

Globalization, Hyperconsumerism, and Hyperreality in Bret Easton Ellis's *Glamorama* (1998)

العولمة، فرط الاستهلاك و الواقعية المفرطة في رواية (1997) *Gamorama*

للكتاب Bret Easton Ellis

Mondialisation, hyperconsommation et hyperréalité dans *Glamorama* de Bret Easton Ellis (1998)

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Introduction

Consumption has become one of the salient paradigms of transnationalism in the postmodern or late capitalistic era. Commodity acquisition embodies one of the central aspects in identity construction and self-satisfaction. Moreover, the signs that the commodities and media images disseminate amplify a conviction in hyperreality. This article, then, studies the two interrelated themes of consumer culture and the effects of hyperreality in Bret Easton Ellis's fifth and controversial novel *Glamorama* (1998). The two themes epitomize salient dynamics in globalization theory. In addition, being a postmodern work of fiction in both themes and techniques, the novel exposes the meaningless character of a life so dependent on consumerism and appearances and the superficiality of culture devoid of spiritual meaning. The writer's assembling of global consumption and global terrorism is arguably his view of the current age where globalization benefits some people in the same way as it harms and destroys others.

1. Bret Easton Ellis and the World of Glamour

Ellis belongs to what is known as the « Brat-Pack » generation of authors who focus in their writing on themes related to fashion, the life of celebrities, pop culture and consumer culture. Their aim is to portray the hedonistic trend of the postmodern society where morality has been lost. According to Sonia Baelo-Allué (2011), these authors were generally famous for their « youth, their being overly hyped, and their having an excessive sense of their importance [...] Their works combined a minimalist style with a focus on the wealthy precarious families of young people » (p. 23). Moreover, Ellis has been raised in an affluent family where his father « was the ultimate consumer. He was the sort of person who was completely obsessed with status and about wearing the right suits and

owning a certain kind of car and staying at a certain kind of hotel and eating in a certain kind of restaurant regardless of whether these things gave him pleasure or not » (Interview, 1999, p. 82). He continues to live as a celebrity and his lifestyle is incarnated in his narratives. In *Glamorama* ; for instance, both the hero and the major characters are obsessed with their way of life and their appearances on the public scene. They focus on every detail in their body, their clothes and the products they use.

Glamorama is Ellis's work which echoes the mood of the current age. The title suggests its content where all the characters are surrounded by glamour and fame. It is considered one of those « fictions of globalization » (Annesley, 2006) because the narrative takes place in different countries, America and Europe, and the characters' lifestyles are tinted with global interface. Being a postmodern narrative the novel is centered on the realm of fashion and supermodels. It relates the life of Victor Ward, née Johnson, who is a fashion model. At the beginning of the novel, Victor is preparing the opening of his night club with a host of characters : his partner Damien Ross, his assistants Beau, J.D and Peyton. The narrative shows that Victor has many girlfriends Alison Poole, who is also Damien's fiancé, Lauren Hynde, and Chloe Byrnes. Against expectations, the opening night proves a failure and it adds nothing to Victor's popularity. Instead, his business partnership with Damien has ended up and he is obliged to accept the proposition of a government agent named Palakon to find and bring back one of his former girlfriends, Jamie Fields, from Europe. Meanwhile, Victor starts to receive mystifying threats. At this point, one can realize that the novel is divided into two central parts, the first part is a meticulous discussion of consumption and popular culture, and the second part is a thriller full of horrifying adventures.

In search for Jamie, Victor travels by ship to London where he finds her and gets acquainted with her friends : Bentley Harrods, Bruce Rhinebeck, Tammy Devol and Jamie's boyfriend Bobby Hughes, who are all supermodels. Victor lives with them in a house where suddenly he discovers that they form a terrorist group led by Bobby, with no apparent political affiliations, and operating on a global scale. Gradually, Victor finds himself involved in terrorist actions, bombings and killings in both London and Paris. A film crew appears from time to time throughout the narrative and Victor alternates roles from being a character in the novel into an actor in a movie based on the novel's story. Victor becomes a drug addict in order to keep up with the situation. The members of the terrorist organization die one after the other and Victor succeeds to take revenge of Bobby who has killed his girlfriend Chloe. He is then in Milan

with Palakon. There, the whole story seems a conspiracy by Victor's father and Palakon in order to get him away from the United States before the presidential campaign. Reading the novel until the end shows that glamour is just a wallpaper for the present period. In fact, glamour conceals bloody actions and reality is just deeper than one may expect.

