



The Body Artist by Don DeLillo: A Baudrillardian nalysis
فنانة الجسد لدون ديليلو: وفقا لتحليل بودريار

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Abstract

The present research examines the postmodern ideas of Jean Baudrillard and conducts an analysis of the manifestation of the notions of hyperreality and simulation within the context of this particular book. In the realm of hyperreality, an artificially constructed version of reality that has only superficial resemblances to actuality and without any substantive foundation, serves as a replacement for genuine reality. This study examines the occurrence of hyperreality and simulation in the Body Artist, focusing on several key issues. These include the multiplicity and fluidity of identities within both the artistic performance and the main narrative, the deliberate blurring of boundaries between fiction and reality through the use of playful elements within the Body Artist, the emergence of simulacra, the presence of circular recursion, and the captivating influence of media. Hence, the central character, Lauren Hartke, surpasses the boundaries that separate the realms of actuality and imagination via her iterative transformations inside the realm of her artistic expression known as Body Time.

Email:

Published: 1- 9-2024

Keywords: Hyperreality ,
Baudrillard, Simulation, Reality,
Media

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المخلص

يتناول البحث الحالي أفكار ما بعد الحداثة لجان بودريار، ويجري تحليلاً لتجليات مفهومي الواقع الفائق والمحاكاة في سياق رواية فنان الجسد . في عالم الواقع الفائق، تكون النسخة المصطنعة من الواقع والتي لها تشابهات سطحية مع الواقع وبدون أي أساس موضوعي، بمثابة بديل للواقع الحقيقي. تبحث هذه الدراسة في حدوث الواقع الفائق والمحاكاة رواية فنان الجسد، مع التركيز على عدة قضايا رئيسية. وتشمل هذه تعدد وانسيابية الهويات داخل كل من الأداء الفني والسرد الرئيسي، والطمس المتعمد للحدود بين الخيال والواقع من خلال استخدام عناصر مرحلة داخل الرواية، وظهور المحاكاة، ووجود التكرار الدائري، و التأثير الجذاب لوسائل الإعلام. ومن هنا، فإن الشخصية المركزية، لورين هارتكي، تتجاوز الحدود التي تفصل بين عالم الواقع والخيال من خلال تحولاتها التكرارية داخل عالم تعبيرها الفني المعروف باسم وقت الجسم

The Loss of the Real:

According to Baudrillard (1983c), the concept of the real might be defined as that which can be faithfully reproduced in an analogous manner. The author further elaborates on his description by emphasizing that the concept of the hyperreal encompasses not only what may be replicated, but also emphasizes its constant reproduction (p.146). According to Kellner's book titled "Jean Baudrillard" (1989), Baudrillard's works include ideas such as "simulation," "simulacra," and "hyperreality" starting from the mid-1970s (p.61). Hence, the potency of "signs, images, and models" is amplified (p. 63), despite their lack of a "origin" or "referent" or signified inside the postmodern realm (Poster, 1988, p.1). Hence, the global recognition of distinguishing between the unreal and the real has ceased to exist, and has been replaced by a general disregard for any such distinction (Boorstin, 1961, p.36). The phenomenon referred to as "the loss of the real" has been identified by Baudrillard (Barry, 2009, p. 84).

In Poster's work published in 1988, Baudrillard's beliefs are summarized as follows: The era characterized by the prevalence of mimetic subject matter has become obsolete. The individual's comprehension of the universe is no longer predicated on the indispensability of Kantian frameworks such as the categorizations of space and time, as well as causation, in the pursuit of universal veracity. The subject matter lacks a perspective that accurately reflects reality. The location of privilege has undergone a transformation, namely towards the hyperreal object, which may be described as an artificial or counterfeit entity. The concept of "hyperreality" emerges as a consequence of the disappearance of the authentic, whereby a simulated reality is constructed via the proliferation of representations or symbols that have no connection to an original reality that really existed (Baudrillard, 1988d, p.161).

