

"ECHOES OF TRUTH AND TERROR: UNRAVELING MASS MEDIA IN DON DELILLO'S 'MAO II'"

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Abstract

This article deals with Don Delillo's Novel Mao II in which he expresses the language complications of native speakers and domination of mass media. It talks about how the media makes the commoners believe all the facts they present through their media and communication channels. Moreover, Delillo's novel, Mao II reveals the truth about the increasing population and how it is dangerous for the society in future. The article also talks about increasing terrorism that affects the peace and harmony of society.

Keywords: Language complications, Mass Media, Communication, Terrorism

Introduction

The novel begins with a large group of people who came marching into American sunlight. They had gathered in twos, boy-girl. From a series of linked couples, they become one continuous wave, larger all the time, covering the open spaces in navy and white. Six thousand five hundred couples and their daughter is down there somewhere, about to marry a man she met two days ago. He is either Japanese or Korean. Rodge



and Karen are friends, they speak through an interpreter who taught them how to say Hello, and it is Tuesday because they do not know the English language fluently. Delillo has described the language problems that exist in America and the domination of Media because it is a vital source of information to society. The media cannot be relied upon fully and it has its own limitations and one cannot believe that all facts published in Media are genuine. In addition, Delillo worries about the emerging terrorism in America, especially for political gain and gratifying the desires of the terrorists. He is always of the view that terrorism is one of the major threats to peace and harmony of society.

Representation of Media in Modern Society

The topic of media representation in contemporary society is intricate and multidimensional, encompassing cultural, social, technological, and economic aspects from many angles. These days, the media is essential for forming public opinion, spreading knowledge, establishing cultural standards, and promoting social connections. The portrayal of media in contemporary society is a major issue in Don Delillo's book "Mao II," which represents the author's investigation of the power relationships among people, media organizations, and society at large. The following are some salient points about how the media is portrayed in "Mao II"

In the beginning of the novel "Mao II" Delillo expresses the eagerness of the people to take pictures of themselves, preparing themselves for the media instead of giving importance to their wedding ceremony. Fifteen minutes in a bare room, after that they were chain-lined for life. They felt hard to receive anything because there were thirteen thousand people in the Yankee stadium. The stadium carried so many people, the bride and the groom exchanged. Many people in the grandstand were taking pictures, standing in the aisles and crowding the rails, whole families snapping anxiously, trying to shape a response or organize a memory to neutralize the event. Rodge saw the brides lift their veils and he zooms quickly. Nowadays, media has dominated everything because they use it for all the important facts. In the stadium, the people spoke half language, a set of readymade terms and empty repetitions. Everything was true, it all comes down to a few simple formulas copied and memorized



and passed on. Language is an essential tool to communicate with others as well as to express our needs. Delillo clearly shows, how people are neglecting languages and their structure, which is why people do not know to communicate in the right way. After the couple entered the stadium, they followed a man because he gave them what they needed. He would answer their yearning, and relieve them from the burdens. This shows the religious belief of the people in God. Karen is the beloved of Scott but her mind streams sometimes slow down, veering into sets of whole words. They take funny snub-nosed form, and the master’s chief assistants spoke not highly developed English.

Did she ever think she’ had found herself in a stadium in New York, photographed by thousands of people? There may be as many people taking pictures as there are brides and grooms. One of them for every one of us. Clickety-click. The thought makes the couples a little giddy. (MAOII, p10)

While analysing the textual lines, one comes to know that the Yankee stadium has been filled with many people. Delillo expresses the danger of increasing population and how individuals have to suffer due to this problem. Few people were taking pictures of the bride and groom, the continuous flashlight power glittered like lightning so which made the couples a little giddy. Photographing and videos are the important key tool of the media.

Domination of Mass media

Once Brita had wanted to meet the terrorist chief at his secret retreat in the mountains. So, her curiosity showed the actual activity or nature of the reporter. Earlier media covered matters relating to knowing what was happening beyond the limit. Today media has access to the territories where ordinary people can’t even imagine getting an entry. This facility could be used in a beneficial way to the society. At the same time, the same media can be used for harmful purposes also. Though it acts as an important source of information it cannot be taken as authentic news. One has to realise that Media also has its limitations. For example, in a war field, the media people will be allowed only to a certain limit so that we cannot get the correct information about the happenings beyond that limit.



In the novel Bill Gray’s two assistants, Karen and Scott are doing all the work for their master, but they do not allow others to meet Gray. Karen was the girlfriend of Scott but she was the lover to his master also. Nowadays, media is extensively used. It is used not only to communicate but also to familiars and popularise. Modern man should know that, excessive use of Television and other electronic gadgets will make people lazy, and physical and mental issues. Scott had narrated everything about Gray to Brita. In that room, there were old manuscripts, printers, type scripts, and master galleys.

There were several magazines and journals containing articles about Bill’s works. When one studies the work of Bill, it is known that he spent all his time writing, reading and thinking about new ideas. Writers have the tremendous responsibility of creating awareness among people. In doing so, they also fulfil the duty of protecting the socio-cultural life of a nation.

