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## ■ MEDIA MEDI(T)ATIONS IN DON DELILLO'S *UNDERWORLD*

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Rad ispituje ulogu medija u strukturi, narativnim tehnikama, razvoju likova, priči i zapletu Don DeLilovog *Podzemlja*, jednog od najcenjenijih savremenih američkih romana. DeLilo prepoznaje beskrajne mogućnosti medija u kompoziciji romana, tako da masovni mediji, internet, film, muzika i umetnost predstavljaju kako okvir, tako i prizmu kroz koju se svet romana percipira i umnožava. Međutim, kako su mediji neodvojiv deo same teksture *Podzemlja*, čini se da medijski prikazi prethode svakoj percepciji, te se ne doživljavaju kao posredovanje već kao sama „stvarnost“.

Ključne reči: masovni mediji, internet, film, umetnost, naracija, tačka gledišta, stvarnost, simulakrum.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Media representations pervade our sense of reality, of the self, to the extent that we can no longer tell what came first, the media image or the world it should mirror. Our perception of the events taking place in the “news age” is so interspersed with media perspectives that everything seems to be pre-framed, the real replaced by the hyperreal. According to Baudrillard, there is always a hidden camera somewhere and everyone can be filmed without knowing it, the video available for broadcast on any TV station (Baudrillard 2002: 26), as well as on the Internet. There seems to be an air of artificiality in this relatively new condition, an ability to perceive ourselves and the world through the media lens, which could be described as a kind of media-awareness urging us to see the media image before the image itself. In Baudrillard's words, “the virtual camera is in our heads” (*Ibid.*), and therefore we picture the world as ready-made, our sight imbued with multiple media perspectives.

Featuring a prominent role in the construction of postmodern identity, media, considered in a broader sense as comprising mass media and digital world, as well as

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film, music and art, loom large in the fiction of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, both as an attractive topic and a powerful narrative asset. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that Don DeLillo, one of the most renowned postmodern American authors who began his career in advertising upon obtaining his Bachelor's degree in Communication Arts, has found media an infinite source of inspiration. From *Americana* to *Point Omega*, DeLillo explores not only the role of the media in today's world, but also how our perception of the world keeps changing with the rise and development of media culture. As some critics have noted, DeLillo's early novels mostly focus on the blurred boundaries between media simulacra and reality, depicting a world fascinated with mass media (Linardi 2003: 234-7), while the later ones seem to concentrate more on the masses, on the characters well aware of their media-mindedness, as well as on the Internet, film and performing arts. However, *Underworld*, DeLillo's most appreciated novel, seems to be all-inclusive in this respect. Published in 1997 and voted the second-best work of American fiction in the past twenty-five years by The New York Times, DeLillo's *Underworld* is a paragon of postmodernism – it is “an example of encyclopaedic narrative” (O'Donnel 2008: 108) in which “everything is connected” (U 825), or rather “networked”.

Some of the most prominent topics explored in this novel pertain to the world of media, including integration of history and fiction in media, media and memory, digital world and information multiplicity, cyberspace and (meta)fiction, media and violence, media simulacra, mass media and the masses, art in the media age. Media can also be found in the novel's structure, narrative techniques, characterization, in its plot and story, and yet their presence is sometimes not so easy to recognize, as they are part of its very texture.

## 2. MEDIA AND THE PLOT

*Underworld* begins with a Prologue featuring two megaspectacles – a Soviet atomic test and the historic victory of the New York Giants over the Brooklyn Dodgers, when Bobby Thomson hit one of the most dramatic home runs in the history of baseball. Dubbed as “a shot heard around the world”, the news about Thomson's home run was placed next to an article about “Soviet's second atom blast” on the front page of The New York Times newspaper on October 4<sup>th</sup> 1951, which is referred to in the novel on several instances. What these two events brought together on a single page seem to announce is the coming of a new age in which everything is equally relevant as long as it is aired in the media. Philip Nel recognizes in the juxtaposition of these two events and articles a “tension between two realities: a euphoric crowd and a scene of mass death suggestive of an atomic attack” (Nel 2008: 19). What is also implied is that media have an ability to make an event part of everyone's shared history and collective memory. As one of the characters notes:

We may take it that the term [the shot heard around the world] applies to the suddenness of the blow and the corresponding speed at which the news is transmitted these days. Our servicemen in Greenland and Japan surely heard the home-run call as it was made on Armed Forces Radio (...) Something propelled this event full force into the public imagination. (U 670).

