

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Simulacra, Simulation, and the Politics of Representation in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*

Muhammad Rashid ^a Junaid Khan ^b

Abstract: This study examines how Jean Baudrillard's concepts of simulacra, simulation, and hyperreality inform the representation of characters, events, and institutions in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. The analysis highlights the pervasive role of media, advertising, religion, and government in constructing distorted versions of reality that shape individual and collective perceptions. Through characters such as Anjum, Saddam Hussain, Biplap Dasgupta, and Naga, the novel reveals how hyperreality influences identity, marginalizes minorities, and sustains dominant power structures. Events such as the 9/11 attacks, the Gujarat violence, and the Kashmir conflict are reinterpreted within the framework of hyperreality, where images and signs replace lived experience and meaning. Roy further critiques the manipulation of truth, the misrepresentation of Muslims, hijras, and lower castes, and the commodification of culture through advertisements. While exposing the human cost of a hyperreal world, the novel also emphasizes resilience, alternative narratives, and the possibility of resistance. This paper argues that *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* serves as a powerful literary critique of postmodern society, where representation frequently supplants reality and human consciousness is reshaped by mediated constructs.

Keywords: Hyperreality, Media Representation, Misrepresentation, Simulacra

Introduction

Simulacra and simulation, the process where those objects become common or in abundance that have no real origin, give birth to a hyperreal situation or hyperreality, the logical result of simulacrum. Baudrillard (1994), defined hyperreal as "the generation by models of a real without origin or reality" (p.1). Baudrillard's (1994) theory of "Hyperreality" suggests that in contemporary society, we are surrounded by images and representations of reality that often obscure the true nature of things. These images and representations can take the place of the real and come to be perceived as real. According to Baudrillard (1994), Hyperreality is a state in which reality is no longer distinguishable from its representation. In other words, the boundaries between what is real and what is simulated or mediated by technology have become blurred. This leads to a situation where the simulation becomes more real than reality itself, and we are left with a world that is composed entirely of signs, images, and symbols. For example, Baudrillard (1991) writes about media "The media promote the war, the war promotes the media, and advertising competes with the war. Promotion is the most thick-skinned parasite in our culture" (p.31). According to Wolney (2017), "Baudrillard attempted to demonstrate that contemporary wars are being fought as much on the battlefields as on television, and thus one cannot dissolve the physical reality from its media representation" (p.76). Baudrillard's (1994) theory of hyperreality can be understood within the broader framework of postmodernism, a movement in art, literature, and philosophy that emerged in the late 20th century as a reaction against modernism and its emphasis on rationality, progress, and truth.

^a M.Phil. Scholar, Department of English, Northern University, Nowshera, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

^b M.Phil. Scholar, Department of English, Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

According to Baudrillard (1994), Hyperreality or hyperreal situations have several important consequences. One of these consequences is the loss of the sense that connects us with the real. When everything that surrounds us is a simulation, it becomes problematic to differentiate between what is and what is not real. This leads to a sense of disorientation and alienation, as we become detached from the world around us. Another result of Hyperreality is the loss of meaning. When everything is a sign or a symbol, it becomes difficult to know what anything really means. This leads to a sense of despair, as we become unsure of our place in the world. Poster (2001), argues that Baudrillard's (1994) concern is not the substituting of the real by its duplication, imitation, or parody, but his concern is the substituting the sign of the real for the real.

Reality has been a very serious subject in academic and philosophical circles from the Greeks to the postmodern era. According to Plato's theory of mimesis, all art is inherently mimetic and an imitation of life. He held the idea to be the height of reality. Since art imitates ideas, it is the imitation of reality (Barad, 2012). Reality is the reflection of the ideal. The ideal should be conveyed in some form of representation. It may not be wrong to say that reality is dressed in representation to make sense. We are surrounded by objects, things, people, places, and abstract ideas through some representation. For instance, the object "cup" is represented by the word "cup," and when we hear or read the word "cup," we instantly get the idea/picture of the object "cup."

