

Chapter 4

The Explosion of the Real in the Simulated Novel

Many criticisms have stated that *Mao II* functions through contradicting binary oppositions that could be drawn from the text such as terrorist/author, image/words, etc. Keeping this theoretical framework in mind, I also would like to extract what I perceive as the dominant binary opposition in *Mao II*. The conflicts between Bill Gray and the terrorist leader Abu Rashid, could be interpreted as the real and the simulated. The plot of *Mao II* drives on this conflict. Both the “terrorists” and the “author” enter the process of image commodification. DeLillo metaphorically portrays this scenario in *Mao II* by having Brita Nelson photograph the representations of the binary opposition, Abu Rashid and Bill Gray. This becomes a case of the binary opposition competing in the same context – a battle on equal ground.

Interestingly, it is the terrorist that emerges from the conflict against simulation. The terrorists manage to recover its realness essence from the process of image commodification, announcing the presence of the real in the postmodern world. The success of terrorism allows us to re-evaluate the concept of the real in the image saturated context. Bill Gray assumes that the terrorists fare better in the postmodern image world than the author and is winning the race to the role of “[the] shapers of sensibility and thought” (157). The advantage he perceives to belong to the terrorists is their availability to the mass media particularly in the form of televised images, the media that devise late-capitalism consumer culture. It is the terrorists’ relationship

with the media that drives Bill Gray to enter the image world. The necessity to replicate the terrorist's tactic stems from his realization that such method is the only way to recover the real, or in a grander scope, the essence of modernity as the power and presence of the author continuously vanished in the image world. By having his picture taken, Bill Gray feels that it is possible to bring the real back into the world. He will never finish his novel because he is not motivated enough to maintain his mythical status. He simply comes to term with the futility of writing as representation. The author realizes the futility of his craft, how the novel is only a representational commodity in capitalism, that the only way to prevail and to reclaim the mass mind is to strike the blow of reality to the image world. Bill Gray feels that his objective is achievable by mimicking the terrorists' resistance strategy, their insistence to force the essence of realness on the image saturated consumer culture.

The act of commodification that DeLillo portrays in *Mao II* is image commodification. It is the transformation of the real into an image-product; a process that, once completed, will totally negate the existence of the real. The emergence of images in the late-capitalism framework is interchangeable with the simulation. *Mao II* is written to simulate this image world. I would like to propose that the key in determining the relationship between the real and the simulated is the understanding of how the terrorists negotiate with the process of image commodification. The essence of the real is eliminated during the procedure according to Jameson's law of simulation. The said logic, which functions as the basis for the postmodern state of simulation, requires an elimination of the real subjects as they are not necessary in the system of the symbolic exchange. Theoretically speaking, the state of simulation should be incontrovertible. Thus, if we accept every detail of Jameson's and

Baudrillard's theories of late capitalism and the law of simulation, the real terrorists should cease to exist in the world. Under the logic of parallelism, terrorists would meet the same tragic simulated death as the author because Brita took both of their pictures. Once the terrorists enter the system, they automatically become simulated images moving across the airwave. Their ultimate aim of terrorizing the worldwide masses to aid their causes would be nothing more than news-entertainment, image products produced by corporate media.

Against the odds, the terrorists have the capability to overturn the logic of simulation in their favor. This theoretical revelation will also expose the flaw of the image commodification process in *Mao II* unique literary construction. The theory of simulation calls for the death of the real in order to be fully legitimate. Along this train of thought, the terrorists' appearances in the media, the projector of simulated images should constitute the elimination of their realness essence. The threat terrorists possessed to the late-capitalism society should have been neutralized and contained in a form of commodity. Technically speaking, the consumer perceives the terrorist images not as a group of people with flesh and blood, not even hooded men but as a form of "brand" or commodity.

The process of image commodification should have "killed" the terrorists. After all, the very process of commodification itself promises a 'simulated image products' that should be literally safe for consumption. However, it is rather illogical and, to a certain extent, inhumane to accept this theoretical proposal that the victims of terrorism are merely "consuming" some sort of quality-control certified spectacles. We simply cannot say that guns and bombs do not inflict any real damage or fatalities occurred during the attacks. In spite of what the simulation theory claims, as human

beings we can still feel the residue of the real from watching televised terrorism. This is because the terrorists are able to terrorize the memory and experience of the victim, a sphere beyond the simulated boundary. Each trauma suffered is personal and unique, like a custom-made emotional scar. Any event that has not been electronically captured, an explosion that occurred far from any recording devices, becomes a hunted specimen of graphical realism. Each traumatized victim recognized the realness of terrorism. Every terrorists attack and hostage brutality are an explosion of reality, triggering another round of convoluted image commodification process to neutralize the incident and turn it into consumer products. This sabotaging of identity from commodification could be counted as the recovery of the real as the terrorist is able to resist and overturn the core of the simulation process from within.

I strongly believe that consumers fear the real terrorists rather than their images airing on the television screens. There is a strong trace of real terrorists in the world. The terrorism threats have not been fully neutralized even when they have undergone the simulation process. To illustrate this, I would like to draw the attention to the least appreciated episode in *Mao II*, which is when Bill Gray and Charles Iverson experienced a bomb explosion while preparing for the airing of the author's poetry reading. The focus is on DeLillo's description of the event that describes the terrorists' assault on the image world. The explosion that Bill Gray experienced in the novel is a literal evidence of how the supposedly commodified images could impact the real world, countering and neutralizing boundary of the simulation theory. The explosion becomes a social reality for Bill Gray and Charles Everson, leaving the residue of realness in their memories and bodies. The actual event of the explosion hints that the terrorists have not been completely simulated even after undergoing the

image commodification process. The importance of the explosion can be looked at from varying angles as either that there is a ‘flaw’ in the simulation theory or that the sudden rupture of the explosion is beyond the anticipatory reception of the postmodern theorists. I am sure that the form of terrorism, which relies heavily on contingency, a sudden but anticipatory breakage of the norm, can challenge the boundary of the postmodern simulation.

The innate realness of the terrorist clarifies how their image in the media could strike authentic fear upon the viewers. The terrorist, rather than being a complete non-person on television, strikes a fearsome posture because of their uncanny presence. The terrorist’s status is border on the super-natural, the “myth” that could strike unpredictable damage to the viewer. The relationship between the image viewer and the terrorists’ image is one of contingency. That is, in all given probability, the viewers are more or less anticipated the terrorists’ attack. We fear of their ability to inflict ‘real’ damage upon our lives and properties. This is why it is impossible to take their presence as merely an image, a part of simulation process that the theorists are trying to assert. The image of the terrorists appears real because it instigates the fear of the viewing public in particular. The threat of terrorism is not universal unlike those of natural disaster because it comes from the viewer’s direct experience with the image. The realness of the terrorist strikes a fatal blow when the image viewers are not fully aware of the threat possessed in the image. The real terrorist appears ever more real when we want to think of them as harmless television footages.

