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SIMULATION IN DAVE EGGERS'S MEMOIR

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for the Department of English  
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## SIMULATION IN DAVE EGGERS'S MEMOIR

JUDIT SLAGER

### ABSTRACT

The genre of the American memoir has been altered through the centuries since Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*. By the twentieth century one of the strongest influential elements has become the simulation of reality. In a memoir as much as an autobiographer reveals about society, also social demands or cultural transactions influence the author as he writes. Modern society has replaced reality and meaning with symbols and signs. With other words simulation seems to be a part of social demand.

As Jean Baudrillard explains it our perception is entangled in prepackaged media perspectives. When Dave Eggers writes his autobiography he attempts to satisfy the demand of the age. He creates written signs of resemblance between himself and society. In *A Heartbreaking Work of a Staggering Genius* Eggers, a verbal artist wants to broadcast a version of reality by mixing true and false, real and fantasy. He produces a simulation of a representative of his generation in order to exchange his traumatic experience for sympathy, psychological healing and popularity. With his verbal simulations of being a representative; his pretending interest in other people's life, and even reproducing of his real life events, he reflects Baudrillard's theories of simulation in a written work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	iii
CHAPTER	
I.    INTRODUCTION.....	1
II.   A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE GENERAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE MEMOIR’S RHETORIC.....	10
III.  FRANKLIN, THE EXEMPLAR -EGGERS, THE EXAMPLE.....	13
IV.  SIMULATION OF REPRESENTATIVENESS AS A MEANS OF BEING HEARD AND HEALED.....	18
V.   PURSUIT OF SENSATION FOR POPULARITY.....	32
VI.  THE REAL WORLD-SIMULATION FOR PROFIT.....	37
VII. POST SCRIPT.....	42
WORKS CITED.....	43

“I am the entire human race compacted together. I have found that there is no ingredient of the race which I do not possess in either a small way or a large way.” (Mark Twain)

“I am the common multiplier for 47 million! I am the perfect amalgam! I was born of both stability and chaos. I have seen nothing and everything” (Dave Eggers)

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

As William Georgiades calls Dave Eggers “the wonder boy of American letters” has risen to be a well-known author, and publisher, achieving intellectual status in American culture before his thirtieth birthday. Eggers began writing as an editor, and founded a satirical magazine entitled *Might*, then worked briefly as an editor at *Esquire*. Also he is an editor of a literary journal, *McSweeney’s* first published in 1998. Two years after founding *McSweeney’s*, he published his memoir titled *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*(2000), which became a bestseller and brought him a Pulitzer Prize. *A.H.W.O.S.G.* topped out at number four on the Times bestseller non-fiction list, and reached number one on a national independent bookseller’s list. To view this book, however, as traditional memoir would be incorrect, writes Marc Rothenberg. It is more of an anti-memoir as David L. Ulin describes it, or a post-modern autobiography as some critics have suggested. Although Egger’s memoir was published a year after the death of Michael Sprinker(1950-1999), an American literary critic, Sprinker’s earlier notes

maybe added to the discussion about Eggers's autobiography. Sprinker stated:

“the gradual metamorphosis of an individual with distinct, personal identity into a sign, a cipher, an image no longer clearly and positively identifiable as ‘this one person’ is a pervasive and unsettling feature in modern culture” (Eakin 183). The deconstruction of the self as a unique personality, and becoming a sign, however, can be due to the rise of simulation, as a new feature in culture in the twentieth century. By representing oneself as an image for many or the general audience, the author may reflect the influence of the relation between the self and the culture. In a memoir the narrative claims to be a version of the author's own life; however, his participation in life and time can be affected by the surrounding cultural practices. Consequently, the author adjusts the rhetoric of the autobiography based upon the cultural atmosphere and expectation of his age. By claiming to be a sign-as an equivalent of the real- for millions, to be one of many, Eggers remixes autobiographical conventions with one of the most popular cultural dimension of the twentieth century America: simulations of reality.

Simulations of reality is a topic that the French literary critic, Jean Baudrillard addresses in his essay on *Simulacra and Simulations*. Nigel Wood writes in his introduction to Baudrillard that “we react more to a network of signs( associations created by advertising, for example) than to the function of any objects”, and he also adds “the symbolic status of the object far outweighs any possible direct use” (Modern Criticism and Theory 403). In other words modern society has replaced reality and meaning with symbols and signs, and the human experience is a simulation of reality rather than reality itself. Simulacra, as Baudrillard calls them, are signs of culture and

media that create the perceived reality. As a result of it our perception is entangled in pre-packaged media perspectives. Baudrillard also writes: “there is a panic-stricken production of the real, and a parallel to the panic of material production. This is how simulation appears in the phase that concerns us: a strategy of the real, neo-real and hyperreal” (Modern Criticism and Theory 405). Eggers is a verbal artist who wants to broadcast a version of reality influenced by the urge of “panic-stricken production” of the real. Even though his protagonist is in a book setting, the story we are reading rather gives the impression of a movie. Eggers’s work crosses from the visual field to the written field, however, Baudrillard’s theory of simulations is still projected in Eggers’s written work.

Baudrillard believed that society has become reliant on simulacra as he states: “Simulation is dependent, like any other commodity, on production and mass consumption” (Modern Criticism and Theory 410). Baudrillard’s statement which says: “A simulation which can go on indefinitely is nothing but the object of social demand, and hence subject to the law of supply and demand” (Modern Criticism and Theory 410) seems to align with Elizabeth Bruss’s speculation that “autobiography could simply come obsolete if its defining features, such as individual identity, cease to be important for a particular culture” (Eakin 182). To stress the importance of the individual identity in a memoir ceased to be a demand for the authors, but to simulate reality has become part of the new expectations from the twentieth century American audience. When Eggers, the individual, writes his autobiography for an age that no longer appreciates the individual, he still attempts to satisfy the demand of the age. Sidonie Smith’s

observation, therefore, sounds true as she writes: “Eggers is rumpling and remaking the autobiographical conventions” (Smith 5), meanwhile creating an autobiography shaped by the twentieth century American cultural demand of simulation. In his memoir Eggers seems to reproduce reality according to the first and second order of Baudrillard’s simulation. Baudrillard distinguishes three orders of simulacra associated with three historical periods: first order simulacra belong to the pre-modern era in which images were clearly copies or representations of some original. Second order simulacra arise with the industrial revolution, photography and mass reproduction technologies in the nineteenth century - the image dissimulates to displace the real. Third order simulacra are part of our postmodern era. The image is said to completely precede and determine the real, such that it is no longer possible to peel away layers of representation to arrive at some original. Living in the postmodern era Eggers cannot avoid the influence of all three orders of simulacra. In his verbal description Eggers try to represent of some original of the real as he chooses to discuss for example the economic recession in America. When he sets himself up as a representative for millions, and declares that “I am America”(155) he displaces the real to reproduce the mass claiming himself to be its ultimate image. Thirdly through fighting for being cast into the Real World show in his wording Eggers wants to precede and determine the real by saying that he can be any image that the audience wants to see. It does not matter any more whether it is real or not as long as he meets the demand of the twentieth century readers for simulation.