The link between representation and reality is a fundamental concept that pertains to how we perceive and understand the world around us. It refers to the relationship between the way something is depicted or symbolized (representation) and the actual state or existence of that thing in the external world (reality). Hall (1997), defined representation as —the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language. (p. 17). In Baudrillardian terms, representation is something that outdoes the real for the sake of imitation. In the selected text, misrepresentation takes many forms, and Roy deftly exposes its consequences for marginalized communities and individuals.

Best and Kellner (1991) highlight the role of mass media, particularly television and digital media, in constructing hyper-reality. They argue that the media's pervasive presence and its ability to disseminate images and information at an accelerated pace contribute to the construction of a mediated world that often supersedes actual lived experiences. In this hyperreal environment, individuals and societies increasingly derive their sense of reality from the media representations they consume. Baudrillard (1994) describes the loss of the real in these words, as described by Poster (2001), "It is no longer a question of imitation, nor duplication, nor even parody. It is rather a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real" (p.167).

Through an in-depth exploration of hyperreality in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, this paper aims to shed light on how Arundhati Roy employs the concept to examine the complexities of modern society. By analyzing the impact of hyperreality on the characters and the broader social context portrayed in the novel, we gain a deeper understanding of the author's critique and the potential for resistance and transcendence in a hyperreal world. The political and social complexities in the novel are presented through a multi-layered lens, reflecting the hyperreal nature of the conflict and its far-reaching consequences. The novel tends to reflect events that took place in real life and describe how the characters in the novel responded to those events. All of the major and minor events in the novel are transmitted through the media, which gives the reader an insight into the misrepresentation of events that favor the powerful and negatively affect the masses.

The author of the novel has unveiled several events in the novel where media and media owners have strings of the public in their hands, and they can make the public believe what they want to believe. According to Alam (2021), Arundhati Roy gives a thorough analysis of the media's function in propagating the prevalent ideologies and values of the ruling classes in the novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. Therefore, analyzing the events and characters in the novel through the Baudrillardian concept of Hyper-reality could be more

reliable in order to know about certain acts and their consequences. Ultimately, this study seeks to contribute to the ongoing discussion surrounding hyperreality and its implications in contemporary literature and society at large.

Baudrillard (1929-2007) is a French postmodernist philosopher, cultural critic, and theorist who studies the connection between reality and its representation in contemporary society. According to Smith (2010), Baudrillard is a critic of postmodern features that are, in fact, celebrated in the contemporary world, such as globalization, capitalism, information economy, and mass communication. As a matter of fact, these taken-for-granted characteristics of postmodernism are the destroyers of the social relations of symbolic exchange. Wolney (2017) explains, "We live, [Baudrillard] argued, not in a global village, to use Marshall McLuhan's phrase, but rather in a world that is ever more easily petrified by even the smallest event" (p.76). Baudrillard's (1994) thoughts are essentially associated with the fading of the real in the postmodern world. He is best known for his concepts of Simulacra, Simulation, and Hyperreality, which, according to Wolfreys et al (2006), is a "reality effect," an effect where reality is constructed or replaced by the representational norm of the contemporary era, such as media.

Simulacra

Simulacra, in Baudrillard's (1994) framework, are copies or representations that have no original equivalent. They are devoid of a real, tangible referent. According to Baudrillard (1994), in the postmodern world, simulacra have become increasingly prevalent. These are not merely imitations of reality; they are fabricated versions of reality that are accepted as real.

Simulation

Simulation, as per Baudrillard (1994), is the process of imitating or replicating something from reality. It involves creating a representation or a copy of an original entity or event. Explaining the term Simulation, Wolfreys et al (2006) state, "Simulation, the process whereby simulacra assume their function". Baudrillard (1994) argues that in contemporary society, simulations have gone beyond mere replication. They have become so sophisticated and pervasive that they often replace the reality they are meant to represent. Simulations can be found in various forms, including media, technology, advertising, and more. Baudrillard (1994), contends that these simulations blur the lines between reality and representation, often leading to a state of hyperreality. Simulation is simply a representation or imitation of reality.

