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Tom McCarthy's Novel "Remainder": Estranged from the Present, Trapped in the Past

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## Abstract

Tom McCarthy's novel *Remainder* depicts the physical and mental struggle of the nameless protagonist who is coping with trauma after an accident that estranged him from the world as he no longer feels real. The object of the present BA paper is the protagonist's search for authenticity in a reconstructed reality where with the use of money he can re-enact scenes from his past by constructing buildings and hiring actors. It is suggested that the protagonist having been estranged from the world due to trauma has lost his sense of reality. The paper focuses on the uncanny elements the story carries, such as the familiar becoming unfamiliar and revealing that which ought to have been hidden, and how it relates to the creation of the simulacra of past events. Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theories of the uncanny, and the pleasure principle together with Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulacra create a concise framework for the analysis and leads towards an understanding of the protagonist's inability to distinguish fallacy from truth. The paper aims at supporting two hypotheses: first, the protagonist having lost his memories sees himself as uncanny and as a result engaged in the creation of already experienced situations; second, having lost his grasp on reality he is the one who remains behind in the past, never able to feel authentic. The results of the study propose that the protagonist is doomed to fail in his quest for authenticity because his methods defeat the purpose and he is unable to overcome his trauma, consequently trapping himself in a loop where he is never able to achieve death.

## 1. Introduction

Tom McCarthy (b.1969) is a contemporary novelist whose works, such as *Remainder* (2005), *Men in Space* (2007), *C* (2010) and the most recent book *Satin Island* (2015) are steadily gaining acknowledgment worldwide. Growing up in London he spent his childhood reading literature, namely Shakespeare, and has thus developed an attitude, much like T. S. Eliot had, towards paying tribute to literary tradition. 'I think Britain turned its back on modernism and isn't dealing with its legacy. You can't ignore it', states McCarthy, and argues that readers and critics seem to want fiction either to be blatantly avant-garde and postmodern, or to be realist and 19th century; but most literature is neither one or the other (McCarthy in Evers 2010:49). Therefore, McCarthy's novels are metamodernistic, belonging to a 'mode of constellatory thinking, a movement between contradictory elements that, when brought together in configuration, even temporal configuration, light up with the Benjaminian flash of illumination' (Eve 2012:10).

The literary career of Tom McCarthy began in 2005 with his first published but second written novel *Remainder*, which had proceeded to become a winner of the Believer Book Award in 2008. Long before he started writing fiction McCarthy had already made a name for himself as a facilitator and provocateur within the London art scene – his central artistic vehicle was, and continues to be, the International Necronautical Society (INS), a group of intellectuals who under the guidance of the general secretary, Tom McCarthy himself, argue the beauty and immanence of death (Hart 2013:662). Such a belief is well reflected in his literary works of which all share the theme of death, as well as inauthenticity, repetition and technology.

McCarthy writes in the context of the late 20th century after technological advances started making their way into people's homes and becoming a big part of everyone's lives. For him technological progress symbolises the creation of the 'cult of authenticity' which he demands to abandon. In one of his interviews he explains that authenticity 'is this constant propaganda for the authentic, you know "Be yourself! By buying our shoes. Express yourself! By getting an iPad", etc. Authenticity is a complete construct'<sup>1</sup> and in fact, none of us are completely unique (Writers in Motion 2013). The question of authenticity, as much as death, is well at the

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<sup>1</sup> Interview on Youtube.com: Tom McCarthy - Writers in Motion - Audiowizualna biblioteka pisarzy. Time: 8:42-9:49

center of McCarthy's philosophy. According to him 'we are not individuals, self-consistent subjectivities replete with Being, the heroes of our own epic narratives. We are "dividuals": self-divided, self-opaque—empty at the center, inauthentic to the core. We fall into death, fall back into matter, and not tragically, with dignity and meaning (death mastered, transcendence in a different guise). Rather, we pratfall: comically, mechanically' (Deresiewicz 2015:35).

Many would agree that all of McCarthy's books essentially carry the same message and style, especially the sense of being exiled from the Real (a world of shared social experiences), which is the specter that besets his work (Deresiewicz 2015:44) and is therefore criticised for not creating anything new. His second published book *Men in Space* (2007), according to the American literary critic William Deresiewicz 'is a Prague novel, one of those coming of-age stories of Westerners at loose in the former Soviet bloc that sad young literary men were drafting in the 1990s' (2015:38). It is also about 'doubles and forgeries' and the narrative is 'laced with opaque references to Christian iconography and French surrealism' (Marcus 2015:72). The technique, for the most part, is conventional realism—interior monologue, exterior description—with sections told from different characters' perspectives (Deresiewicz 2015:38). This ties closely with the American poet Michael Autrey's opinion that the several characters, with distinct registers of speech, make the novel seem episodic and occasionally epistolary, to the point where it sometimes becomes diaristic or fragmentary (Autrey 2012:28). McCarthy's fellow necronaut from the INS, English philosopher Simon Critchley states that the characters in *Men in Space* are lonely and alienated as they 'drift through the debris of an inauthentic world' (Critchley 2010:105), however Deresiewicz sees the novel in a positive light, saying that the text is replete with relationships and 'if most of the novel's relationships are fleeting, if most of its characters do their own thing, that's not because its world is desolate or inauthentic; it's just because those characters are young' (Deresiewicz 2015:39).

McCarthy's third book *C* (2010), is a historical novel, that tells the story of Serge Carrefax from his birth around the turn of the 20th century to his early death, which was unlamented even by himself, shortly after World War I (Ibid. p. 41). From that statement alone one can imagine that the main protagonist is 'haunted and emotionally flat' which should come as no surprise, because the problem of 'dislocated figures cut off from all previous sites of spiritual and moral meaning is at the beating heart of all McCarthy's work' (Marcus 2015:73). The novel explores the emergence of technology at the beginning of the 20th century and does most of this exploring in the country, a setting generally ignored in favour of the city as a more obvious centre of metallic modernity (Robson 2010:51) and yet *C* was highly criticised

for being boring (Deresiewicz 2015:41). Its title “C,” stands for carbon, ‘the universal element of life and death, or it can also be the sea, that all-receiving tomb on which we navigate our brief existence’ (Ibid. p. 42), are themes that have already been visited in his previous works. According to Leo Robson, the *New Statesman*’s lead fiction reviewer, it ‘neither confounds nor excites’, going so far as to say that its protracted descriptions and the recurrence of images of mixing organic and mechanical processes ‘drain the reader’s will to live’, and although initially thrilling ‘the novel’s tone and vocabulary begin to pall after 100 pages’ (Robson 2010:51).

