** One of the biggest DeLillo's achievements in the novel "Libra" is his own absence. Every sign in the system works perfectly for weaving one big cocoon where the author is hidden. He reminds a wizard whom we never see but whose presence is felt subconsciously as if he plays with the reader saying: here I am, but don't try to find me because I'm everywhere. The effect is achieved first of all by the *dumb dialogues*. Another device is *interference into the text* and subjective speculation (although different from that of the realistic tradition) about the successive events: *Does Mother Russia want this boy? He was useful as a radar specialist at a U.S. base. What do we do with him here? Is it conceivable we might send him to the building on Kutuzovsky Prospekt, where he would be trained, genuinely educated, in Marx and Lenin, microphotography and secret writing, Russian and English, rebuilt so to speak, given a new identity, sent back to the West as an illegal?* [9, 166]

If from this passage we cannot say exactly whether it is the narrator or the author, the doubtless evidence then are the cases of giving advice to characters, supporting or refusing to support them:

*He wore jump boots stained by salt water and thought about stopping for a cerveza schlitz. Not smart, Wayne.* [9, 176] *Be on time, Wayne.* [9, 176]

What makes these author's interferences anti-realistic is that they are in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person, i.e.

referring to *you* and sometimes even through *I* as in the following passage:

*"If you allot your time, you can accomplish fantastic things. I learned Latin when I was your age. I stayed indoors and learned a dead language, for fear of being noticed out there, made to pay for being who I was".*

*He forgets I'm here.* [9, 45]

Who can be the author's protagonist in the text? It is difficult to say at once, since the protagonist is scattered in many characters. Probably, all of them make the novel's protagonist. On the level of discourse it is Nicholas Branch because he creates Oswald's story within the author's own story and, thus, via him we can see DeLillo in the process of creation. On the level of *histoire* it is Oswald because he represents a complicated bunch of DeLillo's views and ideas. Besides, in some places, the author entrusts Oswald's mother (the biggest feminine element in the novel) with the function of narrator. Her monologue finishes the text of the book, though it rather reminds a mental confession.

**PHILOSOPHIC DIGRESSIONS** One more proof of the author's disguised presence is the multitude of philosophical speculations, notices, assumptions, that give food for thought, generalize the story and show that the author sticks to one and the same ideas all the time – the idea of truth, inevitability of fate/history, death.

*Maybe what has to happen is that the individual must allow himself to be swept along, must find himself in the stream of no-choice, the single direction. This is what makes things inevitable. You use the restrictions and penalties they invent to make yourself stronger. History means to merge. The purpose of history is to climb out of your own skin.* [9, 101] *At twenty years old, all you know is that you're twenty. Everything else is a mist that swirls around this fact.* [9, 165] *Destiny is larger than facts or events. It is something to believe in outside the ordinary borders of the senses, with God so distant from our lives.* [9, 204]

The interesting thing is that such digressions are on the same level of generalization as the sentences put into the dialogues. Due to this the whole text reminds a long chain of ideas.

**FATALITY OF COINCIDENCES** As it was already mentioned, *Libra's* plot is difficult to retell since the book seems to be about everything. Nevertheless, the central event in it remains the assassination of the 35<sup>th</sup> American president and everything revolves around it. The name of the President being used comparatively rarely and the murder being all the time under a question, the inevitability of this event hangs in the air, it is present beyond the text. Pressing on the reader's subconsciousness it is delayed till the moment comes. This is something for what every single event happens and every single word is said. As the novel

approaches the end the tension increases. First there are only general words about fate:

*He'd been headed here from the start. Inevitable.* [9, 101] *They had matching scars on the arms, his left arm, her right, both scars near the elbow, the same size and shape. A sense of destiny, or mirrored fate.* [9, 202]

Finally, the storm of coincidences makes Oswald think he is the right person to kill Kennedy: [9, 336]

As the time of the outcome approaches we feel the fate with more and more details:

*His room number is eighteen. It is almost October and he was born on the eighteenth. David Ferrie was born on March 18. They have sat and discussed this. The year of Ferrie's birth was 1918.* [9, 356] *"I didn't see yesterday's paper as a matter of fact."* *"Of course you saw it. It said that the President's passing under your fucking window. The fucking building faces Elm Street, doesn't it? You spend most of the day on the sixth floor, don't you? His car is coming along Houston right straight at you. Then dipping away down Elm. Moving slowly and grandly past. The one place in the world where Lee Oswald works. The one time of day when he sits alone in a window and eats his lunch. There's no such thing as coincidence. We don't know how to call it, so we say coincidence. It happens because you make it happen."* [9, 383-4]