This seems to suggest that media are inexplicable forces which operate beyond human understanding, and therefore cannot be named. "Something" refers to a new form of power which starts to gain momentum in the mid twentieth century – even though television was unaffordable to the majority of households at that time, one can see that the radio and newspapers were powerful enough to create a spectacle out of an event and make it part of everyone's shared history. Thus, both of these events announced in the Prologue will resonate throughout *Underworld*, reminding the readers of the powerful and yet mystical role media play in the construction of reality and the world of the novel.

Needless to say, media are sources heavily drawn upon in the very story of the novel, but what will be of more interest here is how they are used for building up the plot. As John Duvall pointed out, the structure of *Underworld* is "unusual in that it juxtaposes a backward and a forward presentation of time", which is why the plot seems to be different from the story of the characters' lives, enabling development of plot tension that would otherwise disappear (Duvall 2002: 25). A world in itself, *Underworld* is populated with dozens of characters and made up of numerous events that seemingly bear no connection to each other. Links between characters and events are largely established via media: TV and radio broadcasts, internet hyperlinks, film projections, songs, jingles, newspaper articles and photographs function not only as plot connectors, but also as places determining the setting of different parts of the novel and providing useful guidelines for the readers. In this manner scene shifts, as sudden and unexpected as they may seem, do not appear to be too abrupt and completely disconnected. The associative links can take different forms – for example, the Time magazine photograph of the painter Klara Sax sitting in a director's chair in front of an Air Force Bomber finds itself first in the hands of Sister Edgar, and then in Nick Shay's (U 250, 252), evoking different memories in each of them, bringing to mind disparate lines of thought, not to mention that this photograph instantly reminds the reader of Nick's encounter with Klara in the desert from the beginning of the novel. The technique DeLillo perhaps unconsciously employs here is not unlike the "intellectual montage" film technique, which explores "how a series of images can, when correctly composed by the filmmaker and then interpreted by the viewer, produce an abstract concept not strictly present in each of the composite images" (Lindop 2007).<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, it is at moments like these that DeLillo's tribute to avant-garde film and "associative montage" technique is best seen, both in narration and construction of the plot. Many critics, including Mark Osteen and John Johnston, have dealt with the influence of film on Don DeLillo's fiction, primarily drawing parallels between DeLillo's narrative techniques and Godard's cinematic handwriting. Moreover, DeLillo has himself acknowledged avant-garde film as his major source of inspiration, praising "the strong image, the short ambiguous scene, the dream sense of some movies, the artificiality, the arbitrary choices of some directors, the cutting and editing" (LeClair 1982: 25) In her paper "Don DeLillo's Transatlantic Dialogue with Sergei Eisenstein", Catherine Morley further explores the connection between avant-garde film directors and the author of

2 Available at: [http://www.offscreen.com/index.php/phile/essays/eisenstein\\_intellectual\\_montage\\_poststructuralism\\_and\\_ideology/](http://www.offscreen.com/index.php/phile/essays/eisenstein_intellectual_montage_poststructuralism_and_ideology/) [20.08.2010].

*Underworld*, recognizing Sergei Eisenstein as “ever-present through the text” (Morley 2006: 19). Morley sees Eisenstein’s major influence in the montage technique and “jump-cuts” (later also used by Godard), as well as in the author’s and director’s mutual fascination with the crowds (*Ibid*: 20). She also mentions that in Eisenstein’s films the transition between shots is not smooth or logical, the spectator is bombarded with “a series of unexpected connections (...) obliging an intellectual engagement with the image” (*Ibid*: 22), which is similar to the associative montage technique that can be recognized in *Underworld*.