And lastly, McCarthy’s most recent book, *Satin Island* (2015), is a vast improvement over *C* in terms of writing style but it still ‘fails to realise conceptual novelty’ (Ibid.). Colonialism is a big part of the narrative, the technological conquest of the earth by the West (Deresiewicz 2015:42). The protagonist’s name is U and following the previous novel’s fashion it stands for the chemical element uranium, a symbol of decay. Yet underneath the novel’s ‘verbal pyrotechnics we mainly find the same old deconstructive tropes, the familiar McCarthyan talking points’ (Ibid.) as it is a ‘work of fiction that capture the ways in which we stubbornly still try to give the world’s absences meaning’ (Marcus 2015:73). David Marcus also notes that in *Satin Island* ‘the emotional plane is beginning to tilt’ because it is hinted by the end of the book that the protagonist U seems to feel sympathetic, making him ‘take on a more human angle’ compared to McCarthy’s old characters (Ibid. p. 75). However the majority agree that ‘*Remainder*, *C*, and *Satin Island* all revolve around the consciousness of disaffected, disconnected young men. Of course the world does not seem real to them; they haven’t encountered it yet—which means they haven’t given themselves over to it yet’ (Deresiewicz 2015:44). And still despite his repetition what makes McCarthy’s novels such a marvel is that his prose is taut and letter-perfect (Ibid. p. 36).

Nevertheless, Tom McCarthy is best known for his novel *Remainder*, which has been praised for being a masterpiece (Deresiewicz 2015:35). The story is about a nameless man who has been in an accident about which he remembers nothing apart from the fact that it involved technology falling from the sky. He is legally bound to silence, to never talk about it and in return receives a settlement of 8,5 million pounds. However, he is left estranged from the world and uses all of his mediated money to reconstruct events from his memory during which he felt most exhilarating and real. Very quickly this compulsion to repeat past time develops into a proper obsession. In an interview McCarthy remarks that the idea for the novel came to him just like it did to the main character, a sense of déjà-vu from staring at a crack on a wall at a friend-of-a-friend’s bathroom, looking over a courtyard’s roofs on which

cats were lounging, hearing piano music looping and so on. ‘And I thought if I had all the money in the world, I could hire architects and designers and actors to recreate and re-enact this memory’ and that is how the plot of the novel came to be (McCarthy in Thwaite 2005).

Critical reception of Tom McCarthy’s *Remainder* is quite diverse in regards to what genre or literary movement one might impose on it, like ‘an assured work of existential horror; postmodern parable on a virtual age’ (Kirkus Reviews 2006), a strong refusal of lyrical realism (Smith 2008:89) or contemporary posthumanism<sup>2</sup> (James 2015:141). The American novelist Robert J. Lennon gave *Remainder* a whole new paradigm to fit, calling it ‘the literature of the ontological wrong turn’ (Lennon 2012:14) and it might best explain the protagonist’s estrangement from the world. Leo Robson states that McCarthy’s debut book, ‘coming after futurism and Freud, Heidegger and high modernism’ is ‘wholly one of content, with form a mere enabler’, explaining that it is fiction laden with theory (Robson 2015:50). Zadie Smith who wrote a 9000 word essay titled *Two Paths for the Novel* declares that having read McCarthy’s manifestos published through his INS she understands that the novel questions the capability of language to narrate what actually happens in the world when we only have ‘partial knowledge’ of things (Smith 2008:94), and such a viewpoint can also be found in the Cambridge Companion to modern British fiction, where it is claimed that ‘McCarthy’s novel, which has become iconic for [the] new wave of British writers seeking to give expression to a contemporary posthumanism, suggests, with an absolutely singular kind of insistence, that the forms we have in which to enact our relations with the world cannot accomodate this matter, cannot account for the “remainder” that is not captured in language’ (James 2015:141). So it seems that the prevailing interpretation of *Remainder* is to view it in the light of posthumanism, but with it being a fairly new literary movement nothing is well-defined and everyone understands it differently, because Wurth and Ven describe it as a case of thanatography, ‘a specific writing of death and even a writing from death’ (Brillenburg Wurth & Ven 2014:51). McCarthy has shared that the novel’s working title before *Remainder* suggested itself was *Desastre*, meaning ‘from the stars’, ‘it is fate, it is gravity, it is time and, of course, death’ (McCarthy in Thwaite 2005), and although its central theme is death it is one which is forever to come. Elena Butușină, sees in *Remainder*’s protagonist the symptoms of autism and that the novel ‘turns life and death into speculums and spectacles by means of a discourse where the autism of the central character stays hidden at the borderline between norm and transgression’ (Butușină 2013:164). All of these comments in regards to what sort

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<sup>2</sup> Posthumanism - The idea that humanity can be transformed, transcended, or eliminated either by technological advances or the evolutionary process; artistic, scientific, or philosophical practice which reflects this belief. (in [Oxforddictionaries.com](http://Oxforddictionaries.com), accessed on February 22, 2016)

of a book *Remainder* is seem to echo Jean Baudrillard and his theory of simulacra to some extent, which is especially evident to Jim Byatt: ‘the narrator is not re-enacting but pre-enacting his own demise, repeating an event which has not yet occurred, perfecting it at every stage until it ultimately coincides with the event itself’ (2012:256). To conclude, *Remainder* is about a lot of things, but mostly it is about living with trauma in a world run by technology and working towards the achievement of feeling authentic, that happens to be in death.

The object of this BA paper is the protagonist’s pursuit of authenticity and how he fails to experience it. The aim of the paper is to investigate the protagonist’s mental and physical struggle to achieve authenticity<sup>3</sup>. The analysis of the protagonist’s search for authenticity draws on the theory of simulacra, as studied by Jean Baudrillard in his observations on Simulations, whereas the origin for the character’s estrangement from the world is discussed applying Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic theories of the uncanny and the pleasure principle.

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<sup>3</sup> Authentic - Of undisputed origin and not a copy; genuine (in [Oxforddictionaries.com](https://www.oxforddictionaries.com), accessed on May 21, 2016)

## 2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical section of this BA paper consists of two parts: it starts by explaining Freud's psychoanalytic theories of the uncanny and the pleasure principle and then the key ideas of Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulacra are presented.