According to Baudrillard, there are "four consecutive stages" in the life cycle of an image. This statement represents a fundamental truth. The phenomenon in question serves to conceal and distort a fundamental truth. The statement serves to conceal the lack of a fundamental truth. The statement

suggests that the subject being discussed lacks any connection to reality and instead exists as an independent and unadulterated representation. According to Baudrillard (1988d, p.170).

According to Baudrillard (1988d, p.170), the first stage suggests that the picture has a favorable aesthetic quality. To clarify, the visual manifestation of an image might be seen as a symbolic representation, as described by Lodge (1988, p.405). The representation in the second phase might be characterized as a negative or detrimental representation. This implies the presence of a malevolent semblance. During the third step, a practitioner of black magic engages in a performance that simulates an illusionary manifestation. In order to enhance the academic quality of the user's text, it is necessary to rewrite According to Baudrillard (1988d, p.170), the simulation replaces the notion of appearance in the final stage.

According to Baudrillard (1983), nostalgia has its full significance after the real undergoes transformations. There exists a proliferation of myths around the interpretation of signals and the origins of reality, as well as notions of authenticity, second-hand truth, and objectivity. There seems to be an observable increase in the prominence of the authentic, lived experience, accompanied with a resurgence of rhetorical elements in which the essence and tangible nature have become less prominent. The building of the referential and the real is characterized by a sense of fear, which is analogous and comparable to the anxiety surrounding substantial production. This is how simulation operates in the context we are discussing - as a policy of the real and hyperreality.

Furthermore, Umberto Eco (1986) shares Baudrillard's perspective on hyperreality, seeing it as a realm where "absolute unreality" supplants "authentic existence." The author asserts that in America, there is a prevailing belief that all reconstructions must be exact replicas of the reality they want to represent. This phenomenon might be seen as a manifestation of the "American imagination" that demands the authentic item, but necessitates the creation of a "complete forgery" in order to achieve it (Eco, 1986, pp.7-8). As an illustrative instance, the author draws a distinction between the "societies located on the Pacific and Atlantic coasts." The author notes that the concept of a compelling "simulation" is prominently emphasized in the context where the absence of historical richness is seen. In support of his assertion, he references the phenomenon of the "post-civilization of the late colonized West." The author asserts that the geographical area in question may be characterized as a "artificial region." Furthermore, Eco (1986) asserts that there are urban centers such as Los Angeles that are specifically designed to cater to the entertainment

industry (p. 26). Consequently, this phenomenon gives rise to what is known as "Absolute Fake" or hyperreality, as described by Eco (1986, p.31).

Baurillard's Simulacra:

Baudrillard posits the existence of "three orders of simulacra." The first order simulacrum offers an artificial depiction. This implies that the depiction of reality is unambiguously and unequivocally authentic. According to Lane (2000, p.86), The item in question may be characterized as a replica that imitates an exceptional prototype, as it exhibits a substantial disparity between actuality and appearance, or between tangible entities and their symbolic representations (Kellner, 1994, p.170).

The distinction between "reality and representation" becomes indistinct inside the realm of the second order simulacrum. Hence, the true nature of reality remains indiscernible since it is seen as being true in and of itself (Lane, 2000, p.86). According to Kellner (1994, p.170), there exists a relationship of equivalence between things and signals, and it should be noted that products are not just replicas of the original. The process of simulation starts by fundamentally negating the sign as a kind of value, or rather, seeing the sign as a reversal and ultimate termination of any form of reference. According to Baudrillard (1983c), the concept of "representation" seeks to understand simulation as a deceptive kind of representation, while simulation encompasses the whole of representation as a simulacrum.