When the assassination takes place the author underlines that the whole system of trifles, talks, papers has worked for it just perfectly: *The timing was split-second, the location was pinpoint. Spotlights came on.* [9, 437]

**IRONY** DeLillo is ironical. It might be difficult to imagine how he can be such without emotions in the text, without live dialogues and brisk expressions. But he is. And the way irony is introduced cannot but impress the reader – adding a 'tail' of biting words to a sentence which is quite plain or using unusual extra-language devices, like *Yes yes yes yes.* [9, 78] *Ha-ha.* [9, 94; 151]

**INCOMPLETENESS** We shall not exaggerate if say that the most penetrating idea on the level of *histoire* (as repetitions in discourse) is the idea of incompleteness which calls to mind the symbolic title of the novel. Primarily, it concerns numbers and measures – the figures are never round but always close to being such: *Down at the docks he saw oppressed workers unloading ninety-pound banana stems from Honduras.* [9, 36] *"The son of bitch requests winds at eighty thousand feet."* [9, 81] *Lee stood in a corner of the Gulf station on North Beckley, eight-thirty sharp... it was ninety-nine degrees.* [9, 279] *He bought a Warrior-brand rubber stamping kit for ninety-eight cents.* [9, 312] *Nicholas Branch has a sound tape made in Miami nine days before the President was due to appear in that city.* [9, 375]

Used twice or more in the text, such numbers may seem to be occasional and non-important. But since DeLillo's reality is 'imagined' we should follow all the signs – they bring additional

information. Besides, on the subconscious level such figures bring on the feeling of something still missing and give sense to the narration itself.

Everything in the text is marked with a defect. Deficiency is a 'guarantee' of living in the real world: at least one element should be always missing, out of this world, infringing the law of never-ending balance. It may be a word, a hand, a leg, a finger, etc.: *He told her he'd...ridden the trains out to Brooklin, where a man wore a coat with a missing arm.* [9, 4]... *the masons would not accept a man who was missing part of his anatomy. This was an ancient bylaw that they kept in the books.* [9, 349] *All he knows for sure is that there is a missing element here, a word that they have canceled completely.* [9, 445]

Imperfection is needed to get the process of balancing which lies down the dynamics for the narration. Incomplete or too complete things match together, they attract each other. CIA lacks Oswald, while Oswald lacks CIA. Marina lacks somebody like Oswald (with a scar on his hand) – she doesn't accept perfect boys: *"She threw over Anatoly, who looked like an actor in the movies, and she threw over Sasha, who was wonderful in every way and therefore not for her."* [9, 201]

**THE IDEA OF HALFNESS** DeLillo's world in the novel is divided into two. Alongside with the *phantomic characters* and *transcendental reality* the idea is intensified by a rather frequent usage of the words 'half of', 'one and a half', or others of the same meaning, including pure figures:

*A woman on the street, completely ordinary, maybe fifty years old, wearing glasses and a dark dress, handed him a leaflet at the foot of the El steps.* [9, 12] *Around were old warehouses and coffee-roasting plants, fifty-cent-a-night hotels.* [9, 60] *...half intelligent, small bright eyes.* [9, 102] *"...I am half the time too tired to say hello."* [9, 263] *He was not half surprised.* [79, 285] *George half admired his resistance.* [9, 288] *He was paid a dollar fifty an hour to grease coffee machines* [9, 307] *About a minute and a half later the Feebees pounced.* [9, 308] *Half an hour later bateman walked into the interview room...* [9, 326] *The leader, T-Jay, seemed half amused by Lee.* [9, 334] *He looked unclear, half-erased.* [9, 340] *The house was at the end of an unfamiliar street about half a mile from the heart of Little Havana.* [9, 364] *The place in daylight was home turf to half a dozen women and their sctuffy into the slot.* [9, 371] *He vomited half his life out the car door, due to these assaults on emotions.* [9, 421]

As we see from the extracts the quality of 'halfness' is attached even to the things and phenomena that normally cannot be divided (admiration, intelligence, smile). The whole idea leaves the impression that something is left behind the text. Here is one of the author's hints put into the quarrel between Oswald and Marina: *"I know this. It's very obvious to me."* **"Very obvious is only half**

*the story.*" "What's the other half?" He hit her in the face. [9, 230]