Also in his verbal simulation of reality Eggers uses all four Baudrillard’s successive phases of the image which are:

- 1.It is the reflection of a basic reality.
- 2.It masks and perverts a basic reality
- 3.It masks the absence of a basic reality
- 4.It bears no relation to any reality whatever.

Baudrillard explains these phases the following way: “In the first case, the image is a good appearance: the representation is of the order of sacrament. In the second, it is an evil appearance: of the order of malefice. In the third, it plays at being an appearance: it is of the order of sorcery. In the fourth, it is no longer in the order of appearance at all, but of simulation” (Modern Criticism and Theory 405). Eggers plays with all phases meanwhile creating written signs of resemblance between himself and society to supply the social demand for simulation, and satisfy the audience’s dependence on simulacra. The author is more eager to attract the audience’s attention than to present a classical credible autobiography. His book could rather be categorized as a post-modern autobiographical novel that ridicules memoir. Similarly to movies that have their satirized, mocking versions, Eggers provides a parody or a simulated-to-be-real version of the serious autobiography.

The first phase in Eggers’s reflection of the basic reality is for example his words about his mother’s sickness and death. He reaches the second phase to distort of basic reality when he changes the places and time of the events that occurred in reality. Eggers’s claim of being a representative for millions eventually reflects the absence of a basic reality; it is a simulation for validation and affirmation. The fourth phase is detectable as he writes about Adam Rich’s fake death, or about himself as an invincible hero, and Toph being the lone hero moving West. There is no relation to any reality,

Eggers simulates stories for attention.

In order to establish my argument, first I would like to briefly reflect upon the general transformation of the rhetoric of autobiography between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries in America. It is important to see how the social demand or cultural genre expectations have changed, and therefore shaped the autobiographical narration by Eggers's age. To reflect upon this change I also intend set up a parallel between A.H.W.O.S.G. and the quintessential American memoir, Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* as a launching point in the theme of representativeness, which plays a major role in Eggers's memoir to create simulacra of reality. Franklin is an example I use to provide a contrast to Eggers, and to point out simulation in Eggers's work. Finally I would like to show how Eggers's claim of representativeness is a recreation of reality to satisfy the social demand for simulation in order to exchange his traumatic experience for sympathy and popularity. Eggers repeatedly sends messages about his narrative as he writes: "the tossing together of as much disparate and presumably incompatible stimuli ...to see how much can be exploited, made permanent" (359). His intention with claiming himself to be a representative for others, is to gain fame, "made permanent" in the literary circles. Although Eggers's words constantly simulate to reflect a conventional autobiographical protagonist claiming to be a representative of his generation, behind the verbal image of the representativeness his aim is to exploit tragedies for gaining the profit of becoming a well-known author. He poses as one of his readers so that also in return he could receive sympathy and applause. Through his words Eggers produces a simulation of a representative in exchange for psychological and financial gain.

Also Baudrillard's theory about the relation between capital and simulation is reflected in Eggers's work. The hope of financial profit, which depends on the popularity of a book, seems also to be a motivational determinant in publishing Eggers's memoir.

Baudrillard writes the following about wealth:

It was capital which shattered every ideal distinction between true and false, good and evil, in order to establish a radical law of equivalence and exchange. And if it was capital which fostered reality, it was also the first to liquidate it in the extermination of every use value, of every real equivalence, of production and wealth, in the very sensation we have of the unreality of the stakes and the omnipotence of manipulation. And when it wants to fight this catastrophic spiral by secreting one last glimmer of reality, it only multiplies the signs and accelerates the play of simulation ( *Modern Criticism and Theory* 409)

Eggers needed not only emotional, but also financial relief when he wrote his memoir, and this necessity led him participate in the play of simulation. Through his claim, Eggers simulates to be a representative of his generation in order to receive the audience's attention and applause in exchange.

Eggers has a three level claim in his memoir demanding that he reveals self, generation, and nation. All these demands and the stories created around them had one purpose: to represent the author as a symbol for his generation and nation. The center of Eggers's autobiography is the author's story, as he is desperately pursuing comfort, success, and popularity. Through his character of the an upper middle class orphan, Eggers claims to echo the domestic, social and economic situation of the late 1990's America in order to intrigue the audience, and to keep them reading his book. To appeal

to the audience has always been a decisive factor for the authors, and through the centuries the expectations of the memoir's genre have accordingly been transformed by contemporary cultural and social ideals. As a result various sub-genres came on line such as autobiographical novel, into which category some critics has counted Eggers's work. Eggers writes about his memoir: "This is a work of fiction, only in that in many cases, the author could not remember the exact words, so had to fill in gaps as best he could" (v). If his memoir carries numerous fictional elements then it is part fiction, story created by the author.

About fiction Joseph Conrad had some thoughts as he wrote in his *Notes on Life and Letters*: "Fiction is history, human history; or it is nothing. But it is also more than that; it stands on firmer ground, being based on the reality of forms, and the observation of social phenomena". In her essay Sidonie Smith writes that Eggers's work is an "extravagant performance of experimental history"( Smith 8) that interrogates cultural norms. Establishing a parallel between Conrad's statement, and Smith's opinion it might be concluded that Eggers lifts the personal tragedy, his human history, into a contemporary cultural experience in a form of an autobiographical fiction or novel. However, an autobiography with extensive degree of fictionality is less than true to life, and may reflect "a significant lying in the autobiography" says Timothy D. Adams. He states that "autobiography is a story of an attempt to reconcile one's life with one's self and is not, therefore, meant to be taken as historically accurate but as metaphorically authentic"( Adams ix). In his book *Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography*, Adams attempt to discover the reasons behind the deliberate lying in autobiographies. If

it is true that “All autobiographers are unreliable narrators” as Adams begins his book, then it is possible that Eggers’s repeated claim of representativeness: “I am the common multiplier for 47 million”(236) is a highly strategic decision to hide his conflicting emotional, mental, and financial interest in writing his book. Also Baudrillard sees representation as pure simulacrum. Through his claim for being a representative of his generation Eggers engages in the play of simulation to appeal to the audience.

Eggers seems to risk his narration’s credibility, and its truthfulness to reality by changing the chronology of events, or by adding or creating dialogues. By doing this he shatters the distinction between true and false, reality and fantasy so that he could establish a story that attracts the audience, which in return can reward him with popularity. The readers demand entertainment, and Eggers supplies it using simulations. William Chaloupka states that Eggers’s work “contributed to the liveliness of the intellectual life in our age” and with his book “a new literary genre might, finally, be emerging”. Unquestionably *A.H.W.S.O.G.* is a refreshing contribution to American literature. The memoir generally follows the expectations and the conventions of the genre’s rhetoric adopting the twentieth century American cultural influence to simulate. His work is an example of how autobiography has been reshaped by the dominance of cultural negotiations and rhetorical expectations of twentieth century America. By fabricating half true stories in his autobiographical novel, Eggers presents a character that fits into Baudrillard’s contemporary model of representing the money making, profit driven mass media in the age of simulacra.