### 2.1 The Uncanny and the Pleasure Principle

The psychologist Ernst Jentsch (1867-1919) was the first to bring awareness to the notion of the *uncanny* (*On the Psychology of the Uncanny* 1906); for him, it mainly meant intellectual uncertainty as to whether a lifeless object is animate which furthermore gives ground to contemplating one's existence. Freud in his own essay *The Uncanny* (1919) states that Jentsch's ideas were not extensive enough and therefore are his starting point for the investigation of his own theory. For Freud, Jentsch had presented excellent examples as to what arouses the feeling of the uncanny: the impressions made on us by waxwork figures, ingeniously constructed dolls and automata, i.e., objects that are 'hiding behind the familiar image of a living person' (Freud 2003:135). However, Freud states that for Jentsch the essential condition for the sense of the uncanny to emerge is intellectual uncertainty and if a person was well oriented in his surroundings then the less likely he would be to find the objects and occurrences in it uncanny (Ibid. p. 125), and for Freud the notion did not seem exhausted. In his own essay on the uncanny Freud studies the many meanings, usages and etymologies of the two German words, *heimliche* ('the homely') and *unheimliche* ('the unhomely, uncanny'). What he finds out is that the uncanny (the unhomely) is something that was long familiar to the psyche and was estranged from it only through being repressed, therefore the negative prefix -un is an indicator of repression (Ibid. p. 148-151). The uncanny also applies to everything that was intended to remain hidden away but has come out into the open (Ibid. p. 132). The theory of the uncanny relates to the phenomena of repetition compulsion that is discussed in Freud's essay *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, because for the uncanny effect to emerge the repressed content has to be revived by some impression (Ibid. p. 155).

The theory of the pleasure principle is, too, crucial to the analysis of this BA paper. Freud's essay titled *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) is best known for its statement that all organisms are born with an instinct that drives towards death. In this essay, on close examination of germ cells' biology, Freud argues that the course taken by mental events is automatically regulated by the pleasure principle, meaning that ultimately with every action we avoid unpleasure or seek to produce pleasure (Freud 1961:1). Consequently humans and

every organism in general struggle between two opposing instincts: death instincts and sexual instincts, the first drives towards death and the latter towards a prolongation of life (Ibid. p. 35). It has been noted by Freud several times in this essay how much of what he is stating are speculations and therefore this might be his least approved theory. Jacques Lacan in regards to *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* said that it is 'unbelievably ambiguous' (Lacan in Miller 1988:37). Peter Gay, a biographer of Freud's wrote that 'it is a difficult text....the reassuring intimacy with clinical experience that marks most of Freud's papers, even at their most theoretical, seems faint here, almost absent' (Gay 1988:398). Nevertheless, it is an essential theory to the analysis of Tom McCarthy's novel *Remainder*.

The key terms of *the pleasure principle* theory are the *compulsion to repeat* and the *death drive*. Freud argues that patients suffering from trauma repress the unpleasant events in their minds but are in return haunted by reminiscences of it. Because 'the patient cannot remember the whole of what is repressed in him' he is therefore 'obliged to repeat the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of remembering it as something belonging to the past' (Freud 1961:12). From examining children's behaviour Freud supposes that in the original experience of something unpleasant the child is a passive agent, overpowered by the experience, but by repeating it, though it is unpleasant, he takes on an active role, one where he is in control of the disagreeable situation and that way revenges himself which in result gives him pleasure (Ibid. p. 10-11). Another suggestion is that through repeating distressing memories one expects it to 'cause less unpleasure today if they emerged as memories or dreams instead of taking the form of fresh experiences' (Ibid. p. 15). Therefore, the compulsion to repeat according to Freud, is an infantile behaviour that works together with the pleasure principle because although it causes pain it also causes satisfaction. As for the death drive, it is closely related to the repetition compulsion because Freud claims that 'seeking to restore an earlier state of things' is a 'universal characteristic of instincts' (Ibid. p. 56). He reasons that if 'everything lives and dies for internal reasons, becomes inorganic once again' then 'the aim of all life is death' because 'inanimate things existed before living ones' (Ibid. p. 32). The function of self-preservation instincts then are to assure that the organism dies of natural and not external causes (Ibid. p. 33). The repetition compulsion and the idea of wanting to turn back time correlate with the theory of simulacra as presented by Jean Baudrillard, another crucial component in the analysis of this BA paper.

## 2.2 Simulacra and Simulation

The theory that ties well with the aforementioned ideas of the uncanny and the pleasure principle is the French philosopher Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulacra and simulation. The theory of simulacra was prevalent in late 20th century, when Baudrillard claimed that we live in an era of simulacra, a world with 'models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal' (Baudrillard 1983:2). A common definition of the simulacrum is 'a copy of a copy whose relation to the model has become so attenuated that it can no longer properly be said to be a copy' (Massumi 1987:91). According to the social theorist Brian Massumi, 'the work of Baudrillard is one long lament' because all of his statements convey the idea that we now live in a meaningless world of signs and signifiers who substitute their models and we have therefore lost our touch with reality. Massumi criticises Baudrillard's framework for being 'the result of a nostalgia for the old reality so intense that it has deformed his vision of everything outside of it' (Massumi 1987:96). While others see the simulacrum as a possibility<sup>4</sup>, an advancement, for Jean Baudrillard the simulacrum is a kind of stagnation because it is 'never exchanging for what is real, but exchanging in itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference', it is purged of death (Baudrillard 1983:11). Simulacra and simulation are interconnected terms, the former implies the result and the latter is its process. Baudrillard explains that 'to simulate is to feign to have what one has not' therefore simulation implies an absence (Ibid. p. 5). This absence is that of meaning - at its core simulacra is devoid of ideas to pass on and in its path it 'obliterates the original's reference and becomes equal to its model', which means that simulacra destroy meaning everywhere it goes (Ibid. p. 97). A good example to explain this is the attempt to duplicate the real through mediums, such as photography, all it does is 'volatilize reality' because a photo is a copy of the real image, something that is meant to just represent reality, but instead it assumes its object's full meaning, rendering both the photo and its true image in the real equal, thus destroying the original's significance (Ibid. p. 141). Jean Baudrillard warns of the dangers that the theory of simulacra poses, because 'transgression and violence' when it comes to law and order 'are less serious than simulation, for they only contest the distribution of the real', whereas simulation 'always suggests, over and above its object, that law and order themselves might really be nothing more than a simulation', and essentially that the reality we think we know is not all that real (Ibid. p. 38). And that is why his theory in particular is essential to the analysis of Tom McCarthy's novel *Remainder*, where the

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<sup>4</sup> Other notable scholars who have spoken about the simulacrum are Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari and they argue that we should embrace the new world of simulation and become realer than real, better versions of ourselves (Massumi 1987:97).

protagonist recreates events of the past and repeats them over and over again expecting to feel authentic when in reality he is creating simulacra, meaningless copies of an irretrievable past.