**NATURALISM** The uniqueness of DeLillo's style is that beyond constant 'references' to another world, world of ideas, he still manages to preserve strong connection with 'real' events, with documental background of the novel. One of the distinctive realistic characteristics is *naturalism* in descriptions, often exaggerated to such extent that it unpleasantly strikes the reader. Such is, for example, the description of the Japanese brig in Atsugi: *You are processed naked, holding your seabag above your head at arm's length, shouting aye aye sir and no sir at the slightest sound. You are permitted to lower the seabag to the back of your neck only when you bend over to allow them to check your anal cavity for printed matter, narcotics, alcoholic beverages, digging tools, TV sets, implements of self-destruction.* [9, 95]

It is not difficult to notice that such 'microscopic' descriptions are usually applied to show the misery of an ordinary American under the almighty CIA. Sometimes naturalistic motifs pop up unexpectedly and due to the context gain a pure symbolic, abstract meaning: *A colonel in golf togs walked through. The men shouted at superiors, damn near grew violent. Someone vomited lazily in a wastebasket, leaning over with his hands on his knees. Win Everett arrived from Miami, wrote out a letter...* [9, 127]

**ANOMALIES** A queer mixture of 'idealism and 'naturalism' normally leads to unexpected strange phenomena in both discourse ('wrong' sequence of events) and *histoire* (characters' appearances, anomalous things happening to them, etc.) which attracts reader's attention (1) and proves that even what is real is still unreal (2) and we shouldn't concentrate ourselves on the text but on its implications. Here are some of the examples of anomaly: *Ferrie suffered from a rare and horrific condition that had no cure. His body was one hundred percent bold. It looked like something pulled from the earth, a tuberous stem or fungus esteemed by gourmets.* [9, 29] *She knew, she was absolutely certain that Mrs. Kennedy would give birth to a boy. It was sure to be a boy, she told Lee, and then they would have a boy themselves, soon after.* [9, 23] *Funny, she thought, how she could vacuum back and forth in front of Suzanne and the girl never complained. The girl looked right through her.* [9, 359]

In discourse an example of anomaly may be Oswald's 'double-death' (living after dying and then again being killed) and the 'otherworldly' characters.

**BIBLE MOTIVES** Not once it is mentioned in the text that DeLillo's "Libra" is written according to the same *histoire* structure as J.Joyce's "Ulysses": *Branch thinks this is the megaton novel James Joyce would have written if he'd moved to Iowa City and lived to be a hundred.* [9, 181] *This is the Joycean Book of America, remember – the novel in which nothing is left out.* [9, 182]

Indeed, the size of *histoire* is impressive and the symbols created are as multistoreyed as Joyce's – in "Ulysses" they pivot upon the Homer's epic poem while in "Libra" the author has definitely chosen the Bible. The evidence is hidden in the ambiguity of meanings:

1) the assassination of John F.Kennedy is compared to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ: *This death was everywhere. Pictures of the grieving family. Reenactments at the scene of the murder. This was an event that had the possibility of being bigger in history than Jesus, he thought.* [9, 428]

2) Oswald is compared to Jesus since he is not the real killer, he missed Kennedy: he becomes himself the victim of unfair circumstances. His death before the real death and disappearance of the body from the chapel echo with Bible inspirations: *He wasn't on the sixth floor at all. He was in the lunchroom eating lunch. The victim of a total frame. They'd been rigging the thing for years, watching him, using him, creating a chain of evidence with the innocent facts of his life... Other people were responsible for the actual killing.* [9, 418] *Somebody ordered the body removed from the chapel. Because the chapel was empty. The body was not there.* [9, 448]

3) Marguerite Lee (Oswald's mother) is compared to St. Mary the Virgin whose monologue reminds a cry over the dead son: *If you research the life of Jesus, you see that Mary mother of Jesus disappears from the record once he is crucified and risen.* [9, 453]

4) Weird Beard is most probably a preacher. The word 'beard' is mentioned on the first pages as the attribute of a preacher's appearance. [9, 5] DJ Weird Beard speaks over the mysterious radio KLIF (symbol of source of truth) about some very important things: *...There are only two things in the world. Things that are true. And things that are truer than true. We need this little private alley where we can meet. Because this is big D, which stands for Don't be Dissimilar. Am I coming in all right? Is my sign clear?* [9, 266]

5) Fidel Castro is compared to St. Paul as he disperses pro-communist ideas among Americans:

*He made the revolution something people felt on their bodies. The ideas, the whistling words, they throbbed in all the senses. He was like Jesus in boots, preaching everywhere he went, withholding his identity from the campesinos until the time dramatically right.* [9, 184]

6) Kennedy is compared to a saint: *A misty light around the President's head. Two pink-white jets of tissue rising from the mist.* [9, 400]

