

Tribhuvan University

Critique of Cyber Culture in Don DeLillo's *Cosmopolis*

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By

Prabha Pokhrel

Symbol No.: 283077

T. U Regd. No: 6-2-479-17-2007

Central Department of English

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Critique of Cyber Culture in Don DeLillo's *Cosmopolis*

– Prabha Pokhrel (April 2018)

Letter of Approval

This thesis, entitled “Critique of Cyber Culture in Don DeLillo’s *Cosmopolis*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Prabha Pokhrel has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

Members of the Research Committee:

Internal Examiner

External Examiner

Head

Central Department of English

Date: _____

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Abstract

The thesis entitled “Critique of Cyber Culture in Don DeLillo’s *Cosmopolis* dramatizes all the possible effects of unrestrained passion and uncritical obsession of the youth in the practice of cyber culture. It explores the interaction of the media, culture that governs the forefront of the narrative. Regarding consumer culture, simulating the constant presence of products and advertisements in consumers’ lives. The protagonist, Eric Packer is obsessed with the chance of making money by betting on the rise of Yen. His intense passion for cyber capital creates unrest and fear in him. He depends on the online news, advertisements, digital archives for information regarding stock exchange and cyber capitals. His lust to the values of latest trends in digital domain and virtual space leads him to the ruinous path. Unpleasant and harsh outcome arise from his reliance on pretend reality, advertisement and digitization of capital. In this way, *Cosmopolis* projects demerits and repercussion of uncritical engagement in the practice of cyber culture.

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I. Representation of Discrepancy of Cyber Practice in *Cosmopolis*

This research analyzes how dreadful cyber culture has become in Don DeLillo's *Cosmopolis*. This research argues the effect on youths' unrestrained critical attachment to the essence and ethos of cyber culture. Cyber culture has become a trend in Don DeLillo's *Cosmopolis*. Moreover, this research explores the interaction of the media and popular culture that directs this paper. None of the characters tend to cultivate passion for true knowledge; rather they are satisfied with the imitation version of reality. They no longer bother to know the instant effect of technology. They are tempted to the virtual reality. Individuals are treated as fragile units beset with hostile facts. Mediated and digitally replicated reality count a lot in the life of Packer, the protagonist of the novel. This research draws the theoretical insights from cyber culture forwarded by Koikawa Kinuyo, Linda Hutcheon and Jean Francois Lyotard.

In this novel, *Cosmopolis* is the story of Eric Packer, a 28-year-old multi-billionaire asset manager who makes an odyssey across midtown Manhattan in order to get a haircut. He drives around in a stretch limo which is richly described as luxurious, spacious and highly technical, filled with television screens and computer monitors, bulletproofed and floored with Carrara marble. It is also cork-lined to eliminate (though unsuccessfully, as Packer notes) the intrusion of street noise.

the protagonist's unrestrained passion for latest fashion, consumer, popular culture and cybernetic practice puts his life in jeopardy. Packer dies with an obsession. Youths expect to lead a meaningful and glamorous life at the cost of established norms to make them dreadful of death. Their uncritical reliance on technological comfort makes them inexperienced to treat chemical leakage lightly.

Rapid mechanization and huge reliance on machine culture weaken the will, passion and free choice of people at large.

The protagonist's limitless passion for fashion, consumer, popular culture and cybernetic practice puts his life in risk. The ideological support of cyber culture is called into question in the novel as Packer, the protagonist. Ultimately he is affected by the fatal effect of toxic leakage. The lack of moderation and self-restraint lead to the disintegration of an individual's role in society.

The protagonist is obsessed with the chance of making more money by betting on the rise of Yen. His intense passion for cyber capital creates unrest and fear in him. He depends on the online news, advertisements, digital archives for information regarding stock exchange, and cyber capitals. He is attached to the values of latest trends in digital domain and virtual space. How can he perceive ground reality in the midst of these obsessive ingredients?