To conclude the aforesaid, the goal of the present BA paper is to construe the memory loss, repetition and death in Tom McCarthy's novel *Remainder* applying Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theories of the uncanny and the death drive and the philosophy of Simulacra by Jean Baudrillard.

### **3. The Re-enactment of the Past as Present as a Quest for Authenticity in Tom McCarthy's Novel *Remainder***

The analysis consists of three parts that focus on re-enacting the past as present. The first part of the analysis focuses on the protagonist having his mind rerouted which resulted in him feeling uncanny and that being the reason he pursues authenticity. The uncanny elements in the story are examined applying Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory of the uncanny. The second part of the analysis draws on Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulacra and examines the motive and mode of recreating the past, which is the creation of simulacra. Lastly, the third part of the analysis explores the nature of the protagonist's compulsion to repeat past time with the help of Sigmund Freud's theory of the pleasure principle.

#### **3.1 Rerouting of the Mind: from the Familiar to the Unfamiliar**

At the beginning of the story the protagonist explains that he has been in an accident and remembers relatively nothing about it other than the fact that it involved technology falling from the sky. All of his memories from before waking up from coma have been lost, yet they would come back as scattered images, i.e. not causally connected movie scenes. A part of the protagonist's brain that controls the motor functions of the right side of his body had been damaged pretty irreparably therefore he had to undergo a procedure called 'rerouting', during which the nerve signals of the brain are mentally programmed by the host to take a different route to substitute dormant nerve signals and in result to enable him to move the paralysed side of his body:

*The physiotherapist had to route the circuit that transmits commands to limbs and muscles through another patch of brain - an unused, fallow patch, the part that makes you able to play tiddlywinks, listen to chart music, whatever. (...) They just ask you to visualize taking a carrot in your right hand, wrapping your fingers round it and then levering your whole forearm upwards from the elbow until the carrot reaches your mouth. They make you understand how it all works: which tendon does what, how each joint rotates, how angles, upward force and gravity contend with and counterbalance one another. Understanding this, and picturing yourself lifting the carrot to your mouth, again and again and again, cuts circuits through your brain that will eventually allow you to perform the act itself (McCarthy 2015:18-19).*

As can be seen in the above excerpt from the novel the rerouted motor signals now take the place of the signals that might have been responsible for sensitivity or being attentive, which results in the protagonist's inability to relate to music ('the part that makes you able to (...) listen to chart music' (Ibid. p. 18)) or people for that matter. After the protagonist gets a voicemail from his best friend Greg in which he imitates a woman's moans implying that the

protagonist is having intercourse with a female friend he asserts that ‘before the accident I would have found this really funny. Now I didn’t. It’s not that I found it offensive or crass; I didn’t find it anything at all’ (McCarthy 2015:76). Even after it was suggested to the protagonist that he should put money towards a resource fund for building homes in poor countries he dreads that he simply could not care about others: ‘I wanted to feel genuinely warm towards these Africans, but I couldn’t. Not that I felt cold or hostile. I just felt neutral’ (Ibid. p. 35). Therefore, the rerouting of the protagonist’s nerve signals has desensitized him and made him unable to connect with people.

With his mind rerouted, which makes him fail as he wants to connect with the people he used to know, the protagonist also has to re-learn how to walk and move in general, as a baby would. Since he had lost his memories (hobbies, habits, preferences, he lost all that made him *him*) his mind has become a sort of blank canvas which would be painted by the events following the lightening of his coma. Thus the protagonist’s beliefs were formed by his physiotherapist, who during rehab would repeat day after day that the protagonist’s movements are ‘plastic. Rigid. The opposite of flaccid. With time they’ll go flaccid: malleable, relaxed. Flaccid, good; plastic, bad’ (Ibid. p. 21). Therefore, his mind was programmed to a state in which he thinks his muscles are plastic and consequently sees all of himself as unnatural: ‘...ever since learning to move again I’d felt that all my acts were duplicates, unnatural, acquired’ (Ibid. p. 71). Together with his beliefs the protagonist’s preferences were also rerouted by the routine of the hospital, hence the protagonist got accustomed to a life run on repetition and loops.

*I’d looked forward to that in hospital: the moment when the trolley comes. The conversation the person pushing it makes with you is banal and instantly forgettable, just like the food, but this is good because it means you can have the same conversation again a few hours later, and again the next day, and the next, and still look forward to it. Everything in hospital runs on a loop (McCarthy 2015:47).*

As illustrated in the quote, the protagonist spent several months in hospital stuck doing the same things over and over again, making him used to it. Since the protagonist’s mind was rerouted to a mind state where full comprehension of one’s movements and repetition was the norm, he was in a way programmed to think that that is what life is like. Therefore, once getting back into the real world the protagonist does not seem like a normal person, but appears to be uncanny: ‘I didn’t know who the *you* was she was putting through – Daubenay or me. A trivial distinction, you might say, but the uncertainty still made me dizzy’ (Ibid. p. 7).

It is not only the protagonist who himself feels unreal, but also the reader who might question whether the main character is human at all. The protagonist's actions are often described as automated, robotic and computer like: 'I realized that I was jerking back and forth like paused video images do on low-quality machines' (Ibid. p. 14). It is not just the protagonist who might resemble a robot but also another character, Nazrul Ram Vyas, who becomes the protagonist's facilitator. Naz is the person who executes the protagonist's commands just like a computer would, always processing information while the protagonist listens to the 'thing behind his eyes whirr' (McCarthy 2015:80). The images of automata and machinery are introduced at the very beginning of the story, as he recalls events right after the accident:

*As I lay abject, supine, tractioned and trussed up, all sorts of tubes and wires pumping one thing into my body and sucking another out, electronic metronomes and bellows making this speed up and that slow down, their beeping and rasping playing me, running through my useless flesh and organs like sea water through a sponge* (McCarthy 2015:5-6).

Reading the quote above it is not definite that the protagonist is an automaton but the imagery of tubes and wires running through his body does linger in the back of one's mind throughout the whole story because the main character does not feel real himself and it was already mentioned that the protagonist's physiotherapist would tell him his muscles are plastic and rigid, therefore descriptions such as given in the excerpt above only intensify this idea. The uncanny effect, to follow Jentsch, is often used in this way as an artistic device to confuse the reader, so that this uncertainty would not appear directly at the focal point of [the reader's] attention, so that he is not given the occasion to investigate and clarify the matter straight away' (1906:10).