## CHAPTER II

### A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE GENERAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE MEMOIR'S RHETORIC

The term autobiography- thought to be first used by Robert Southey in 1805- tends to be applied to any kind of personal writing which has to do with the facts of the author's life. Some sub-genres have been added under the genre of memoir, the confession, the apology, the diary, and a gray area the autobiography novel, which takes facts of its author's life. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a general form of literary self-reflection or self-revelation appeared in the shape of diaries and journals which could be considered forerunners of the autobiographies. Diaries were largely private documents, and often remained unpublished. These documents were secretive, written confessions in which the self became the locus of narration. The seventeenth century diary resisted representing the self as a unified, rational, and intentional subject. Donald Stauffer states about the diary that "it is focused on the immediate present, and finds that the happenings of twenty-four hours are sufficient unto the day. It becomes, therefore, a journal of an existence" (Nussbaum 128). Although the autobiographical texts in their early period represented the ideas of the self rather than eternal truths, by the nineteenth century they had shifted from the self to the surrounding of the self. As James Olney writes: "...holding formal patterns and meaningful artifacts, the autobiographer who draws out of the flux of events a coherent pattern, or who creates a sufficient metaphor for experience, discovers in the particular, and reveals to us, the universal" (Olney 45). Consequently autobiography can be in one sense history. History can be

cultural or racial memory, however; it is not always an objective collection of facts but points of view of what the historian experienced, understood, and intended to reveal.

By the twentieth century the genre of the autobiography shifted from focusing on the immediate present of the individual to represent historical moments of a society. A new generic paradigm in the expectations of the memoir emerged: investigate the self while revealing general social customs. Consequently the contemporary autobiographer does not limit the memoir only to discover personal identity, but broadens the picture to show the relevant negotiation in social culture, and to discover the complex interrelation of culture and self in reality. Eggers reveals his unique experiences, meanwhile displays cultural transactions in his individual observations. Along with investigating of the self and of meaning, the author provides evidences of the past, reflects upon social customs, and create critical assumptions of the culture. In Eggers's case his reflection on social customs mirrors the media shaped reality: simulations of the real.

Although self-exploration, self-definition, and self-revelation have always been major purposes in an autobiography, they have been changed by the twentieth century: the age of simulacra. In memoir writing, according to Karl Joachim Weintraub, the modern man's self-conception, and his interest in the history of one's history is also "part of the modern form of historical consciousness" (Weintraub xi). He adds that there is relation between the views men held of the past and their concept of their own selves. On the one hand Eggers's memoir is a self-revelation as he is searching for recovery from a family tragedy. On the other hand in his autobiography he included some socially accurate data about the problem of alcoholism, divorce, disintegration, unemployment,

AIDS, Social Security issues relevant to his generation and nation. As part of his self-revelation Eggers interprets the relations in his family's past from his specific point of view based upon his cumulative experience. Meanwhile he does not restrict his narration to the self, but along the self-presentation he continuously exposes collective cultural practices from the beginning to the end of his book. For example on the first pages Eggers stays within the walls of his family house, and gives us a tour around the clashing furniture, and already points out a social dimension in America: adoption. Eggers writes: "we are like families that adopt troubled children and refugees from around the world-we see beauty within and cannot say no" (7). He hardly begins his autobiography, and the introduction of his family, and he already incorporates a social discourse about adoption of foreign children and immigrants into his country. Although it is one single sentence about the adoption, and immigration issue circulating in the contemporary American social discourse, yet it reflects the intention of the author: his autobiography is going to incorporate something beyond his individual experiences. Already the beginning of his book projects Eggers's intention to refer to himself as an embodiment of his nation's representative.

## CHAPTER III

### FRANKLIN, THE EXEMPLAR -EGGERS, THE EXAMPLE

As a follower of numerous Puritan spiritual autobiographers, Benjamin Franklin seemed to have a similar intention of representation. He was assumed to be a classical example of the idealized masculine politician of his age. In his rhetoric the quintessential American embodied the virtuous, independent, genuine individual searching and striving for abiding values of specific goodness. As a historical figure Franklin is perceived as unique personality with a responsibility both to himself and humanity. Franklin, the author, inventor, and politician of the colonial period, rose from poverty to prosperity with diligence, ambition, good work ethic and faith. Two centuries before the rise of the mass media, in 1771 Franklin began to write his memoir to reveal his successful life, which he intended to be a positive example for the future generation. On the first page of his autobiography Franklin openly states that one of his aims in revealing the circumstances of his life was to present an example to the readers in case they may find it “suitable to their own situation and therefore fit to be imitated”( Franklin 3). Franklin’s rhetoric follows the eighteenth century conventions to set up the protagonist as a heroic individual, whose life could be and should be imitated. He presents himself as the best of his kind, models a unique hero image of his age: the exemplar worth imitating. Although in his memoir Franklin quotes two letters which encouraged him to continue his writing, he did not need validation or affirmation as Eggers longed for. Franklin writes his memoir when he has already been a well-to-do business man, an internationally well-known and respected politician. Apart from the above mentioned two letters, Franklin did

not incorporate of dependence on reader-response, but his intention was to show a positive role model to the readers. Franklin tries to lead the mass to follow his example, yet he leaves it open, and optional for the readers to choose whether they imitate his example or not. He wanted his readers to relate to him because he thought he offered a good citizen ideal that can overcome oppression and war, and succeed at the dawn of the new American nation's birth. Franklin wanted to share his contentment, and describe the road that led to it in his life, Eggers is desperate to share his life with the reader to receive sympathy.

Franklin's didactic element, the intention to instruct, and show an example also appears in Eggers's work, yet in a forceful, aggressive way. Eggers writes his autobiography at the beginning of his career after a family tragedy, therefore he is in need for attention and acceptance. His wording is impolite, almost demanding to be heard. The author insists to be a man worthy of attention as he addresses the readers: "Don't you know that I am connected to you? Don't you know that I'm trying to pump blood to you. I'm trying to get your stupid fucking attention"(436-437). Why does Eggers want attention? On the surface Eggers's rhetoric seemingly expresses his desire to encourage his readers, to be an example for them. He claims that he is typifying the average, he is the "common multiplier"(236). Eggers does not say that he is the best, but he depicts himself as a representative, a sample: a typical example. Assuredly Eggers claims that his autobiography is worth reading because he models the twentieth century readers. By writing "pump blood" Eggers attempts to personify a life saver or to function as a heart to stimulate his audience for listening. Behind the aggressiveness, and the tone of urgency

may lie Eggers's emotional turmoil. After having lived through his family drama, Eggers wants attention, because he needs to find comfort and healing through being listened to. On the surface Eggers's discourse seemingly reconnects with Franklin's representation of the individual entrepreneurial, attention demanding spirit; however, Eggers does not say to the reader to follow his model. Moreover, he wants to fit into the mass by trying to persuade the audience that they could identify themselves with him. He is simulating to be a representative of the reader to be accepted by the audience.