The researcher examines the dreadful effects of cyber culture. Packer's obsessive attachment to cyber capital generates a colossal loss of money which ultimately puts him on the harmful path. He almost lapses into frenzy and random explosion. Unpleasant and harsh outcome arise from his reliance on virtual reality, advertisement and digitalization of capital.

The major thrust of this study is to explore how the protagonist of this novel is affected by the various practices aggressive competition, cyber capital, and risk in stock exchange. In this research, this idea is probed critically within the broader textual framework of this novel.

Don DeLillo produces most of his known work in late twentieth century. His early novels are mainly concerned with illness and sickness faced by people who are trapped in the postmodern society. He also writes on the subjects like terrorist threat,

cultural schizophrenia, post-September 11 scenario and various other fresh issues and themes. His novels deal with miseries faced by people who are trapped in the postmodern society. He raises postmodern genre to the peak of sophistication and art ability by the end of the last century. He then writes mainly on some of the latest trends and fashions. He captures the ethos and shifting trend of present society which is exposed to countless ills and difficulties like creation of society and obsession with death. He is dedicated to the genuine purpose of representing reality in its holistic form. He has achieved the higher level of sophistication and artistry.

Kinuyo Koikawa, the prominent critic of Don DeLillo, makes the following observation regarding to the transgressive power of visual technology which is obviously handled in *Cosmopolis*:

Don DeLillo elaborately depicts the effects of technology on human behavior and consciousness in late capitalism in *Cosmopolis*, where Eric Packer, the main character, is a business tycoon who has an unrivaled ability to manipulate information. Preoccupied with the analysis of data on computer screens, Eric can detect various patterns hidden in the natural order of things, which makes his transaction successful enough for him to say that we have meaning in the world. People eat and sleep in the shadow of what we do. Ultimately he becomes enveloped in the illusion that the world revolves around him.

(1)

DeLillo's reflection on the power of media, and visual technology is obvious in the novel. The portrayal of power is carefully planned and maneuvered. In structuring this dichotomy over the course of the novel, DeLillo leads to read for making the inevitable extension to it.

Aaron Smith maintains that painful sense of numbness projected in *Cosmopolis*. This decentralization and the pervading sense of numbness echoes the numbness of grief. Smith reveals the following truth concerning this aspect of *Cosmopolis*:

Cosmopolis is also a novel, in many ways, about postmodern unmaking. Eric Packer, a young, ruthless multi-billionaire currency analyst and head of an investment fund, is speculating heavily against the yen, which is rising beyond expectations. Eric seems to be undergoing some sort of existential crisis at the beginning of the novel, and has apparently not slept for weeks. On the morning of the novel's action, Eric resolves to cross Manhattan in order to have a haircut in a particular barber shop where his late father used to take him as a boy.

(2)

Various issues are addressed by DeLillo in *Cosmopolis*. From the loss of public sphere to the new dynamics of hegemony, core thematic content appeals to the readers and critics alike. The nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor occupy the forefront of the novel.

Linda S. Kauffman notices lots of sympathetic characters. He expresses the following remarks about sympathy-deserving characters in *Cosmopolis*:

DeLillo does not reconcile myth with fact. Both are part of the counter-narrative, as is false memory and the Internet's rumor, fantasy, and mystical reverberation. In other words, self-deception is part of this psychic geography. No one was more aware than DeLillo of the speed, with which politicians and media pundits transformed the tragedy into spectacle. (2)

Characters are dramatically convincing and life-like. They are really appealing to the audiences at large. DeLillo's representation of painful threat is questionable in the light of the sympathy-deserving characters.