Besides, DeLillo often mentions Bible in the conversations of his characters. [9, 19; 106; 270]

There are certain episodes in the book that have their symbols (very close to those we may find in "Ulysses"). For example, dogs always bark when the author switches the narration to Jack Ruby, a nightclub owner, who in the long run kills Oswald. The assassination is accompanied with the symbol of

pigeons. [9, 396; 397; 403] Orange colour is always mentioned as a symbol of communistic ideas: *Lenin and Stalin lay in an orange glow at the bottom of a stone stairway.* [9, 156] *Lenin and Stalin in an orange glow.* [9, 164] *Raymo stood on a sideline stripe in the Orange Bowl, three blocks from this stinking bed, and heard the renewed pledges, the second wave of emptiness.* [9, 187]

**SELF-PORTRAIT AND THE MIRROR EFFECT** On the level of discourse, within the structure of DeLillo's novel we can see the principle of *mise-en-abyme*, i.e. the author describing himself in the process of writing. The peculiarity in *Libra* is that this phenomenon appears to be clearly exposed also in *histoire* (even more than in discourse): the writer's protagonist, Nicholas Branch, is described as if from aside, from another world. He works on the files for the Agency in the frames of the 'fictional' reality created by the author. The proofs in the very text are numerous. First of all, the 'leading' phrase repeated throughout the story: "*There is a world inside the world.*" [9, 13; 47; 153; 277] or the synonymic: "*There are stories inside stories.*" [9, 450] There are worlds existing within characters themselves, their personal "phantomic" reflections, so, that the chain of inner and outer self-portraits is indefinitely long. *Nobody knew what he knew. The whirl of time, the true life inside him.* [7, 46] *It was a second existence, the private world floating out to three dimensions.* [9, 277]

The impression is achieved with the help of reflecting objects – TV screen, camera, mirror, etc. The following episodes brightly demonstrate how it works in *histoire*: *They watched each other eat... They watched TV in the next room.* [9, 35] *She thought how strange, that the woman in the coat was her and she was the person who was shot... If she was shot, she thought, she ought to be sitting down.* [9, 401]

Sometimes, especially in conversations, mirror self-reflection is hidden in the instant negation of the preceding phrase making dialogues sound in a paradox way. This is due to the fact that in the mirror we see everything vice versa: *Left is right and right is left*, as the author says. [9, 303] *...and that was that was that.* [9, 76] *Hidell prepares to make his maker.* [9, 151] *He'd be a real defector posing as a false defector posing as a real defector. Ha ha.* [9, 162]

Maybe because of the same *mirror-effect* things are usually doubled, split into two as if intensifying the idea that there is the real world and the world which is only its idealistic reflection: *First he used the branch across the street from Warren Easton High School. It was a two-story building with a library for the blind downstairs, the regular room above.* [9, 33] *The building had two entrances, two addresses. One for who you are, one for who you say you are.* [9, 312] *So the jacket is mohair. You should have bought two. One to shit on; one to cover it up.* [9, 266]

The intriguing cases are those, when the 'mirrored' reality comes first in time and then the 'true' one. DeLillo describes first the event as it was perceived by the people and then – as it happened (unnatural sequence). A bright example is the scene of the assassination:

*She thought she saw a man throw a boy to the grass and fall on top of him... A girl ran waving toward the limousine* [9, 397]... *A man threw his kid to the ground and fell on him. That's a vet, Hargis had time to think, with the Governor, Connally, kind of sliding down in the jump seat and his wife taking him in, gathering the man in. Hargis turned right just after noticing a girl in a pretty coat running across the lawn toward the President's car.* [9, 399]

Thus, it gives an impression that everything happens only in the minds of the people. The events themselves are of zero importance. Events happen only if they are perceived, fixed by the consciousness.

## DISCOURSE

**REPETITIONS** If our task were to make a stylistic analysis of DeLillo's novel, we would undoubtedly dedicate half of the research to *repetitions* since it is the author's main device. Repetitions have several functions within the text. To illustrate them by the text we would have to rewrite the whole novel. Therefore, we shall give fragments with repetitions of the shortest frequency and the ones dispersed on more than half a page will be simply marked by the pages where they occur in the text.