Eggers seeks a remedy for the family trauma by persuading the audience to accept him as one of them. It would ease his pain if others could identify themselves with him providing the sense of not being alone. Also he reflects a general contemporary social attitude by his wording. Both autobiography writers intend to represent a model in their narrations. Franklin thinks to be worthy of imitation, and Eggers also begins with a similar tone as he writes: "I am tired. I am true of heart. And also. You are tired. You are true of heart". By changing the personal pronouns and keeping the content of the sentences he manipulates the reader to identify himself with the narrator. Earlier in Baudrillard's theory it was also mentioned that manipulation is part of simulation. The author is saying: we are similar, what I am going through, you are going through. Eggers projects the Franklinian idea of the self as being and showing an example for the reader. However, Franklin's wording offers the choice for the reader to follow his example. Franklin uses conditional mode: "may find it fit to be imitated". His narration focuses on personal experiences, failures and virtues, and encourages others to learn from it so they may be able to become useful members of the new born nation. By contrast Eggers's

narration employs affirmative case: “you are tired”. Both the personal pronoun and the affirmative verb form suggests that the protagonist’s life can also be life of others. From the beginning of his memoir Eggers simulates oneness with the reader, and offers his prefabricated perception for the audience to receive him as a representative for them.

Moreover, as Eggers talks about his magazine, *Might*, during the *Real World* interview, he clarifies his conscious intention to be influential: “ I get on the show, the show films us putting together this magazine together, reaching millions, defining the zeitgeist, inspiring the world’s youth to greatness”(203). Eggers sounds as if he wanted to step over even his nation’s borders and literally become a global inspiration. A possible reason behind his words can be that he wishes to fit into the cultural expectations of the rhetoric of the memoir. Eggers incorporates the discourse of his age’s cultural conventions in his autobiography: “think globally“. Franklin’s wording is polite and indirect, spotlighting the heroic and virtuous features of the individual character: the exemplar, which was also the expectation from the discourse of the eighteenth century man. Eggers’s discourse is affirmative, direct, and occasionally raw reflecting the example: the features of a man, who is one of many, mirroring the rhetoric at the dusk of the twentieth century America. Although it can be concluded that both autobiographers’ narration was shaped by the culture, Eggers seems to be rather in need for adjustment to the culture to receive popularity. Eggers is less about being the exemplary ideal, he wants to persuade the reader that he is more about embodying the common element. If he is seen as a common element, the reader can easier identify himself with Eggers, which could project Eggers as a representative of his audience, moreover his generation. As a

conclusion it could be said that Franklin wanted the readers to imitate his example for their and the new nation's benefit, meanwhile Eggers tried to imitate the readers for his own benefit.

CHAPTER IV  
SIMULATION OF REPRESENTATIVENESS AS A MEANS OF BEING HEARD  
AND HEALED

Eggers claims himself to be an example partially to find comfort for the pain and suffering which originates from the loss of his parents. Assuming that he is a “common multiplier” (236) may help him to recover psychologically. Simplifying his claim it may sound as a grieving person’s cry for mental and emotional deliverance, remedy, and comfort. As a parallel I would also say that by claiming to be a “multiplier”, Eggers adds some revelation about the social negotiations of his age through his individual experiences to support his claim as a representative of his generation. Eggers’s rhetoric includes a two-level intention: it mirrors the author’s pursuit of mental and emotional relief, and pictures the author as an active participant in general social conducts to be accepted as a representative. His memoir begins as a reconstruction of his early life constituting a family tragedy; however, the memoir continues from the family drama to the representation of the twentieth century American culture and society.

In his memoir Eggers intentionally chooses topics as devices to catch the audience’s attention. Eggers generates mental and psychological connection between he reader and his protagonist by including similarities in experience using topics such as economic recession, alcoholism, divorce, suicide, accidents, disintegration, his business failure, and in the details of his private life. Partially searching for sympathy and for relief from his loss and trauma, and longing for attention, Eggers narrates the constraint of family life, the breakdown of moral values, and reveals numerous economic and

social dimensions in contemporary American culture. Eggers's story also discloses graphic pictures of alcohol addiction, sickness, sexual intimacy, post-traumatic family situation, financial struggles, and death. The author creates a parallel between the protagonist's life and the surrounding cultural practices. Eggers uses the revelation of the objectives of cultural practices to make his personal story more interesting, moreover, to make it sound like a story of many. For instance he mentions social circumstances such as divorce as he remembers his mother's activities at high school: "Everyone knew her from school...(she) would take in kids who were going through divorces"(15).By invoking the problem of divorce Eggers touches a heartbreaking subject in society; however, it his device to keep the reader reading. Similar is the alcohol abuse issue, which is an ongoing hardship in his family. His father's alcoholism and violent outburst, his mother's consequent martyrdom is not only Eggers's family struggle. Data from many sources indicate that about15% of the population in the United States is problem drinkers, and approximately 12.5 million people could be diagnosed as alcohol dependent. Eggers refers to a social problem which he, like his generation, is exposed to, so that it would designate him as one in many. The author longs to emerge as an embodiment of multitudes, as one more datum in the system, which would support his claim to be a representative of many. It is such an interesting paradox: Eggers singles himself out as common, yet calling himself a unique representative. At the same time he wants to be ordinary and exceptional. Eggers's ambivalence may be rooted in his need for attention: he is desperate for attention, and pleading for recognition.

Eggers is persistent, and continues to provide themes that attract the audience.

Just like the wallpaper in the Eggers's suburban Chicago home has decorative statements about "an exuberant, fanciful time in American history"(6), so does Eggers's narration about the American economy. As he is collecting article ideas for his magazine, Eggers contemplates on the urging questions of student loans, economic instability, for instance Social Security. Eggers writes: "It appears, from the calculations of many economists, that when we are all sixty-five or seventy, when we retire...there will not be enough money left in the pot for us... that Social Security will be bankrupt"(174-175). Eggers narrates a discourse on economy because it is an ever popular, hot topic. Most people's minds may be engaged with finding a solution for a serious problem: possible lack of financial cover for retirement, economic insecurity. Eggers draws the readers' attention to a life battle just to keep them busy with his book. The original background motivation for narrating a social experience is to promote his magazine. Eggers transforms the first person singular I-need-a-solution-for-my-magazine problem into our-economic-insecurity issue to motivate the people to buy his edition. The first person plural "we"(175) appears thirteen times in the context related to Social Security. To use "we" within a short passage creates an atmosphere where the reader begins to think that he is part of the story, which controls his interest in the book. By referring to a sensitive topic in the social stratum, and depicting the pitfalls of economic instability, Eggers follows the path of the media that simulates interest in the real to gain attention. The Baudrillardian pattern of simulation is projected: to play of being interested. As an editor it is part of his job to inform the public; however, he chooses topics that would get the attention of the audience.

Beside economic recession, alcoholism, and divorce, Eggers includes another growing phenomenon in the USA: disintegration. Disintegration of society has become another major issue in Eggers's narration. As he describes it the positive network of relations are diminishing. Due to all kinds of issues such as financial instability, sickness, or lack of trustworthy, long-lasting personal relationships individuals choose the exile of isolation. Eggers portrays a multilevel assessment of disintegration. On one level he describes his mother's physical weakening due to the cancer that slowly devours her. He provides a lively and vivid description of how the sickness disintegrates his mom from life, and finally overcomes her. However, the physical and probably emotional separation from her husband had begun earlier as Eggers writes: "...my sister's old bedroom. She had been sleeping there for years"(2). On the micro level it is a revealing picture about the lack of connection in a spousal bond. On the macro level Eggers tries to reflect upon society as he uses his family as an example to project how individuals could be disengaged gradually. By writing about disintegration Eggers mesmerizes the audience, involving them into the familiar experience of alienation. Engaging the readers through manipulating their feelings is another technique to seize their attention. While reading about the heartbreaking family struggles, the reader is separated from reality, his or her actual time and place in real life, and relying on his or her fantasy emotional pain can be generated in his mind. Eggers creates an atmosphere where psychological pain could be stimulated through reading, and as a result the reader's sympathy would be gained. As Baudrillard could say the reader is trapped between his own reality and the simulated or reproduced reality of feelings.