Jen Bartlett says that DeLillo's view on postmodern aesthetics is not explicitly projected in this novel. DeLillo does not aim to document how aestheticians are forced to review the canon of aesthetics. Sander makes the following remarks as to if DeLillo's view is explicitly clear or not:

DeLillo's *Cosmopolis* terminology provided a plethora of iconic images allowing the world outside of New York to experience the event. For the great majority of the world's population, living through 9/11 was a postmodern experience. Although we now inhabit a world irrevocably altered by the events and we claim to have memories of them. (3)

As claimed by Bartlett, the text starts with a third-person narrator and with short and broken sentences in order to stress the sensation of chaos and loss of understanding. Everyone in this story tries to move forward, tries to extract himself or herself from the past.

Although all these critics examined this novel from different perspectives, none of them examines the disruptive effects of unrestrained immersion in cybernetic practices and enterprises. When the cyber culture reaches the climax, people become greedy for materialistic gain. Obsession with death and confusion resulting from the disparity between simulated reality and actual reality grow dramatically. Denial to one's own selfhood becomes the means to achieve instant pleasure quickly. That is why there is connection between the exhausted will of people and dreadful effect of cyber culture. The unregulated hunger for consumption leads to the outbreak of

exhaustion, fear, despair and deviation. Since, the topic of the disruptive effect of innocent immersion in cyber culture is untouched and unexplored.

To conduct the research, the present researcher adopts Baudrillard's view on imitation, Lyotard's perspective on postmodernity and Linda Hutcheon's opinion on postmodern practice. Lyotard says that science and technology has become the tool of exploitation and deception in the emerging world of post-modernity because the prospect of human beings has decreased the view of ethical humanism.

Lyotard defines postmodernism in a somewhat different way. His version of postmodernism differs substantially from other postmodernists. To Lyotard, postmodernism is the collapse of grand narrative. Science as a grand narrative appeared to be the means of domination. In his famous book *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard presents postmodernism as the stepping stone for modernism. Lyotard portrays scientific and technological innovation as a form of domination. Consumers are simply cheated and exploited by the ongoing advancement and innovation in science and technology.

This idea of Lyotard is further explained by Andrew Benjamin. Benjamin makes the following observation the postmodern condition resembles:

The bulk of postmodernist writing. One could say that, often in spite of itself, much postmodernism remains pre-political. Its political credentials –its implication for the existing distribution and legitimacy of power crystallized in state and non-state institutions-remain wholly ambiguous” (65).

Postmodernism is said to be involved the practice of resistance; challenging master narratives with the discourse of others; questioning rather than exploiting cultural

codes; opening closed systems to the heterogeneity of texts. In the era of postmodernism, science has hunted to seek legitimacy via narrative.

In one hand, Lyotard puts science appears as a separate sphere that is no less than grand narrative. On the one hand, science achieves power and legitimacy through narrative. When scientific discourses and claims tend to take the form of grand narrative, those who pursue science began to feel adversely affected by it. Rather than valorizing science as another grand narrative, it would be better to let it function as language game. The concept of language game is crucial in understanding.

Regular library visit and consulting the proper websites facilitate the research work. In addition, the researcher consults different websites and external links to collect the related ideas. The researcher collects all the advices and inducements from the respected teachers and professors. The researcher's own insight can of some help.

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In the era of postmodernism, science has sought to seek legitimacy via narrative. To Lyotard, science appears as a separate sphere that is no less than grand narrative. On the one hand, science achieves power and legitimacy through narrative. When scientific discourses and claims tend to take the form of grand narrative, those who pursue science began to feel adversely affected by it. Rather than valorizing science as another grand narrative, it would be better to let it function as language game. The concept of language game is crucial in understanding Lyotard's notion of postmodernism.

As Hutcheon writes, "Postmodernism is not incredulity toward narrative or myth; on the contrary, it unveils that all knowledge is grounded in such" (57). She goes on to make clear that "what legitimates knowledge in the postmodern condition is how well it performs, or enables a person to perform, in particular roles" (*The Postmodern Condition* 14).