Another similarity between film and the narration in *Underworld* is in that the characters are sometimes introduced into the scenes in action, which is followed by a “close-up” in which their thoughts are exposed. For example, in the sixth part of the novel, “Arrangement in Gray and Black”, there is a very short scene showing Nick’s mother Rosemary Shay doing her beadwork and thinking about her run-away husband.<sup>3</sup> Rosemary is presented as seen through the camera-like eye of the third person narrator who seems to shift from the “crane-view” to the very beadwork needles, material and the frame the mother is holding in her hands. Finally, there is a series of “jump-cuts” in which Rosemary is presented sitting in the same position, immersed in her work, and yet from different angles which present different aspects of the character. DeLillo usually achieves this by repeating the same sentence at the beginning of each new paragraph, adding a new piece of information every time, and developing it in the subsequent paragraph: “She sat there, Rosemary Shay, doing her beadwork (...) She did her beadwork and listened to him doing whatever he was doing (...) She did her beadwork, her piecework (...) She did her beadwork and listened to Nick, finally, go out the door (...) She listened to the radio and did her work (...) (U 676-7) After each of these sentences there appears to be a new line of thought in Rosemary’s mind, so she is first thinking about her son, then about her job, her husband and then about her job again, as if finding the only comfort in it (the word “piecework” tells us that she is paid according to the quantity of beadwork she can produce, but is also evocative of the word “peace”, which could mean that she finds solace in work). More broadly, the “jump-cut” technique can also be recognized in the very structure of the novel, as the events are often replayed, but always in a slightly different context, offering a new perspective to the reader.

### 3. MEDIA AND THE MULTIPLICITY OF VIEWPOINTS

What *Underworld* also has in common with film, as well as with media in general, is the multiplicity of images and viewpoints it presents, which has been recognized as an important feature of the American postmodern fiction by John Johnston. Arguing that the novels relying on media and media techniques “extend to new languages and levels of expression, the forms of subjectivity produced by new regimes of information

3 DeLillo borrows the title of this part of the novel from Whistler’s famous painting of the same name, which shows the portrait of the artist’s mother sitting in a chair, immersed in her thoughts. Rosemary Shay is presented in a similar manner, but as if she was painted from different angles.

production, storage and communication", Johnston suggests that these novels "are multiplicities and articulate information assemblages (...) engaged in something other than the nuanced and realistic representation of human beings" (Johnston 1998: 5-6). In *Underworld*, for example, many characters seem to have Baudrillard's virtual camera in their heads, which is why they tend to perceive the events from the story as if they were taking place in front of a movie camera or on the screen. While Nick Shay, one of the central characters in the novel, watches his sometime lover Klara Sax giving an interview in a desert, rather than describing what he sees, he renders a description of the interview as it would appear on TV:

I could see her in France, dotted down to reconvered waves. I could hear her voice distanced behind a monotone translation. People watching in every part of the country, their hands clustered in the dark. I could see her flat-screen face buzzing at the edges, her eyes like lived-out moons, half a million Klaras floating in the night. (U 78)

What the reader sees here is the media mirror image of the character, what the character would look like if the interview was broadcasted on television. In Nick's mind the body transcends human form and turns into electronic waves, the voice is muffled, as if belonging to another world, secondary to the one of media simulacra.<sup>4</sup> What is also peculiar here is that readers are invited to imagine what Klara would look like in thousands of homes worldwide, her character is multiplied to "half a million Klaras" who will become alive only through the eyes of other media consumers. In other words, here, as well as in many other places in the novel, the media image precedes the image itself, and what is finally rendered is a many times remote, multiplied and media-mediated perspective on a character.