A closer view of the explosion episode shows that Bill Gray is also aware of the potential explosion of realness that the terrorist possessed. Bill Gray could sense a

dangerous vibe as his appointed poetry reading looms closer from the following remarks, “[h]e didn’t know if he wanted to do this thing. It didn’t feel so right anymore. He had a foreboding, the little clinging tightness in the throat that he knew so well from his work...knowing there was something up a head he didn’t want to face, a character, a life he thought he could not handle” (121). The writer’s uncertainty of what he perceived as an imminent danger is strongly contrast to his causal response of “[people] who make phone calls don’t set off bombs. **The real terrorists** make their calls after the damage is done. If at all” (122, emphasis added) to Charles Everson’s news of a bomb threat at their designated reading place. It is quite reasonable to ponder that Bill Gray’s decision to participate in the reading of Jean-Claude’s poems, the captured Swiss poet, immediately places him among the terrorists’ target. The explosion did actually take place possibly with him as the intended victim. In this frame of thought, the “something up a head [Bill Gray] didn’t want to face” is terrorism and his sudden uneasiness is a sure sign of a real fear. Furthermore, his usage of the words “real terrorists” emphasizes that he carries certain knowledge of terrorism. It seems the terrorist’s power has always been on Bill Gray’s thought from the beginning and his decision to replicate their resistance method

DeLillo’s literary description of the explosion episode also supports the potential of terrorism in igniting the real. I will now adopt a stylistic approach to analyze and interpret the explosion episode. The narration of the event flows very smoothly, without any redundant words used in building up the suspense. The explosion fulfills its function perfectly in catching us by surprise as visible in the following excerpt:

Soon they were talking about something else. The rain stopped. Charlie crossed the street, said something to the detective and came back shrugging. They talked about a book Charlie was doing...Bill reached for his handkerchief. The blast made him jerk half around but he didn't leave his feet or go back against the wall. He felt the sound in his chest and arms. He jerked and ducked, shielding his head with his forearm, windows blowing out. Charlie said goddamn or go down. He turned his back to the blast wave, bracing himself against the wall with his elbows, hands clasped behind his head, and Bill knew he would have to remember to be impressed. He also knew it was over, nothing worse coming, and he straightened up slowly, looking toward the building but reaching out to touch Charlie's arm, make sure he was still there, standing and able to move. (125)

Prior to the explosion, Bill Gray observes that the purpose of a bomb threat is "control", in which "[the terrorists] want to believe they have the power to move us out of a building and into the street. In their minds they see a hundred people trooping down the fire stairs. I told you, Charlie. Some people make bombs, some people make phone calls" (124-125). What Bill Gray refers to as "control" in his analysis of the terrorists is ironically also his objective: to control and influence the mass mind. What is missing from Bill Gray's initial observation is the exact method of how "control" functions in the first place. The excerpt shows that the blast happens suddenly, disrupting the ordinary routines that could run on until the end of the paragraph. An explosion in text occurs when DeLillo describes an ordinary scene in which "Bill reached for his handkerchief" and the bomb blast right after one another. DeLillo did not indent paragraph or insert any description of the blast prior to the

explosion. This seamless progression of writing style emphasizes the directness of the blast. The moment of the explosion becomes Bill Gray's personal reality.

The terrorists' attack provides the victims' with the memories of their real existence as able individuals who are capable of inflicting real terrors upon the world. The directness, or to be more precise, the reality of the events transcend beyond watching "live" explosion images on television. The realness of the explosion becomes part of his memory as DeLillo writes "he knew he would have to remember to be impressed" (125). The exact nature of the word "control" in association with terrorists' attack is the power to reaffirm 'reality' through direct experience – burning their essence of 'realness' into the victims' minds. The realness of the terrorists' existences merges with Bill Gray's memory, creating a personal reality that is his alone – a "reality" that he is bound to impress.

Now I would like to draw an attention to the effect of the terrorist's attack upon the victims' bodies. The body is the undeniably integral part in affirming our notion of the self. The body acts as the representation of the self. It is the concrete actuality that physically appears for other people to see and confirm our existence. In short, by identifying our consciousness with our body, the physique acts as the real manifestation of the inner abstract self. Conversely, the reverse is also true. The physique of the body is also a record of our experience – a concrete evidence of the real.

To highlight the importance of the body, I would like to point out the episode that the text tries to erase the real body. After Bill Gray unexpected disappearance, Scott still performs his managerial duty of listing his master's inventory (139). This episode could be read as Scott's commodification of Bill Gray's existence. While

doing the listing, Scott is selecting, in his opinion, the best literary artifacts that will shape the image of the mythical author. For Scott, the entire process of “making the list, crossing off the items as you complete the task” is “a small whole contentment, a way of working toward a new reality” – his reality as the simulated Bill Gray.

Scott’s actual method of listing is basically maintaining the ‘authentic’ condition of Bill Gray’s collections. Every object Bill Gray produced are kept in their original condition. Scott does not need to understand the objects, the only criteria that matter is its relationship to Bill Gray in one way or another. When Scott is “[looking] at the wall charts, the blue prints of Bill’s long book” he considers them to be “[l]arge foxede sheets filled with mythical graffiti” and vaguely concludes that “[t]hese were interesting things to study” (140). Thus, when Scott remarks that “[s]omething primitive and brave-natured here [.]” he is identifying with the value of authenticity in these barely intelligible artifacts (140). The wall charts and the mythical scribbles are classify as “primitive” because of their originality; their origin as the womb of the printed manuscript; their value as the abstract real. The writing on the wall is an act of bravery because he is literally reproducing himself into the novel to be published and sold. The decaying papers are the references to Bill Gray’s original suffering while writing the book (140). If the value of authenticity is what Scott is after, it is quite baffling when he decides to clean Bill Gray’s typewriter, “[blowing] on the keys, using damp rag to lift dust and **hair** from the felt pad” (139, emphasis added). Scott’s “blowing” routine is repeated through out the episode. It is as if Scott could not take his mind away from the typewriter and move on with other items on the list wholeheartedly unless he is sure that every piece of “dust and hair” are entirely cleaned. If he decides to commodify and simulate Bill Gray’s status as a literary star,

keeping hold of the author's real artifact, his body piece and genetic information, the obvious evidence of the real would certainly fetch him a higher price in the capitalist marketing scheme.

