Transformation of Hyper-Reality in Contemporary America and Its Effects on Political Life of Islamic World

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Abstract

Thomas Pynchon, Don DeLillo, Jack Martin, and William Gibson representatively demonstrate the transformation of phases of hyper-reality, termed by the French philosopher Jean Baudrillard, in the last decades of American literature, lifestyle, and politics controlled by mass media. According to Baudrillard, American values are hyper-real. The present research aims a critical inspection of the objectives of these novelists and its repercussion on Islamic World and its political life. It also tends to discern how the media from 1960's up to the present time – from printed media means such as postal letters (1960's) to tele-visualized life (1980's), and subsequently to cyberspace and virtual reality at present time – have contributed to the propagation of hyper-reality in Islamic World. Being incapable to distinguish reality from simulacra, people take simulation and trends of hyper-reality as real. Mirroring the culture of the America at present, the literature of the period reflects the simulated life of characters, their illusionary, televisual, consumerized, and cyber-spacious lives, of which the present paper duly compares with their counterparts in Islamic World. The media entertain, instruct, educate, and pervert us, ceaselessly. Among two examples discussed in this research include the emergence of the Telegram in Iran as a Western media and its effects on Iran's cultural shaping which duly leads to political shaping; and the other one is discussing the issue of the Persian Gulf War especially according to Baudrillard's book *The* [Persian] *Gulf War Did Not Take Place*.

Keywords: Hyper-reality, American lifestyle, mass media, Islamic World, political life, Iran.

1- Introduction

The point of the study is to reflect on American society and its values as being hyper-real; i.e., they are not real, they are either perversions of reality, pretensions of reality, or realities with no references to any reality whatsoever through the functions of media. The cases of study are chosen in a way that would represent the transformation of phases of hyper-reality. Same time, the researcher would examine them as the embodiment of politico-social cases that may exist behind the emergence of such hyper-reality in American society and the consequent comparison with and effect on Islamic World counterparts, the case study being Iran.

Americans are living in a postmodern era and postmodernism together with hyper-reality, a characteristic of postmodernism, has affected everyone's life. All selected novels are contemporary and belong to postmodern period. Not only all four novelists, but also Baudrillard himself is a postmodern figure. By tracing the signs of hyper-reality and becoming familiar with the way it works and penetrates everyone's life and mind, one can be educated not to fall in its trap, which is the paper's main concern with its Islamic and Iranian readers to be much more conscious of the issue. In addition to being a literary study, this research is a philosophical and sociological study as well, which once identified and studied, would change the mentality and worldview of its reader(s) from Islamic World.

The authenticity of the present research is that it explores the transformation of hyper-real elements in different decades. Not only the study distinguishes and explores hyperrealism in the novels (each one belonging to a different decade, since 1960's onward), the current research explores the different phases of the transformation of hyper-reality itself. The interesting thing is that hyper-reality has reached its fourth and final phase called simulacrum in the current decade mostly via cyberspace and virtual life, i.e., internet, which, since being an international network to which people – and in this case people of the Islamic Nations and especially Iran – can have simultaneous access, is the most perilous of all. The represented reality of American environment has no reference to any reality whatsoever. The necessity of conducting this research becomes clearer, when one comes to the awareness of how hyper-reality may affect one's perceptions.

Hyper-reality is a "term associated with the effects of mass culture reproduction, suggesting that an object, event, and experience so reproduced replaces or is preferred to its original: that the copy is 'more real than real'. In the writings of the French social philosopher and commentator on postmodernism, Jean Baudrillard (1929-), the Italian semiologist Umberto Eco (1932), [and the American historian Daniel J. Boorstin as well as German born American philosopher Albert Borgmann,] hyper-reality is associated especially with cultural tendencies and a prevailing sensibility in contemporary American society" (Behler, 2016).

2- History

Baudrillard's books *Simulacra and Simulation*, *America*, *Vital Illusion* and *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* which is a collection of three short essays published 1995 together with the secondary sources including *Forget Baudrillard?* (Edited by Chris Rojek, and Professor Bryan S Turner), *Media, Gender and Identity* (by David Gauntlett), American Post Modernity, and Bloom's *Modern Critical Views* compose the main material for this research. His unique perspectives examine how reality is partial in the world and how the media exposes and structures the reality to the extent that it is replaced with hyper-reality.