However, perspectives on characters and events can also be multiplied in a slightly different process, by choosing not one but many focalizers in the representation of one and the same event. As it appears, this is where DeLillo recognizes infinite possibilities of cinematic montage applied to narration. Some literary critics, such as John Duvall and Catherine Morley, have chosen The Prologue as the part of *Underworld* which best supports this point, since the baseball game is perceived through a variety of viewpoints, even though there are technically four focalizers: Cotter Martin, the boy who catches the baseball sought after by many characters in the novel, Russ Hodges, the radio announcer whose dramatic rendering of the game appears to be more important than the game itself, J. Edgar Hoover, whose thoughts on the Soviet atomic test and Bruegel's painting "The Triumph of Death" bring a sinister air into the scene, and one of the baseball players, Willie Mays, who is "helplessly" repeating in his mind a radio jingle he has been hearing lately. As Morley notices, even though the baseball game takes place in pre-television time, the readers have an impression that they are

4 This description could be compared to the part from DeLillo's novel *White Noise* depicting the reaction of the Gladney family upon seeing their wife and mother Babette on TV, "...the face in black and white, animated but also flat, distanced, sealed off, timeless. It was but wasn't her (...) she was coming into being, endlessly being formed and reformed as the muscles in her face worked at smiling and speaking, as the electronic dots swarmed" (WN 104). Like Klara, she also appears to be otherworldly and the experience is close to mystical.

watching it on their TV screens (Morley 2006: 25). There is first a crane view, followed by a series of close-ups, "In the radio booth they're talking about the crowd. Looks like thirty-five thousand and how do you figure it." (U 14) and later on the narrative voice says, "A man slowly wiping his glasses. A staring man. A man flexing the stiffness out of his limbs" (U 28) or "Look at Cotter under a seat." (U 47). The image of a TV show is even more pronounced when the pages from the Life magazine start to fall all over the crowd, resembling a short commercial break.

A similar technique is used for the presentation of two more mass scenes (evocative of Eisenstein's "Battleship Potemkin") – the Civil Rights March from 1964, which is perceived through the eyes of Rose Martin, Cotter Martin's sister who participates in the protests, and a few scenes later Dow Day, a protest against Dow Chemical in 1967, perceived through the lens of Mrs. Bowman and her daughter Marian, Nick Shay's girlfriend and future wife, who listen to the radio broadcast of the march at home. The second time a march is presented in the novel (as a radio broadcast) the radio noise is so pervasive that the comments and the sounds of the march coming from the radio seem to overshadow the very event that is broadcasted. At one point, Marian even decides to open the window because it seems that everyone is listening to it, "People listened to the radio, to the dialogue between what was real and what was spliced and mixed and processed and played" (U 601). This immediately plants a seed of suspicion in the quality of the broadcast, implying that its content may not be true to the "real" event, and points to the fact that there are as many perspectives on an event as there are possible characters processing or consuming it. The crowd scenes DeLillo seems to be so fond of emphasize this important characteristic of the information era.

According to Douglas Kellner, media are "a force of socialization" (Kellner 2003: viii), so whatever appears in the media instantly becomes part of shared experience and collective memory. DeLillo seems to employ this theory with ease in *Underworld*, especially for making connections among random characters, and showing that we are all part of the same grand scheme. For example, Klara Sax is the focalizer through most of the fourth part of the novel named "Cocksucker Blues" in which she muses on three different film projections she attends in the summer of 1974. Watching faux Eisenstein's film "Unterwelt", she notices that "an understanding seemed to travel through the audience, conveyed row by row in that mysterious telemetry of crowds" (U 443). In the same scene, Klara's second husband Jack recognizes a familiar tune in "Unterwelt" – Prokofiev's "March" – and comes to the conclusion that he has heard it a thousand times before because it used to be the theme music of an old radio show. This reminiscence of a radio tune connects him with the other people in the audience, whose minds are at that moment "locked in radio recall" (U 442). It is at moments like these that seemingly unrelated characters of *Underworld* are suddenly connected by an awe-inspiring higher force that can operate both within their conscious and unconscious, merge their perspectives and allow them to experience togetherness with others.

