"Simulacra" and "Simulation" in Selected Novels of Don DeLillo

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Abstract

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This thesis studies three novels by the American postmodern novelist Don DeLillo which are White Noise (1985), Cosmopolis (2003), and Falling Man (2007). It analyzes them from a postmodern perspective by exploring some major notions of this era, like simulation, mass media, consumerism, and terrorism, and showing their influence on the works of DeLillo. In order to explicate the paradigms of postmodernism in DeLillo's novels, I will rely on the critical writings of the French postmodern theorist Jean Baudrillard especially Simulacra and Simulation (1981), America (1986), Selected Writings (1989), and The Spirit of Terrorism (2003).

The study foregrounds the themes of the fear of death and the violence of reality as the major reasons that make people in postmodernity embrace and prioritize hyperreality and technology which help detach them (virtually) from the real.

Keywords: postmodernism, DeLillo, Baudrillard, simulacra, simulation, hyperreality, the fear of death.
Simulacra and Simulation (French: Simulacres et Simulation) is a 1981 philosophical treatise by the sociologist Jean Baudrillard, in which the author seeks to examine the relationships between reality, symbols, and society, in particular the significations and symbolism of culture and media involved in constructing an understanding of shared existence. Simulacra are copies that depict things that either had no original, or that no longer have an original. Simulation is the imitation of the operation... Everything is connected in the simulacrum: don delilloâ€™s dialogue with the images of consumer media.Â

SPECTACLE AND SIMULATION: FOUNDATIONAL THEORIES FOR DeLILLOâ€™S FICTION

In 1967, Guy Debord published The Society of the Spectacle, which analyzes contemporary consumer culture through a Marxist lens, and like many Marxist theorists, he theorizes that with the rise of commodity fetishism â€œin societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all of life presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles.Â

DeLilloâ€™s characters and novels themselves are only understood in their relation to other pop images in media culture; identity is formulated from the constantly consumable fragments of media images. 2. Don DeLilloâ€™s novels are postmodern theory put into fictional practice. 3. (As a logical consequence of point 2) DeLillo embraces e.g. Baudrillardâ€™s radically skeptic view of the postmodern world where â€œthere is nothing outside of the play of simulations, no real in which a radical critique of the simulational society might be grounded.â€ (Leonard Wilcox qtd. in Nel 749) 4. DeLillo (as another consequence of point 2) thinks that the breakdown of Lyotardâ€™s grands récits, i.e. â€œmaster discoursesâ€™ or metanarratives such as Christianity, Marxism, or Science, is a good thing (as Lyotard does).Â

Whereas representation tries to absorb simulation by interpreting it as false representation, simulation envelops the whole edifice of representation as itself a simulacrum. Review. Don DeLilloâ€™s White Noise: An Initial Postmodern Society Struggling with Fledgling Policies of Consumerism. Mohammad Sadegh Najjarzadeha. M.A of English Language and Literatures, University of Tehran, Iran.Â

One of the most sumptuous products in the United States is an automobile that aside its utility and performance is selected due to its role in elevating oneâ€™s prestige. This novel is chronologically the eighth novel by Don DeLillo and is categorized in the genre of postmodern literature.Â

DeLilloâ€™s great facility with a language perfectly tuned for irony and satire allows him to range the breadth and depth of these themes. Americana All these thematic strains are present in Americana.Â

The Names Of the later novels, The Names and White Noise offer the most moving and powerful treatment of DeLilloâ€™s recurring themes. The Names features the decay of the typical American marriage. James and Kathryn are married, have a son named Tap, and live happily for a time on an island in the eastern United States.