This is where the idea of the concrete real body comes into equation. What Scott is doing to Bill Gray's artifact is the literal mutilation of Bill Gray's body parts – the dismissal of the referential of the real. Scott is wholly aware that any concrete evidence of the real can compromise his position as the simulated author. As a matter of fact, the discarding of Bill Gray's artifact is almost a replication of the simulation process as Scott is literally concealing the real. He is not is not arranging his master's storage, he is replicating the image reproduction discourse. As an agent of simulation, Scott acknowledges the importance of the body as the representation of the real and quite possibly the only reference of the real available in the postmodern image world. Thus, when Scott's ponders that "Bill's return would not be complete without [him]" (143), what he is referring to as the return of the author is not a second coming of the real but the movement into the totality of the simulated image sphere. That is, Scott will be the only point of reference for the mythical entity known as Bill Gray if the real body vanishes entirely. Moreover, Scott's opinion of the body as a concrete evidence of the real is also apparent in his yearning for Karen. He informs how he "[misses] her in more ways than he could name" as he is now "left with the memorized body, the ageless shape and cadence and the way she arched and twisted" (142). The physique is able to capture the representational image. In contrast to his simulated relationship with Bill Gray, Scott does not desire Karen's image or any of her representational objects. He longs to possess her real body, the concrete and graspable reality that materializes his abstract mental image. His yearning for Karen,

which clearly leans toward eroticism, also shows us a more humanistic side of Scott rather than a representation of the simulated author.

Ultimately, the analysis of Scott demonstrates the potential of the body to be both a concrete manifestation of the real and the physical frame that captures and materializes the image representations. The notion of the body alone goes hand-in-hand with the notion of “life” and of personal reality. Although this may seem like stating the obvious, the acknowledgement of the real could come from the identification between the self and its vessel, the body. Incidentally, even the pieces of dead bodies could be said to contain the essence of the real as they are the literal evidences of the lives once lived. If the postmodern image saturated context is taken into consideration, the notion of the body is ever more valid because the presence of the simulated image would conveniently provide a referential point for the ‘real’ to affirm its essence, debunking the monolithic myth of the simulation as a singular state of reality.

Returning to the scene of Bill Gray’s experience of the explosion, it is possible to see that the realness of the event is imprinted in his body. The explosion obliterates the boundaries of representations as what appears to be a simulation is made real. What seem to be harmless television images trigger severe impact on the unsuspecting viewers. The blast is not represented or captured by the camera. Instead, what captures and represents the blast is Bill Gray’s body and his memory of the experience. The body becomes a direct record of the terrorist attack - a tangible physical scar that will always remind him of the realness of the blast and of the terrorists. Here, the body captures the real. It records the pain and the moment of realness and translates the abstract into the literal through the physical wound. The

act registering the pain and the aftermath becomes a “living” testimonial that the terrorist attack did in fact happen and has become part of the survivors’ personal realities. The body acts as the living proof of the terrorists’ attack.

The emotional scars of the victims are not the only indication of the real terrorist. Just as the mental image of Karen could be physically rendered, what appears to be a mythical image of the terrorists on television could also be lively represented in the victims’ personal reality. To be more precise, the direct physical wound from the terrorists’ attack could also be said to trigger the realness effect on the body. The realness of the blast is undeniable as it “made him jerk half around” (125). His body and memory records this particular point of time and constructs Bill Gray’s personal reality. The realness of the blast belongs to and may even define his existence. The blast, a work of terrorists’ intention is the agent of the real invades Bill Gray’s life, initiating an explosion of realness that opens his mind and body to a new set of reality. There is also another function to the terrorist’s explosion of realness. The explosion could be said to reanimate the realness essence in victims’ bodies – reminding them their physical frame is the concrete proof of the real. In other words, rather being force fed the notion of the real terrorists outwardly, the blast actually recovers the realness essence. Bill Gray tells us that he “felt the sound in his chest and arms” (125). At first glance, the “sound” Bill Gray heard seem to be that of an explosion. However, it is also possible to interpret that the source of the sound is within his body. The sound that he hears and feels is the pounding heart and the moving muscle – sound that he may not have heard in normal circumstances. As paradoxical as it may seem, it is possible to say that Bill Gray’s body springs into life

through a deadly bomb blast. A life threatening experience is deconstructed to trigger Bill Gray's awareness of his body, the concrete manifestation of the self.

The analysis so far shows the terrorists' potentials in overturning the simulation process at theoretical level. The terrorists' resistance strategy originated from their symbiotic relationship with the media therefore enables them to negotiate with the image commodification process. This type of relationship is perfectly logical because the media such as television requires the images of terrorists as their news products. On the other hand, the terrorists also need the media to televise their images and demands to the masses. The simulation theoretically takes place within this relationship because the emergence of the final product, the news displaying images of terrorism, eliminates the necessity of the real terrorists. The terrorists' place in this symbiotic relationship is almost sacrificial. They must be killed by the camera, in order for their images to reach the masses.

Theoretically speaking, the terrorists' ability to resist simulation, more or less, shows the two side of the same coin. On one side, it demonstrates the terrorists' impact, their contingency to initiate the unspeakable fear in the memories and bodies of the victims hint at their potencies to be dangerous. On the other, their prevailing residue of realness also expresses the imperfection of the simulation theory. That is, the simulation process has its limit in terms of suppressing the personal realities of the terrorists' as well as the victims'. The analysis so far reveals the terrorists' rebellious intent their will to resist the commodification process, forging a symbiotic relationship with the media. The terrorists enter the image commodification process with a purpose – to utilize the media capability in order to project their realness into the world rather than appearing as a submissive agent waiting for the simulation

process to capitulate. Their abilities to be dangerous are innate as their realness as individuals pre-exist before the explosion. The relationship between the terrorist and the simulated media is a symbiotic one but it is not without a sense of direct confrontation and struggle. The terrorists engage the process of simulation with the intent to utilize the system for their own gain. Thus, it is safe to say that terrorism functions on the intention and freewill of real collective individuals.

The essence of the real has always been part of the terrorists' identities. If we are to accept the terrorists' action base on their intent and freewill, we are also simultaneously confirming its status as the real. If this is the case then the analysis of the terrorists in *Mao II* ceases to be a case of stamping a representational alignment of image to them. The terrorists' proven signs of real intention force us to consider their seemingly representational status in a more humanistic light. The proven intention of the terrorists could also place them in the category of the real, in which their free will to act would confirm the essence of individuality. It is easy to categorize them as the representation of image, given their association with the media. However, one cannot deny that the terrorist's decision to engage with the media did not stem from their own freewill to act – the will of the individual and the privileged real. In a way, the ambiguity of the terrorist is not an ambiguity at all but an act of intentional purpose from the start. It is the real that chooses to engage methodologically with the image world. The image of the terrorist is a direct product of the action of the real. The means is more important than the ends. These conflicting or ambiguous representational positions would prove to be beneficial to the analysis of *Mao II*.