Analysis

1. Depiction of Misrepresentation

In Baudrillardian terms, representation is never an unbiased reflection of the real but an act that surpasses it, generating a copy or image that contests with and ultimately passes reality itself. What starts as an attempt to depict the real eventually becomes a system of signs that constructs its own truth, often obscuring the very reality it claims to reveal. Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* echoes with this idea, presenting a portrait of India in which misrepresentation rules and hyperreality unsettles the reader's sense of truth. Through her layered characters and interwoven narratives, Roy exposes how institutions, media, and individuals manipulate reality, shaping collective perception and limiting authentic understanding.

Muslims: Roy challenges stereotypical portrayals of Muslims in India, showcasing their diverse experiences and highlighting the injustices they face, including discrimination, police brutality, and government surveillance. For example, Roy masterfully exposes the misrepresentation of Muslims in India in the wake of September 11, which stirs the whole world, yielding prejudice against Muslims. Furthermore, Muslims are also held accountable for the Gujarat incident where "Sixty Hindu pilgrims were burned alive" (p.45), and as a result, "the police arrested hundreds of Muslims" (ibid) and killings of innocents continued for weeks. The media propagates this symbolic event to perturb the entire world. If we assume that a Muslim did these

attacks, then it is an injustice to hold billions of Muslims accountable for it. Thus, Muslims' identities were misrepresented on such platforms, which created chaos in different parts of the world.

The novel depicts the Kashmir conflict through the eyes of several characters like Tilo, Biplap Dasgupta, Musa, and Naga, revealing the human cost of violence. Freedom fighters of Kashmir, like Musa, are represented as terrorists, although they were fighting for their rights. On Baudrillard's (1995) stance on the Gulf War, Wolney (2017) argues that, "wars are being fought as much on the battlefields as on television, and thus one cannot dissolve the physical reality from its media representation, particularly in the context of military operations and their political and ideological motivations" (p.76). Since public access to Kashmir is restricted, people rely heavily on the media for information about the conflict. The Indian press, in particular, shapes public understanding by what it chooses to report, how prominently it features stories, and how it frames the narrative. This raises the question: what kind of image of the Kashmir conflict does the Indian press create for its audience? For example, it is revealed in the novel by Biplap that Kashmir is a place where "separatists spoke in slogans and our men spoke in press releases" (p.176); his statement can be taken for comparison between reality and the media version of reality.

Furthermore, this reliance on media representations creates a potential for hyperreality. In the context of Kashmir, the media's portrayal of the conflict, with its selection of events, emphasis on specific aspects, and chosen language, can create a reality for audiences that may not entirely reflect the complexities on the ground. This constructed reality, shaped by the media's narrative, can then influence public opinion and potentially harden stances on the issue. Essentially, the media acts as a filter through which Kashmir is experienced by its audience. The media's power lies in its ability to construct a version of reality, a hyperreality that may differ from the lived experiences of Kashmiris themselves.

Hijras: Roy challenges societal prejudices against hijras (transgender women), giving them agency and voice through Anjum's story. She exposes the violence and discrimination they face, while also celebrating their vibrant community and resilience. The media distorts facts by selectively highlighting injustices. While widespread issues of family abuse often go unreported, the media tends to remain silent when the majority is implicated. In contrast, the media readily broadcasts any negative information against minorities. For instance, when Anjum, an intersex individual, is discovered living outside her home, mainstream journalists frequently visit her to gather information that portrays her Muslim family negatively. They encourage Anjum "to talk about the abuse and cruelty that her interlocutors assumed she had been subjected to by her conventional Muslim parents" (p.26). However, Anjum defends her family, and the media is consistently disappointed, perpetuating a biased narrative that depicts her family as perpetrators of abuse.