2.Consumer Culture and the « It Boy of the moment »

Mass consumption is a feature of postmodernity, consideration is no longer attributed to how to produce or where to produce, but to what to consume and how much a person can consume. In concluding his analysis of consumption in the contemporary period, Jean Baudrillard (1996) contends that « It has to be made clear from the outset that consumption is an active form of relationship (not only to objects, but also to society and to the world), a mode of systematic activity and global response which founds our entire cultural system » (p. 199). In fact, consumption in the postmodern age is characterized by the global diffusion and purchase of commodities where people in every corner of the planet can possess identical products. Consumption has been developed into a global culture which relates not only individuals to objects but individuals to other individuals.

Glamorama took eight years to be written, a fact which makes it a veritable witness on late capitalism whose major characteristic is an excessive tendency towards consumption. The novel is considered as one of those narratives which discuss consumer culture in an exhaustive way. It presents a wide range of consumer items and brand names which originate in various parts of the world. Consumer objects are mentioned all through the novel as an integral part in the life of the characters. In describing Chloe's house, Ellis meticulously cites the objects, brand names and consumer items found there :

Stills from Chloe's loft in a space that looks like it was designed by Den Flavin : two Toshiyuki Kita hop sofas, an expanse of white-maple floor, six Baccarat Tastevin wineglasses—a gift from Bruce and Nan Weber—dozens of white French tulips, a StairMaster and a free-weight set, photography books—Matthew Rolston, Annie Leibovitz, Herb Ritts—all signed, a Fabergé Imperial egg—a gift from Bruce Willis (pre-Demi)—a large plain portrait of Chloe by Richard Avedon, sunglasses scattered all over the place, a Helmut Newton photo of Chloe walking seminude through the lobby of the Malperisa in Milan while nobody notices, a large William Wegman and giant posters for the movies *Butterfield 8*, *The Bachelor Party* with Carolyn Jones, Audrey Hepburn in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. (Ellis, p. 40)

According to Karl Marx (1990), « A commodity appears at first sight an extremely obvious, trivial thing. But its analysis brings out that it is a very strange thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties » (p. 163). Actually, when we consume we pay little or no attention to the process of production and commodification of objects. Yet, commodity studies is a complex field which both economists and sociologists engage to decipher. In addition, the object is acquired for both its use value and its sign value. In *Glamorama*, however, the object is cherished for its image because in the life of fashion models, all that matters are appearances. Victor is satisfied only when he uses the brands that are distinguished within the world market. His failure in his business with Damien forces him to accept Palakon's proposal in order to compensate the loss and secure a constant way of living.

The novel is replete with names of commodities which have been produced not only in the West, but also in the Eastern side of the world. In describing Lauren's house, the narrator tells how « down a hallway covered with a Berber style woven carpet and Moroccan embroidered pillows stacked against the walls » (Ellis, p. 138). The models are presented with global brands : Chloe's and Alison's « Todd Oldham wraparound dress » (Ellis, p. 23), Baxter's « Audiovox MVX cell phone », Chloe's « Ericsson DF » (Ellis, p. 33), Alison's « Vivienne Tam-designed sink » (Ellis, p. 25), Victor's « Matsuda jacket » (Ellis, p. 27), « Giorgio Armani prescription sunglasses » and « Motorola Stortac cell phone » (Ellis, p. 46), all of which have been designed or manufactured by world fashion houses and companies. Global consumerism engenders the circulation of goods across nations which makes the world people familiar with commodities that were once considered exotic.

What globalization has offered for world populations is a syncretism of cultures ; the influence is no longer from center to periphery, but from center(s) to center(s) deconstructing previous modernist convictions, and upholding one of the most fundamental tenets of postmodernism. Western products are no longer the only appreciated objects to constitute a lifestyle ; instead, people are allowed to choose from the worldwide catalog whatever commodity they want. Moreover, the uniqueness of style which prevailed in modernity has given rise to a mixture of styles in postmodernity. Pastiche, the technique used today, reflects the disappearance of a « personal style » (Jameson, 1991, p. 16). In addition, the combination of high and low culture is maintained as one of the postmodernist precepts. The result is the interrelation and the cross-fertilization of world cultures.