The presence of the terrorists' alerts us to the existence of the real in an otherwise simulated text; therefore, negating the extreme movement toward either

pole of representations. If the constant tension exists between the real and the simulated, then the analysis and interpretation of the novel become a state of personal dilemma – a choice of foregrounding one pole of representation over another. Along this line of thought, the deconstruction of the novel is entirely probable. Yet, I feel that the complete overturning of representation of value is not necessary. The beauty of *Mao II* lies in its playfulness attitude toward the notion of the depthlessness representational meanings. That is, in every seemingly obvious representation there is another deeper level of representations to balance the equations. The simulated surface structure and narrative of *Mao II* are never what they appear to be as another level of reality will always run in parallel and ready to emerge. Like wise, the concept of simulation is never a flawless concealment of the real as it is the point of reference to the real itself. Indeed, the idea of simulation will never come into being without the notion of realness or authenticity.

The negation of absolute representational positions is visible in the captured poet, Jean-Claude Julien, who appears to be experiencing the full realness capability of the terrorists. Yet, there is also a trace of simulation during his captivity. I will provide a detailed analysis of Jean-Claude's period of captivity then interpret its significance. The poet encounters even more direct experience than those of Bill Gray because, obviously, he is taken hostage by the Maoist group in Beirut. He is also subjected to various physical and mental tortures during his captivity. Let us first examine how his captivity is described in the text and how the nature of the experience contributes to the understanding of the terrorists' method in inflicting the real.

Firstly, Jean-Claude, when compared to Bill Gray, is victimized by the real terrorist in the story. The word real here refers to the fact that his captor, the hooded boy who is revealed at the end of the novel as “the children of Abu Rashid”, is physically present. Jean-Claude memorized every detail from the beginning of his captivity and his body is experiencing a real world of pain. He fully registered that “they drove him here in a car with missing door” (107) and that “[t]he boy tortured him sometimes. Knock him down, told him to stand...The pain extended long past the boy’s departure from the room. This was part of the structure of time, how time and pain became inseparable” (108). Moreover, he is also aware of the reality of his confinement as “[h]e admitted to the presence of the plastic wire they’d used to fasten his wrist to the water-supply pipe. He conceded the hood. His head was covered with a hood” (108). Jean-Claude’s ordeal successfully testifies the realness of the terrorist. What he is experiencing is clearly not a symptom of the simulacra. Stylistically, Jean-Claude’s captive episode is narrated very closely to what the students of high modernist literature call “a stream of consciousness”. Every paragraph is a piece of his mind. Flashes of his personal experiences are visible in the following excerpts:

He thought of the no-shirt man caught on the wire. His memories didn’t extend past the moment of abduction. Time started there except for small dim snatches, summer flashes, compact moments in a house somewhere.

But even with authorities, what do authorities know, did he really expect authorities to learn important things from the length and width of brick even if there were bricks to count and measure and there weren’t, or meaningful sounds they barely petered through the walls.

There was no sequence or narrative or one day that leads to another. He saw a bowl and spoon at the edge of his foam mattress and the boy continued to feed him by hand. Sometimes the boy forgot to replace the hood after mealtime. This made the prisoner anxious.

The mortars came next, a sound of dust in the heavy crumble of the shells, slow-motion dust, dust specks colliding by the millions.

It was hard to think about women except desperately and incompletely. If they could send him a woman, just once, for half a second, so he could set eyes on her (109).

The disconnected topics written in this stream of consciousness style implies that Jean-Claude, despite his insistence that “his memories didn’t extend past the moment of abduction”, is forming new thought from his experience during the captivity. His direct experience, like Bill Gray’s, confirms that real terrorists exist beyond the boundary of simulation. His first hand encounters outside the media’s reproduction realm affirms the existence of the real terrorists in the postmodern image world.

Jean-Claude is clearly suffering from the terrorists’ infliction of realness. The episode appears to be a perfect illustration of Jean Claude’s personal reality, a push toward the pole of the real. However, a closer exploration of Jean-Claude’s behavior will reveal a valid trace of the simulation. Judging from the rigorous tortures, we can be certain that he holds the memory of the real terrorists through his pain and suffering. However, the captive episode is rather contrasting in nature. During his

captivity, Jean-Claude employs an interesting method in retaining his sanity – he repeatedly “estimated meters, wall to wall. Measure the walls, then the bricks in the walls, then the mortar between the bricks, then the hairline cracks in the mortar” (108). It is noteworthy that these methodological repetitions bare resemblance to a worker’s operating in an assembly line. It is as if the hostage employs himself in a factory, conducting a discourse of reproduction, to retain his identity. His real experience becomes a simulated one.

Jean-Claude’s self employment, while clearly differs from panic state of a usual hostage, is entirely logical to him – a standard procedure even. This calculated calmness originates from “the conscientious tape running in his head”, which informs him to “[b]e alert and note the details” as he is “smarter than his captors” (107). Logically speaking, the need to be “conscientious” during what seem to be time of great distraught is clearly not a behavior of a normal person or a poet. The extreme alertness is a blessed characteristic of a secret agent, a *James Bond* figure who is eager to impress the authorities with “his recall of details and his analysis of facets and aspects” in order to “determine the location of the building and the identity of the group that held him [captive]” and finds pleasantness in a post-hostage interrogation at “a secret place” (108). It is quite comical, given Jean-Claude’s reputation as a poet, he chooses to render an espionage scenario to remedy his real suffering rather than composing an ode to his predicament. Indeed, what he produces in his factory is an entirely separate reality in order to piece together the lack of narrative sequence during his captivity. As he persists with this strategy, his mind strays away from the real, moving closer to realm of simulated espionage. Here, the process of commodification is illustrated to carry beneficial property to the character’s mental

state. In creating his simulated reality, Jean-Claude reshapes his experience from those of a hostage to a consumerist. In doing so, he manages to carve his own specific space and time.

What he is doing here is trying to simulate his period of captivity, to return to his personal consumerist time of the Western capitalist culture – a time of image-consumption. In Jean-Claude's image commodification discourse, the stream of consciousness narration can be viewed as an emulation of T.V. zapping experience. The movement of thoughts in repeated randomness is equivalent of a television viewer scanning through the channels, without any actual interest in the subject on screen. Rather, it is the act of remote-wielding randomness that determines the context of his time and reality. Jean-Claude does not desire the real, he dwells in pure imagery – ready to embrace totalitarian television consumption. Jean-Claude's fondness for imagery is apparent in his contrasting desire of women that is contrast to Scott. Whereas the simulated author longing for the body of the real Karen, Jean-Claude only wants to look at his women to satisfy his sexuality. His eroticism is clearly visible as he "[tries] to repeat the old stories [of sexual fantasies]" such as "sex with shadowy woman on a passenger jet crossing the ocean at night (and it has to be night and it has to be water) or encounters in unexpected places with women in tight things, crisscrossed with black straps, sealed for his unsealing" (111). However, he fails miserably to satisfy his urge as the women "stuck fast in the middle of a thought" even though what he wants are industry-standard pornographies, "images that would trail [him] into the middle age, into the final ruin, those sad little picture-stories so dependable and true" (111). The voyeur consumer even wishes that the terrorist would "send him a woman, just once, for a half second, so he could set eyes on her"

(109). Given his captive condition, his wish may be a reasonable lowest common denominator. But if he is brave enough to visualize himself as an espionage, it is rather strange that he chooses to put a limit upon his sexual fantasy. The reasonable explanation of Jean-Claude's subtle use of his sexual imagination is that he could only "see" and not "feel" the body of a woman. His notion of sexuality does not extend beyond a consumption of pornographic images. Sexual intimacy, the caressing and crushing of the real body, is reduced to streams of fictive scenarios where he is merely the lead actor. His imagination is but a product of consumer culture.