Terrorism

In MAOII, one can compare Bill Gray with Delillo because as a writer he did not get any recognition from the public. They do not accept the writer’s opinion. In this novel, Delillo has expressed the role of writers in the world, as well as the degenerative influence of Media. Brit had carried a Swedish passport so that the terrorists would allow her otherwise they would kill the

Prime minister who had kidnapped them. Terrorism is one of the major themes in the novels of Delillo. The terrorist used violent activities to achieve political aims or to force the government to act according to their wish. The problem of terrorism is acute in the Middle Eastern countries.

A Terrorist does not allow the common people to live in peace. They do not have mercy on the people, they involve themselves in criminal activities like taking people as hostages and killing them. In short, we can say that the whole society is in a state of chaos. There’s a curious knot that binds novelists and terrorists. In West, we become famous effigies as our book loses the power to shape and influence. Do you ask your writer how they feel about this? (MAOII, P.41).



Through these lines, Delillo has pointed out the limitation of media because it publishes everything. They would popularize all and they are giving way to terrorists through tape records and cameras. Media has become so commercialised that they want to publish unwanted stories to get more money. They do not realise that their primary duty is to give authentic news. They have to create awareness among people. They should have the sensitivity to visualize the effects of publishing news. Writers will always write, they have a long range of influence and they can't talk about gunmen in the same breath. Bill had always struggled with every word. He walks five feet from his desk and doubt hits him like a hammer in the back. Bill has to go back to his desk and find a passage he knows that will reassure him. After one hour he was sitting in the car, he felt it again, the page was wrong so the chapter was also wrong, so he could not shake the doubt until he got back to his desk and found a passage he knew would reassure him.

For him, publication is exactly what he needs and writers have shown to the people what he has done. Bill felt happy when he did not publish his work, for Brita if he decides to publish, she will work with him day and night on the galleys, the page proof, everything. When the book comes out, people will buy and read it. He feels totally exposed. Delillo has pictured the task of writers and how they are working to complete a novel. However, Scott wanted to publish the work of his master. After two days Scott and Brita are talking about Bill's new novel, while Scott replies that the book is complete but it would remain in type script. Here Delillo had twisted a sense of the writer's position in society. They thought the writer belonged at the far margin, doing dangerous things. Delillo's satirical portrait of the modern publisher is wickedly satisfying, and his moral suspense, reminiscent of Graham Green's makes a splendid portrait of the ambiguous

Arab intermediary between Gray and the terrorists. Nobody, of course, is better placed to write about the poisonous exposure and solitary agony of the contemporary writer.



In Central America, writers carried guns and other weapons for their safety. Once, the terrorists kidnapped a Swiss UN worker who was doing research on health care in the Palestinian camps. He was also a poet who had published fifteen short poems in French language journals. Bill said that everyone complained about loneliness. The solitude is killing. The nights are sleepless and the days are filled with pain and worry. The novelist felt unhappy and dissatisfied because he wanted to reengage the world.

Perhaps, infact, Delillo is too close. The scenes with Gray, particularly in his retreat, bog down in their very intensity; besides the portrait of a writer immured inside himself and going dry, they suggest a confession. There are times when we wonder whether Gray, lamenting the inertness of his book, is not Delillo foreshadowing what we shall find in parts of his. For much of the time, it is as if the author’s corrosive voice had begun to eat at itself; as if darkness had swollen to bolt out the contrasts-Delillo’s talent for a fugitive tenderness, the slapstick shuffle in his funeral marches-by which darkness can be made out. (C.L.C. Vol.76, p.173)

In the Middle Eastern part of America, people have received bomb threats from the terrorist. The real terrorist often confesses their involvement only after committing the crime. They do not reveal their location to anyone until the last possible moment. It has a state of confusion when they try to kill the innocent. In this novel MAOII, DeLillo has expressed his strong belief that ‘The future belongs to crowds’. Mass weddings at the Yankee stadium, crowds, living in Tompkins Square Park, and thousands of mourners at the Ayatollah’s funeral show that overpopulation could be one of the major issues in the future.

“Look what happens if, I go to Beirut and complete this spiritual union you find so interesting? Talk to Rashid. Can I expect him to release the hostage? And what will he want in return? “He will want you to take the other man, place” (MAOII, p.164).

There was a conversation between George and Bill about the release of a Swiss poet. George informs Bill about Abu Rashid who was the leader of the terrorist group. If the hostage has



to be released, somebody has to negotiate with the terrorist group. Delillo also predicts an age of terror. He strongly believes that terrorism is going to endanger the American society.

Conclusion

Along the way, Delillo raises some starting images and questions about individuality and crowds, writers and terrorists, peace and war. Delillo’s prose makes them real again, so real in fact that for a moment they seem the only reality. Through this novel MAOII, Delillo has brought out the degenerative key factors such as an increase in population, mass media and terrorism. The Socio-cultural life of America can be saved only if these harmful ingredients are removed. Brita says “Look I know that everybody who comes to Lebanon wants to get in on the fun but they all end up confused and disgraced and maimed, so I would just like to take a few pictures and leave, thank you very much” (MAOII, p.232).

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