Other sources are related to semiotics in postmodernism. One of the vital books is *Elements of Semiology* by Roland Barthes. Without knowing semiology and semiotics discussing the notions of Baudrillard is absurd. Baudrillard has problems with mass media and its effects all along his works. His keywords such as the hyper-reality, simulacra, simulation, and interpretation are applied in a wide range in some works. As an example Elaine Campbell wrote about the cinema under the title of *The Future(s) of Risk: Barthes and Baudrillard Go to Hollywood*. She tries to show the effects of cinema on politics and people's mind. It offers a truly dangerous effect of mass media on our daily life.

Giuseppe Sorrentino (2008) in his thesis "The Disappearance of the Real: Mass Media in Thomas Pynchon, Don DeLillo, and Cormac McCarthy" talks about The Collective Allegory of Postmodernism, Mass Media and Postmodern Writers: Pynchon and DeLillo, and Spectacles, Mass Media, and the Power of Images in Pynchon and DeLillo. According to Giuseppe Sorrentino, Pynchon's relationship with postmodernism is clearer. Together with William Gaddis and Donald Barthelme, indeed, he is probably the one that better has given identity to it as a literary genre; writing masterpieces like *The Crying of Lot 49*, that develop as linguistic vortexes and labyrinthic fictions, he almost set the standard of the postmodern story. However, going beyond the label of postmodernism, there is one main feature that links McCarthy to DeLillo and Pynchon: these three authors create novels in which it is possible to trace the mode of allegory. In order to clarify this idea it is essential to reflect on the connection between allegory and postmodernism. Marshall McLuhan saw literature as an instrument which allows deep understanding of cultural phenomena that characterized his age (radio, television and mass media in general); an investigative tool that operates as mediator between culture, technology and science.

Wasan H. Ibrahim explores the "Techniques of surrealism" in Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* (1965). He believes that Thomas Pynchon's fiction is centrally concerned with the hallucinations of the mind for whom the distinction between physical reality and fantastic embellishment simply do not exist. In his work, a vast plot is unknown to at least one of the main characters, whose task becomes to decipher the chaotic world. This paranoid vision is extended across continents and time itself, for Pynchon employs the metaphor

of entropy, a process of degradation or a trend to disorder or the gradual running down of the universe.

Anne-Marie Feenberg-Dibon in "The High-Low Debate Revisited: The Case of Postmodern Fiction" states that postmodern art such as works of Jorge Luis Borges, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Umberto Eco, Italo Calvino, Paul Auster and Thomas Pynchon tried to abolish the distinction between high and low culture, rejecting it as elitist. Certainly, intellectual and social movements today seem to parallel the questioning of the postmodern novel, expressing our skepticism about technological progress [in this case we consider Telegram] and the viability of our world.

A book entitled *New Essays on the Crying of Lot 49* whose author, Patrick O'Donnell, enquires into the book from four different perspectives. In one chapter, "Paranoia as Semiotic Regime," proceeds declaring, "first and foremost, Thomas Pynchon's second novel, *The Crying of Lot 49*, is concerned with signs and their reading or interpretation. This would seem to be an obvious constant in Pynchon's fiction" (55). In "The Engine that Drives *The Crying of Lot 49*" we have: "The last view claims that it is a postmodern text, more interested in revealing the constructed nature of consensual reality than in mimetically reflecting a world that exists independent of our perceptions" (O'Donnell, 1992: 105).