The hero is presented with the « caption It Boy of the moment » (Ellis, p. 46) in magazine titles and in TV shows. The slogan used to describe Victor stems from the excessively materialistic life he conducts. Victor, who represents « a pretty big pie wedge of the new generation » (p. 156) in fact gets « written about ... for doing nothing » (p. 81). If we reflect on the role of models in the community, we find that they do nothing except showing some manners and representations. In this respect, Debord (1994) claims that « Media stars are spectacular representations of living human beings, distilling the essence of the spectacle's banality into images of possible roles » (p. 17). The whole point, however, rests here. In the postmodern age, the society has been transformed into a « society of the spectacle » (Debord) where everything is centered upon the image and everything is commodified from products and services to emotions and opinions.

In his study of commodity, Marx (1990) considers « alienation » to be the isolation of producers from consumers ; the only social relation which can be established between the two sects is through the commodity. Debord (1994) claims that « The commodity world is thus shown as it really is, for its logic is one with men's estrangement from one another and from the sum total of what they produce » (p. 26). In this respect, Ellis articulates on this idea when he describes Victor's relationship to his father who is a US senator. Victor does not know that his father « is leaving the United States Senate » and that he « is planning to announce his bid for a higher office » (Ellis, p. 441), simply because the commodity-driven atmosphere in which Victor lives makes him distant from his father. His father hates the fact that his son is a supermodel, but at the same time benefits from his obsession with and immersion inside the world of objects. After undergoing a severe experience with the terrorist group in Europe, Victor is informed by Palakon that his journey there is just a conspiracy by his father in order to get him away. Personal relationships are now characterized by a high degree of isolation, and determined by the image they produce. Victor's image as a model does not help his father's political campaign, some of Victor's « antics » were « distracting » ; they were « unnecessary. There was the possibility of bad publicity » (Ellis, p. 441). Personal and social relationships are also commodified ; they are esteemed according to what they can profit the individual. Although Victor's father did not want to harm him, Victor is severely hurt to find himself recruited in a globally-organized terrorist section.

Supermodels are cultural icons who can influence individual choices and lifestyles worldwide. What supermodels possess is the body, all their work is

based on the manipulation of the body which seems the ultimate ideal for the other people too. In this respect, Mike Featherstone (1990) contends that « The body is presented as the central vehicle to the consumer culture good life : the source of pleasurable sensations which must be 'looked after' (maintained, repaired and improved) » (p. xxi). In fact, commodities are promoted via the body of a model who publicizes them. They « were making a hundred thousand dollars a day and it seemed worth it and it was maybe ten-thirty or eleven » (Ellis, p. 337). For that reason, « everyone wanted to be around us . . . everyone wanted to be movie stars » (338). The models do not only offer a universalistic catalog but they also participate in global actions. Chloe, for instance, does « fur ads » and donates « money to Greenpeace » (Ellis, p. 35) ; her involvement in international actions is part of her life as a famous person.

Baudrillard (1996) assumes that objects « constitute a system determined entirely by an ideological regime of production and social integration », and advertising is an « irremovable aspect of the system » (p. 163-164). Advertising is one of the central jobs of models ; Anjanette shouts, « I got the job ! I got the contract », and Victor replies, « Baby, you're a face to watch... A star of tomorrow » (Ellis, p. 17), showing the importance of this occupation. What a model can offer is an image to be sold in return for huge amounts of money ; « Right now Chloe's on the verge of signing a multimillion dollar contract with Lancôme, but a great many others are also in pursuit » (p. 33). Advertising benefits the models, and at the same time, it is a way which « trains » individuals in the art of purchasing. Baudrillard (1996) claims that « we do indeed 'believe' in advertising : what we consume in this way is the luxury of a society that projects itself as an agency for dispensing goods and 'transcends itself' in a culture. We are thus taken over at one and the same time by an established agency and by that agency's self-image » (p. 166).

Consumers are convinced to buy a certain product and to believe in its efficiency by way of advertising. The whole matter has become a culture where the individual is taught how to appreciate the image or the sign that the commodity diffuses. In a Ralph Lauren advertisement, for example, there is « an intensely green landscape, a gray overcast sky—and Bobby's so well-groomed it's astonishing ; he's wearing a black wool blazer, a black cashmere turtleneck, Gucci boots, his hair's impeccable, he's holding a large bottle of Evian water » (Ellis, p. 432). Bobby's look and the international brands he uses are significant to draw an impressive picture about the product to be sold.