Much of the story holds elements of the uncanny, such as the familiar becoming unfamiliar and revealing that which ought to have been hidden, but most importantly, looking back at all that was discussed by this point, the protagonist of *Remainder* has been made uncanny through the process of rerouting of the mind. Although the protagonist lost his memory it would come back to him eventually, however he would not see them as genuine memories but as figments of his imagination: 'Who's to say my traumatized mind didn't just make them up, or pull them out from somewhere else, some other slot, and stick them there to plug the gap – the crater – that the accident had blown?' (McCarthy 2015:5). Therefore, something that was long familiar to him, his memories, his life before the accident, have now become unfamiliar, making him feel uncanny, to follow Freud (2003:148), as though he was not real.

As the protagonist became uncanny through the rerouting of the mind, because he was estranged from the world due to the mere fact that he could no longer do something so basic

and fundamental to human life as control his own body with ease, he had to be conscious in every move, keeping track of every muscle movement in his mind or else he might trip: ‘Everything, each movement: I had to learn them all. I had to understand how they work first, break them down into each constituent part, then execute them’ (McCarthy 2015:20). This loss of movement has furthermore ensued doubts for the protagonist of his realness (authenticity) on an existential level for he thinks he is plastic and artificial, because his physiotherapist made him believe that his movements are ‘forced, awkward, acquired, second-hand, [un]natural’ (Ibid. p. 60). After watching a movie, the protagonist discusses with his friend Greg how authentic the actors look in their work:

*“He’s natural when he does things. Not artificial, like me. He’s flaccid. I’m plastic. He flows into his movements, even the most basic ones. Opening fridge doors, lighting cigarettes. He doesn’t have to think about them, or understand them first. He doesn’t have to think about them because he and they are one. Perfect. Real. My movements are all fake. Second-hand.” (...)* *“It’s about just being, De Niro was just being: I can never do that now”* (McCarthy 2015:22).

As illustrated in the quote above, thoughts about the protagonist’s own realness run through his mind for the most part of the beginning of the book and they set the object of the story which is the search for authenticity. It is not only the character of the protagonist that has become uncanny, but also the events that take place later, the plot that he creates for himself is uncanny in the paradoxical scenario that the protagonist is supposed to forget the accident has ever happened but what he does instead is his effort to remember the feeling he had right before it had happened, essentially going against the terms of the Settlement. To follow Freud, that which ought to have been hidden – the details of the accident – has come into the open (2003:132).

*“You can’t discuss the accident in any public area or in any recordable format. To all intents and purposes, you must forget it ever happened.”* *“I’ve already forgotten,” I said. “I never had any memory of it in the first place.”* *This was true, as I mentioned earlier. The last clear memory I have is of being buffeted by wind twenty or so minutes before I was hit* (McCarthy 2015:8).

As the quote explains, the protagonist, by receiving eight and a half million pounds, is legally bound to silence, to never talk about the details of the accident, essentially to forget all about it. However, despite claiming that he has no memories of it to begin with he does in fact remember a specific feeling that he had experienced right before the accident that had made him feel human instead of what he felt like now – not real and neutral. Although it is not explicitly stated that the protagonist, throughout the novel, is trying to remember the accident that is basically what happens. By trying to achieve the same feeling of serenity he had felt before the accident he eventually gets to reconstruct the accident with the money he accrues

from pledging to forget it, without even realizing it. Thus the very plot that the protagonist creates for himself is uncanny, because that which was to remain secret – the details of the accident – have come out into the open, into the reader’s hands.

The most uncanny aspect of the protagonist’s image to the reader is that ‘we can also call a living person uncanny, when we credit him with evil intent’ (Freud 2003:149). As sentient beings we do not expect violence from each other but amity. The protagonist seems to be emotionally detached from his surroundings from the beginning of the story and ever since his indifference to cats falling off the roofs the reader gets this sense of foreboding all the way to the end of the story. Ultimately the protagonist sees nothing wrong in ‘eliminating’ people when Naz, the protagonist’s facilitator, ‘executioner’, suggests they blow up a plane full of their staff and furthermore the protagonist, now turned anti-hero, finds blood and death beautiful as he is, by this point, incapable of discerning what is right or wrong.

Lastly, since the protagonist feels uncanny, thinks that he himself is not real, he also cannot discern what is real. For example, he views actors, people who take on the identity of someone fictional and portray their lives, as more real than him or anyone else is. The uncanny effect here arises ‘when the boundary between fantasy and reality is blurred’ (Freud 1919:150). The protagonist can no longer tell apart what is authentic and what is staged, blurring the line between the real and the imaginary. This connects well with the theory and the analysis that will be discussed next, which is the theory of simulacra and how the protagonist cannot discern reality anymore in more detail.

To conclude, the protagonist might not have felt unnatural if he had not had his nerve signals rerouted. The impediment of memories and movement have intensified this feeling of uncanny felt by the protagonist, therefore he has become uncanny through the rerouting of the mind. Because the protagonist doubts his own reality that leads to him being unable to tell what is real and what is inauthentic, consequently engaging in the creation of simulacra, which will be analyzed next.

### 3.2 Reconstructing the Real

In the second part of the analysis I will analyse the method of pursuing authenticity that the protagonist chooses. The motive and mode of recreating the past is the creation of simulacra that will be studied applying Jean Baudrillard's ideas on the simulacrum.

With the protagonist having lost his memory and having his mind rerouted he has become, to follow Baudrillard, a model with no original, he has become a simulacrum (Baudrillard 1983:2). Although the protagonist's forgotten memories return to him as scattered images he does not think they are real, but see them as the result of his imagination. Therefore, by mistrusting his own memories and having to learn how to move again the protagonist appears to only externally resemble a human being. The simulacrum as a model with no original reflects the nameless protagonist, who upon losing his memories has essentially lost his original identity. The protagonist does not fit in with the world of shared social experiences because he cannot discern reality from fallacy, thus finding himself unnatural. This is due to him being desensitized by having his mind rerouted and because living in a hospital he became accustomed to a life running on repetition and loops (walking in patterns that had the symbol of an eight, following routine, having the same banal forgettable conversations with hospital staff).