Sima Farshid and Hanieh Mehr Motlagh with regard to Baudrillardian notions of "Simulacra and Simulation" (2012), came to the conclusion that in *The Crying of Lot 49*, Pynchon depicts a society where the proliferation of signs is continuously increasing via simulators and simulations, and huge amounts of meanings are constantly produced. Consequently the original aims of production gradually disappear. As the protagonist of the novel is bombarded by the excess of information, her life circumstances become more and more chaotic. Consequently the more she struggles to find the answer to the puzzling questions, the more she gets lost in the confusing world of unrelated data. Suffering from uncertainty and confusion, she becomes mentally disordered, and gradually reaches a state of indifference which is regarded as one of the main effects of the hegemony of hyper-reality in the contemporary society. These points are discussed in their article with regard to Baudrillard's theory of "Simulacra and Simulation" to verify the role of the mass media in *The Crying of Lot 49*.

3- Discussion

All previous researches regarding Baudrillard and hyper-reality have only concentrated on exploring the hyper-real elements either on a single work/ author or on some selected works as a comparative study. They have failed in presenting a hierarchical representation of the transformation of these elements and what contributes to this transformation. The present paper in addition to this hierarchy also presents a due comparison with Islamic counterparts.

"Simulacra and Simulation" breaks the sign-order into 4 stages:
1. The first stage is a faithful image/copy, where we believe, and it may even be correct, that a sign is a "reflection of a profound reality".

2. The second stage is perversion of reality, this is where we come to believe the sign to be an unfaithful copy, which "masks and denatures" reality as an "evil appearance—it is of the order of maleficence". Here, signs and images do not faithfully reveal reality to us, but can hint at the existence of an obscure reality which the sign itself is incapable of encapsulating.

3. The third stage masks the absence of a profound reality, where the sign *pretends* to be a faithful copy, but it is a copy with no original. Signs and images claim to represent something real, but no representation is taking place and arbitrary images are merely suggested as things which they have no relationship to. Baudrillard calls this the "order of sorcery", a regime of semantic algebra where all human meaning is conjured artificially to appear as a reference to the (increasingly) hermetic truth.

4. The fourth stage is pure simulation, in which the simulacrum has no relationship to any reality whatsoever. Here, signs merely reflect other signs and any claim to reality on the part of images or signs is only of the order of other such claims. This is a regime of total equivalency, where cultural products need no longer even pretend to be real in a naïve sense, because the experiences of consumers' lives are so predominantly artificial that even claims to reality are expected to be phrased in artificial, "hyper-real" terms. Any naïve pretension to reality as such is perceived as bereft of critical self-awareness, and thus as oversentimental (Wikipedia, Simulacra and Simulation).

"While the spectator [of TV, media, Telegram, etc.] cannot control or resist the flood of images politically aimed at diminishing his/her subjectivity and autonomy, as well as to think independently of events presented, the spectator is empowered in the sense of being granted a sense of omnipresence as voyeur, albeit a passive one" (Chin-Yi, 2007: 31). This passivity which results in making mere consumers out of users – in our case study the Iranian users of Telegram – together with the fact that the Telegram servers are not within Iran and/or controlled by Iranian government, which itself duly and surely may result in foreign Western intelligence to intervene the case, result in a cyber-spacious atmosphere which is totally apt for political and cultural brainwash of Iranians.

A study entitled "contemplating on cyberspace and its effect on religious identity of the youth" believes that "more interaction in the cyberspace shows the effects of the universalization of the culture, and its due effects are gradually become apparent on Iranian students. This is an indicator of the dangerous situation of the interaction in cyberspace upon Iranian students' religious identity" (Ahmadpoor, 1389).

Hereby is presented a brief definition of the key terms:

• Simulation: With the advent of 'realistic' media (photography, film, sound recording, TV, digital media) it has also come to refer to an audio- visual experience that artfully mimics but otherwise has no connection with the reality it presents. It is the notion of a kind of copy which is not merely indistinguishable from what it copies, but in which the very distinction between copy and original disappears. Simulation threatens the difference between the

true and the false, the real and the imaginary. Simulating is not pretending. It is replacing the reality (Smith, 2010: 199).