This thesis has been divided into three chapters. In the first chapter, the researcher introduces the topic, elaborates the hypothesis, and quotes different critics' views regarding to the text. In the same chapter, the researcher shows the departure o. too. The second chapter deals with the thorough knowledge of postmodernism and cyber culture and makes a thorough analysis of the text, *Cosmopolis*, by applying the theory of postmodernism. The last chapter contains the conclusive ending of the research.

II. Critique of Cyber culture in DeLillo's *Cosmopolis*

This research examines the effects of youths' unrestrained and unsuspecting attachment to the essence and ethos of cyber culture. In DeLillo's *Cosmopolis*, some of the assumptions and effects of cyber culture are analyzed technically. DeLillo presents the notion and scope of cyber culture in a broad way. He does not represent cyber culture in a limited context.

His theoretical insight is used extensively. His notion of imitation is indispensable to describing the psychological effects of undue alliance with the postmodern passion. The postmodern trend sets the stage for imitation. To simulate is more than to pretend to have what one does not have. Pretension is also one of core component of postmodern imitation. But imitation is more than pretending to have what one does not have. In the simulated state there is the danger of the loss of the real. Baudrillard makes the following remarks regarding to the effect of imitation:

The difference between the real object and imaginary object snaps.

The growing resemblance between the real and the imaginary puts the simulator in jeopardy. The simulator begins to mistake the imaginary as the real. He or she is totally detached from the real. The imaginary begins to perform as the real. The imaginary no longer serves as the substitute of the real but it works as the real. (76)

When the place of the real is taken by the imaginary, the postmodern dreamer is lost in the fictitious world of his fantasy. He or she begins to judge each and every thing from his or her simulated world that is quite detached from the real world. Moreover, the viewers become so detached from the real and normal that they are simply under the illusion whether the real exists or not. There are several factors which compel and tempt citizens to simulate. In the late capitalist –consumer society, the excessive

domination of technology and massive dependence on technology create daily lives of people entirely dreary.

The novel opens with an insomniac Eric, almost infinitely powerful but isolated from the world in his Manhattan triplex, with “no friends he loved enough to harrow with a call” (5). From there, we follow Eric’s ride in his stretch limousine to Hell’s Kitchen, his childhood neighborhood; there, he wants to get a haircut. His relationships with people he meets are detached, based on terse exchanges of sometimes disconnected lines of dialogue. At one point, even the sex Eric has is disembodied and touchless “The man and woman reached completion more or less together, touching neither each other nor themselves” (52). This situation will slowly change through the novel, as Eric searches for some kind of authenticating instance that would materially ground, or territorialize his cybernetic being. But at the beginning, Eric’s spatially isolated and hyper protected existence, his communicative and social detachment, all point to his utter inability to form affective attachments, and to a complete absence of any tangible basis of sociality. Eric, a currency trader, is all about information, and his experiential virtual seems to replicate the virtual flow of financial capital under his control:

He understood how much it meant to him, the roll and flip of data on a screen. It was shallow thinking to maintain that numbers and charts were the cold compression of unruly human energies, every sort of yearning and midnight sweat reduced to lucid units in the financial markets. In fact data itself was soulful and glowing, a dynamic aspect of the life process. This was the eloquence of alphabets and numeric systems, now fully realized in electronic form, in the zero–oneness of the world, the digital imperative that defined every breath of the

planet's living billions. Here was the heave of the biosphere. Our bodies and oceans were here, knowable and whole. (24)

As this passage illustrates, the immateriality of Eric's labor is paralleled by an equal sense of immateriality of his own historical experience. At the same time, Eric's references to the world and the biosphere stress the global reach of his actions. Eric uses to refer to himself to the imperial character of his power and implicitly invokes the sociality the lack of which defines him. Although Eric clearly reduces the materiality and plurality of life to the immaterial sphere of financial speculation, the unruly human energies, as the novel shows, cannot be eliminated: "How things persist, the habits of gravity and time, in this new and fluid reality" (83). These things are omnipresent in the streets that Eric is riding through.