Therefore, the method he chooses for pursuing authenticity is that of recreating past events, during which, in his mind, he feels most exhilarating and real. The cause of his search for authenticity takes the form of a vision, a sense of *déjà vu*, he has from staring at a crack on a wall at a friend of a friend's party. In this vision he carries out mundane actions in a large parisian style building, with piano music playing in the distance and the smell of cooked liver wafting in the air. The protagonist decides that in this vision he had felt as though his movements were authentic, not second-hand like he feels now, after the accident. He views the vision as a 'world' that he wants to recreate and inhabit, but he cannot place that world in his memories: 'I searched back further in my past, right back to when I'd been a child. No use. I couldn't place this memory at all' (McCarthy 2015:59). The vision, then, is also a model with no original, a simulacrum, an imaginary space that he recreates and places in the real world.

Being immersed in recreating past events and reliving those experiences as though they were contemporary asserts the protagonist's becoming a simulacrum: 'My project was a programme, not a hobby or a sideline: a programme to which I'd given myself over body and soul' (McCarthy 2015:112). By giving himself over body and soul the protagonist thus

becomes part of his project, the project that is a simulacrum, consequently rendering him into a simulacrum. Jean Baudrillard explains that the simulacrum is ‘never exchanging for what is real, but exchanging in itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference’ (1983:11), therefore the protagonist as a simulacrum is unproductive in the sense that he does not pass on any ideas, any meaning that one might find in the real world.

Moreover, the protagonist is destructive, in the sense that he obliterates meaning in his path by repeating past events and by literally becoming destructive when he commits murder and blows up a plane boarded by his staff. By duplicating singular experiences he volatilizes their original significance that way reducing them to meaningless copies and by hiring people to constantly re-enact certain actions he strips others of their authenticity:

*The driver (...) wore a white ice-hockey goaltender’s mask, so as not to overrun my personality with his – or, more precisely, so as not to impose any personality at all. I just wanted the motions and the words, all deadpan, neutral - wanted the re-enactors to act out the motions without acting and to speak the words without feeling, in disinterested voices, as monotonous as my pianist. (...) In the small hours of the morning I decided to leave.*

*“Shall I tell them to stop?” Naz asked me as I put my jacket on.*

*“No,” I said. “Absolutely not. They should continue. When they’ve done three hours replace them with the third team. Keep rotating them.”*

*“For how long?” he asked.*

*“Indefinitely,” I said (McCarthy 2015:158-160).*

As a simulacrum the protagonist creates more simulacra by destroying meaning in his path, as can be seen in the quote entered above, he wants everything to be neutral and monotonous, he masks every trace of personality, identity – essentially, masks all meaning or authenticity. The actors are not even told the reason why it is they are performing in the first place: ‘what was lacking, if anything, was comprehension: making them understand exactly what it was that was required of them. And making them understand at the same time how little they needed to understand’ (McCarthy 2015:101). This shows that all events that take place in those re-enactments are pointless, simulacra. As simulacra is always exchanging in itself in an uninterrupted circuit, so are his re-enactments carried out ‘indefinitely’, the protagonist makes sure that all actors are performing round the clock. However, if it so happened that somebody were to cheat their way out of their duty to repetition, the protagonist becomes violent. For example, when he caught his pianist outside the building attending some musical audition while he was presumably playing the piano, but which turned out to be a recording of him playing it, the protagonist turns white with rage and informs his facilitator Naz to punish him for it: ‘But give him hell! Really bad! Hurt him! Metaphorically, I mean, I suppose’ (McCarthy 2015:142). This surge of anger foreshadows the protagonist’s indifference to the

well-being of others and consequently the loss of sense of law and order. He gets so immersed in his reconstructed reality, simulacra, that whatever minute sense of order and law of the real he had in the beginning of the story he loses midway of his addiction. For example, he gets shocked when he finds out that after making all of his actors perform their actions slower, so slow they barely move at all, the halls fill up with sunlight faster than they did a couple of weeks ago:

*When I'd timed this before it had taken three hours and fourteen minutes. This time it all took place within three hours. Within two hours, forty-three minutes and twenty-seven point four-five seconds, to be precise. I didn't like this. Something had gone wrong. I called in Frank and Annie. "The sunlight's not doing it right." I said (McCarthy 2015:203).*

It is then explained to him that it is later in the year so the sun is in a different angle than it was at the beginning of the re-enactments. From living in a reconstructed reality, a simulacrum, over which he has full control the protagonist forgets simple laws of physics; that he cannot affect things like the sun's or earth's movements to change the time it takes for a room to fully light up. He gets so involved in his re-enactments that he ends up committing an actual crime of which he does not seem conscious, because it is explained to him that a bank's 'staff are programmed to behave a certain way, the robbers know they know they know. So a robbery, ideally, follows a strict action-reaction pattern' (McCarthy 2015:222). Therefore, he ends up lifting the re-enactment into the actual bank instead of its replica, because in his eyes it would still be a re-enactment rather than an actual offence, for the bank staff are trained to perform in a certain way just like his actors were. Baudrillard claims that simulation 'always suggests, over and above its object, that law and order themselves might really be nothing more than a simulation' (1983:38), which asserts the danger the protagonist put himself in by engaging in the continuous creation of simulacra, for he ended up being unable to discern reality from fallacy, as he now lives in a different reality, a reality which he controls and where he does not need to abide the law or order of all things. And yet Baudrillard adds that perfect simulation is not possible, because both the real and the imaginary share the same gestures, the same signs (Ibid. p. 39), so when one of the actors tripped and instigated an unpredicted chain of events that lead to one of the actors getting shot. That is when the protagonist finds himself in the real and not the simulacrum: 'But it was a re-enactment. That's the beauty of it. It became real while it was going on' (McCarthy 2015:264). This turn of events has overjoyed him, made him feel authentic for that moment but because he still belongs to a different reality he proceeds to run away from the normal order of things, does not get prosecuted but takes to the skies with a private jet where he

continues to be aggressive in stripping away the authenticity of others by ordering the pilot to keep flying in the symbol of an eight or infinity.