• Hyperreality: It is one of Baudrillard's most provocative ideas that in contemporary culture there is a return to a situation in which the reality principle is once more questioned and abandoned. But this does not lead to a situation in which there is no referent, but to a state in which the sign conditioned by the mass media and the entertainment industry increasingly posits its own basis and non- reality. This identification of the hyper- real as a stage in the cultural development marked by the appearance of the mass media is framed by Baudrillard's general theory of the transition from the bourgeois culture of drama and the spectacle to that of a mass culture mediated by televisions and computers. Hyper- reality is a precursor of virtual reality (Smith, 2010: 95 – 96; Lane, 2000: 97 – 98).

• Hyper-Real Religion: is a Sociological term coined to describe a new consumer trend in acquiring and enacting spirituality. The term was first described in the book *Religion and Popular Culture: A Hyper-Real Testament* by Adam Possamai. The term is used to explore the intersection between post-modernity and religion/spirituality. The idea has been expanded and critiqued by a number of academics since its creation (Possamai, 2005).

• Simulacrum: Simulacra refers to the significations and symbolism of culture and media that construct perceived reality, the acquired understanding by which our lives and shared existence is and are rendered legible. Baudrillard sketches four successive phases of simulacra. Firstly, he argues, the image is taken as the reflection of a profound reality. Then the image masks and denatures a profound reality. Thirdly, the image also masks the absence of a profound reality and finally, with simulation, has no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum (Smith, 2010: 196 – 197).

According to theories of postmodernization, the last half of the 20th century (often termed as the 'postmodern era') saw consumerism, individualization and choice come to the forefront of Western societies via capitalism (Giddens, 1991; Jameson, 1991; Bauman, 2000). Thus religion as a part of this culture became increasingly commercial, individualized and democratized (Turner, 2010). People now have more choices in religion, they can often practice it in privacy and as they wish, outside of traditional institutional boundaries (Davie, 1994). Due to this change, the sociology of religion has become increasingly interested in the potential for typologization of the modes of non-institutional religion and the foundation of non-institutional religion in human nature (Davidsen, 2013; Heelas and Woodhead, 2004).

It has become increasingly clear that the people leaving the structures and ceremonies of traditional religions are not instantly becoming non-religious in an atheistic sense. For example, some continue 'believing without belonging' to a church (Davie, 1994), others turn to alternative spiritualities (Heelas and Woodhead, 2004) and others, as discussed by Possamai, turn to consumer based religions/spiritualties partly based on popular culture, what he calls "hyper-real religions." With hyper-real religion, elements from religions and popular culture are highly intertwined (Possamai, 2005). They are post-modern expressions of

religion, likely to be consumed and individualized, and thus have more relevance to the self than to a community and/or congregation (Possamai, 2005). Thus in postmodern times, the relation between people and religion/spirituality is very fluid due to consumerism and the internet. William Gibson's *Pattern Recognition* (2003) is the representative of such a phenomenon in recent American literature, and literature being among the old-fashioned types of media. Imagine an internet based software such as Telegram, and/or applications such as WhatsApp and Twitter in Turkey. A seemingly innocent international program like Telegram has the majority of its users in Islamic World, and particularly in Iran. This internet based programs not only do promote the Western culture and false consumerism in Iran, but also transform their users to ineffective consumers without any output, either scientific or etc. When we speak of politics, it is not an isolated and independent concept; people's political thinking and action is, among many other factors, also shaped by their popular culture and religion.

Possamai explains that the concept of hyper-real religions is derived from the work of Jean Baudrillard. Baudrillard put forward that we are living in an age of hyper-reality in which we are fascinated by simulations that lack a real world referent or 'simulcra' (Baudrillard, 1999). Possamai (Possamai, 2012) sees these simulations as part of the popular cultural milieu, in which "signs get their meanings from their relations with each other, rather than by reference to some independent reality or standard". With no way to "distinguish the real from the unreal", Hyper-reality – the situation in which reality collapses – emerges. For example, we may refer to a person as being like Superman or Homer Simpson, rather than a real-life example of a hero or dunce, and theme parks represent movies or Disney creations rather than real life (Possamai, 2005). The fictional character and world become more real for us than the real person or real world. Following critiques in the *Handbook of Hyper-real Religions*, (2012) Possamai modifies his original (2005) definition of hyper-real religions to: "A hyper-real religion is a simulacrum of a religion created out of, or in symbiosis with, commodified popular culture which provides inspiration at a metaphorical level and/or is a source of beliefs in everyday life" (2012).