A similar kind of networking can be found at another place in the novel – in cyberspace, which may be described as both a focalizer and the focalized. According to Duvall, the Internet is another narrator in the novel, and its viewpoint is close to an omniscient one (Duvall 2002: 68). Duvall has noted that first person narration shifts to a "third-person omniscience" when the reader enters the web address. Nevertheless,

there always needs to be someone searching the web, so the omniscience is “filtered through Nick, who is looking at the screen for us” (*Ibid.*) Recognizing “a bit of metafictionality” in the web address <http://blk.www/dd.com/miraculum>, Duvall draws a parallel between the supposed omniscience of the author of the novel (as the website indeed was fabricated by D.D.) and the very Internet, which supposedly contains this site, as well as the information on the majority of the characters, since all of them seem to end up in cyberspace, either as visitors or part of its content. However, if the author of *Underworld* can be compared to the website creator, the reader may be likened to Nick’s son Jeff, “a lurker” who never posts anything but merely browses the web, obsessively trying to find hidden information and read the signs he encounters. Further, as Nick acknowledges, the Internet is both a miracle and miraculous, since “everybody is everywhere at once, and he is there among them, unseen” (U 808). Today’s fascination with media culture is perhaps most overtly expressed in this part of the novel, as the Internet really is astonishing in that it is a composite of viewpoints where everything is available, connectable and infinitely possible.

#### 4. CAUGHT BY THE CAMERA

Another viewpoint presented in the novel is of a completely different nature – on several instances narration is mediated through the lens of the camera. However, it is a problematic one – on the one hand, the eye of the camera is similar to the objective, disinterested narrator in that it resembles “a fly on the wall” and cannot enter the minds of the characters, but merely presents the events. On the other hand, there always needs to be someone behind the camera, a human being who records the events, choosing what to capture and what to leave out (and in that has a similar role to that of a film director or the novelist himself), from which it follows that the camera can only mediate narration and present the events as they take place in front of it. Finally, there should also be someone who watches the events as they unfold on the screen. Nevertheless, the world seems to change when processed by the camera, the recorded event gains an air of importance, since, given its limited viewpoint, the camera can record only what the person behind it wants to focus on, the unrecorded material inevitably falling into oblivion.

The narration mediated through the camera lens could be best explored in the parts featuring the Texas Highway Killer video, which is played and replayed throughout the novel. This family video, shot by a twelve-year-old girl referred to as the “Video Kid” in the media,<sup>5</sup> shows a man in his forties driving a car and getting killed by a serial killer roaming the Texas highways during the mid eighties and early nineties, killing people randomly. The event is introduced into the novel as an amateur video which hides more than it reveals, as the face of the murderer is unrecorded and remains unseen. In these parts DeLillo seems to explore the nature of the footage on several levels: the relation between the camera and the camera holder, the compelling nature of the tape, the

5 John Duvall calls The Texas Highway Killer tape “the eerie double” of the Zapruder video (Duvall 2002: 50), comparing the girl who recorded the event to Abraham Zapruder, who filmed the assassination of J. F. Kennedy with a home-movie camera in Dallas, Texas.

connection between the camera and the world it captures, the filmed material as the hyperreal, the capacity of the tape to inspire the murderer to repeat the crime and others to copy the same crime, as well as the process of becoming alive through the footage.