Functions of repetitions:

- 1) to keep the story bound with one idea, to make it a complete mature novel. Separate fragments of narration are united mainly due to the repetitions: *There is a world inside the world.* [9, 13; 47; 153; 277; 450]
- 2) to emphasise a certain sense taken out of the meaning by using one and the same statement in different contextual situations – by comparison we can draw it out. *Ruled a suicide.* [9, 58; 443] *Oswald requested permission to cross the line.* [9, 101-2; 103; 104]
- 3) to create allegorical images and symbols out of the ordinary things mentioned in the text with a certain frequency: *The Agency forgives.* [9, 363...363] *There were pigeons suddenly, everywhere, cracking down from the eaves and beating west.* [9, 396]... *Pigeons flared past.* [9, 397]... *Pigeons spinning at the treetops.* [9, 401]... *Pigeons reversing flight eastward now.* [9, 403]
- 4) to charge the novel with the essential static element. Circulation of repetitions makes the impression of immobility; everything happens beyond the physical time since the events are deprived of natural dynamics. The novel,

therefore, gains traits of poetry: “*But we don’t hit Kennedy. We miss him,*” Win said. [9, 28]... “*We don’t hit the President. We want a spectacular miss.* [9, 51] *The rain fell on empty streets.* [9, 46-277]

- 5) to intensify the atmosphere of mystery: every time a phrase is repeated it gains a new meaning: *He checked the [piece of] paper with her name [on it].* [9, 83-4]

- 6) to substitute emotions – repetition produces tenseness. DeLillo doesn’t dot emotional connotations in one place, they are not concentrated but scattered due to repetitions. In other words, emotion is the repetition itself, taken abstractly out of the text: “*I scrub on my knees.*” [9, 239]

*A shot.*

*There’s a shot.*

*Oswald has been shot.*

*Oswald has been shot.*

*A shot rang out.*

*...A shot rang out as he was led to the car.*

*A shot...* [9, 438-9]

- 7) to emphasize the inevitability of fate: *They had matching scars on the arms...* [9, 202; 241; 324]

On the whole, the stylistic device of repetition works for the idea of one huge subjective narration. It keeps the author very close to the modernistic tradition.

#### ‘EXPLANATIONS’ OF DISCOURSE

Everything we have mentioned above in the analysis of “*Libra*” has its explanations within the frames of the text itself. The text gives all the keys to its understanding. On the level of *histoire* the author prompts us how the novel is written and how it should be read. He uses various methods:

- 1) description of the protagonist’s (mostly Nicholas Branch’s) thoughts in the process of writing the ‘inner story’: *There is enough mystery in the facts as we know them, enough of conspiracy, coincidence, loose ends, dead ends, multiple interpretations. There is no need, he thinks, to invent the grand and masterful scheme, the plot that reaches flawlessly in a dozen directions.* [9, 58] *...of actual finished prose, there is precious little. It is impossible to stop assembling data. The stuff keeps coming. There are theories to evaluate, lives to ponder and mourn. No one at CIA has asked to see the work in progress. Not a chapter, a page, a word of it.* [9, 59]

David Ferrie says to his secretary: “*...Notes, lists, photos, rumors. Every bit and piece and whisper in the world that doesn’t have a life until someone comes along to collect it. It’s all been waiting just for you.*” [9, 143] *Branch thinks this is the megaton novel James Joyce would have written if he’d moved to Iowa City and lived to be a hundred.* [9, 181]

- 2) author’s own speculations over the process of novel creation. He tells us about the way he creates the plot: *Plots carry their own logic. There is a tendency of plots to move toward death. He [Win] believed that the idea of death is*

*woven into the nature of every plot. A narrative plot no less than a conspiracy of armed men. The tighter the plot of a story, the more likely it will come to death. A plot in fiction, he believed, is the way we localize the force of the death outside the book, play it off, contain it.* [9, 221]

The writer says he wants to catch different readers on different levels of understanding: *Too many people, too many levels of plotting.* [9, 304] He also explains how the very novel is compiled into one, giving, probably, the biggest key to its reading (when the reader has covered already 75% of the pages!): “*Think of two parallel lines... One is the life of Lee H. Oswald. One is the conspiracy to kill the President. What bridges the space between them? What makes a connection inevitable? There is a third line. It comes out of dreams, visions, intuitions, prayers, out of the deepest levels of the self. It’s not generated by cause and effect like the other two lines. It’s the line that cuts across causality, cuts across time. It has no history that we can recognise or understand. But it forces the connection. It puts a man on the path of its destiny.*” [9, 339]

- 3) exposing the way some casual characters think of their own life: *She [Beryl] said the news clippings she sent to friends were a perfectly reasonable way to correspond. There were a thousand things to clip and they all said something about the way she felt... She believed these were personal forms of expression. She believed no message she could send a friend was more intimate and telling than a story in the paper about a violent act, a crazed man, a bombed Negro home, a Buddhist monk who sets himself on fire. Because these are the things that tell us how we live.* [9, 261]

*Ferrie didn’t seem to know sometimes whether a story was funny or sad.* [9, 329] These may be the methods DeLillo is using himself in the process of compiling and assessing his own narration.