This leads to the final claim – that ‘the real is a system of death’, everything dies eventually, but ‘the simulacrum is purged of death’ (Baudrillard 1983:4), therefore the protagonist is unable to die, for he is stuck in a loop. In the very first page of the story the protagonist is told to never let the details of the accident he has been in to come out into the public or he will lose all that he has accrued thanks to the Settlement, which would ‘clos[e] the loop, so to speak’ (McCarthy 2015:5). But instead of forgetting it he tried to achieve the serene feeling he had right before the accident, consequently not closing the loop but trapping himself in it. Since the only thing the protagonist remembers from his accident is being buffeted by wind and feeling serene and intense minutes before getting hit, that is what he originally associates with feeling authentic, natural and real. All the re-enactments that he organizes and repeats allow him to feel fluent only for a short while and does not quench his thirst for authenticity. Yet by making his re-enactments more violent he gains more and more pleasure out of them until they coincide with the actual event, the event that is him unconsciously re-enacting his own accident by hijacking a plane and telling it to keep flying in the symbol of an 8 or infinity until they run out of fuel, from where on the reader can come to the conclusion that he survives the crash, but loses all memory of it, except for the intense and serene feeling of being buffeted by wind, which he wishes to re-experience, and that is how the whole story begins again.

To conclude, the protagonist re-enacts imaginary and past events over and over again stripping away the authenticity of others. Those meaningless copies of an irretrievable past mark the protagonist’s becoming a simulacrum and thus he gets stuck in a loop where he becomes purged of death, never able to achieve authenticity.

### 3.3 Mastering the Unpleasurable

The third part of the analysis examines the nature of the protagonist's compulsion to repeat past time and concludes why the protagonist's quest for authenticity is deemed to fail. The compulsion to repeat is analysed applying Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theories of the pleasure principle.

The protagonist's compulsion to repeat the past is twofold: to follow Freud, it shows his inability to overcome his trauma and his attempt to master the unpleasurable (1961:10-12). By not remembering the accident or the trauma it has caused him, he is compelled to repeat events that have a similar feeling to that which he had felt right before the accident, for he has no idea what it is but it gives him pleasure.

*I stopped right in the middle of the road. There was no traffic. Before heading back towards my flat to get the number I paused for a while, I don't know how long, and stood in what had been the marksmen's sightlines. I turned the palms of my hands outwards, closed my eyes and thought about that memory of just before the accident, being buffeted by wind. Remembering it sent a tingling from the top of my legs to my shoulders and right up into my neck. It lasted for just a moment - but while it did I felt not-neutral. I felt different, intense: both intense and serene at the same time. I remember feeling this way very well: standing there, passive, with my palms turned outwards, feeling intense and serene (McCarthy 2015:11).*

The reason he feels a tingling sensation in the excerpt above is because he realizes he is standing in the marksmen's sightlines, which means that he is in a position where someone has died or might die. This leads to the assumption that the protagonist is fixated to the moment of his trauma that was a near death experience. Freud argues that people become fixated to their traumatic experience due to them automatically repressing the unpleasurable material, but because 'the patient cannot remember the whole of what is repressed in him' he is 'obliged to repeat the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of remembering it as something belonging to the past' (1961:12). To follow Freud, the protagonist is compelled to repeat situations that make him feel intense and serene because it gives him pleasure and it is what he seeks, but the protagonist is unaware that those moments are reminiscent of his trauma, which consequently marks his inability to overcome his trauma. The protagonist's fixation to the traumatic moment also emerges in his dreams, something that Freud would call 'punishment dreams' (Ibid. p. 26), whose role it is to remind the protagonist that 'what appears to be reality is in fact only a reflection of a forgotten past' (Ibid. p. 13).

*That night I dreamt that I and all my staff (...) all of us had linked ourselves together (...) in this way in the formation of an aeroplane. (...) We could see ourselves, our re-enacted doubles, in the courtyard too. (...) And then our plane – the plane that we'd formed from the interlinking of our bodies: it was stalling, nose-diving towards the ground, whose surface area was crumpling like old tin...* (McCarthy 2015:137-138).

The quote illustrates that this dream is a foreshadowing of what is to come; it also affirms that the protagonist is in fact stuck in a loop by infinitely re-enacting his own accident for the simple reason of not recognizing it as the trauma he has experienced. As for why would it matter for him to remember the accident in the first place – the protagonist could recognize the events as belonging to the past and come to terms with his trauma which would result in the lowering of tensions taken by mental events (Freud 1961:1-3), because the ‘compulsion to repeat is supported by the wish to conjure up what has been forgotten and repressed’ (Ibid. p. 26). Had the protagonist remembered the accident he then might have accepted who he has become and stopped his search for authenticity by recreating and re-experiencing past events that way freeing himself from the loop.

Then the second aspect of his compulsion to repeat is his unconscious attempt to take revenge by taking control over certain situations and re-experiencing the past as he wishes, which consequently gives him pleasure. Freud supposes that in the original instance of something disagreeable the patient (who is suffering from repetition compulsion) is overpowered by the experience assuming a passive role, but by repeating it he takes on an active role, one in which he is in control of the unpleasant situation and that way can take revenge for himself and gain pleasure (1961:10). Therefore, through the repetition of already experienced situations the protagonist is attempting to master the unpleasurable. ‘I’d walked over this stretch a hundred times before, of course – but it had been different then, just a floor: now it was fired up, silently zinging with significance’ (McCarthy 2015:127). Only once the protagonist gets things perfectly after practicing the actions for a hundred times does he feel satisfied, because that is when he feels as though his movements are fluent and not artificial which is ironic considering they are staged and perfected making them anything but natural. Yet that is the protagonist’s way of taking revenge for the times he could not move his body as he wished during rehab. The protagonist now gains pleasure in mastering every experience by being completely in command of things that were to happen.

To follow Freud’s idea of the death drive, the idea that ‘everything lives and dies for internal reasons – becomes inorganic once again’ – then makes death ‘the aim of all life’ because looking backwards, ‘inanimate things existed before living ones’ (Freud 1961:32). Thus the

protagonist wishes to master the unpleasurable, to control past experiences so far back to the point of death, because it is a universal instinct shared by all.

