

Chapter 6

Conclusion

It is well documented that the goal of capitalism is to render every representation saleable; however, such notion could only extend to what could be captured or projected as marketable representations. The late-capitalism logic excessive commodification of images, especially through the image media such as television, is responsible for creating a state of simulation that directly questions the status of the real. The postmodern theorists such as Jean Baudrillard and Fredric Jameson propose that the essence of the real is replaced entirely by simulation, in which the images from the media conceal our perception of reality. Don DeLillo presents the postmodern simulation vividly in *Mao II*. It is a novel that foregrounds the notion of simulation excessively through its incorporation of photographs and distorted narrative streams. Moreover, DeLillo also portrays Bill Gray, his novelist protagonist, who also died near the end of the novel. At first glance, these literary elements appear to glorify simulation and the death of the author. However, the analysis of *Mao II*, especially terrorists' strategy in countering simulation, shows that the novel displays a constant tension between the real and the simulated rather than an inclination toward one extreme of meaning.

The terrorists exploit the flaw in the capitalist logic to prove that the essence of realness exists in the postmodern image world. The basic assumption of this proposal is from the terrorists' ability to exist as the simulated image as well as the initiator of the real fear in the mind of the victims. The terrorists' dual existence on two levels of realities causes a tremor in the scope of the simulation theory, which

calls for the obscurity of the real in any shape or form through impenetrable wall of simulated image. The success of the terrorists' counter reproduction strategy is extendable to analysis of the novel's simulated text. Using, the terrorists' counter reproduction strategy, Bill Gray is able to recover the essence of the real. However, the achievement of the terrorist and Bill Gray in their own respective mediums is not a call for the reformation of the postmodern simulation theory. Instead, it is to prove that there is a constant tension between the real and simulation rather than to establish the extreme dominance of one pole over another. This process exposes the myth of the monolithic simulation theory, proving that there is a detectable flaw in the image commodification system. *Mao II* is not a simulated progression from the original Mao but a completely different simulated entity just as the real and the simulated could be extracted and distinguished in the analysis of the text. In contrast to the the critics, I believe *Mao II* is not a novel that heralds the time of the postmodern image world or a cautionary tale against simulation. It could be if one chooses to deny the essence of individuality and realness. It is a novel of constant friction, in which the real consistently resists simulation successfully. The constant struggle at every level of the novel from its form of presentation to the narrative suggests that the real is not lost, merely hunted.

It is a novel that brings the act of writing and reading together through its depth as a postmodern literature rather a multi-media gimmick. The novel could be read and interpret as a manifestation of the real or the simulated – a text that is deep enough for multiple levels of reading as these two poles run in parallel through out the novel. This parallel structure is not a sign of DeLillo's uncertainty. On the contrary, it presents an interesting dilemma for the readers, whether to push the representational

meanings of *Mao II* toward the pole of simulation or the real. In a way, *Mao II* is a pluralistic text. The reading and interpreting of the novel not only reveals the presence of the real Don DeLillo from within the simulated text but also renders our status as a real reader.