In the novel, Ellis seems to be reacting to the power exercised by the models in manipulating consumers' preferences. In this respect, he admits that « models

are so annoying, and it's horrible how obsessed our culture is over them that I made a connection between models and ... terrorists » (« Interview », 1999, p. 88). Ellis's criticism of consumption is based on his connection between the terrorist actions, models, and brand names ; in this passage, he describes how the bombings which occurred in different parts of Paris are so gruesome :

The first explosion propels Brad into the air. A leg is blown off from the thigh down and a ten-inch hole is ripped open in his abdomen and his mangled body ends up lying in the curb on Boulevard Saint-Germain, splashing around in its own blood, writhing into its death throes. The second bomb in the Prada backpack is now activated. Dean and Eric, both splattered with Brad's flesh and bleeding profusely from their own wounds, manage to stumble over to where Brad has been thrown, screaming blindly for help, and then, seconds later, the other blast occurs. This second bomb is much stronger than the first and the damage it causes is more widespread, creating a crater thirty feet wide in front of Café Flore. Two passing taxis are knocked over, simultaneously bursting into flame. What's left of Brad's corpse is hurled through a giant Calvin Klein poster on a scaffolding across the street, splattering it with blood, viscera, bone. (Ellis, p. 343)

The bombings conducted by the terrorist models did not occur just in Paris ; they occurred in different other parts of the world such as London and Milan. The nexus of the terrorists incorporates people from other countries ; « Sam Ho » is the son of the Korean ambassador (Ellis, p. 316) ; a Lebanese man is responsible for planting the bombs, and « Everything's . . . connected . . . to the Japanese [...] Everything is bought with Japanese money from . . . Japanese banks and they . . . supply everything » (p. 464). Ellis shows us how a celebrity fashion model is taken from the world of glamour, lights and safety to the darker side of global terror and jeopardy. The model-terrorists reside in a « 5,000 square foot triplex that has been paid for with Iraqi money washed through Hungary » (p. 324). Furthermore, the consequences of the bombings are not confined to deaths, injuries and a destruction of the infrastructure. Blaming the part responsible for the terrorist deeds is another problem. In Paris, the bomb which Victor carried in a tote bag following the instructions of the terrorist group « was placed in a 35 pound gas canister along with bolts, shards of glass and assorted nails ». Victor is convinced that « The blast will be blamed on an Algerian guerrilla or a Muslim fundamentalist or maybe the faction of an Islamic group or a splinter group of handsome Basque separatists » (p. 348). Ellis is adept at pointing to international opinion regarding the accused part for global terror. The fact that Glamorama was published in 1998 does not prevent

Ellis from anticipating the 9/11 events which ignited the global war on terror and where the blamed part is either an Arab Islamist or a separatist group.

The subject has been displaced by the object ; Baudrillard (1996) explains how the individuals' « daily dealings are now not so much with their fellow men, but rather-- on a rising statistical curve -- with the reception and manipulation of goods and messages » (p. 26). This fact is triggered by the transformation towards a consumer society, where objects are an indispensable component. Moreover, the subject is being objectified and commodified. Just like Chloe who has been « twice on the cover of the Sports Illustrated swimwear issue as well as on the cover of four hundred magazines. A calendar she shot in St. Bart's has sold two million copies. A book called *The Real Me*, ghostwritten with Bill Zehme, was on the New York Times bestseller list for something like twelve weeks » (Ellis, p. 32).

Chloe's photo on the magazine cover or in an advertising of a product is an essential measure for its marketing. Consumers are attracted by the product as well as by its way of presentation. In addition, to ensure a global purchase, advertisers choose universal figures to publicize for their commodities. Victor cites many proposals of advertising by global companies : « Banana Republic (no), Benetton (no), Chanel (yes), Gap (maybe), Christian Dior (hmm), French Connection (a joke), Guess ? (nope), Ralph Lauren (problematic), Pepe Jeans (are we kidding ?), Calvin Klein (done that), Pepsi (sinister but a possibility), et cetera » (p.33). All these companies are interested in Chloe whose value is increasing after each successful publicity. Chloe's identity is not restricted to just a human being ; it is also a cherished object, a sign, which makes a lot of money. Baelo-Allué (2011) contends that « when celebrities become language signs, adjectives, verbs or nouns they lose all human qualities » (p. 149). This means that, being a celebrity, Chloe also possesses a market value. This reification of the human is one of the characteristics of the globalized postmodern era, mainly because the human no longer feels to own his being ; on the contrary, all other persons can have possession of him in some sort. In *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, Gajo Petrovic (1983) defines reification as the « transformation of human beings into thing-like beings which do not behave in a human way but according to the laws of the thing-world » (p. 463). Chloe's diet, for instance, is severely restricted ; « Chocolates, the only food Chloe even remotely likes, are severely rationed. No rice, potatoes, oils or bread. Only steamed vegetables, certain fruits, plain fish, boiled chicken » (Ellis, p. 33). She cannot go to dine out with Victor because this will deregulate her regime and she will probably lose her contracts with the fashion houses and the advertising companies.