*The truth is that, for me, this man had become a symbol of perfection. (...) In dying beside the bollards on the tarmac he'd done what I wanted to do: merged with the space around him, sunk and flowed into it until there was no distance between it and him – and merged, too, with his actions, merged to the extent of having no more consciousness of them. He'd stopped being separate, removed, imperfect. Cut out the detour. Then both mind and action had resolved themselves into pure stasis. The spot that this had happened on was the ground zero of perfection – all perfection: the one he'd achieved, the one I wanted, the one everyone else wanted but just didn't know they wanted and in any case didn't have eight and a half million pounds to help them pursue even if they had known. (...) And so I had to re-enact his death: for myself, certainly, but for the world in general as well. No one who understands this could accuse me of not being generous (McCarthy 2015:177-178).*

A black man that has died in a shooting in his neighbourhood has become a symbol of perfection for the protagonist because he had done what the protagonist and assumingly all of mankind wanted – became inorganic and merged with the space around him. From this point on it becomes clear that the authenticity the protagonist seeks is death, because the intense and serene feeling he remembers from right before the accident is actually a near death experience from when the plane he hijacked was nose-diving towards the ground. Although he does not comment whether he is fully aware that what he wants to experience is actually death, the protagonist does explain that he wants to be on the other side of things: ‘ “Demanding money of which he most certainly had no need,” he said. “That’s what made him feel most real.” “Demanding money, yes,” I told him, “but also the sense of... of being on the other side of something. A veil, a screen, the law – I don’t know...” ’ (McCarthy 2015:216). Putting the pieces together it can be said that his wish to be on the other side of something might after all be death, because an immediate association one might make of ‘the other side’ is what comes after life – which is death. If question were to arise why the protagonist would not just commit suicide that can be explained by the ‘instincts of self-preservation’ that are inherent in all of us, whose ‘function it is to assure that the organism shall follow its own path to death’ for it ‘wishes to die only in its own fashion’ (Freud 1961:33). The narrator wishes to die in his own fashion that is to say of natural causes, yet death is natural whereas the protagonist feels and, having applied the theories of the uncanny and simulacra, is artificial. Therefore, he cannot die in his own fashion or die at all.

Since the aim of all of the protagonist’s re-enactments was to achieve authenticity (‘I’d gone to these extraordinary lengths in order to be real’ (McCarthy 2015:214)) and in the end it turns out that he cannot achieve it – the novel is suggestive of authenticity being a myth for

we are all copies, modeled through mimesis<sup>5</sup> and each of us share the same goal in death – to merge with our surroundings. Authenticity as originality cannot exist because we are shaped by others and our surroundings. If authenticity were possible then the protagonist failed in his quest the moment he identified it with the past.

To conclude, the protagonist is compelled to repeat past events because he cannot remember his trauma and because it gives him pleasure. His repetition compulsion is also an attempt to master the unpleasurable – so far back to the point of death. Therefore, the authenticity the protagonist seeks is death, but because he is uncanny and a simulacrum he cannot die in his own fashion for he had lost his own fashion by having his mind rerouted and essentially losing his original (authentic) identity.

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<sup>5</sup> Mimesis - imitation, mimicry (in [Oxforddictionaries.com](http://Oxforddictionaries.com), accessed on May 21, 2016)

#### 4. Conclusions

I have analysed the protagonist's re-enactments of the past as present as an attempt to achieve authenticity in Tom McCarthy's novel *Remainder*. The analysis draws heavily on the interconnected theories of Sigmund Freud's the uncanny and the pleasure principle together with Jean Baudrillard's ideas of the simulacrum in his work *Simulations*.

The protagonist feels estranged from the present due to the rerouting of his mind that has desensitized him, making him unable to connect with people. The rerouting of the mind has also made him believe that his own body is plastic which led to the protagonist's inability to discern reality from fallacy. Consequently the protagonist sees himself as uncanny, as if he were not real himself and in order to achieve authenticity the nameless protagonist engages in the creation of already experienced situations because they would allow for his movements to be fluent and real as compared to how he sees them – forced and unnatural.

Because the protagonist is uncanny he cannot understand what makes him feel authentic, natural, and therefore the method he applies to his search for authenticity defeats the purpose because he creates meaningless copies of an irretrievable past, something that has lost its authenticity and destroys every trace of it. Eventually the protagonist becomes so immersed in his reconstructed reality he loses all sense of law and order of the real. By losing himself in the continuous repetition of past events the protagonist becomes a simulacrum, volatilizing meaning in his path and purging himself of death, because he is stuck in a loop, infinitely re-enacting his trauma because he cannot remember it but indefinitely strives towards it.

The protagonist's compulsion to repeat is his attempt to master the unpleasurable so far back to the point of death. Thus, the authenticity the protagonist seeks is death but having lost his grasp on reality he becomes estranged from the present and is the one who remains behind in the past, never able to feel authentic, because he is stuck in a loop where he can never achieve death. The protagonist is the remainder of the past, because he has lost his memories, his identity. The protagonist has essentially already died in a way yet he always survives the accident forgetting who he is and continues on living while trying to remember the past by making it present.

## Summary in Lithuanian

Tomo McCarthy romane „Remainder“ vaizduojami bevardžio pagrindinio veikėjo fiziniai ir psichiniai sunkumai patyrus traumą nelaimingo atsitikimo metu, po kurio veikėjas negeba prisitaikyti prie pasaulio ir ima abejoti savo autentiškumu. Šio bakalaurinio darbo tyrimo objektas yra pagrindinio veikėjo autentiškumo paieška rekonstruotoje realybėje, kurioje veikėjas, statydamas pastatus ir samdydamas aktorius, stengiasi kuo tiksliau atkartoti scenas iš praeities. Darbe teigiama, jog bevardis veikėjas, dėl traumuojančių įvykių ir permaršrutizuotos (angl. ‘rerouted’) sąmonės, jaučiasi nebeprisitaikęs pasauliui ir nebegalės atskirti realybės nuo vaizduotės. Šiame bakalauriniame darbe yra akcentuojami romane pasireiškiantys „nepažįstamumo“ (angl. ‘uncanny’) elementai, tokie kaip pažįstamo virsmas į nebeatpažįstamą ir atskleidimas to, kas turėjo būti paslėpta. Taip pat, pabrėžiamos šių elementų sąsajos su simuliakrų, praeities įvykių atkūrimu. Sigmundo Freudo psichoanalitinės nepažįstamumo ir malonumo principo teorijos ir Jeano Baudrillardo simuliakrų teorija padeda kurti glaustus koncepcinius pagrindus analizei bei suprasti veikėjo patiriamą vidinį konfliktą dėl tikrovės ir hipertikrovės skirtumų neįjautimo. Bakalauriniame darbe siekiama paremti dvi hipotezes: pirma - veikėjas, praradęs savo prisiminimus, neatpažįsta savęs ir nusprendžia atkurti jau išgyventas situacijas; antra - netekęs realybės suvokimo, jis praranda savo autentiškumą kaip praeities likutis. Šio darbo kūrinio analizė atskleidžia, kad veikėjo autentiškumo paieška yra pasmerkta žlugti dėl jai įvykdyti pasirinktų metodų, kurie naikina patį paieškos tikslą, bei negalėjimo įveikti savo traumą. Dėl šių priežasčių veikėjas įstringa užburtame rate, kuriame mirtis yra neįgyvendinama siekiamybė.

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