

**POSTMODERN TRANSFORMATIONS OF ART AND
AUTHORSHIP:
FROM ART PRODUCTION TO IMAGE CONSUMPTION**

Keywords: *modernist tradition; Romantic authorship; postmodernism; aura of simulacrum; seriality; image culture; missing writer; commodification*

Abstract: *Postmodernism represents itself a cultural “mutation”, a systemic transformation affecting many aspects of life and art. It is the realm of consumer culture in contrast to what might be called the production culture of modernism. Moreover, it reflects a broad cultural shift, not only from a dominance of production to the dominance of consumption, but also from producing and selling goods to (re)producing and selling images. In this context, and with the major contribution of technology, the reproduction and the image become more powerful than the original and the unique.*

*The present paper focuses precisely on the cultural transition – in the particular fields of art and literature – from modernist authenticity and uniqueness to postmodernist replication and seriality, from the original artwork to its endless, depthless copies within a techno-capitalist environment. This transition is reflected by the duplication-induced decline of artwork’s aura (in Walter Benjamin’s famous definition) and the concomitant rise of a new kind of aura – what American writer Don DeLillo calls “the aura of the simulacrum” which is actually augmented by reproduction and embraced like a new religion by his characters. I use as case studies DeLillo’s novels *White Noise* (1985) and *Mao II* (1991) to show how reproduction has become part of contemporary life, how art and artists are packaged and turned into commodities, to explore the transition from art production to image consumption as reflected by the change in the notion of aura — from the aura of high-culture objects to the aura of the simulacrum.*

*DeLillo’s *Mao II* in particular also points to the shift from the Romantic notion of individual authorship to the postmodern dissolvability of the author/artist/writer into multiple representations in the world of mass-reproduced images; thus reclusive writer Bill Gray is reduced to his image, prey to consumption and simulation. Finally, DeLillo gives Brita Nilsson the last word in the novel, as a more viable form of opposition to an image culture. Photography, Brita’s creative medium (and employed by DeLillo as well), allows a critique not from exile but from within the postmodern culture itself.*