Lower Castes: Through the character of Saddam Hussain, Roy critiques caste hierarchies and explores how they lead to marginalization and economic exclusion. She highlights the dehumanizing language used to describe lower castes, for example, the word "untouchable" is used frequently, and its role in perpetuating inequality. The caste system within Indian society represents a troubling aspect, as the nation continues to engage in a practice that marginalizes and discriminates against a specific segment of its population. For example, it is the social construct of the lower caste that persuaded Saddam Hussain to accept hyperreality as the only solution to survive in a country like India.

Government: In this literary work, Roy depicts a government tainted by corruption and neglectful of its impoverished citizens. The narrative recounts a situation in which a Supreme Court judge issues an order to eliminate the "surplus people," referring to those unable to afford city living. The media actively supports the government's malevolent actions, with journalists and media agents being ideologically manipulated, lacking genuine concern for the welfare of the poor and marginalized. Instead, they pose irrelevant and nonsensical

questions to those in need. She portrays the government as complicit in perpetuating misrepresentation and silencing dissenting voices.

Advertisement Agencies: The author skillfully exposes the advertising agencies in the novel by depicting its misrepresentation every now and then. In the novel, advertisements play a multifaceted role, contributing to the narrative's exploration of societal dynamics and the impact of commercial influences. The novel delves into the ways in which advertising misrepresents shapes perceptions, influences public discourse, and reflects the broader socio-political landscape. Advertisements are often used as tools for political manipulation and propaganda. They can be employed to shape public opinion, control narratives, and advance the interests of those in power. The novel depicts instances where advertisements are used to influence political agendas and maintain the status quo. The disparity between the media portrayal of Kashmir and its actual conditions is stark. While the media depicts Kashmir as a picturesque paradise, the reality of the region, under Indian government occupation, is far from idyllic; it can be likened to a harrowing experience. A glaring instance of this incongruity is evident in the promotional efforts of the Jammu and Kashmir tourism department, which showcases the scenic beauty of Kashmir with images of "snowy landscapes and happy people in warm clothes sitting in snow sledges" (p.90). The department strategically markets Kashmir as a "white," "fair," and "exciting" land (p.90). However, the stark contrast emerges when one confronts the grim truth: Kashmir is, in reality, a forsaken place marked by mire and blood.

Allan (2008), explaining Baudrillard's (1994) point of view on advertisements, states, "In postmodern society, people purchase commodities more for the image than for the function they perform" (p.309). The author of the novel also suggests the same scenario when Saddam Hussain and Anjum watching the ad for Vaseline on Saddam's mobile phone, which is described as "a TV clip that began with an advertisement for Vaseline Intensive Care moisturizing cream in which a pretty girl oiled her elbows and shins and seemed extremely pleased with the results" (p.90). The advertisement itself embodies Baudrillard's (1994) ideas. It doesn't focus on the actual benefits of the cream but on the 'image' of a "pretty girl" using it and being "extremely pleased." According to Barnard (2010), "[Baudrillard] insists that...advertising exists to persuade and to awaken desires that consumption cannot ultimately satisfy" (p.7).

This superficial association creates a desire for the product based on an emotional response and cultural assumptions about beauty, rather than its functionality. Misrepresentation of the girl's "pleasure" is likely staged and exaggerated, not necessarily a genuine reaction to the cream. This misrepresentation further enhances the hyperreal image, leading viewers to believe that using the product will guarantee similar happiness. The author might be criticizing the superficiality and manipulative nature of advertising within the larger context of the novel's themes. It highlights how individuals get caught up in chasing desires manufactured by these simulations, potentially leading to dissatisfaction and unhappiness.

On the other hand, a giant advertisement of "Bombay Dyeing Towel" on a flyover illustrates the misrepresentation because it marginalizes the minorities and, in turn, illuminates a beauty that does not represent the actual people living in India. For instance, Anjum, a hijra, does not find her reflection in the ad, and the idealized beauty of a girl in it further manipulates individuals' emotions. Later on in the novel, Anjum tells Saddam Hussain that the place we live in is the place of "falling people" (p.83), which shows her belief in disconnection from the majority and inability to fit herself in society. The advertisement further alienates Anjum from her true feelings and desires. It presents a manufactured version of reality that she cannot access, potentially highlighting the inequalities and limitations of her circumstances. By applying Baudrillard's (1994) framework, the passage exposes the manipulative nature of advertising and its role in creating false desires and perceptions of happiness. It highlights the gap between the constructed reality promoted by consumerism and the lived experiences of individuals like Anjum.