Strangely enough, DeLillo's camera is never a "disinterested" one, however paradoxical this may appear, and in *Underworld*, there is a sense that the camera commands the person holding it. Thus, the girl recording the murder is understood as "neither the victim nor the perpetrator of the crime, but only a means of recording it" (U 155) as "it is the camera that puts her in the tale" (U 157). In other words, rather than an instrument in the girl's hands, the camera seems to be in charge, it appears to have taken control of the events in this part of the novel, undertaking the role of a director, whereas the girl is merely "watching what you're watching, unprepared" (U 158). Further, Baudrillard's idea of the hidden camera waiting to capture someone unawares is echoed in the often cited sentence from the novel "The world is lurking in the camera, already framed, waiting for the boy or girl who will come along and take up the device" (U 156). This seems to imply that people have become instruments in the hands of the media which possess a higher knowledge of the world, inaccessible to human beings; the home video seems to have a mind and life of its own, it "gives things shape and destiny" (U 157). Therefore, it is through the eyes of the camera that people perceive the pre-framed world without any chance of changing the course of events, as "once the tape starts rolling it can only end one way" (U 160). In other words, media shape DeLillo's *Underworld* and the characters are only passive observers.

As it appears, the footage of the Texas Highway Killer most overtly deals with the implications of the media age, in which media products are considered more real than the real itself, which is a recurring topic in DeLillo's novels showing "mutation of reality into hyperreality" (Linardi 2003: 234). In *Underworld* it is when the killer, Richard Henry Gilkey, watches the video of the murder he committed and talks to Sue Ann, the anchorwoman, that Gilkey's character seems to gain shape in the eyes of the implied narratees, the spectators. What is even more peculiar is that Gilkey himself seems to feel alive only when he sees himself on TV and in the newspaper. Like DeLillo's Lee Harvey Oswald, Richard Henry Gilkey is "absorbed in the celebrity-making apparatus of media culture" (Duvall 2008: 3), and like Oswald's, Gilkey's "sense of the self seems to be constructed through the media" (Knight 2008: 32). In this respect, another echo of Baudrillard can be found in the description of the video tape, as it is perceived as "more real, truer to life than anything around you" with its "rehearsed and layered and cosmetic look" (U 157). This insight into the very nature of the tape implies that media indeed give us a changed, hyperreal picture of the world, manicured, framed and ready for broadcast, the one that needs to be watched, not only because it is constantly replayed everywhere, even in supermarkets, on multiple screens, but also because of its compelling nature.

## 5. ABSORBED BY MEDIA CONSTRUCTIONS

In *Underworld*, the characters seem to be immersed in media "body and soul" (U 117), they can feel as if they were "wearing the film instead of a skirt and blouse" (U

445), Nick's son Jeff spends most of his time in cyberspace, and Texas Highway Killer comes alive only in newspaper articles and TV shows. Also, in the first part of the novel a baseball player cannot get a jingle out of his head, and similarly, at one point in the novel, Klara realizes "she'd been seeing Mick Jagger's mouth everywhere she went" (U 382). Media voices are everywhere in the novel, in the shape of familiar jingles, tunes, images, videos, and they pertain to both mass culture and high culture: there are "Long Tall Sally" and Prokofiev's "March", "Cocksucker Blues" and "Unterwelt", Whistler's "Mother" and "Moonman 157" graffiti tags, "The Triumph of Death" and Ismael's street art, which are all there to be consumed and thus mediate the perception of the novel's world.

However, DeLillo also seems to be concerned with what happens when media forms are no longer perceived as the mediations of the real, but the real itself (Duvall, 2008: 4). Indeed, many theorists argue that media voices have "infiltrated" their way into our stream of consciousness (Knight 2008: 31) and as we can see in *Underworld*, media perspectives can hardly be differentiated or separated from the other viewpoints in the novel – the media model even seems to precede every perspective, it "makes reality come true" (U 177). In this sense, DeLillo presents another aspect of the media in *Underworld*, underlying its prophetic role. Bruegel's painting featured in the Life magazine and the supposed Eisenstein's film, as well as Lenny Bruce's talk shows and Ismael Muñoz's installation *The Wall*, prefigure the events taking place in the Epilogue – Nick's visit to the Kazakhstan clinic and Museum of Misshapens with disfigured embryos and people who were exposed to radioactive wastes, as well as the rape and murder of Esmeralda Lopez, a twelve-year old orphan hiding in the slums of the Bronx. As it has already been noted, DeLillo's media seem to possess the secret knowledge of the world and therefore are able both to announce and shape the events in the novel, furthering the confusion over the primacy of the "real" world versus the media order.