The concept of hyperreality is generated by the third-order simulacrum. According to Baudrillard (1983c), the concept being referred to is the development of a reality that lacks both a beginning and true substance. The concept under consideration might be characterized as a "order of representation" that has effectively supplanted actuality (Powell, 1998, p.58). The arrangement of this order is predicated upon the principle of the "reproducibility of objects." To clarify, the items undergo replication, resulting in their identical appearance to both one another and the "generated model" (Kellner, 1994, p.171). According to Baudrillard (1988a), he argues that the phenomenon in question is "more real than the real" (p.188). In the realm of "hyperreality," the encounters and perceptions beyond the ordinary experiences of daily existence. The contemporary society is heavily influenced by Baudrillardian concepts, including terms like "simulation," "simulacra," "the hyperreal," and "the implosion of meaning" (Lane, 2000, p. 2). In the contemporary society, the pervasive surveillance of many aspects of human existence is facilitated by the use of visual representations, computational algorithms, and conceptual frameworks. According to Kellner (1994, p.8), According to Baudrillard (1988d, p.3), the act of simulation involves pretending

to own something that one does not really possess. Hence, the distinction between authenticity and counterfeit is imperceptible.

Hyperreality may be seen as a distinct "mode of representation" that has supplanted the traditional notion of reality. According to Powell (1998, p. 58), the phenomenon in question may be described as "more than real." Additionally, Baudrillard (1988a, p. 188) argues that it is "more real than real." According to Mark Poster, Hyperreality may be defined as a realm consisting of self-referential signals (Poster, p. 6), as influenced by Baudrillard's ideas. Hyperreality is a phenomenon that arises via a simulation process, whereby the authentic representation of the natural world and its corresponding referentiality is substituted with self-referential indications. Hence, the separation between subject and object diminishes, resulting in the disappearance of the objective reality. The autonomous realm of objects becomes integrated, while artificial codes and simulation models come to define it (Kellner, 1994, pp. 53-54). According to Powell (1998), language is regulated by the "codes of grammar," while biological processes in the body are controlled by "DNA codes." In the postmodern period, the universe is governed by "codes or models" (p. 52).

The Body Artist in the Light of Baudrillard:

The Body Artist is an intriguing novel by Don DeLillo, published in 2001. This novel has been referred to as "a compressed, poetic novel" (Osteen, 2008, p.146) and "performance text, body-art novel" (Radia, 2014, p.200). American husband and wife Rey Robles and Lauren Hartke are featured in the 2001 film The Body Artist. Due to their estrangement from the metropolis of New York, they rent an ancient seaside home in the New York suburb of Little Moon. Rey is a director and filmmaker, while Lauren is a body or performance artist. The first section of Little Moon is set in their kitchen on a Sunday morning during brunch. DeLillo describes precisely what is occurring in this circumstance. The initial scene emphasizes the breakfast food, particularly its flavors. It also emphasizes their dietary habits. For example, Lauren Hartke consumes soya. "The soya had an odor that did not seem to belong with the sand in the box," she explains. It smelled faintly of wheat and feet combined. She smelt the soya every time she used it. She inhaled the scent twice or thrice" (DeLillo, 2001, p.15).

According to Powell (1996), postmodernism views the concept of "self" as being fragmented and characterized by multiplicity (p.1496). Put differently, there exists a "plurality of fluid identities." According to Powell (1996), in the postmodern period, the concept of identity is characterized by its perpetual state of flux, rendering it inherently unstable and devoid of fixedness (p. 1496). Furthermore, Freeman (2007) asserts in *New Performance / New Writing* that body art serves to problematize the notion of self. The phenomenon in question

is often replicated, romanticized, and subjected to various acts of transgression and obsession, as well as undergoing processes of metamorphosis and enduring through time (p.81).