It is especially captivating when Eggers shows the parent-children and individual-outer world disconnection. As people are arriving to his father's funeral Eggers mentions that most of them were his mother's friends. A few came from his father's office but no one knew them. His father was an atheist alcoholic who did not socialize much, and he seemed to prefer loneliness to company. Probably the addiction problem stimulated the father's isolation, which also resulted in less of connection between father and children, as Eggers states: "We have never heard anything about our father, knew nothing about him outside of what we'd seen ourselves"(35). Deficiency of communication is the descriptive word for the relationship between the Eggers siblings and their father, which many readers may identify themselves with. The presence of disrespect, and the desire of distance from the father are obvious from Eggers's narration. For example when their father calls him and Beth to have a conversation about their mother, Eggers writes: "we were there sitting as far away as possible from the customary cloud of smoke around him and his cigarette"(22). The major issue was not the unhealthy air around the father that repelled the kids, but the father himself. Also earlier in the book Eggers expresses his and his siblings' low opinion about the head of the household when they call him "loser"(8). Due to the diminishing respect towards parents, the disintegration of the family unit seems to be unavoidable. The Eggers family symbolizes the disappearance of the classical paternal authority, which can also be traced in the macrocosm of the American society. Ridiculing or disrespecting higher power could be connected back to the generational attitude that wants to debunk classical values. By integrating the collective manifestations of frustration with higher authority Eggers intends to capture the

concentration of two layers of the reading public: the older generation that most probably disagrees with it, and his peers, who are demonstrating the attitude.

Searching for relief from loss and trauma, Eggers's narrative reflects the constraint of family life, an alteration of moral values in contemporary American culture. During his exploration to find soothing for the personal tragedy, Eggers establishes relations between the protagonist and the culture. As Eggers claims he represents tens of millions as "an orphan of America"(210). The author uses the indefinite article before the word orphan. Instead of writing "the orphan", a possible unique representative of many, he writes "an orphan", which reduces him to be an average person: one in many. The choice of the indefinite article reveals Eggers's desire to be thought similar to the audience. With the simulation that he presents about himself he wants to reflect basic reality in society. His continuous projection of the American cultural negotiations in his own life is a simulation of reality shaped by Eggers to create a salable memoir.

From the orphaned young adult he proceeds to be a hero, and pictures himself as a tragic hero. The term hero originates from Greek, *heroes* or demi-god, refers to one who is part god, part man, and is a protector of ordinary lives. True, after outlasting the family trauma, Eggers steps up as a defender of his younger brother, thus the whole family pitches in to help. Also in the title of his memoir Eggers uses the expression of "staggering genius". In the Oxford English Dictionary explains genius as a controlling spirit, "the presiding deity or spirit" that was supposed to interfere powerfully in human affairs. Eggers's wording creates the survivor, and the protector image of the protagonist, parallel to the claims of being a representative of his nation ("I am America", "I represent

tens of millions”). Eggers’s narrative suggests that he has multiple identities, which are supposed to help in identifying him with many individuals. After examining some examples his claim of a representative appears to be fabricated to attract, to please the audience in order to be read, and heard.

To support the idea of his representativeness to be able to present himself as a sign for many, Eggers reveals his private life to the public. Also the rhetorical convention of his age requires satisfying the sensation-hungry audience with some details of private life in order to manufacture a salable commodity. Usually to debunk privacy, and openly share family turmoil, one’s feelings and sexual encounters bring success to an autobiography in the twentieth century America. Eggers therefore offers detailed accounts of his private life. He informs the reader about his personal struggles: the losses in the family, liaisons with different women, and the hardships in the printing business. Eggers tells us how he ventured on to fulfill his dream of an intellectual achievement. One of his dreams was to produce a long-standing, well-known, and independent magazine. He founded the *Might* magazine, and this is how he recalls that period in his life: “We are trying to get advertising, distribution, all that floatsam lined up for our first issue, and right now we are nowhere, we have nothing and we have no one”(169). Despite his efforts and hard work the magazine was short-lived. The failure of the magazine does not testify to an accomplished entrepreneur. Rather it reflects one of many unsuccessful business men. By writing about his business failure, Eggers wants to prove that he is not the best, he is just like anybody else: he simulates to represent the rest of his audience. Eggers narrates that he was tangled in the affairs of his private life: he had to survive his

family feuds, then to provide for his younger brother food, clothes, and shelter. His discourse shows a character who tried to work all these out, not as a scheduled parent but as an undisciplined young adult. When Toph and he move into an apartment in San Francisco, the beginning of their life together is chaotic, as Eggers describes: “We are always late, always half-done. All school forms need to be sent me twice, and I have to hand them in late. Bills are paid in ninety days minimum”(83).The picture Eggers sketches about himself is supposed to mirror the average individual, the one who is a typical example. By openly discussing the flaws in his character, the author intends to make the reader to accept him as an average sign. Also the sensation-seeking media has been stimulating the audience’s hunger to see more about intimacy and vicarious adventures. Consequently self-revelation, and exposing one’s faults and vulnerability seem to have become a means of creating a common or satisfactory simulacrum. Again Eggers presents detailed and thorough information on his private life from the death of his parents and the family struggle through his promiscuous life style, and fights with his sister. He also writes about disorder, and lack of discipline in his early period of parenting with Toph. Eggers’s confession of him being unpunctual, irresponsible, almost a slacker, and involved with different sexual relationships is his direct method to meet the media expectation of his era. The revelation of his imperfectness, his actions, and conduct in life supports his claim to be a “common multiplier”. By the raw self-exposure, Eggers intends to reinforce his claim for being an example, and to simulate a sample in his generation.

Also when Eggers narrates the issues of the past, he reconnects himself as a

representative to the reading public. As he describes himself and his brother Toph, he proclaims themselves to be a representative of the new American generation. On one occasion they arrive to an open house event, about which Eggers writes that the people were not sure what to think about the two of them. The people represent also the readers, and Eggers uses the context to address the readers as the narration clears up the uncertainty in the air: “ We are unusual, and tragic and alive. We are disadvantaged but young and virile. ....we are the future, a terrifying bright future”(96-97). Eggers did not write “despite our past experience we have a bright future” but he states “ we are the bright future”. With using his tragic past, Eggers attempts to feature, and to link the past and the future of his generation. In the literary rhetoric it has always been an issue for every generation how to connect the past and the future. Uprooted from the past to adventure into the unknown was a major part in the literary discourse in America. Several writings disclose how throughout the centuries generations chose to relocate thousands of miles away from their homes in the hope for a better life in the West.