To push the argument further, I would like to propose that Jean-Claude is spurred by the fear of the real rather than by the image of the terrorist. The terrifying reality that he witnesses is the sight of "an old man with no shirt who was stuck to a coil of military wire in a sewage meadow somewhere" (107). This particular sight is always on his mind during the captivity, acting as the source of his fear. The body, a mutilated human artifact, embodies the essence of the real. However, this particular body does represent the terrorists' power and savagery as Jean-Claude speculates that the "poor old guy probably lost at night wanders dizzy into the wire, senile, shirtless, pinned, still living" (107). Without any concealing garment, what appears before Jean-Claude is the extreme state of human decay. The body of the old man projects a primitive image, the one of death. . The abject body makes death literal, manifesting our inevitable horror. Hence, it is safe to speculate that his need to resort to simulation inducing strategy is a result of his pain, the suffering of the body. This line of interpretation seems fairly obvious in it self as the simulated mind is the escape from the body relentless suffering. His fear follows a paradoxical logic: it is authentic because he fears the real rather than the simulated image of the terrorists'. On the

contrary, it is the image of the espionage that gives him refuge because if he remains in captivity for too long, he would meet the same end.

From the analysis above, it is clear that Jean-Claude's real captive experience is diluted to a simulated one as his realness surrounding is being reshaped to fit his own television viewing norm. Here, the distinction between the real and the simulation merged. What he achieved is a control of simulation and the ability to represent it – just as photography could capture and represent the real. In this episode, what seems like a real experience is processed into a simulated one. Jean-Claude self inducing simulation defies the theorists' claim that the process of simulation must be initiated through the media. However, the poet mimicry of the image production discourse suggests that it is possible for an individual to represent simulation. Jean-Claude captivity proves that there is no definite distinguishable extreme between the real and the simulated. What appears as an extreme state of reality in Jean-Claude's captivity could be interpreted to carry contrast underlying meaning altogether.

The analyses of Bill Gray's and Jean-Claude's experiences with the terrorists suggest the real and the simulated are never as clear cut as the surface structure of the novel presented. To further confirm this proposal, it is necessary to examine that the real recoverable even in the narrative episode that glorifies the simulation like "In Beirut." The episode describes Brita Nelson's confrontation with the Maoist group leader, Abu Rashid. She is also able to capture his Rashid's images for her employer. Surface appearance wise, the significance of the encounter between Brita Nelson and is a clash of two different representations. It is seemingly obvious that Brita functions as the symbol of the image media, while Abu Rashid is supposedly the symbol of

commodified real terrorist. The knot that strangely binds these two together is that they both used the same discourse of mass production in their confrontation.

Her barraging photo shots should have captured and neutralized her subjects. However, what Brita Nelson gunned down are not the real terrorists but their images. A thorough reading of this episode shows that Abu Rashid or the terrorists have reproduce the discourse of the mass media successfully. “The children of Abu Rashid” are “not an invention of Europe” (223) but the terrorists’ own mass reproduction of Abu Rashid images that each individual child regards as his identity. The signs of mass reproduction and image commodification are even more apparent when Abu Rashid’s interpreter describes the group’s replicated soldiers that “[t]he boys who work near Abu Rashid have no face or speech. Their features are identical. They are his features. They don’t need their own features or voices. They are surrendering these things to something powerful and great” (234). The ambiguity of the terrorists’ identity and ultimately their strategy to counter simulation are formulated from their mimicry and adaptation of the late-capitalism mass production system. Indeed, the Abu Rashid’s franchise is growing rapidly as the terrorists are “[making] and [changing] history minute by minute...[they] do history in the morning and change it after lunch” (235). It is noticeable that the terrorists are speaking of their activities almost as if they were some sort of products emerging from assembly lines or suffering from a schizophrenia-like symptom, in which one is constantly zapping the television to find a viewable program. Commodification and terrorism are fast becoming interchangeable.

Brita takes photograph of the terrorist leader in similar posture as she would of the reclusive author. “You are dropping your chin”, she commands Abu Rashid as

she “moves the chair up against the dinner table and tilts it slightly and leans forward with her elbows on the table, snapping pictures” (234 – 235). Brita’s obvious sniper-like movement implies that she, as the representative of the image simulation, has eliminated the terrorism threat. For Brita, the meeting with Abu Rashid is an all out manhunt. With each captured photograph, Brita processed the image of her victim into the simulation system – a perfect enactment of the image commodification process. Interestingly, terrorism provides a contrary statement. The knowledge that there is in fact another level of reality that the terrorists could occupy and exploit neutralizes Brita’s nature as the representation of the image pole. What Brita captured is nothing more than images of terrorists. The real terrorists exist elsewhere, in the mind and experience of the victims, spaces where her camera could not reach.

The knowledge of the dual nature of reality allows us to view “In Beirut” as “In Beirut II”, a city of simulation. If the whole encounter is examined closely, it is noticeable how the terrorists’ behaviors as well as the setting lean excessively to the image pole, conforming entirely to the postmodern context. One could not help but feel that the Maoist group is merely staging an image, a trademark of the organization for the camera, like they are performing a preset postures to predetermined events. The terrorists’ lair, Beirut, is filled with images both literal and representational. When she glances at the street of Beirut she notices that it “run[s] with images. They cover walls and clothing – pictures of martyrs, clerics, fighting men, holidays in Tahiti” (229). As she moves closer to Abu Rashid’s hideout she sees “signs for a new soft drink, Coke II, signs slapped on cement-block walls, and she has the crazy idea that these advertising placards herald the presence of the Maoist group” (230). While

she was taking the photographs of Abu Rashid, their conversation also filled with images:

“I saw the boys outside with your pictures on their shirts. Why is this? What does this accomplish?”

“What does this accomplish? It gives them a vision they can accept and obey. These children need an identity outside the narrow function of who they are and where they come from.”

“We teach them identity, sense of purpose. They are all children of Abu Rashid. All men one man....They are not making a race to God. We don't train them for paradise. No martyrs here. The image of Rashid is their identity.” (232 - 233)

The entire Beirut is certainly overwhelmed with images from the literal “Coke II” sign to the images of Rashid in the identities of the people. The dominance of the images signifies the absence of the real. In fact, Abu Rashid and the entire city of Beirut are already themselves images. “In Beirut” is an image producing machine. Theoretically speaking, Brita, does not produce or process images from the real with her photographs. Instead, her position becomes those of a consumer exhausting the reprocessed terrorists' images, while the real exist elsewhere entirely. It is as if Abu Rashid and his parties were aware of the nature of simulation and they are only trying to coexist with the image world – a symbiotic game of cat and mouse.