This confusion reaches its climax in the final pages of the novel where the reader faces the questions "Is cyberspace a thing within the world or is it the other way around? Which contains the other, and how can you tell for sure?" (U 826). The novel seems to suggest that these two worlds, the "real" one and that of simulacra, have become so intertwined that the real is practically non-existent without its media counterpart. Moreover, there is a sense that reality has become an "excess", something one may as well do without. Thus, Nick's mother refuses to go to the zoo, because she has already seen too many animals on TV and therefore "can't (...) see the point of living breathing creatures" (U 196), arguing a few pages later that the zoo animals from the Bronx are probably less real than the ones she can see on TV presented in their natural surroundings like rainforest or desert (U 207). Similarly, one of the characters suggests that the existence of Greenland is questionable as it never appears on TV, unlike some other parts of the world which do. It follows from here that, in the world in which the media image is confused with what it stands for, whatever is left out from the camera viewpoint and therefore not broadcasted in the media is either forgotten or considered non-existent.

Another example supporting this point can be found in the character of Russ Hodges, the radio announcer presented in the Prologue, who is remembered as "the old radio voice" (U 132) after his death. According to Duvall, it is through this character

that we see the birth of a new world order in which the model of reality precedes and generates the real (Duvall 2002: 40). At one point of the game, Hodges recalls the simulated broadcasts he used to do in the past in which he commented on the games he did not attend. However, his broadcast of the baseball game presented in the novel is not unlike the simulated ones, and Duvall argues that this is so because "he still must flesh out all the details for his listeners if the game is to rise above the level of mere facts and statistics" (*Ibid*: 41). What is peculiar, though, is that in *Underworld* this kind of mediation has become almost completely invisible and is actually perceived as "unmediated mediation" (*Ibid.*) More broadly, like Hodges' hyperreal broadcasts, media voices in *Underworld* are so pervasive that they do not feel like mediations but constructions of the real.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Don DeLillo's seminal novel *Underworld* appears to comprise a multitude of networked worlds with media as the most important points of reference through which they can be perceived. As a media-absorbed novel where everything is both connected and connectable, deconstructable and reconstructable, *Underworld* demands intellectual engagement of the reader, who is invited to search for hidden meanings, scrutinizing the scenes which are "spliced and mixed and processed and played" and replayed through a variety of lenses. DeLillo masterfully portrays a world which is heavily dependent on media representations and well-aware of it, too, a cyber world the characters cannot grasp and before which they feel religious-like awe. Indeed, a certain fascination with the media seems to emanate from the novel, especially as regards its infinite possibilities in the structuring of the novel, narration and character development. However, as it has been noted, in the media culture DeLillo presents in *Underworld*, media representations no longer feel like mediations of the real, but are capable of replacing it entirely, so the real seems to be just a faint echo long overpowered by voluminous, mystical media voices.

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## SUMMARY

### MEDIA MEDI(T)ATIONS IN DON DELILLO'S *UNDERWORLD*

This paper explores the role of the media in the structure, narrative techniques, character development, plot and the story of Don DeLillo's *Underworld*, one of the best-rated works of postmodern American fiction. DeLillo recognizes infinite possibilities of the media in novel composition, so mass media, the Internet, film, music, and art provide both the novel's framework and the lens through which the world of the novel is perceived. However, media mediations are not always easy to recognize, as they are inextricable part of the novel's texture, creating confusion over the primacy of the two worlds – the "real" one and that of the media model.

**KEYWORDS:** mass media, Internet, film, art, narration, viewpoint, reality, simulacra.

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