To simulate that he is a representative, Eggers reverberates the above intellectual inheritance in his narration. The resettling motif in California frames Eggers to share parts of the conventional rhetoric about finding the promised land, and it may establish a parallel between the cultural past of the American nation, and him. At first the intention of leaving behind the past, and starting a new life is echoed in the narration: “we will move to Berkeley, where Beth will start law school, ...to a nice big house in Berkeley with a view of the bay”(44). As Eggers with his siblings were forced on a route of self-reliance and self-making due to his parents’ sudden death, he decided to move from

Chicago to San Francisco. According to the dramatics of the earlier American adventure stories from the place of sorrow, devastation and death, Eggers migrates or rather escapes to the land of new opportunities, and promising bright future. He echoes the idealistic notion in which not only the future is promising, but also the Eggers brothers are carrying the seeds of promise in themselves as the narration unfolds: “a future that has come from Chicago, two terrible boys from far away, cast away and left for dead, shipwrecked, forgotten, but yet resurfaced, bolder and more fearless, bruised and unshaven, sure, their pant legs frayed, their stomach full of salt water, but now unstoppable, insurmountable”(97). In his description Eggers recreates the simulacrum of the tired adventurers who are searching for a new life in a new land. All of a sudden the reader finds himself on the page of almost like a history book, gathering information about the “fearless, unshaven, but unstoppable” men similar to his ancestors. Eggers copies a classical narration of an adventure story forcing the image of him as a “common multiplier” even for the forefathers. He stimulates his readers to identify him as a great adventurer with one possible intention: to accept him as a representative sign for others. The words “shipwrecked, unshaven and stomach full of salty water” are farfetched, unreal description of him and his brother only to create overemotional reaction from the reader. Toph was only eight, he did not even shave at that time; they used a car for transportation therefore shipwreck or salty water cannot be part of their journey. Eggers mixes some of his own real life elements with the heroic images of the past to manipulate his audience to embrace his claim as a representative. With other words Eggers projects himself as a perfect simulacrum of the audience.

Eggers's memoir begins with the attempt to discard the past and move to California. Similar to many of the American adventure stories, the misfortunate, and usually poor protagonist escapes from the past and goes West to find a new life. Initially Eggers borrows the theatrics of the misfortunate, lonely hero who wants to forget the past, but as his story continues the past is not left behind. On the contrary, Eggers decides to revisit Chicago to collect his parents' remains, to visit old friends and acquaintances, and to attend a wedding. From the revisitation of his childhood town Eggers expects to heal from the brokenness that his parents death caused as he writes: "The idea, I suppose, is the emotional equivalent of a drug binge, the tossing together of as much disparate and presumably incompatible stimuli as possible... to see what comes out of it, how much can be dredged up, brought back, remembered, exploited, excused, pitied, made known, made permanent"(359). Eggers does not bury or leave the past behind completely, but he intends to benefit from it: writing the autobiography may help him with mental and emotional healing. However, Eggers's purpose with writing his memoir is beyond the expectation of recovery from the personal tragedy. On the surface he sounds to be inspirational as he is finishing the book: "I am willing and I'll stand before you, and I'll raise my arms and give you my chest and throat and wait, and I've been so old for so long for you, for you"(437). By the repetition of "for you, for you" Eggers is trying to persuade the audience that the story was for their benefit. The narrator pretends to be sacrificial, honest, almost like a martyr at first sight, however, as he finishes the sentences it reveals impatience, moreover insults the reader: "I want it fast and right through me - oh do it, do it, you motherfuckers, do it do it you fuckers finally, finally, finally."(437).

The motif of altruism, and representativeness dissolves in the last sentence. The author's goal is obvious: he wants to be recognized, accepted and appreciated by the audience. Eggers true intention with publishing *A Heartbreaking Work of a Staggering Genius* is clearly revealed at the end of the book. More than four hundred pages with different imitations of representativeness were written for one single purpose as the author confesses: "I'm trying to get your stupid fucking attention"(437). Even the appearance of being a representative vanishes. There is only one crystal clear demand of the author left: I want your attention because I am in need for affirmation. Rooted in the urging need for acceptance and being considered Eggers reproduces or creates a need for his readers to believe that they are represented by him. What Eggers did in his book is similar to the profit driven mass media productions for example the commercials through which needs for all kinds merchandize are simulated for the audience to purchase.

Eggers seems to have endless resources of simulation of being a representative to capture the audience's attention. On one occasion, Eggers attempts to become a mass simulation, and declares that "I am America"(155) when he and his girlfriend were attacked on the beach by Mexican youngsters. During the confrontation with the attackers Eggers thinks of himself as an embodiment of America, meaning he is strong enough to resist or overcome the attackers: "I am massive. I am America"(155). Repeatedly he claims to be a representative, this time for the whole nation. His statement is symbolic and manipulative. It evokes the general cultural-historical belief about America: the strong and the invincible. The author is manipulating with the social discourses about America that have saturated the mind of the overall reading public. The noun "America"

reflects a specific place and time in history with which the American audience can identify themselves, therefore it seizes their attention. However, the episode ends with the escape of the attackers after they knock out the invincible protagonist, who finds his supposedly stolen wallet later on the dresser at home. Eggers's representation of the powerful and the unconquerable ends in failure.

Another invincible hero ideal created by the media through the motion pictures is mirrored in Eggers's narration to catch attention. To misrepresent the true nature of reality for a higher quantity of audience seems to be intensively built in the American media. As D.H. Lawrence depicted it: "Americans refuse everything explicit and always put up a sort of double meaning. They revel in subterfuge" (qtd. Adams 5). Eggers shows how people can be influenced by the media in the age of simulacra. The American television programs and movie theaters are flooded with action-hero movies. In Baudrillard's theory these movies would cover the "evil appearance" category, where the representation is false and perverts basic reality. During various trials, confrontations, quests and challenges the hero or heroes always defeat their enemies, and escape dangers triumphantly. On his way driving to California with Toph, Eggers began to simulate in his mind what would happen with them in case of an accident: "The possibilities leaped into my head...as the Civic crashed into the ocean's mulch glass.. We'd plunge under, half circle back to the surface and then break through, into the sun, whip our heads to shake the water from our hair and then swim to each other, as the car with bubbles quickly drowned"(55-56). Eggers reflects how his conscience is soaked with the cultural discourses and practices of the American motion pictures. He identifies himself with the

unconquerable hero who breaks free from danger only to satisfy the public's desire for heroism as he writes: "We are dangerous. We are daring and immortal"(50). Eggers operates with a desirable hero image of society to feign his secret ambition: to get the public's attention. Eggers's work is also a publishing product so he follows the media's practice, and employs what he needs to be accepted and heard: he uses simulations of being a representative.