- 4) introducing Weird Beard’s philosophic speeches on radio:

*I know what you think. You think I’m making it up. I’m not making it up. If it gets from me to you, it’s true. We are for real, kids. And this is the question I want to leave with you tonight. Who is for real and who is sent to take notes? You are there in the depths of the night, listening in secret, and the reason you’re listening in secret is because you don’t know who to trust except me.* [9, 266]

- 5) ‘squeezing’ his (the author’s) ego into the character’s speech: “*Feebees? That’s my word. A long-time word of mine.*” “*I thought it was my word.*” “*You must have heard it from me,*” *Ferrie said. “This happens all the time. People think they invent things they actually heard from me. I have a way of creeping into people’s minds. I get inside people’s minds.*” [9, 314]

- 6) sudden switches from the narrating tone into the addressing one:

*...he said he had an ample supply, obtained directly from the western cartridge company on the*

basis of past dealings. *See? Everything is taken care of. It's falling into place.* [9, 334]

**'INSTRUCTIONS' ON HISTOIRE** The author 'takes care' of his reader and directs his attention to the most important issues of the novel by inserting *intertextual instructions* as if saying: remember this, mind this, keep this in your head, think about it, etc. Partially, this function is laid on philosophic digressions but since such instructions are too obvious and have no addressee DeLillo hides himself again behind the *dumb dialogues*: *Don't listen to what I say. Trust my hands, my touch.* [9, 17] *There is time for everything... Time to recall the smallest moment, time to revise your story, time to change your mind. We are here to help you clarify the themes of your life.* [9, 162] *This is the Joycean Book of America, remember – the novel in which nothing is left out.* [9, 182]

In his care for the maximum possible understanding of the text, DeLillo can even merge with the reader into one common 'we': *Let's devote our lives to...* [9, 15], *Let's regain our grip on things.* [9, 15]

**DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE** To make the story of Kennedy's assassination true to reality DeLillo used all the newest information collected by FBI in late 80's. He introduces within the story facts, figures and "extends them, as he says, into the imagined space and time." Symbolism and fatalism are based on the game of figures, facts and dates. To insert them into the text the writer uses forms of diary: [9, 150-6], tape recordings [9, 376], postcards: [9, 93; 133; 199; 204 etc], documents:

*DIAGNOSIS: WOUND, MISSILE, UPPER LEFT ARM GUNSHOT, NO A OR N INVOLVEMENT # 8255*

1. Within command – work.
2. Patient dropped 45 caliber automatic, pistol discharged when it struck the floor, an missile struck patient in left arm causing the injury.

*NARRATIVE SUMMARY*

*This 18 year male accidentally shot himself in the left arm with a sidearm, reportedly of 22 caliber. Examination revealed the wound of entrance in the medial portion of the left upper arm, just above the elbow. There was no evidence of neurologic circulatory, or bony injury. The wound of entrance was allowed to heal and the missile was then excised through a separate incision two inches above the wound of entry. The missile appeared to be a 22 slug. The wound healed well and the patient was discharged to duty.* [9, 92-3]

Alongside with elements of naturalism in *histoire*, documentaries cognate the novel with realism – these are the core pivots of the narration structure.

**SPELLING MISTAKES** Spelling mistakes seem to be made by the author for some very peculiar reason: they are not accidental and used only in particular places, namely, in Oswald's diary and the names of characters. This is not a feature of

Derrida's text *self-destruction* or *scene of writing*. There might be two possible explanations and both are given by the writer: *Banister's secretary thought his first name was Leon. Ferrie started calling him Leon, after Trotsky. Mistakes have this way of finding a sweet meaning.* [9, 317] *The Fair Play Committee discouraged him from opening a branch office. But they were nice and polite and made spelling mistakes and anyway the important thing was the correspondence itself.* [9, 313]

Spelling mistakes in Oswald's handwriting are essential also for the *histoire* since Kennedy's handwriting was the same and it makes one more unbelievable coincidence:

*She is flabbergassed, but agrees to help. Asks me about myself and my reasons for doing this. I explain I am a communist, ect. She is politely sym. But uneasy now. She tries to be a friend to me. She feels sorry for me I am someth. new.* [9, 150] *...After a pleasant hand-in-hand walk to the local cinema we come home, standing on the doorstep I propose's She hesitates than refuses, my love is real but she has none for me. (I am too stunned too think!) I am miserable!* [9, 199]

One more function of spelling mistakes is that they add more to the idea of the imperfection of human life as such which is cultivated in the novel.