Damien's question to Victor, « You're dating Chloe [...] Byrnes, [...] How do you do it, man ? What's your secret ? » (p.47), bears out a fact that Chloe, who is considered an icon in the fashion realm, is a brand name and an image which adds to his fame.

Anjanette, another fashion model, looks upset by the constraints she feels surrounding her being since « There's always a car waiting. There's always a Steven Meisel photo shoot » (Ellis, p. 17), and « as a model all you do all day is stand around and do what other people tell you to do » (p. 338). She can only describe the life of models as a « mess » which they have to « survive » (p. 17). In this respect, Patricia Pisters (2001) states that Easton Ellis depicts « a modern society through the eyes of Victor Ward » where « Calvin Klein, Armani, Gap, DKNY, and Dolce & Gabbana decide the looks ; in which silicone breasts, sunglasses and cell phones are a 'must' ; in which sushi and salads form dinner and Evian, diet Coke and (occasionally) champagne are the main beverages » (p. 134). In addition, Victor cares for the people with whom he appears on the media or elsewhere. For the opening ceremony of his nightclub, he plans to invite a host of guests who are all world celebrities : movie stars, famous singers and artists ; for him, they constitute an aura which stabilizes his identity. They are not just persons, but pictures which impress a whole public. He is interested to know who came to Brad Pitt's birthday. In fact they were « Ed Limato. Mike Ovitz. Julia Ormond. Madonna. Models. A lot of lawyers and 'fun' people » (Ellis, p. 13). On the other hand, he shows no attention to the waiter who advised him to benefit from his fame ; Victor replies by saying, « There's a snag in your advice, man », « Yeah ? » « You're—a—waiter » (p. 190). The world Ellis is criticizing rests upon the outer shells and not on the real meaning of things. Victor, like many in this age is mesmerized by his own appearance as well as by the appearance of others.

3. Questioning Objective Reality via Simulated Images

In an era when the model has supplanted the original and the map precedes the territory, Glamorama touches upon one of the most important themes, that of reality in a postmodern globalized era. According to Baudrillard (1995), our age is when reality reaches the fourth stage, or the « precession of simulacra » (p. 3), where people no longer discriminate the real from the simulated. Moreover, the simulated no longer reflects a reality but creates a new reality from models which have no origin. The idea stems from the postmodern precept that everything has been seen and everything has been dealt with. Globalization stimulates the dispersion and the interpenetration of signs across the world

nations. What contributes to this fact is the role of mass media and electronic telecommunications. For Timothy Luke (1995), « simulation in the global flow goes beyond the old realist dimensions of space and time, sender and receiver, medium and message, expression and context as the world's complex webs of electronic media generate unbound areas of new hyperspace with no sense of place » (p. 97).

In fact, people can now share common meaning or constructed realities to various notions across the globe. Fashion is one example ; people tend to have a universal belief in what is modeled by the models. It is commonsensical that what fashion exhibits is more beautiful than the beautiful itself, as are the copies created to simulate a reality seem more real than the real.

Glamorama presents a genuine account on how reality is simulated via images and signs, and how both the market and mass media have their share in the construction of reality. The novel is based on the life of a group of models who represent a frame that embraces a whole lifestyle. In addition, they represent a 'model' which has no origin. After all, people are accustomed to believe in and appreciate the model and do not worry about the original. The question of reality has always been delicate. Ellis has succeeded to a great extent to juxtapose reality and illusion. Right from the beginning, Victor cannot ignore the fact that he is seeing specks which his assistants do not see. He says : « Specks—specks all over the third panel, see ?—no, that one—the second one up from the floor ladies —there they are : specks, annoying, tiny specks, and they don't look accidental but like they were somehow done by a machine—so I don't want a lot of description » (Ellis, p. 1). For Victor, « everyone's acting like there's a question as to whether these specks are an illusion or a reality » ; he is convinced, however, that « they're pretty goddamn real » (p. 6). The hero continues his quest for reality all through the narrative. Although warned by his friend JD that « Reality is an illusion » (p. 6), he favors confirming it. In fact, Victor can be considered as a naive character who is pursuing a reality which seems unapproachable. His adventure outside the United States reveals how immature he is and how much he has been exploited thereafter.