The narrator laments, criticizes, and feels somewhat nostalgic about the power dynamics of commodities that have no purpose to perform. Rooh Afza, with its local ingredients and cultural significance, represents an authentic product embedded in a specific context. Coca-Cola, on the other hand, signifies the globalized, hyperreal simulacrum, disconnected from local realities and driven by profit motives. Furthermore, it suggests that replacing Rooh Afza with Coca-Cola entails a loss of meaning and cultural identity. Rooh Afza's unique taste and connection to local traditions are replaced by the standardized, globalized image of Coca-Cola. Coca-Cola's vast resources and marketing power are juxtaposed against Rooh Afza's limited reach, highlighting the power imbalance between global corporations and local producers. This can be seen as a form of cultural colonization, where Western values and products are imposed on other cultures. The defeat of Rooh Afza by Coca-Cola is a complex story with various contributing factors. It's not just about one product replacing another, but about the broader context of globalization, changing consumer preferences, and the interplay between global brands and local identities. According to Allan (2008), instead of being involved in social reality, people tend to believe in fake stimulations, for example, "drink flavors that don't exist naturally" (p.310).

Media: Reality is no longer what we experience in the real world, but the real is what we consume through the screens of the TV. Now "TV is the world" (ibid.). Roy criticizes the media's complicity in shaping public perception through biased reporting and sensationalization. The media and journalists are ideologically constrained, lacking genuine motivation to assist the impoverished and marginalized. Instead, they pose irrelevant and senseless questions to those in need. In her critique, Roy highlights the phenomenon of biased journalism, wherein "untrained, but excellent-looking young reporters" (p.99) pose superficial inquiries to the impoverished, such as "What it [is] like to be poor, the hungry what it [is] like to be hungry, the homeless what it [is] like to be homeless" (ibid.). This exposes a failure in journalism to address the root causes of poverty and oppression, perpetuating rather than alleviating societal struggles. She shows how dominant narratives often erase the experiences of marginalized communities and reinforce existing prejudices.

History and Truth: Roy questions official narratives of history and highlights the silencing of alternative perspectives. She shows how dominant versions of history often erase or distort the experiences of those who are marginalized or silenced. For Example, Ustad Kalsoom Bi and others from Khwabgah feel an emotional attachment to a theatrical show based on the life of Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah Rangeela, "The Sound and Light Show". When the sound of the lady's anklets and laughter begins, she says, "That is our ancestry, our history, our story. We were never commoners, you see, we were members of the staff of the Royal Palace" (p.51). Roy foreshadowed that the new government would bring their version of history, and thus it happened when "The Sound and Light show at the Red Fort was taken into the workshop for revision" (p.401). Baudrillard (1983) argues that "Myth, chased from the real by the violence of history, finds refuge in cinema" (p.32). The narrator lamented that mythology would be turned into history and history into mythology. The history of Muslim rule would be separated of architecture, music, and poetry.

Now, the remaining time, Muslims would be misrepresented as the peace killers and tyrants while glorifying the Hindu glory. This aligns with Baudrillard's (1994) idea that history, as it is traditionally understood, becomes intertwined with simulations and projections of the future. In a hyperreal society, historical narratives are often constructed, manipulated, or reinterpreted to serve particular agendas or to project certain futures. Baudrillard (1994), argues that history in the contemporary world is "the empty form of representation" (p.45). He proposes that our perception of history is not an objective reflection of the past, but rather a simulation constructed in the present. In this case, Roy's statement can be interpreted as reflecting a postmodern understanding of history, where the past is not viewed as a fixed, objective reality, but rather as a fluid and malleable construct that is constantly being reinterpreted and reshaped. The idea that history reveals as much about the future as it does about the past suggests a collapsing of temporal

boundaries, where historical narratives are constantly being rewritten and reimagined in light of present concerns and future projections.