**ITALICS** Parallel to repetitions DeLillo applies another method of paying attention to certain phrases and words – *italics*. Very often such italicized sentences appear out of nowhere, but subconsciously underline the hidden meaning of the context where they are used: *It also included a fragment from the psalmbook, not known to the outside world. Terminate with extreme prejudice. Parmenter was handling the actual production of the memo on a suitable typewriter and stationery.* [9, 138] *The sight of the Lincoln sent a thrill along the street. One roar devoured another. There were bodies jutting from windows, daredevil kids bolting into the open. They're here. It's them. They're real. It wasn't only Jack and Jackie who were riding in a fire excitement. The crowd brought itself into heat and light.* [9, 394]

The most emotional moment – the description of the assassination – is overfilled with italics:

FLASH SSSSSSSSS BLOOD STAINEZAAC KENNEDY SERIOSTY WOUNDED SSSSSSSSS MAKE THAT PERHAPS PERHAPS SERIOUSLY WOUNDED [9, 402]

The text itself is emotionally dumb, the words don't produce tension but the italics 'cry out' instead of marks of exclamation. Within the description of the scene of the assassination there are phrases which remind the 'not heard' conversation between two people talking over a radio transmitter:

- *Wellcome Mr. Kennedy to Dallas.* [9, 393]
- *Advise crowds behind barricades. They are getting in the street here.* [9, 393]
- *Advise approaching main go real slow speed.* [9, 394]
- *Dallas One. Repeat. I didn't get all of it.* [9, 397]

- *Stand by a moment please.* [9, 398]
- *Put me on, Bill. Put me on.* [9, 398]
- *We are hit. Lancer is hit. Get us to Parkland fast.* [9, 399]
- *Put me on. Put me on. Put me on.* [9, 401]
- *See if the President will be able to appear out here. We have all these people that are waiting. I need to know whether to feed them or what to announce out here.* [9, 402]

Whose words are these? They seem to come from *the Agency*, where everything that happens on the earth is planned. On the other hand, it may be the conversation between the conspirators. It may be also a state of somebody's mind, a mental inner conversation. This phenomenon, regardless of its meaning in the text, is very close to what J.Derrida calls the *scene of writing*: the writer shows us that the truth is in these words.

The analysis of the text of DeLillo's "Libra" allows now to make certain conclusions about the writer's artistic method and to find out whether we can attribute postmodern tradition to his work.

Judging from the analysis we made, it is easy to see that the structure of the novel perfectly represents the *thetic intention* of its text (according to C.Nash's classification), i.e. the text brings a certain theme on all the levels and makes the novel homogeneous. '*Instructions*' on *histoire* and '*explanations*' of *discourse* manifest textual *self-reflexivity*. Elements of *self-portrait* and *metalepsis* are hidden in the doubleness of the fictional world, indistinctive characters and the author's description of himself through the protagonist character. These phenomena are, at the same time, the signs of the idea that the process of writing was as important as the result, i.e. the author did not simply write the novel, but also described how he did it (Christopher Nash: *writing as act*). Omnipotent author is a bright example of C.Nash's *narrative alibi* (the author is 90% elusive).

Nearly all of the notions introduced by destructionists in their theoretical approach to text-analysis can be more or less applied to DeLillo's novel. Thus, J.Derrida's *scene of writing* is realized via the discourse devices such as italics and philosophical digressions. The contradiction between the conscious and the subconscious leads to the contradiction in dialogues and paradox statements. Elements of interjection are seen in the simultaneous textual realisation of two and more parallel levels of narration. Inconsistency of events and the symbolic pyramid that goes deep beneath their description are signals of shape complexity. Repetitions of phrases inevitably gain the characteristics of the notion introduced by Derrida as *trace* – the kaleidoscope of meanings which change into a unique combination in every single contextual surrounding. The philosophic concept of *incompleteness* penetrates the novel starting from *histoire* (the crucial event is always *yet* to take place throughout the narration; it is rather

potential, than real) and finishing with elements of language deviations.

There are certain things that don't match. Fragmentality, so typical of contemporary fiction, is definitely not in the list of the main *Libra's* characteristics since the fragments are connected not only by associations and textual implications, but also due to the unity of events, their natural (in most cases) inner determination and, therefore, are not so distinctly seen in the text taken as a whole. We may rather speak of the *author fragmentality* in the narration, his "multi-faceness". Fragmentality lies also in the interlacement of the pieces of fictional reality and the world of consciousness which influence and determine each other.