Fed up with the mundane and monotonous lives, the postmodern consumers isolate themselves from the drab and arid world. They prefer to remain in the world of simulated reality. "Confined nostalgically in the simulated world, consumers sometimes try to involve in the murderous acts, dreadful fantasies and formidable delusions" (Baudrillard 74). The moment the connection between the real and the imaginary snaps, the simulator's sufferings starts.

Baudrillard is of the view that the identifying feature of postmodern world is its dependence on technology. Technology has largely structured the postmodern world. "The postmodern world is defined in terms of its heavy reliance upon technology. The narrative of technological progress contains elements which eulogize the possibility of the collective liberation of mankind from their discomforts through the medium of technological advancement" (Baudrillard 101). As a postmodern theorist, Baudrillard dwells upon the darker sides of technological dependence. Baudrillard shows the contexts in which total dependence upon technology turns out

to be counterproductive. By manufacturing and distributing consumer objects in abundance, the late capitalist industries try to glut the market and compel consumers buy goods and commodities.

Moreover, the sharp class divisions that are evidenced in Eric's total separation from the life of the city speak of a further fracturing of the national polity under the pressure of a global economy. This novel work rests on the assumption that the absolutely virtual and self-referential work of financial speculation, where money breeds money, loses from sight the material basis of economy in human labor. This results in, for the figurative carrier of the immaterial labor, a disembodied sense of self and an inability to meaningfully relate to others. Eric's sense of existential inauthenticity, his lack of territorial grounding, his inability to establish affective attachments are thus all closely related.

Here, it is labor in its different forms that emerges as the background against which affective ties are either established or dissolved, and community is consolidated or undermined respectively. This novel assumes the existence of a strong link between economic forms and the forms of sociality. Indeed, *Comopolis* hints at the possibility of grounding community in labor, both in the sense of social activity and social force. Eric's progress in the novel is marked by a gradual transformation during which he destroys his possessions, puts himself in danger, kills and finally, as if in a realization of his deepest desire, gets killed. This narrative progression is paralleled by an equally gradual and ambivalent tendency of the main character to variously ground his immaterial being, in memories, in culture, and in violence.

The shifting notion of knowledge is a gateway to understanding some of the important tenet of postmodernism. Knowledge has become informational commodity in the wake of postmodern scenario. Manufacturing commodities are replaced by the

digitalized or computerized form of knowledge. Hans Bertens has exemplified this kind of postmodernist conception. Bertens elaborates thus:

The scenario in which information replaces the manufacture of material goods as a central concern in the most advanced economies. This computerization of society will affect the nature of our knowledge. It is not very clear how exactly our knowledge will change, but Lyotard offers the prediction that the direction of new research will be dictated by the possibility of its eventual results being translatable into computer language. (119)

Bertens subscribes to the conviction that metanarratives have been replaced by a great number of language games. These language games range from models of discourse, various forms of utterance-denotative, performative, and prescriptive. Narrative language games can accommodate elements such as deontic statements prescribing what should be done with respect to kinship, the difference between the sexes, children, neighbors, and foreigner. Narrative language games have only limited social and historical validity.

As his increasing bent towards violent behavior suggests, Eric can imagine his own immersion into the materiality of communal life and the respective escape from the disembodied existence of finance capital that is, his reterritorialization only through acts of authenticating bodily violence. While Eric consolidates his sense of self through an ambivalent relation to others, who remain alien and essentially empty screens on which Eric's fantasies of otherness are projected, in the process of his transformation the novel registers, if only fragmentarily, other possible societal grounding forces. These variously imagined foundations of the U.S. polity are in *Cosmopolis* multiple and can be read out of several scenes in which Eric experiences

strong affective and experiential responses. Since their progression culminates in the final violent event. At the point near the end of his journey, when entering Hell's Kitchen, Eric runs into the funeral procession of his late friend, Brutha Fez, the Sufi rapper from the Bronx. DeLillo's description of the funeral reads like a theatrical enactment of the cultural hybridity often celebrated as the positive effect of globalization. Brutha Fez's body is:

Lying in the spiral of his own vocal adaptations of ancient Sufi music, rapping in Punjabi and Urdu and in the black swagger English of the street...Then came the break-dancers, in pressed jeans and sneakers, here to affirm the history of the deceased, born Raymond Gathers in the Bronx. (133)

Here, foreign religions and cultures are grafted onto a distinctly American history one, it is important to add, in which the industrialized mainstream of hip hop draws its energy from the urban socio cultural margins thus resulting in a multicultural mix that is, as the world city of New York itself, the emblem of globalization.

Viewed from the normative perspective, this impact seems to be normative. But it is the constant source of jubilation approved within the framework of postmodern context. The postmodern ethos is the ethos of transgression. It is the 'lightning-flash' which illuminates the sky for an instant only to reveal the immensity of the darkness within. Postmodernism is not a gesture of the cut. Whatever transgression takes place, it would further reveal latent primitive instinct in its crude and raw form. David Cooker makes the further disclosure:

Transgression is not limited to the limit as black to white, the prohibited to the lawful, the outside to the inside, or as the open area of a building to its enclosed spaces. Rather their relationship takes the

form of spiral which no simple infraction can exhaust. Perhaps it is like a flash of lightning in the night which, from the beginning of time, gives a dense and black intensity to the night which it denies. (8)

When the surface of normative and the rationally approved conception are torn asunder, what arises outside is the dark forces which, if irrupts sporadically, can render entire human life vulnerable and enervated. The dark forces and instinctive urges put life on the path of anomaly, incompatibility and gruesome track. At the postmodern moment of the eruption of latent primitive and dark forces, people can hover between ecstasy and decay.

The work of mourning occurring here prepares the ground for a potential consolidation of affect, for a community to be. This communal flow of affect revolves around the dead rapper who is himself an incarnated adaptation of other localities to the hegemonic, American one. Through this process of hegemonic adaptation the present locality in effect becomes global. The community to emerge from this process of affective attachment is itself constituted as global. But this community, which will allow Eric to feel at ease for the first time in a long time, is also clearly defined in class terms. The friends and family come in thirty six white stretch limousines, precisely the kind Eric owns. There is the mayor, the police commissioner, as well as the crowd was still learning how to mourn a singular rapper such as Fez, who mixed languages, tempos and themes the mothers of unarmed blacks shot by police, and fellow rappers. . . media executives, foreign dignitaries, faces from film and TV, and. . . figures of world religion in their robes, cowls, kimonos, sandals and soutanes. (134–5)

The crowd is composed, in other words, of the heterogeneous variety we associate with nations. Significantly, this nation of mourners the global hybrid community

overflowing the New York streets collectively gravitates towards the focal point of its consolidation: a dead body defined by a form of empowering cultural adaptation intimately connected with financial gain. Eric becomes one with this hybrid socium and is genuinely moved by the spectacle: “He wept violently. . . He wept The Market Moves Us in Mysterious Way for Fez and everyone here and for himself of course, yielding completely to enormous body sobs” (139). As a part of this post-national, but nationally grounded community, Eric feels “thoughtful acceptance” (139).

Bryan C. Taylor views the effects of postmodern contemplation in the light of the role of media in shaping objects, understanding and strategies of survival. Taylor is of the opinion that the burgeoning media industries are largely responsible for putting people’s power of perception in hazard. Taylor is closer to Baudrillard in dramatizing the effects of how the productions of objects or simulated objects without reference make people getting drowned in the hyperreality. Taylor’s view is reflected in the following citation:

The rise of global media systems whose continuous operations breaks traditional boundaries of space and time exerts powerful influence in the psyche of people. In their cumulative effects, the programs circulated by these systems collapse important distinctions that traditionally have shaped modern cultural identities. These systems create a rapidly shifting phantasm of fragmented, decontextualized information. (4)

According to Taylor, this stimulation does not, however, necessarily produce knowledge or wisdom, but rather hyper-realities with no real referents. These environments are populated by imitations, models, and copies of something else that has no single, original, real source. Postmodernists argue that organizations are

marked by irony, ambiguity, contradiction, and paradoxes that oppress their members by prematurely foreclosing options for understanding and action. As a result, postmodernists adopt the image of fragmentation to characterize some organizational cultures and identities. This condition is presumed to result from several factors.