Don DeLillo's *White Noise* and Jack Martin's *Videodrome* are full of scenes dealing with TV culture of their protagonists. ". . . in passively consuming spectacles, one is disengaged from actively producing one's life. Capitalist society disconnects workers from the product of their labor, art from life, and spheres of production from consumption, which involve spectators passively observing the products of social life. We are allowing hyper-reality to reign over reality and hence celebrate reality as interplay of signs and the collapse of the signified" (Debord, 1995: 44; and Chin-Yi, 2007). This is exactly the case which these two novelists try to show and criticize all along their works.

Reality television demonstrates Baudrillard's thesis that the obscene lies in the fact that there is 'nothing to see' and that the spectator, rather than desiring difference from others, desires sameness with the subjects that witnessed on television (Baudrillard, *Ecstasy of Communication*: 41; and Chin-Yi, 2007).

According to Chin-Yi (March 2007) "The subject's sense of individuality and distinction from external objects is dissolved . . . The subject is the total prey of hyperreality, a pure screen, a switching center for all networks of influence".

Eileen Barker by mentioning the ambiguity of hyper-real suggests that it is this ambiguity which gives it its main strength. Through this positioning it permits masses to view new religious developments and to regard the effects of those developments on the older religions of the world (Barker, 2012).

Contrary to the title of *The* [Persian]*Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, Baudrillard believes that the war of the Persian Gulf War actually happened, whereas this is a debatable and controversial subject: were the events that took place comparable to how they were presented by the media?, and can one call what happened there a war?

Baudrillard argued the Persian Gulf War was not really a war, but rather an atrocity which *masqueraded* as a war (Merrin, 1994) – using overwhelming airpower, the American military for the most part did not directly engage in combat with the Iraqi army, and suffered few casualties. Almost nothing was made known about Iraqi deaths. Thus, the fighting "did not really take place" from the point of view of the west. Moreover, all that spectators got to know about the war was in the form of propaganda imagery. The closely watched media presentations made it impossible to distinguish between the experience of what truly happened in the conflict, and its stylized, selective misrepresentation through *simulacra* (Baudrillard, 1995; and Wikipedia, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*).

Akbar Ahmed in his book *Postmodernism and Islam* when discusses the issue of the Persian Gulf War, puts much emphasis on "The involvement of the media. The media were everywhere. Every gesture and every word of the main players like Saddam was news, to be discussed and analyzed . . . In 1991 the Western media were freely placing Muslims in the context of what they labelled a 'criminal' culture (Ahmed, 2003: 1-2).

There is no way an ordinary Muslim can make his views known in the media, which floods hostile words and images over and around him. He is portrayed as a fanatic over the book, politically unstable through the dictator . . . In the end, unable to convey his arguments, helpless and impotent, he is as cynical of Western motives . . . But he is also as disgusted as he is confused with his own sense of impotence in shaping reality around him; he can no longer challenge what is real or unreal, no longer separate reality from the illusion of the media (Ahmed, 2003: 3).

Islamic and Western postmodernism may have little more in common than that they are coetaneous, running concurrently . . . still unsure of certain features, like the nature of the media and formulation of their responses to it (Ahmed, 2003: 6).

As Ian Almond mentions in his book *The New Orientalists: Postmodern representations of Islam from Foucault to Baudrillard* "In enacting his critique, Baudrillard addresses the 1991 Persian Gulf War as a purely visual phenomenon, a media event rather than a military conflict, a proliferation of

signs rather than a physical assault. An almost impressionistic sequence of images and Baudrillard's responses to them – Saddam on television, Paris demonstrations, messages from French generals – form the basis for Baudrillard's argument that no 'war' has taken place, but rather a mass of information (a war, Baudrillard tells us, 'when it has been turned into information, ceases to be a realistic war and becomes a virtual war, in some way symptomatic', p. 41)" (Almond, 2007: 163).