What prevented us from making a pure deconstructional analysis of the DeLillo's piece of fiction is the *idea of event* in *histoire*, the pivot that immediately brings contradiction into the text-centred apprehension of the novel. Fatality of coincidences, anomalies (on the level of *histoire*), cult of mystery, majestic play of figures, Bible motives, diary and documentary evidence – all this indicates that there are also deeper motivations of *histoire-discourse* correlation. Elements of symbolism and naturalism interchange bring DeLillo back to modernistic tradition and the text-deconstruction turns rather into a *deconstruction of ideas*.

Thus, summarizing everything said above, we can confirm that in majority of cases DeLillo fits in the frames of postmodern tradition. It should be mentioned that in our postmodern text-analysis (following C.Nash's idea of anti-realistic tendencies prevailing in contemporary literature and J.Derrida's idea of text deconstruction-centred criticism) we obviously and deliberately left out all the sore subjects and aching problems of the '*American existence*' raised by the author but it does not mean they are of less importance in the novel. Realistic element is definitely strong in the course of narration. With irony DeLillo depicts the deficiencies and 'sins' of the United States. In order not to be groundless we shall mention some of them: primitive understanding of democracy and individual responsibility: [9, 173], collapse of the 'American dream': [9, 294], American megalomania: [9, 204], crisis of religion and beliefs: [9, 320], racism: [9, 327], decay of cultural values: [9, 233]

All the things mentioned in the novel are described not via deeds but via thoughts, dreams, impressions and 'unuttered' dialogues. They serve to compile the complex structure of labyrinths in the consciousness of American people in the late 80's. It is, in terms of C.G.Jung's psychological theory, a stored collection of '*initial images*' or *archetypes* which constitute the fundamental structure of the American mind. According to C.G.Jung, the psychology of a human being is based on the collective (or racial) unconscious and its archetypes such as the hero and the mother goddess (Lee

Oswald and his mother). Thus, we may assume that the author's initial task was to show the whole underground of psychological archetype of an ordinary American. For that reason he needed both – 'vast' reality and 'deep' symbols. Probably, one of the most unique features in DeLillo's method is his ability to make a tight correlation of reality with its symbolic implications. In this article we have dealt mainly with the depth of the text, with the contextual implications and the means of their interpretations. The realistic surface still preserves a rich material for further 'investigation' of the novel.

The fusion of symbolism and realism is the evident result of J.Joyce's influence which helped DeLillo to emboss a static picture of American life succeeding equally in its amazing size and inconceivable depth. DeLillo's symbolism, though, is different from the Joyce's: it is not hidden beyond the *histoire* in colours, names, names of episodes, frequently repeated images, associations, etc. DeLillo's symbolism is within reality itself. It is not put outside the brackets of the *histoire*, but inserted into it, which works for the a-world-inside-the-world effect.

According to the most widely accepted definition of postmodern<sup>4</sup> there should be a combination of realistic and modernistic traits based on the textual

self-efficiency. Indeed, "Libra" is not only a complex interlacement of these literature trends, it comprises the particular elements of symbolism, naturalism, realism, modernism. The book is an enormous sequence of bravura passages: stream-of-consciousness, interior monologues, phantasmagoric events, bare narrative, etc.

Therefore, speaking of DeLillo's relation to postmodernistic literature, to be more precise we shall say that Don DeLillo is the writer who essentially enriches our idea of postmodern in the literature of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The polyphony of thought, an attempt to expose reality without imposing stereotypes, the aspiration to unite historic material with speculations about the eternal beyond-time categories that border upon the metaphysical constants of human existence: life, death, love, fate, etc. – these are the basic 'personal' traits of DeLillo-the novelist which would not allow to mix him with other writers. The artist experiments on the level of discourse in order to send the message to the reader with the maximum effect, absorbing the bulk of postmodernistic traditions and remaining, at the same time, a distinctive and unique representative of the contemporary American literature.

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<sup>4</sup> Christopher Nash in his book gives a summarizing understanding of postmodern as a complex phenomenon in literature of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which pivots upon the rejection of any conventions, stereotypes and traditional critical notions, i.e. it destroys the idea of narration as fabula created by realistic tradition on the one hand, and dismantles the idea of text as a cosmic unity created by modernists, on the other hand. Postmodernism is, in other words, a fanciful compilation of both.