Manipulated Information: Roy explores the impact of propaganda and misinformation on shaping public opinion. She highlights how powerful entities can control information and use it to their advantage, further marginalizing those who speak truth to power. For example, Gafoor's narrative serves as a compelling illustration of media bias and pervasive control. Despite being an impoverished laborer with no apparent connection to the Kashmiri conflict, Ghafoor allegedly endured brutal torture, leading to his subsequent death and burial in a sewage-filled manhole. Notably, the Special Task Force (STF) labeled him a "dreadful Afghan terrorist," and to substantiate this claim, coerced two innocent civilians into becoming witnesses for a fabricated incident. This manipulated account found its way into mainstream media as news.

In a conversation with Biplap Dasgupta, Tilo laments, "There is so much data, but no one really wants to know anything" (p.188). She implicitly addresses the human rights violations, human sufferings, and Indian army atrocities in Kashmir; all are well-known facts, but still, no one cares. She might be trying to wake both Biplap and Naga to resist the ongoing war in Kashmir in their capacity. Baudrillard (1983) contends, "We live in an era where there is more and more information and less and less meaning" (79). In the contemporary world, information is easily accessible, but taking action is lacking.

The broader implication is that media integrity, particularly in Kashmir, has eroded, rendering it unable to challenge the narratives propagated by allegedly corrupt military and government entities. The media, in this context, is portrayed as a compliant instrument, succumbing to the influence of a compromised army and government, thereby losing its credibility and inhibiting its ability to confront distorted narratives.

Techniques and Devices: By employing multiple narratives and fragmented narratives, Roy gives voice to diverse characters and challenges the idea of a single, authoritative truth. This allows readers to engage with the complexities of misrepresentation and its impact on different individuals and communities. Furthermore, Roy uses rich imagery and symbolism to evoke the emotional impact of misrepresentation and its consequences. For example, the recurring motif of the "dumping ground" represents the societal rejection and exclusion of marginalized individuals. Roy uses a lyrical and evocative writing style to draw attention to the beauty and humanity of those who are often misrepresented. Her language itself becomes a tool for challenging dominant narratives and giving voice to the silenced.

The author of the novel depicted the misrepresentation of minorities like Muslims, transgender and lower castes. Muslims in India face injustice, police brutality, and government surveillance, especially after September 11. Journalists force transgender especially Muslims, to accept that they are under siege by their conventional parents. Lower castes, often mentioned in Arundhati Roy's work, are also highlighted through the character of Saddam Hussain. They are called "Untouchables" in the existing social order. The author also sheds light on the powerful institutions like government, advertising agencies, and media, which become tools in the hands of the powerful to misrepresent people, places, and issues. Roy advocates that history and truth are also misrepresented, and now the history of Muslim rule has been turned upside down. Manipulated information marginalized those who speak truth to power. She implicitly addresses the human rights violations, human sufferings, and Indian army atrocities in Kashmir; all are well-known facts, but still, no one cares. Last but not least, by employing multiple and fragmented narratives, Roy give voice to diverse characters and challenge the idea of a single, authoritative truth.

Conclusion

These findings have significant implications for understanding the human experience in a hyperreal world. They highlight the need for critical awareness of the forces shaping our perceptions and the importance of developing individual agency in navigating the complexities of hyperreality. Furthermore, our findings raise

questions about the ethical implications of technology and media, the role of education in fostering critical thinking skills, and the importance of promoting diverse perspectives in an increasingly homogenized world.

The Ministry of Utmost Happiness stands as a powerful critique of hyperreality and its misrepresentations. Roy masterfully deconstructs the manufactured narratives, exposing the human cost of a world dominated by spectacle, manipulation, and the erosion of truth. However, amidst the bleakness, she also offers a glimmer of hope through the resilience of the human spirit and the potential of alternative narratives to challenge and subvert the hyperreal constructs. Ultimately, the novel serves as a call to critically examine the narratives that shape our understanding of the world and reclaim the power of individual stories in the face of a pervasive hyperreality.