The biggest illusion in the novel is associated with its main plot. The supermodels who offer an idealistic image on social life are no more than terrorists who have caused the death of hundreds of people worldwide, and who have tortured others in a terribly horrifying way. On the same day that « Tammy and Jamie had their hair done at a salon that's so chic » and « there was a shopping expedition at Wild Oats in Notting Hill » for the other models, « a body was discarded and a videotape of its torture was sent to the appropriate

address » (Ellis, p. 317). Two stories are juxtaposed, no one can believe that a supermodel or a film star who is an idol for the world people can commit such inhumane deeds. Till now, Victor has taken huge amounts of Xanax in order to keep up with that implausible situation. Bobby Hughes, whom Victor used to appreciate, turns to be the head of the terrorist faction. He is sadistic and his only aim is to recruit the utmost number of attractive models who finally find themselves trapped in his iniquitous actions. When Victor informs Markus that Bobby is a terrorist, he is unable to believe it ; for him, Bobby « doesn't look like a terrorist. He's way too gorgeous... I know terrorists. That guy doesn't look like a terrorist » (p. 347). Jamie Fields finally confesses to Victor about how her life has been altered from being a supermodel and movie actress, with all the glamour surrounding her, into an addict who keeps weeping hysterically. She tells him about the « arrangement of fake passports, soldiers of fortune from Thailand, Bosnia, Utah, new social security numbers, heads struck with such force they broke open as easily as soft-boiled eggs, a form of torture where the victim has to swallow a rope » (p. 340). Jamie has been taken to numerous parts of the globe in order to live the contentment a celebrity may live ; she traveled to Palm Beach, Aspen, Nigeria and spent « Christmases in St. Bart's . . . a week at Armani's home in Pantelleria » (p. 339) ; at the same time, she has beheld scenes of torture in other parts.

The life of the models is centered on a fake lifestyle. On the public scene, they appear happy, rich, famous, and good-looking. However, as Victor admits, « I'm a legend. But in reality everything's a big world party and there are no VIP rooms » (Ellis, p. 155). His life has gone under the influence of Xanax and Klonopin ; his agreement with Palakon to bring Jamie back from Europe in return for a good material reward reflects his bankruptcy. Chloe suffered a nervous breakdown before the MTV awards ; Tammy and Anjanette are addicted to heroin. Neither Chloe, nor Alison, can approve the fact that Victor is cheating on both of them. To sum it all, no one within the group of models seems to live contentedly.

An extraordinary aspect which Ellis applies to Glamorama is the blurring between two techniques : narrating the novel and filming a scenario based on the novel's story. Victor changes roles between a narrator and an actor, while the reader alternates between reading a story and watching a film. Words or expressions such as « Cut ! » (Ellis, p. 103), « montage » (p. 211), « camera moving » (p. 212), « shots » (p. 214), « director », « props », « crew members » (p. 202) all alter the reader's attention to follow a movie. In the following passage, Victor seems rather acting :

Occasionally the crew converged and the camera would follow me at a discreet distance, shots mainly of Victor on the upper-deck starboard railing, trying to light cigarettes, some rolled with marijuana, sunglasses on, wearing an oversized Armani leather jacket. I was told to look sad, as if I missed Lauren Hynde, as if I regretted my treatment of Chloe, as if my world were falling apart. I was encouraged to try and find Lauren in Miami, where she was staying with Damien, and I was given the name of a famous hotel, but I feigned seasickness and those scenes were scrapped since they really weren't in character anyway. (p. 213)

The camera, or the film crew, does not follow the hero only ; it records almost every action of every character in the novel. Furthermore, whenever the reader is immersed inside an action which is thought to be serious and/or real, a film crew is intruded and pacifies the climax. The reader is no longer shaken but relaxed to find all that is happening is just a movie scene. When Jamie informs Victor about the cruelty of the terrorist models she lives with, she « starts shrieking about a serial killer Bobby befriended in Berlin and I hop out of bed and tell the director 'Hey, it's over' and while they pack up to leave Jamie writhes on the bed, sobbing hysterically » (Ellis, p. 340). Although her reaction and feelings are so profound, Victor's words convey that Jamie is just acting so the reader's impression changes.