According to Kontoulis and Kitis (2011), The Body Artist exhibits a sense of mobility rather than a fixed core (p. 235). The concept of Lauren's absence of a stable identity can also be seen in the first scenes of the book, as she transitions between first person, third person, and second person perspectives. The book under examination (Kontoulis and Kitis, 2011, p.225) prominently features the notion of "overlapping of subjectivities." In the given example, DeLillo characterizes Lauren's engagement with newspaper reading as an active process whereby she tends to position herself and actively involve herself in certain narratives within the newspaper. DeLillo (2001) refers to a kind of daydreaming variation (p.16). This particular occasion presents her with an opportunity to assume a different identity. She is capable of sustaining a lifestyle similar to that of others for brief periods of time, ranging from a few seconds to a few minutes.

Moreover, the act of visually seeing a page and differentiating between individual lines initiates a process of engagement and immersion. According to DeLillo (2001), individuals engage in discussions with others in a rather uncontrolled manner until they reach a point of self-awareness, at which they cease their conversational engagement. The individual holds the belief that by engaging with a narrative, one undergoes a transformation, assuming the role of a character inside the tale and engaging in self-created conversation. According to DeLillo (2001), individuals sometimes assume a masculine identity, existing inside the confines of written text, and engaging in an alternative rendition of the narrative (p. 22). Consequently, she has the potential to embody several identities.

The presence of many variations and absence of stable entities evokes parallels with Jean Baudrillard's concept of simulacrum, namely the third order. The author typically provides three categories of connections pertaining to the classifications of simulacra. The first order consists of direct signifiers-signified linkages. At the second level, there are indirect connections between signifiers and signifieds. The third level, sometimes referred to as simulation or "hyperreal," encompasses the concept of "signifier-signifier links" (Kellner, 1994, p.120). Put differently, the quantity of meanings associated with a linguistic symbol is not inherently static. Not only are they subject to change, but each signified also serves as a signifier for another referent or signified. Hence, the concept of signifiers pertains only to their mutual reference within an unceasing sequence of signification (Roman, 2001, p.309).

In *The Body Artist* (2001), the presence of an internal dynamic allows the characters to assume distinct identities and roles while yet maintaining their own selves. The play is characterized by a pervasive presence of acting or role playing. The central character in the narrative assumes several roles, namely Lauren. The protagonist assumes several roles, not just in her physical performance but also in her personal life, specifically within the context of the story. According to Kontoulis and Kitis (2011), it is argued that Lauren undermines the notion of "fixed representations" of persons (p.222).

The part titled "Body Art in Extremis: Slow, Spare and Painful" is situated inside the book, specifically positioned between the sixth and seventh chapters. This transcript presents an interview conducted by Lauren with Mariella Chapman subsequent to her theatrical portrayal in the production titled "Body Time." In the interview, Mariella emphasizes that she saw two out of the three performances and expresses her astonishment at Hartke's ability to modify her body and voice (DeLillo, 2001, p. 107). This discourse signifies her transformation of identities via the adoption of several voices and the alteration of her physical form.

Within the book, Mariella, the interviewer, provides a detailed account of her observation of Lauren's artistic creation titled "The Body Time: The Last of Her Bodies." In this particular piece, the male figure shown is devoid of any identifiable linguistic or cultural markers. The subject exhibits an intriguing kind of locomotion, reminiscent of navigating through an environment with limited visibility, although at a reduced pace and with pronounced gestures. He wants to communicate a message to us. The voice may be occasionally heard on the recording, and Hartke performs lip-syncing for the spoken phrases. According to DeLillo (2001, p.109).

The transition of pronouns, namely from the feminine pronoun "she" referring to Lauren, to the masculine pronoun "he" denoting the nude male, serves to heighten the assumption of an other persona. Additionally, the last piece of evidence suggests that she assumes many identities throughout her performances, with the nude guy being the most recent one. The interviewer characterizes the evolution of Lauren's identities as a multifaceted process. The primary source of potency in the composition is inside Hartke's physicality. Occasionally, she portrays femininity in a manner that is enigmatic and potent, transcending traditional gender boundaries and encompassing several indeterminate moods. Historically, she has occupied the physical forms of individuals in their adolescence stage, Pentecostal preachers, an individual of advanced age who relied on yogurt for sustenance, and notably, a male individual who was in a state of pregnancy. According to DeLillo (2001, p.111).