It is apparent that the terrorists successfully nullify her camera and image production discourse. We can easily see that even through Abu Rashid is only an

image, it is capable of infinite reproduction. It should be noticeable while reading this chapter that the interpreter is doing more than just interpreting as demonstrated in the following lines, “[h]e is saying the atrocity has already befallen us. The force of nature runs through Beirut unhindered. The atrocity is visible in every street. It is out in the open, he is saying, and it must be allowed to compete itself. It cannot be opposed, so it must be accelerated” (234). Abu Rashid could have uttered these philosophical remarks. The interpreter is working beyond his duty because he is propagandizing Abu Rashid’s thoughts. However, the assurance in his tone of voice emphasizes the collective oneness, which has been mass implemented into Rashid’s followers. The interpreter is one of the same with his master – a member of Rashid’s image army. Hence, what exists in Beirut is only simulation, while the real terrorists exit in the suffering of their victims.

In a way, the terrorist’s activity that DeLillo portrays in “In Beirut” is actually a reverse system of simulation. The real is returned to every individual through fear and physical suffering. The terrorists’ method of recovering the real here works in two folds. First, by proving their authentic identity and reality from simulation, they justify that they are not just some product of the media. In doing so, the terrorists should acknowledge their existence at the level of individuality separate from the image commodification process. They retain the sense of individual identity and personal reality that simulation aims to eradicate. By imprinting a severe trauma and pain into the victims, they have succeeded in passing the information of their realness to others. The terrorist essence of realness therefore is constructed from the identification of the self and the perception of others. The terrorists are able to reproduce their presence from the grip of commodification. What media aspires to

capture and transform into a depthless commodity, the terrorist retorts in reproducing another level of depth, which in turn neutralizes the entire operation of simulation. The suffering of the victims is, ironically, the literal evidence of the real terrorists. Charles Everson, a capitalist manipulator, also gives credibility to the suggestion that terrorists could also redefine commoditization and produce their dangerous reality with this comment, “we understand how reality is invented. A person sits in a room and thinks a thought and it bleeds out into the world. Every thought is permitted. And there’s no longer a moral or spatial distinction between thinking and acting” (132). As far as Everson’s liberal capitalism goes, it is possible and acceptable for terrorists to “bleed a thought” into the shaping of reality regardless of their moral stance.

Secondly, by reproducing the discourse of reproduction, the terrorists are able to re-project their images for the media, sabotaging the process of simulation. It is apparent that simulation is overturned as the real is created in the viewers’ mind while the process of image commofication is replicated simultaneously for the media to falsely capture. Considering all the elements, I would like to propose that the terrorist initiate a form of counter-reproduction system. Consequently, if the terrorists’ counter reproduction strategy is based on their judgment and will to act, then it should be safe to assume that they are aware of the media simulated environment. Their counter-reproduction strategy is not an act of pure chance or situational coincidence but a calculated gesture aiming for result. Thus, it can be stated that the terrorists’ decision to stage the image of Beirut for the camera is an act of pure freewill to conceal the real and sabotage the Western image world. It is ironic that the gruesomeness of the

terrorist function on the same principle as those of Bill Gray's: to alter the inner life of the culture and challenge the mind of the mass against consumer culture.

The tension between the real and the simulated that is being revealed along the analysis of the novel allows us to view "In Beirut" in a different light. At first glance, this episode may symbolize the hunted status of the real, how it is unable to avoid image commodification as evidence in the terrorists' necessity to conform their essence of the real from Brita's camera. It appears that what is concealing the real from emerging is not Beirut, a city of fabricated image, or the terrorists, whose realness are innate but actually Brita's and camera – the symbols of image. However, the dominancy of these symbols could be overturned and used as a strength to resurrect the notion of the real.

Brita's inner realness surfaces when she decides to take off the boy's hood to photograph his real face (236). After she snaps his picture she observes his facial feature and realizes that he "wants her to see every muscle moving in his face" as he gives her "a look of slow and intelligent contempt" with murdering alertness" (237). The boy then decides to attack her, "hitting her hard in the forearm and reaches in for the camera" as she "throws an elbow that misses and then slaps him across the face" (237). The significance of this scene is not on Brita's photographing the boy or her attack on him who carries the image of Abu Rashid. Rather, it is on her act of uncovering the reality beyond the mask; the real beyond the image. As previously mentioned, the terrorists' strategy is to present the image of Beirut and to a certain extent themselves to the media in order to carry the symbiotic relationship without having to sacrifice their identity. Their operation is successful to a certain extent. The city of Beirut is rife with staged images. The terrorist creates a near perfect

image of themselves. The image of the terrorists in Beirut is obtrusively stereotypical as a group of insane militant that the Western media mythologized. Thus, when Brita take off the boy's hood, she is exposing the real person behind the illusion. She shows us that there is the real boy behind the mask. He is a boy equipped with intention and free will, an individual who express interpretable emotion. He is a human subject who "wants her to think she is someone he has thought about and decide to hate", while carrying "a violence in the eye that shows how hate and rage repair the soul" (237).

Of course, it is possible to argue that Brita shows us the real only to photograph it, thrusting him back into the image commodification process. If we assume that the real exists beyond the image, then the boy in Brita's photograph becomes a testament that each individual behind the mask is unique in his own. What Brita captured is an image of one boy, a singular entity dislocated among the faceless and stereotypical terrorist peers. In fact, it is only in Beirut's unique image infested environment that enables the boy's realness to shine. The simulated city becomes a point of reference for the real. Suddenly, as Brita take off his hood, the boy becomes a single distinguishable individual among the crowd of terrorists. The act of photographing and image commodifying of the real is overturned. Here, the act of photographing the image of the boy becomes an act of affirming the real. There is no doubt that the act of photographing constitutes the image commodification process. However, the said system functions on the basis that there is no point of reference to confirm the real. This episode, on the contrary, it is the image that becomes a point of reference for the real by giving the property of difference from its surrounding. To put it simply, the real hooded boy is distinctively foregrounded. By being the singular

hoodless identity, this particular boy stands out among the crowd. If the image behind the mask is the real, then the rest of the terrorist crews become a referential point, a reflection that the image of the real could be referred upon. The image of the boy, should it ever be processed, would still retain the quality of realness because it would forever be the image of the real among the rest of the terrorists' staged appearances. Thus, the simulated image property of photography is overturned to ironically confirm the essence of the real. The presence of the real boy, instead of decrementing the terrorists' explosion of realness, only reinforces it. His solitary image reaffirms that the essence of the real terrorists always exist and will continue to remain even upon entering the image commodification process.