One of the main targets of Baudrillard's critique is precisely the 'cleanliness' of the Persian Gulf War, the absurdity of such a proposition. The only drawback to this positive reading of Baudrillard's approach is that, in its meditation upon the surface of the war, its omission of the uglier details, even its epistemological querying of whether the conflict actually happened at all, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* does not critique the superficiality of its subject, it replicates it. If CNN has turned the war into information (p. 42), then Baudrillard's book in many ways repeats this strategy by turning the war into philosophy (Almond, 2007: 164-165).

4- Conclusion

In her article entitled "Investigation of the Effects of Social Networks (Telegram) on Religious Identity of Users", Nezhadasghari mentions that "different kinds of messages in social networks, under elements such as the content and repetition of messages, start to gradually change the identity of the users in general, and their religious identity in particular" (2017: 1).

Bakhtiarvand mentions that "Religion, as a dynamic entity is the most important basis in cultural and political identity of Iran's society. Using networks such as Telegram, WhatsApp, Facebook, etc. has created an opportunity to have access new sources which may deeply revolutionize the religious beliefs of the users of these networks" (2016: 2). The point which one should always bear in mind is that the content of these networks is not always produced by authentic sources and the West is often playing a role in shaping some illusionary hyper-real cultural, and as a result political identity for Iranian users in particular and international users in general. He continues that "Iran's society doesn't use internet, satellite, and social network logically; and these media are most of the time spreaders of the Western cultures" (Bakhtiarvand, 2016: 8).

The transformation and functions of (hyper)-reality and the effects of media on society and educating people through media and advertisement are the major priorities of the research. Accordingly one of the crucial notions of Baudrillard to be considered is hyper-reality. Pynchon's novel (published 1966) stands as the representative of 1960's, somehow representative of the starting decades of postmodernism. One should bear in mind that Pynchon is usually regarded as the first author directly applying Baudrillard's theories in his works. Don DeLillo and Jack Martin serve as a middle stage, representative of the middle decades of postmodernism (1980's). Their writings coincide with the boom of consumerism and TV culture in America. Gibson is usually regarded among the

key figures contributing to cyber-spacious literature. His *Pattern Recognition* well represents the virtual and internet based life of the third millennium.

Main focus of the present research is studying the transformation of different media means which contribute to the emergence of hyper-reality in American society and the role of these different media means in spreading hyper-real cultures to the Islamic World and Iran through cyber-space applications such as Telegram. As a result, 1- Pynchon's work is the representative of decades in which media was mainly paper based, i.e. printed media. One should bear in mind the role of letters and postal system in *The Crying of Lot 49*, having the least access and influence on Islamic World. Think of the time when foreign gums with perverted photos inside started to flow in Iran. 2- DeLillo's and Martin's work well represent TV and market culture of 80's; prevalence of TVs and a public welfare which lead to the proliferation of market culture in America. "DeLillo has been widely hailed as an exemplar of postmodernist writing. Typically, this assessment rests on readings that focus on his accounts of the postmodern experience of living in a hyper-reality" (Bloom, 2003: 214-15). Finally, 3- Gibson's work is among the best contemporary representatives of virtual media means, namely cyberspace. His *Pattern Recognition* represents loss of identity in cyberspace and Tube culture. This is the most important factor to be cautious about in Islamic World; programs like Telegram, WhatsApp, and Instagram blow-by-blow spread West-desired perilous cultures on Iranian individuals, creating simulacrums for these victims. "In *Pattern Recognition*, Gibson addresses remix . . . patterns, whether real or imagined, are how we make meaning. Unlike Baudrillard and others, who seem to be essentially nostalgic about the "real", identifying the hyper-real with a loss of authenticity, Gibson suggests that everything is remix [Despite use of the term "simulacra" and sustained exploration of concepts such as authenticity, homogenization, and the virtual in *The Big end Trilogy*, Gibson is less interested in poststructuralist accounts of the hyper-real than in the idea of remix—of making the old into the new], though some may be of more value than others" (Henthorne, 2011: 66).