In the same way, the group's intimidations in Paris such as what happens « at the juncture of Boulevard du Montparnasse and Boulevard Saint-Michel, across the street from Closerie des Lilas » where a « bomb kills ten people immediately. Seven others die during the following three days, all of them from severe burns. One hundred and thirty are treated for injuries, twenty-eight of them in serious condition » (Ellis, p. 349). All this seems just trivial when we consider that « Later a scene will be shot in which Bobby expresses his anger that the bomb didn't explode underground, where the damage would have been »far greater« , instead of on the Pont Royal, which is partially in open air » (p. 349). Ellis's insertion of the filming technique in the narrative reflects the absurdity and superficiality of life in the current era. Serious events appear to be just scenes in a film.

Another idea Ellis highlights in his novel is the dominant conviction about hyperreality in the postmodern era. Victor and the other models are photographed either by professional photographers, such as « Lindbergh and Elgort and Demarchelier » (Ellis, p. 337), in order to appear on magazine covers and in advertisements, or by paparazzi who permanently follow to hunt a photo of them. The public gets acquainted with the models through their images

and representations, or through a model, a copy of them. In fact, people do not know the real Victor and his fellow models ; they only know their copies which have been produced through photographs and TV screens. These copies seem more real than the real, a fact which makes those who see them trust them. Victor himself and his friends acknowledge something as true only if it generates an immense media coverage. Victor frequently plays Super Mario Bros. For him, « The whole point of Super Mario Bros. is that it mirrors life » (p. 21) is a clear example on how the map precedes the territory. This video game constructs a model which people believe in and emulate. It passes on, like any game or electronic program, implications about how to live at present age.

Because of the strong belief in what is mediated in our era, Victor is caught in a dilemma since he is thought to be in some places where he did not really go. He is shown a file of photos in which he sees himself in the « CK Show », in « Telluride w/S Ulrich », in the « Dogstar concert w/K Reeves », in the « Union Square w/L Hynde », in « Miami, Ocean Drive », in the « QE2 series », in the « GQ Shoot w/J Fields, M Bergin », in the « Café Flore w/Brad, Eric, Dean », in the « Institute of Political Studies », in « 80th and Park w/A Poole », and in Hell's Kitchen w/Mica, NYC (Ellis, p. 392). He gets surprised and proclaims that he was not in those places, nor with those people. Yet, the photos confirm the opposite. Victor is so frustrated to find himself in the photos because whether they are authentic or a camouflage, people will believe in them just because they exist. What further aggravates the situation is that Victor is photographed killing Sam Ho, the Japanese ambassador's son and a famous model.

Ellis tackles the issue of global terrorism from the perspective of Baudrillardian hyperreality. Baudrillard (1995) considers that everything from consumption of objects and personal relationships to politics are being built upon simulations. The war(s) in the postmodern era are different ; they cannot be called « wars » in the classical meaning of the term « war », but rather simulations of war. They are either terrorist attacks or wars on terror where the enemy is not an apparent party, but different sections which operate beyond the nation state. Baudrillard (2002) argues that « Current terrorism is not the descendant of a traditional history of anarchy, nihilism and fanaticism. It is contemporaneous with globalization » (p. 87). In Glamorama, Ellis highlights a fact that models who can fashion manners and lifestyles are also able to model wars and genocides. The bombings which kill hundreds of persons at once are suddenly being filmed by a crew as if the whole event is no more than a parade. Baudrillard (1991) maintains that « 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). For many reasons, political and economic, many nations find it a crucial issue to start a war in some region of the world. The war initiates a spectacle which the politics need more than the war itself. No one can imagine a fashion model to be a terrorist in the same way that it is difficult to stand upon the reality of those who cause terrorist attacks in our age.

Terrorism represents one of the characteristics of postmodernity. Globalization has its share in this situation because it is no longer a country or a group of countries opposing another, but rather a supraterritorial group which has global affiliations. It has roots in rich as well as poor countries, and it makes use of the facilities offered by globalization mechanisms. As Baudrillard (2002) puts it :

Terrorism, like viruses, is everywhere. There is a global profusion of terrorism [...] It is at the very heart of this culture which combats it. [...] as though every machinery of domination secreted its own counter apparatus, the agent of its own disappearance – against that form of almost automatic reversion of its own power, the system can do nothing. And terrorism is the chock wave of its silent reversion.
(p. 11)

Terrorism has become a mobile war which occurs anywhere and everywhere. Following the explosion which occurs in the Parisian 1st arrondissement, « the paparazzi arrive first, followed by CNN reporters and then local television crews. » Later, « ambulances carrying rescue teams followed by blue-black trucks carrying antiterrorist police wearing flak jackets over paratrooper jumpsuits, gripping automatic weapons, and they start wrapping victims in blankets and hundreds of pigeons lie dead » (Ellis, p. 390). This scene is familiar nowadays and it is very often transmitted via world televisions.