## CHAPTER V

### PURSUIT OF SENSATION FOR POPULARITY

Eggers's self-revelation is influenced by the twentieth century media practice: the pursuit of sensation. By doing that he seems to fit into Foucault's description about a characteristic of an author: "the author provides the basis for explaining not only the presence of certain events in a work, but also their transformation, distortions, and diverse modifications" (qtd. Lodge 181). Eggers goes beyond self-reflecting in his autobiography. The text does not refer simply to one individual's experiences, but it opens the way for number of resemblances of figures, relationships and structures in the society. However, by including others into his memoir he simply wants to exploit the sensation that connects to those people's stories. Intentionally he chooses events that fit into the social demand of sensation. For instance Eggers incorporates Shalini's accident into his discourse. As he tells the shocking story of Shalini, Eggers feeds the thrill hungry audience: "She is in coma. She fell four stories and landed on her head. They don't know if she's going to make it"(326). As the narration continues the rhetoric lacks empathy. It rather sounds as a list of facts, and acts in case of a tragic accident: " We are not to smile. We are to dress neatly. We are not to miss visiting hours. Most important, we too must suffer"(330). Where is the compassion in the above sentences? The narrator does not seem to be shocked or sorry rather he sounds robotic, unemotional. The thought to bring a teddy bear to Shalini is to make the narrator feel better about himself: "I will feel pious and proud and will let myself believe that it means something"(331). Later in the book the bear disappears from Shalini's room. Eggers writes: "the bear is gone and everything

is still uncertain”(350). He thought he did something extraordinary, but it turned out to be a misconception. Also the narration adds: “The only sure thing is that I can’t be trusted with anything” (350). Another self-revealing moment which warns the reader not to believe everything that is written. Shalini is in the story to satisfy the demand for sensation, and to exploit the possible interest of the audience in her drama so that the author could finally receive the attention he is longing for.

Also by narrating John’s reoccurring suicide attempts the author wants to satisfy the grotesque, and intense public interest in tragic events as he adds a more sensational topic to his memoir. Eggers’s visit in the psychiatric ward, where John is kept for a few days, is similar to a business man’s evaluation who wants to sell his product rather than a friend with sympathy. Basically a deal is made between John and the protagonist as Eggers writes: “It is all just boredom. It’s boring. You’re bored. You’re lazy. I mean, no one will even believe this shit, it’s so fucking boring... We’re trading. I gave you the attention you wanted, all the shit I put in for you- now I get this, this is mine also. Now you’re the metaphor.”(274). The narrator is not empathic. His response to the suicide lacks sympathy, rather he behaves like a capitalist who makes some investment in return for profit. John’s anecdote is in the memoir to generate interest for the author. In Baudrillard’s words Eggers wants meet to the social demand of producing sensational stories, because it is a good selling factor for the autobiography. Eggers simulates interest in other people’s life to gain the profit of attention from the reading audience.

It is also interesting to consider John’s drama as a metaphor for Eggers’s tragedy. The author tells John that his tale is “boring...no one will even believe this shit” then he

states that John is “ the metaphor”. Eggers’s metanarration discloses another serious statement about his own memoir: he tries to simulate a credible story. The point of incorporating anecdotes into his story is to make his autobiography believable. The book as a collection of memories of what happened to the Eggers kids ( Bill, Beth, Dave, Toph) after both their parents die within weeks from one another may sound boring or even unbelievable. In itself his family story could not have been enough for the audience to fancy the memoir, therefore Eggers needed extras to grab the readers’ attention. From adding anecdotes of others, Eggers hoped for the desired result: popularity of his work.

The idea of the lattice is another example for the author’s self-obsession, and his devouring other people’s stories to be a reinforcement, and marketing factor for his memoir. Through his narration Eggers interconnects with others as if his life and theirs were an intertwined structure like a lattice. He explains his idea of the lattice system at the *Real World* interview as he writes: “ the connection between people, the people you know, become a sort of a lattice...The lattice is everyone else, the lattice is my people, collective youth, people like me”(211-212). According to the Random House Unabridged Dictionary “lattice” in crystallography means an arrangement in space of isolated points in a regular pattern that shows the positions of atoms, molecules or ions in the structure of a crystal. Eggers employs the lattice idea symbolically. Reading about other people’s anecdotes is like seeing him. By saying the lattice is “my people”, or “people like me”, Eggers’s focus is on him again. The members of the lattice are to help him, to spotlight his story: “ they are here to help”(212) because they know “ your situation, your story, your troubles”(212). His autobiography is similar to a lattice that shows the position of

atoms, molecules and ions. In his case the lattice is made of from the characters he included in his memoir, and the position of atoms and ions are the events of his life. Eggers's lattice symbol exposes that he uses the stories of others to highlight his situation for his own greater benefit.

The most revealing, though indirect confession of Eggers's simulations is the story of the fake newspaper article about Adam Rich's death. Eggers writes the following: "We needed a celebrity who the public, the press not to mention the hard-to-fool Internet community would believe had indeed dies, but whose passing did not make national news"(311). The author's purpose clearly focused on misleading the public. His magazine, *Might* needed financial help, and he uses the article to create a sensation that supposed to lead to a breakthrough for his publications. Eggers says that his article was an elaborate hoax to serve a higher purpose which was to debunk the media's phony interest in anybody's life or death. Eggers simply highlights the real interest of the majority media, which is not to express sympathy or tell the truth but to gain profit. By mentioning it, however, he also discloses his own plan with his writings. Eggers's magazine, like his autobiography, is a product of the media, and also instruments to reach or influence people. Similarly to the other sources of media, his book is not exempt from recurrence of simulations. Eggers distorts reality, either by adding to it or creating it. His general motif is to be salable, and popular. In the heat of chasing popularity and high publicity he is not deterred from fooling the community by presenting stories with a twisted version of the real events. Although Eggers pretends to question the media's truthfulness at some point in his autobiography, his memoir also includes the reflection of

the hysteria to produce and reproduce reality.

Adam Rich's story is an essential moment of epiphany in the book. His fable is not only an example for simulation, creating reality, but also Rich's character can be projected as a metaphor for Eggers. After the article about Rich's death had been published, the editors of the magazine organized a party for him. Naturally, when Rich appeared in the club people did not know what to believe. When some of them realized that the article was a fake, they were still unimpressed- the expected ovation did not occur. Eggers writes that "it was freakish"(351), and Adam Rich himself was "unimpressive". In Eggers's description Rich manifests the desperate, forgotten movie star, who would do anything to regain fame. As Eggers continues to talk about the subject he addresses the reader with questions: "Could he really be doing all this for attention? Could he really be milking his own past to solicit sympathy? No. no. He is not calculating enough, cynical enough. It would take some kind of monster, malformed and needy. Really, what sort of a person would do that kind of thing?"(351). The words desperate, "needy", and "milking his own past to solicit sympathy" are the codes to unlock Eggers's message about his own memoir. The embedded anecdote of Adam Rich brightens the motif why Eggers claims himself to be a representative or example for his generation: he wants sympathy, he wants attention. Eggers uses his past and simulates to be one of many to gain popularity.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE REAL WORLD -SIMULATION FOR PROFIT

Employing Baudrillard's words it seems that Eggers "reinjects realness and preferentiality everywhere, in order to convince us of the reality of social, of the gravity of the economy, and the finalities of production" (Modern Criticism and Theory 409). Through the *Real World* show related narrations Eggers's claim of representation becomes as itself a simulacrum. Eggers intends to prove that he represents the culture whose members he is addressing, so his words testify about the change in the social stratum and the economy at the *Real World* interview. He includes signs of reality to support his story as his vocabulary, and his tone testify that he had been shaped his culture: "I'm the product of my environment, and thus representative, must be exhibited, as inspiration and cautionary tale"(236). Again Eggers claims to be a representative of his generation: his readers can identify themselves with him, because he is similar to them; therefore, he can be their example. However, Eggers's claim sounds rather like begging to be accepted, than being sure of his qualities: "oh let me be the strong-beating heart that brings blood to everyone! I want-"(237). The question that the interviewer points at him reveals Eggers's real intention with his claim: "And that will heal you?"(237) Eggers's answer: "...Yes! Yes! Yes!"(237). The reason behind the fervent claim of being a representative is therapeutic: it is he, who needs blood pumped into him. Eggers is desperately searching for comfort, sympathy, and encouragement from the reading audience. He thinks that by projecting himself as a representative for the reader, it will bring him mental and emotional restoration. On the interview he begs to be accepted into

the show only to find relief from the stress of his trauma.