Lauren has a transformation of identity, transitioning from a female to a male, specifically assuming the role of a pregnant male. Additionally, she experiences a change in age, transitioning from a youthful individual to an elderly lady. Consequently, she has the capacity to undergo diverse stages of life and assume contrasting genders. In DeLillo's work, the author posits that Hartke, a body artist, endeavors to detach herself from her physical form (DeLillo, 2001, p.106). Furthermore, DeLillo asserts that Hartke consistently engages in performative acts, perpetually undergoing transformation or delving into her fundamental sense of self (DeLillo, 2001, p.107). The aforementioned descriptions pertain to the concept of variability and plurality of identities within the postmodern epoch of the literary genre known as the novel.

The concept of mutability, including the fluidity of identities in the postmodern era, is prominently evident in DeLillo's literary works. As DeLillo (2001) aptly expresses, the objects seen by the protagonist exhibit a perpetual state of transformation, undergoing metamorphosis and assuming several forms, while remaining elusive in their true nature and essence (p. 38). According to DeLillo (2001), throughout the interview, Mariella observes that Lauren's physical presence exhibits a heightened state of engagement, beyond the current level. (p.110) The narrative demonstrates that Lauren embodies several identities or subjectivities. Additionally, it signifies the concept of postmodernist reproducibility. Lauren's physical training for her role in the production of "Little Moon" is integrated with the culminating performance of "Body Time" on the New York stage. The fusion in issue prompts an inquiry into the concept of reality. Which of the performances is the authentic one? Which one of these options corresponds to the rehearsal? The demarcation between these two entities lacks clarity.

The crisis of multiplicity or plurality of referents or signifieds, as described by Roman (2001) in the context of Poststructuralism, is characterized by the signifiers referring only to one another in an unending cycle of signification (p.309). This phenomenon poses a significant challenge in the postmodern period. The current crisis engenders a state of confusion and skepticism about the veracity of the portrayed reality. Hence, it is uncertain for readers of the story to ascertain if the actions shown as performance by Lauren really represent her actual performance or rather her preparation for future performances. The presence of doubt is clearly evident inside Lauren herself.

According to Baudrillard (1988d), the emergence of the hyperreal world is facilitated by the process of "liquidation" or eradication of "all referentials" (p.167). Baudrillard (1988d, p.176) underscores the notion that the many referentials intertwine their discourses in a circular manner, driven by a Moebian compulsion. The term "Moebius strip" serves as a metaphor to

symbolize the exponential growth seen in the development and use of models and simulation processes. This gives rise to a complex and interconnected spiral formation. This system exhibits circularity, without definitive starting or ending points or precise referents (Kellner, 1989, p.83). According to Baudrillard (1988e), it is reiterated that inside the realm of hyperreality, the concept of "finalities" has ceased to exist. According to the author (p.120), the phrase "the death of 'all referentials'" signifies a state of nonexistence.

The novel "The Body Artist" (2001) is characterized by the presence of two distinct realms: the realm of objective fact and the realm of imaginative fiction. The play contains multiple instances where the boundaries between reality and unreality are indistinct, leading both the audience and the characters to question the authenticity of what they observe or participate in. Consequently, a pervasive atmosphere of hyperreality or distorted reality permeates the play: "Time seems to pass. The world happens, unrolling into moments, and you stop to observe one, and what you notice is the body's loneliness" (p. 22).

Lauren, a practitioner of body art, directs her attention towards engaging in physical exercises aimed at enhancing her performance on the stage in New York, as a means to cope with the profound sorrow stemming from the loss of her spouse. The individual in question starts the process of divulging more identities, both inside her personal life and via her artistic performances. For example, according to Schuster (2008, p.157), Lauren is able to surpass the binary opposition of gender by undergoing a significant transition from portraying feminine characters to assuming masculine roles. The distinction between male and female becomes ambiguous when the individual undergoes a transformation into a pregnant man: "She tried to remember who she was, the thought that she'd been someone else. But this only happened when she remembered to think about it" (DeLillo, 2001, p.111).