The findings of the study reveal that the characters in the novel have been influenced by hyperreality and suffered in one way or the other. In today's world, images and signs have altered the way we think. It is a major shift in the ability of humans to think, believe, and act what the media wants us to think and believe. The influencing and altering nature of media highlights the notion of control and power and how they operate in postmodern societies. The media has a solid relationship with power; therefore, it maintains, represents, and justifies the acts that suit the powerful. The internal conflict in characters like Biplap highlights the individual's complex relationship with hyperreality, often caught between maintaining their position within the system and yearning for authenticity. For example, Onal (2019), argues that "there could still be some possibility of escape from the endless simulations" (p.71). One can also lose moral consciousness in hyperreal situations.

People who constantly experience graphic or simulated experiences (hyperreal experiences) may become numb to real-life sentiments. This could lead them to detach from their feelings and the experiences of others, potentially causing a decline in compassion and empathy (moral collapse of human consciousness). For instance, the constant barrage of disturbing images, like those describing horror attacks, might inform us but could also make people like Biplap lose their natural emotional responses. Individuals like Saddam Hussain and Naga wear the identities of others to survive in the existing social order. The former accepts the imposed identity; the latter chooses it for him. This poses a question about the consumer's free will in selecting the identity. Some identities are imposed on an individual, while some are taken. Those who lack power or money and cannot afford to choose an identity for they must wear the identity that the advertiser or producer imposes. On the other hand, a person with power or money can choose an identity among other identities presented to him or her by the producer. Therefore, one has no free will in the consumer society.

Recommendations

This article has opened doors for further exploration into the complex relationship between hyperreality and perception. Future research could investigate specific aspects of this relationship, such as the impact of particular technological advancements on human psychology, the role of specific media genres in shaping reality, or how different cultures cope with the challenges of hyperreality. Additionally, the research could delve deeper into the psychological mechanisms underlying perception in hyperreal environments, potentially leading to the development of strategies for navigating this complex landscape with greater awareness and agency. By continuing to explore the factors influencing characters' perception of reality in hyperreality, we can gain valuable insights into the human experience in our increasingly technologically mediated world. This knowledge can empower us to navigate the challenges and opportunities of hyperreality and ultimately craft a future where reality remains meaningful and human connection thrives.

References

- Alam, M. (2021). Media and ideology in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 57(4), 510–525.
- Allan, K. (2008). *Contemporary social and sociological theory: Visualizing social worlds*. Pine Forge Press.
- Barnard, M. (2010). *Approaches to understanding visual culture*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Barad, K. (2012). *Meeting the universe halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Duke University Press.
- Baudrillard, J. (1983). *Simulations*. Semiotext(e).
- Baudrillard, J. (1991). *The Gulf War did not take place* (P. Patton, Trans.). Indiana University Press.
- Baudrillard, J. (1994). *Simulacra and simulation* (S. F. Glaser, Trans.). University of Michigan Press.
- Baudrillard, J. (1995). *The Gulf War did not take place* (P. Patton, Trans.). Indiana University Press.
- Best, S., & Kellner, D. (1991). *Postmodern theory: Critical interrogations*. Guilford Press.
- Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: SAGE Publications Limited.
- Chen, K. H. (1987). Mass media and the redefinition of reality. *Journal of Communication*, 37(4), 70–81.
- Onal, A. (2019). Reality and hyperreality in postmodernism: A critical analysis. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science Studies*, 1(3), 65–75.
- Poster, M. (2001). *What's the matter with the Internet?* University of Minnesota Press.
- Roy, A. (2017). *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. Hamish Hamilton.
- Smith, R. G. (2010). *Baudrillard dictionary*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Wolfe, J., Robbins, R., & Womack, K. (2006). *Key concepts in literary theory (2nd ed.)*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Wolney, R. (2017). Simulacra and the problem of representation in Jean Baudrillard's philosophy. *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology*, 5(1), 72–84.