The scene also illustrates the tension between the real and the simulated perfectly. There are no definite establishments of the real and simulation. What exists is a constant tension between the two. At first glance, the scene portrays a successful capture of the real by Brita's camera. The scene seemingly renders how the real is being simulated by glorifying Brita's status as the female protagonist. If we assume that Brita represents the image pole, this scene would undoubtedly represent the capturing of the real into image commodification process. By taking the picture of the real boy, one can argue that the real ceased to be real because it has been represented. Here is where the dominancy of photography and simulation is being challenged and consequently neutralized. She captured the image of the real boy, while the rest of his environment is a stage. The scene becomes an illustrative portrait of the captured real among the midst of image. Conversely, the image of the terrorist environment becomes a referential point that confirms the status of the boy's realness. To put this argument into an analogy, the image of the boy is real because his

environment is an image. There is no reason to doubt that the real is represented; however, the real also exists even within the representational medium if the captured subject is so different from his image saturated environment. The image commodification process is neutralized as the image is the affirmation of the real.

Another major scene in “In Beirut” that demystifies Brita as a representation of image is how her body animates, springs to life as she watches the parade of a local wedding party before the end of the novel. The scene is quite comical and engagingly lively. In fact, the sense of absurdity emitting from this scene comes from its unexpected liveliness – a scene of life bursting fourth from the womb of Beirut, a city of image. As she watches Beirut from the balcony she sees a “tank come chugging around the corner into her cratered street” (239). In an unexpected turn of event, she “hears voices, sees people walking behind it [the tank]. Civilians talking and laughing and well dressed, twenty adults and half as many children, mostly girls in pretty dresses and white knee-socking and patent-leather shoes” (239-240). Brita, a foreigner on Beirut soil, sees this scene and she, like us, is just as surprise. She did not expect such carnival atmosphere in this urban-chaos setting as she observes that the bride looks “surpassingly alive” and concludes that “they all look transcendent, free of limits and unsurprised to be here” (240).

The scene could be said to embody the essence of the ‘real’ and authentic human life simply because as the participants of the wedding “make it seem only natural that a wedding might advance its resplendence with a free-lance tank as escort” (240). Despite its absurdly contradicting elements that create a strange portrait of wedding in a battle field, this scene is “natural” because it is part of the Beirut people way of life. Its authenticity comes form its absurdness. The sight is

unprepared and chaotic with the “bride and groom carry champagne glasses and some of the girls hold sparklers that send off shower so excited light”, while other guest “smokes a long cigar and does a dance around a shell holes” (240) – the real life of the Beirut people walk before her eyes. It is apparent there is no distinction between the people and the image space of Beirut – human beings and tanks walk side-by-side in celebration of life. The real and image merges seamlessly, causing the breakdown of representational boundaries. The wedding is indeed “free of limits.” A best classification of the scene is that it embodies the sense of life, the very essence of living and the contradicting absurdness that surround the human existence. The sense of life is even more apparent when we compared this scene to the Moonie’s wedding in “At the Yankee Stadium.” In contrast to the one in Beirut, the one in New York appears quite lifeless and staged, with no room for improvisation as thousand upon thousand of couples march on to the field in perfect coordination. Here, the novel gives us two contrasting image of a wedding ritual – the one in New York is performed, whereas the one in Beirut is lived. It is absurdity of life that remains unrepresented by Brita’s camera – a real live wedding.

Needless to say, Brita is also impressed and captivated by the scene. Throughout the novel, Brita appears to us as pure representation of the image pole. That is, she insists upon her occupation as a photographer and is attached to her representational meanings so strongly. She appears to us as a character who is conscious of the values of representations, almost to the point of being too rigid. She informs us that she avoids reading religious books or wearing anything symbolic as to avoid attracting unwanted attention from the terrorists (41). It should be no surprise on why this novel is often viewed in terms of binary oppositions – the characters are portrayed to present

their representational meanings outwardly. However, this static representational stance changes in her watching the wedding as she seems to be awakened to her inner humanness. Brita, for the first time, abandons her representational attitude and identifies with her body – the effect is one of transformation. The sense of joy and liveliness is opposite to those of Jean-Claude. Brita is alive because she is in awe of the real rather than terrified of it. The authenticity of life below also leaves profound impact on her body – transforming her from an image representation into a full fledged human being. In fact, it is only in her captivation of the wedding scene that we are able to see her as a realistic human portrait, rather than some kind of representation in the struggle of representational domination. As Brita gazes down at the wedding below, she suddenly “wants to dance or laugh or jump off the balcony” (240). We can see how Brita exists as a person rather than a symbolic representation of image because she identifies with our own human quality, the emotion that defies our essence of life and the knowledge of who we are.

Her sense of life is one of authenticity. Moreover, if we presume that Beirut is a city of image, then Brita’s newly emerging essence of realness would be more apparent. In a city of staged imagery, the essence of life portrayed in this scene, both in the wedding itself and Brita’s emotional connection to it, establish a sharp contrast from the setting. The backdrop of Beirut as a city of image and sign provides a striking point of reference that affirms Brita’s authentic emotion and her humanistic awakening. The analysis clearly shows that the tension between the real and the simulated image exists even in the episode that tries to present itself as a triumphant of simulation.

The notion of depth and the negation of absolutism allows us to see that there is the essence of the real even in the simulated mediums. That is, the image in the television exists as the privilege real before they are commodified into stream of airwaves. A clear evidence of the lack of absolutism is visible in DeLillo's illustration of the confronting crowd on television in the previous chapter. The general consensus of Karen's watching television is that she is consuming images. The act of watching television confirms the simulated presence of the novel. Yet, it is Karen's subjective manner of watching that incites amazement. First of all, she chooses to watch the image of the confronting crowd rather than anything else. Karen's television consuming period is narrated by a third person omniscient narrator, intruding her head while spilling out the words. Indeed, Karen's opinion of the on-screen image is based on her perception. Her choice of image viewing is of her own.

Interestingly, she is captivated by the sight of the confronting crowd at the football field and the Khomeini's funeral as presented in Chapter 3. She concentrates on the details of the crushing body parts, how the human subjects on screen main each other physically rather than the factual details of the news. The human bodies are described in details, almost to the level of grotesqueness. The violence and the depiction of the human physiques are dramatized in epic proportion. Her emotion describes the finer details of the image than any camera ever could. If we assume that we are watching television with Karen, what the narrative is showing us is the details she chooses to see. Her vivid caption of body parts, while neglecting the news information suggest that she is not watching the news for simulated information that would make her feel better about herself. She looks at the body parts, identifies with it, because she is searching for the real rather than image. To her, the casualties

depict on screen are the real captured on cameras. She emotionally connects with the sufferers because she identifies their pain with her own body rather than seek a false comfort from the plight of others. It is useful to note that Karen completely ignores the factual information of the news, providing us with neither exact date nor place of the event on screen. She watches television to confirm the real rather than the simulated images. Her neglecting of the informative side of the news suggests that she is able to bypass the appearance and form to see the real details of the human subjects. For Karen, the news ceased to be a collage of informative images. It has become an art form that captures the residue of the real. Karen's observation demonstrates the possibility for a subjective individual to overturn the simulation process – adjusting it to support the notion of the privilege real as well as affirming the realness of her own body.