In *Pattern Recognition*, the first volume of "The Bigend Trilogy", Gibson again addresses simulation, simulacra, and hyper-reality through the novel's protagonist Cayce Pollard. Pollard, it seems, is allergic to the hyper-real, as evidenced by her reaction to Tommy Hilfiger products . . . This stuff is simulacra of simulacra of simulacra [regarded as the fourth and last phase of Baudrillardian hyper-real classification] (Henthorne, 2011: 66).

Regarding Baudrillardian notions of "Simulacra and Simulation", this research considered the domination and transformation of hyper-real in these novels. Thus analyzing hyper-reality, we would examine the influence of the media and simulacra on the lives of characters. Reviewing the literature disclosed some gaps which were as prompts to conduct this study. These four novelists' writing style demonstrates Jean Baudrillard's theories about reality in the modern society run by the media which is itself in turn run by Western politics. Therefore, the present research aims to prove that the above mentioned novels indicate Baudrillardian hyper-reality notion. It is determined to prove

that the protagonists in the novels are not aware of reality and hyper-reality in their lives and how mass media can interpret the contents for them. Moreover, it explores a situation where the boundaries between reality and hyper-reality become blurred and how mass media, especially television and internet and Telegram, play a vital role to make this situation.

According to Chin-Yi (March 2007) in his article "Hyperreality, the Question of Agency, and the Phenomenon of Reality Television":

In *The Ecstasy of Communication*, Baudrillard argues that our subjectivities are dissolved—we are no longer 'subjects of interiority" (13) in control of television, but are instead subjected to the controls of multiple network satellites. Television becomes an intrusive actor in our domestic space, overtaking our lives from work, consumption, play, social relations and leisure. Baudrillard further explains that the hyperreal displaces the real and renders it useless, thus turning the spectatorship into one of simulation, as we become simulated according to television events. Social relationships within the home are destroyed as face-to-face and interpersonal communications are diminished (34)

Scheifinger [in "Handbook of Hyper-real Religions"], makes the argument that Hyper-real Religion is a Western construction . . . suggesting that it may only fit within a post-Christian environment where popular culture is fully commodified (Wikipedia, 2016).

It can be said that the best solution is to become as familiar as possible with hyper-reality, its kinds and phases, and the way it works and affects our lives. The so far mentioned novelists try their best to represent this issue to their readers by writing their novels. The protagonist of their novels becomes entangled in situations making them as well as the reader to reconsider the role of media and especially mass media in constituting a simulated reality around them. So a careful study of Baudrillard and applying his theory to these representative novels seem to be a proper solution, especially by considering the vehemence of the issue since reaching to the fourth phase of hyper-reality called simulacrum in the contemporary decade.

Unlike Derrida, whose Jewish Algerian background protects him from any basic charge of ignorance about Islamic culture, or Foucault, who at least made an effort to read Corbin before his trip to Iran, Baudrillard appears to be relatively unburdened by any deeper knowledge of Islam or its socio-political history. In a universe where the flow of events 'bear no relation to any reality whatsoever', where the various manifestations of signs form their 'own pure simulacrum', 7 the superficiality of Baudrillard's knowledge of Islam, far from constituting any kind of handicap, becomes a means of obtaining a clearer and purely imagistic perspective on the issue at hand, unclouded by the mendacious illusions of depth, research and 'background knowledge'. (Almond, 2007: 159).

This brute fact of the West's ontological non-recognition of the Islamic world –together with all the subsequent connotations of Occidental truth/fact/reality versus Oriental dream/fantasy/unreality–relocates Baudrillard's insistence on the non-occurrence of the bombing of Iraq, for all his good

intentions, in a thoroughly Orientalist context . . . only a war in the unreal Orient, one feels tempted to say, could acquire such a series of fictitious adjectives. Only a text written by a non-Arab thinker, for a non-Arab audience, could carry such a title; it is difficult to imagine whether Baudrillard could ever have written a book called *9/11 Did Not Take Place* or *The Second World War Never Happened* (Almond, 2007:165).

To conclude, once again we should refer to Ahmed who says: "The media entertain, instruct, educate, and pervert us, ceaselessly and with endless variety" (Ahmed, 2003: 11-12).

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