Eggers is ready to participate in a simulation of the popular American television show, *Real World*, which with its plot and characters is basically paradoxical. It is titled “real world” while consciously selected participants who are under twenty-four hour’s observation are supposed to behave naturally in an artificially created atmosphere. The artificial signs are mixed up with real elements, and therefore an illusive picture of reality is constructed as Eggers’s reflection explains it: “everyone on it made hideous, silly and simple, two-dimensional”(239).The key word is “ made”. In other words the cast is selected, the surrounding set, the events are directed, and created in a hermetically sealed studio. Eggers also writes: “a television show with a massive worldwide audience, and an unquantifiable kind of influence over the hearts and minds of the young and impressionable”(240). Eggers concern is that the *Real World* program has an unpredictable effect on its viewers. The word “impressionable” allows suggesting that Eggers presents a derogative criticism of the broadcast. In his opinion it sounds that the program can manipulate those who are inexperienced, or ignorant of the media’s cunning games. Eggers draws the attention to the manipulative quality of the media, meanwhile he wants to be, and he is part of it. If everyone on the show is “two-dimensional”, which could be interpreted as not real, a mere simulation, then he as possible participant is also fake. Consequently whatever he declares or claims about himself is simulation so that he would be watched by the audience.

In the chase of fame, Eggers repeatedly claims that he is a representative of his generation. While being questioned on the *Real World* interview he states: “I represent

tens of millions”(205). Then he adds: “ I can be the average white suburban person, midwestern, knowing words of both wealthy and central Illinoisian, whose looks are not intimidating, who’s self-effacing but principled- one whose tragic recent past touches everyone’s heart, whose struggles become universal and inspiring”(205). The context suggests that Eggers is merely trying to find a fitting figure so that he would be chosen into the TV show. Plus being on the show Eggers’s overall goal is to advertise his magazine, *Might*. He says “ I can be”, which suggests possibility, not certainty therefore it is conditional tense. His representation is hypothetical, he is imposing to be a person whose tragic past could touch everyone’s heart. Eggers is ready to act or perform for approval. He is willing to simulate a representative so that he would be seen and accepted. Eggers’s demands to be identified with millions in America is a device to merely be added to the show, and receive a wider scale reputation. His representativeness is a simulation. As Baudrillard could say: “There is a proliferation of myths of origin and signs of reality; of second hand truth, objectivity, and authenticity. There is an escalation of the truth of the lived experience; a resurrection of the figurative where object and substance have disappeared”( *Modern Criticism and Theory* 405).Again and again Eggers reproduces himself as a representative for validation and affirmation.

At the *Real World* interview Eggers states that he has so many things to say and he writes that “ there is so much symbolism”(236) in his rhetoric. In other words he is using written images, signs which are simulations of the real. As the interview continues his sentences are directed to the interviewer apparently, but he is addressing the reader indirectly:

Can you not see what I represent? I am a common multiplier for 47 million...Can you not see that we're extraordinary. That we were meant for something else, something more? All this did not happen to us for naught. I can assure you - there is no logic to that, there is logic only in assuming that we suffered for a reason. I am bursting with the hopes of a generation, their hopes surges through me, threatened to burst my hardened heart (236)

Eggers's dictum insinuates that he may manifest collective experience of millions in America. By calling himself a representative, Eggers exaggerates his importance to the audience and the literary world. The narrator desperately bombards his readers to believe that he represents them; however, later his words sound as if he were rather asking for charity: "Let me try. Let me prove. I will stand before you feeble and shivering"(237). Here again there is a paradox: Eggers claims himself to be the extraordinary individual who thinks he represents many, then he cries out as a broken-hearted individual who despairingly seeks sympathy. The author's ambivalence is reinforcing his act of simulation. He almost says: " I can pretend, I can simulate whatever you want me to". With the dramatic tone Eggers attracts attention, and basically this is his real the motif. Eggers uses the interview as a setup to create an atmosphere where he can simulate a story of his story. He has created a place where his character could operate as desired to capture the reader's consideration. The narration discloses it clearly as the author provides a message about the message:

*This isn't really a transcript of the interview, is it?*

No.

*It's not much like the actual interview at all, is it?*

Not that much, no.

*This is a device, this interview style. Manufactured and fake.*

It is.

*It is a good device, though. Kind of a catch ball for a bunch of anecdotes that would be too awkward to force together otherwise.*

Yes (196-197)

In his book Eggers writes about the *Real World* interview through seventy pages to use it to present his real life stories, but he perverts the basic reality of the events. Baudrillard could say that Eggers falsely represents reality. Eggers confesses that his anecdotes about places and people are partially for attention grabbing. His method- creating the interview, and the content of his message- personifying a representative, are fabricated so it would be “familiar to many people”(197). To acquire the reader's regard Eggers plainly writes what the audience wishes to read. To entice the readers to identify themselves with the narrator, or the narrator's story is a similar method of the media's simulations. The motif behind it is to produce a readable material for the public, which also means higher marketability for the product. Through his narration Eggers testifies how he manufactured simulations of reality in creating his memoir. The author's claim of being a representative is not merely his psychological search for sympathy, but also his reflection on a contemporary media phenomenon: simulation for profit.

## CHAPTER VII

### POST SCRIPT

After the refusal of being cast on the *Real World* show Eggers plans to issue a volume of *Might* with photos of naked people to help the magazine's newsstand distribution. Now the naked peoples' body photos are not necessarily all beautiful, or perfect but they are projecting real life people with real features. By setting up a parallel between the TV show's popularity and his magazine's unpopularity Eggers reflects that the worldwide audience is paying more attention to the almost perfect simulacra rather than to the less attractive though real life elements or events. In decoding Eggers's metanarrative it means that simulacra are more sought after than the true aspect of reality. Eggers is clearly aware of the salability and popularity of simulation of the real in society, therefore he builds his autobiography upon verbal simulations of being a representative; of pretending interest in other people's life, and even on reproducing of his real life events. *A Heartbreaking Work of a Staggering Genius* is an example of how to incorporate simulations in a written work to be able to gratify the post-modern, television influenced audience's demand and desire for simulacra.

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