On a grander scheme, the terrorists' recovery of the real also carries a more "modern" significance. The recovery of the real is also a recovery of individual identity. The act of terrorism is equivalent to that of a modernist gesture. This assurance of identity is a result of the counter-reproduction strategy. The terrorists obviously retain their own conceptualized self after conducting the cultural purge from the simulation monopoly. The terrorists' counter-reproduction strategy is successful in breaking the simulation confinement because both the recovered real and individual are manifested in the suffering of the victims. Each victim acknowledges that the real terrorists exist, each suffering their own personal trauma. The emerging concept of individuality clearly alludes to Bill Gray and his status as the representation of the real and high modernity. When putting both the terrorists and the author into the same high modernist framework, the former's counter-

reproduction strategy could be regarded as a gesture conducted in high modernist spirit, in which individual identity is held in a position of privilege. As unlikely as it may seem, terrorists' counter-reproduction strategy is parallel and interchangeable with the modern concept of realness and authenticity as well as the notion of individual identity. The terrorists' resistance offers a hint that despite the construction of the simulated surface structure and the insistence on the death of high modernity shown in the text, the idea of the resurrection of the real and individual identity remains graspable. Hence, the key to understand *Mao II* depends on the drawing the parallelism between the terrorists' resistance strategy and Bill Gray's position as the representation of the real.

Bill Gray's notion of the real is deep rooted in his high modernist training. He views the real from the modernist perception and believes strongly in the authenticity of the self. Bill Gray's high modernist stance is evident in his decision to have his photograph taken by Brita. He does not try to present himself as an image. On the contrary, Bill Gray wants to present his real self to the camera instead of a commodity or some sort of PR gimmick. The scene that best represents Bill Gray's modernist attitude toward the real is his photography session with Brita. What Brita captured with in this scene is the real Bill Gray, the image of his authentic self. The photo session is minimalist and the real is stripped bare in front of the camera as Bill Gray "stood against the wall waiting" and "watched her handle the equipment, looking past her into another moment somewhere" (35) when the session begins. His untroubled attitude remains consistent after the session ended as "[h]e didn't seem to be putting across his own picture, his idea of what he wanted to look like or who he wanted to be for the next hour or two. It was clear he hadn't bothered to think it out" (38). He

willingly presented his identity to camera, hoping that it would capture the real therefore he did not seek to question the working of the camera or the effect of photography. Bill Gray only appears as an image when Brita suggests that he should “[r]aise [his] chin” (37). The scene shows two contrasting attitudes toward an act of photography. Bill Gray appears in front of the camera as his unfiltered self. Interestingly, by being himself (or appears to be so) he is letting the camera captures his realness essence, unrestrained. He is totally unconcerned on how he will look in the photograph or how he appears to look during the photographing. We are informed that the photo session is of Bill Gray’s own willingness. The session was planned but Bill Gray seems to be totally unprepared. He did not treat the camera with a pretentious attitude. He did not dramatize event, aside from Brita’s guiding instruction. Indeed, the one who is trying to beautify the photos is Brita. These two characters exhibit two different sets of mentalities toward images. For Bill Gray, the images or graphic commodities are not a representation of reality but rather reality captured on film. He does not see images as representations. He sees them as actual slices of realities. For Bill Gray or the student of modernism, the concept of authenticity is alive in the mediums. Thus, we can say that Bill Gray approaches the session with a high modernist mind rather than a postmodern one. He believes that the real, the essence of individuality, of the self, the authenticity of life could be located in the mediums. That is why he wants to appear to the world as himself, the real Bill Gray, severing the tie with the image of a reclusive author, which is regarded as a rare commodity branded by corporate logic. In conclusion, Bill Gray is a modern man reasoning with the postmodern image world, insisting upon the authorization of authenticity. For him the real is privileged.

Moreover, the author offers himself to the image world not because he wants to appear as an image but because he acknowledges the limit of writing. The act of writing is in itself a myth, another form of representation, images recorded in ink – a commodity. The novel, as Scott Martineu, quotes Bill Gray's words, could no longer "feed our search for meaning" (72). Writing or the novel becomes just another capitalist product and corporate representation. He realized that in order to influence the mass mind, the presence of the real is needed in the image saturated world – the remodernization of the postmodern. Consequently, the struggle between the real/simulation could be translated into the struggle between the modern/postmodern. Based on this framework, the similarity between the terrorist and author is extended to their high modernist position. The terrorists' strategy prompts for the recovery of high modernist spirit rather than its destruction. They are in a superior position that Bill Gray is trying to achieve as he observes that "[f]or some time now I've had the feeling that novelists and terrorists are playing zero-sum game...What terrorists gain, novelists lose. The degree to which they influence mass consciousness is the extent of our decline as shapers of sensibility and thought. The danger they represent equals our own failure to be dangerous" (156 – 157). For Bill Gray, the logic of the "zero-sum game" is not to create a clear discrepancy between the binary opposition author/terrorist. On the contrary, he wants to be on equal term with the terrorist, which is to occupy the role of the image manipulator – a position that allows the like of Abu Rashid to overcome simulation. He needs the realness in the photograph to "break down the monolith [he has] built" (44). Bill Gray needs to reaffirm his realness from his simulated mythical image.

If we assume that the novel drives on binary opposition of the real and the simulation then what Bill Gray is struggling against is not the terrorist but himself. His conflict is his personal quest to resist being simulated. The race between the terrorist and the author is more or less their quest to retain the real in order to agitate the mass, recuperating their identity from simulated images. Both are equipped with means to sabotage the simulation system. I have demonstrated that the simulation process is only completed when the real subject is perfectly concealed. The terrorists have prevailed against this process because they are able to manipulate the simulated condition. They can select and control what could be simulated and what not through their own distinction of representational levels. Hence, what the camera captures is not the real terrorist but the surface image. They are able to play on their representational ambiguity at different levels – an image to the camera and the real to the victims. The cycle of image capturing process endures and so does the presence of the real. Simulation is not total. Bill Gray also carries these ambiguous representational positions that he can use to his advantage. Similar to the terrorist, Bill Gray also occupies two separate representational positions. In order to say that Bill Gray is simulated, one would have to indicate if he is being commodified as the author or as a person. The simulations of Bill Gray as the mythical author and Bill Gray as the ‘real and privileged individual require two separate analyses. Using this ambiguity, it is possible to sabotage Bill Gray’s privileged real from simulation by replicating the terrorists’ counter-reproduction strategy. Bill Gray could escape image commodification if he could command the condition of his entrance into the simulation process.