Lauren undergoes a process of self-disintegration. The individual recognizes her identity by stating, "I am Lauren." According to DeLillo (2001), there is a decreasing trend seen. The individual in question is progressively experiencing a loss of their own identity, assuming the characteristics and traits of other individuals. According to Kontoulis and Kitis (2011), in order to access the enduring life energy that cannot be eradicated, Lauren must undergo a process of self-reduction to the point of nonexistence (p.239). The individual relinquishes their inherent subjectivity and adopts an alternative subjectivity or identity that has no resemblance to their own self. DeLillo describes the act of cleaning the bathroom by using a spray-gun bottle of disinfectant. According to DeLillo (2001, p.116), the protagonist proceeded to position the nozzle of the spray pistol against her own head. Additionally, the protagonist, Lauren, has a

phenomenon in which she perceives a little apparition of her own self levitating (DeLillo, 2001, p.36). Consequently, the individual is experiencing a loss of personal identity as a result of using the disinfectant over her own body. Moreover, according to Radia (2014), Lauren engages in a meticulous procedure aimed at separating the physicality from her own being (p. 204).

In DeLillo's novel, *The Body Artist*, the author effectively eradicates any boundaries that exist between the individual and the external world, as well as between the mind and the physical form it occupies. Mr. Tuttle is shown as a biological being without the conventional emotions and mental experiences that are often associated with the human mind and awareness. Mr. Tuttle exhibits a profound state of emotional desolation. Even Lauren is not exempt from this sense of emptiness, as she has difficulties in removing the many aspects that make up her individuality, which she has previously experienced, under the influence of Mr. Tuttle. Lauren undergoes a process of depersonalization, resulting in a diminished sense of personal identity.

The distinction between Lauren and Rey becomes indistinct as she replicates his vocal expression. The protagonist endeavors to appropriate her spouse's identity: On each occasion when she is required to stoop and extend her arm into the deeper and more distant sections of the refrigerator, she emits a moan that, while not occurring with absolute consistency, bears semblance to a lamentation of existence. The individual in question had physical fitness and flexibility, rendering her impervious to the physical exertion. She just replicated Rey's actions, expressing her identification with him by audibly expressing his pain, although in a way that was both smooth and profound, reminiscent of a 47-like quality. According to DeLillo (2001, p.11).

DeLillo says that despite Rey's demise, his presence is metaphorically perceived like to ethereal smoke suspended in the atmosphere. Rey, as shown in DeLillo's (2001) work, may be metaphorically likened to smoke, a formless entity that permeates the atmosphere and eventually occupies every available place. Despite lacking a defined shape, Rey's presence is characterized by a distinct facial expression that is intimately connected to the enigmatic nature of the prowling man (p. 35). The text in question serves as a foreshadowing device for the subsequent portions of the work, hinting to the forthcoming replication of Rey's simulacrum.

Conclusion:

Don DeLillo's novel, *The Body Artist*, effectively explores the themes of hyperreality and simulacra, as conceptualised by Jean Baudrillard. The novel's examination of time, identity, and the distinctions between what is real and what is not, mirrors Baudrillard's concept that in a postmodern society, reality is progressively replaced by simulacra - images that lack an original source.

Lauren, the main character, represents the process of disintegration as she transforms into a live embodiment of her performance, erasing the boundaries between her identity and her artistic expression. The enigmatic presence of the individual in the residence, whose existence may or may not conform to customary norms, further accentuates the precariousness of reality. DeLillo implies that in a society inundated with information and visuals, our understanding of what is authentic becomes uncertain, resulting in a fragmented and flexible sense of self, similar to Baudrillard's hyperreal state where the boundaries between reality and simulation are permanently blurred.

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