Conclusion

In Glamorama, Ellis offers a critical view of a world dominated by consumption and the influence of commodities on the life of supermodels who, in turn, induce other people. The global circulation of commodities has made an almost identical consumer culture worldwide. Mass media and advertising have a hegemonic control over such a culture. The masses believe and identify with the superficiality of supermodels and lack a serious analysis of life.

Reality is considered differently in the postmodern age. The excessive cross-exchange of signs throughout the globe and the dominance of media culture reinforce the blurring of boundaries between what is real and what is simulated and represented. The hero of the novel is engaged in searching

for reality in a world dominated by fake relationships and fake representations. Ellis interrogates the ability of the individual to believe in a shared constructed reality, or to construct his own in the light of deconstructing the signs around him. The media intrusion in the novel reflects their dominance over the lives of individuals. The changing roles of the hero between a character in the novel and a narrator in a film reflects how strong is the influence of media on our lives. In point of fact, mass media are monitoring our lifestyle and realities about ourselves.

Terrorism is the product of globalization ; the powers or sometimes, the hidden powers, which exercise an influence on the global stage stimulate wars and terrorist attacks which typify the current age. The classical prominent division of West against East has ended. Instead, many global organizations which originate from equally the West and the East amalgamate to draw the world's political scene. These organizations can have access to many regions and resources due to the global facilities in both travelling or electronic finance. Glamorama in fact predicts and reflects many of the third millennium's episodes whether on social or political levels.

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Abstract

This article attempts to shed light on hyperconsumerism and hyperreality as two postmodern paradigms of globalization in Bret Easton Ellis's *Glamorama* (1998). In fact, commodities circulate on a global scale and acquiring them has become an inseparable fact in the signification of individual identity. The proliferation of signs and media images diffused globally creates a hyperreal ambiance where it is no longer possible to distinguish the real from the simulated. In the novel, Ellis criticizes and condemns the consumer-obsessed transformation of society where the commodity becomes cherished for its sign more than its use. In addition, reality is considered through models derived from other models which no longer have an origin.

Keywords

consumer culture ; hyperreality ; globalization ; postmodernism ; *Glamorama*

Résumé

Cet article tente d'étudier l'hyperconsommation et l'hypermérialité en tant que deux paradigmes postmodernes de la mondialisation dans *Glamorama* (1998) de Bret Easton Ellis. En effet, les produits de base circulent à l'échelle mondiale et leur acquisition est devenue un fait indissociable dans la signification de l'identité individuelle. La prolifération de signes et d'images médiatiques diffusées à l'échelle mondiale crée une ambiance hyper réelle où il n'est plus possible de distinguer le réel du simulé. Dans le roman, Ellis critique et condamne la transformation de la société, obsédée par la consommation, où la marchandise est chérie pour son signe plus que pour son utilisation. De plus, la réalité est considérée à travers des modèles dérivés d'autres modèles qui n'ont plus d'origine.

Mots-clés

culture de consommation ; l'hypermérialité ; la mondialisation ; postmodernisme ; *Glamorama*

مستخلص

ملخص : يحاول هذا المقال تسليط الضوء على فرط الاستهلاك وكذا الواقعية المفرطة كنموذجين لما بعد الحداثة وعلاقتها بالعولمة في رواية غلاموراما للكاتب الأمريكي بريت ايستون اليس (1998). من الواضح أن السلع متداولة على نطاق عالمي وأن اقتناءها أصبح جزء من الدلالة على الهوية. إن انتشار العلامات والصور الإعلامية المنتشرة على مستوى العالم يخلق أجواءً مفرطة الواقعية حيث لم يعد

من الممكن التمييز بين الواقعية والمحكاة. ينتقد الكاتب هوس المجتمع بالاستهلاك واهتمام الفرد برمزية السلعة أكثر من اهتمامه باستعمالها، كما يبين كيف أن الاعتقاد في الحقيقة أصبح مبنيا على نماذج مستمدة من نماذج أخرى لم يعد لها أصل.

كلمات مفتاحية

ثقافة الاستهلاك؛ الواقعية المفترضة؛ العولمة؛ ما بعد الحداثة؛ غلاموراما