It is no wonder then that Eric, the novel's figure for the contradictions of globalization, here feels at home. There is another kind of multicultural community that Eric encounters, one that provides him with a model for reterritorialization towards which he is far more ambivalent. The barbershop he is going to is in the neighborhood where Eric's father grew up. Although claiming that "this had never been his home or street, Eric "was feeling what his father would feel, standing in this place" (159). This ambivalence, where Eric both recognizes his belonging to a particular history and purposefully rejects it, is significant, and marks a clear opposition to his willing sense of community with the global crowd at Brutha Fez's funeral. As Eric will state later on, "power works best when there's no memory attached," and the hybrid community of Fez's mourners is less based on common memories than on the common participation in a spectacular event (184).

The barbershop, on the other hand, is suffused with Eric's childhood memories. The old Italian American barber, Anthony Aduvato, who greets Eric "in his working outfit, used to cut Eric's hair when he was a child, and is now telling stories of the working class neighborhood as it once was" (160). There is a third party in the room, Eric's Arab American driver Ibrahim Hamadou. Ibrahim, with a collapsed eye and a scar, represents one of Eric's others that function as bearers of materiality of history: "The man had a history evidently," Eric thinks, "looked wary and prepared, a disposition he'd learned on some sand plain seven hundred years before he was born" (164). Ibrahim's being is thus profoundly historical; it extends to

an unknown but fundamental and violent past. In all these examples, Eric sees violence and its trace, the scar, as marks of historical being. This scene takes place in the old barber shop where Eric faces his own past, his childhood memories, from which he remains disconnected, and does nothing to become a participant in the nostalgic narrative of the barber.

Eric, the embodiment of cyber capitalism, thus renounces his own past and denies his own rootedness in a territorially delimited history. But unlike with other scarred foreigners on Eric's journey, Eric engages in a dialogue with Ibrahim, whose presence eventually facilitates, Eric's newly found and immediately renounced sense of sociality. Anthony and Ibrahim embark on an exchange of common immigrant memories, it turns out they both used to be taxi-drivers at some point in their lives. While the two are conversing about common memories of labor, Eric falls asleep:

In time the voices became a single vowel sound and this would be the medium of his escape, a breathy passage out of the long pall of wakefulness that had marked so many nights. He began to fade, to drop away, and felt a question trembling in the dark some- where. What can be simpler than falling asleep? (165)

Two important moments should be noted in this passage: the voices of Anthony and Ibrahim become a single vowel a community is consolidated here, but of a different kind than the funeral crowd. At the same time, Eric intimates his own death. As opposed to Eric's expropriating and/or violent attempts at establishing societal ties, barber and driver consolidate an affective community through a dialog that, significantly, focuses on their common memories of labor. Clearly, the communal tie is here established along class and gender lines. Eric's renunciation of his memories thus corresponds to his renunciation of a particular form of labor and the corresponding class position.

In his famous book *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault points out how sexuality appears to be the category of concept created by power and power relations. By rejecting repressive hypothesis, Foucault goes on to assert that power not only represses sexuality; it produces new notions of sexuality. Shifting notions of sexuality are actually the effects of complicated circulation of forces, interest of those who are in the position of power and the trend in which institutions have been taking the dominant thought of people. In the ancient Greek society, pederasty, same sex relation and homosexuality arose as the part and parcel of Hellenic life.

Sufficient attention falls on those seeming deviant sexuality. But it was not as deviant as readers are trained to believe. In the Christian era, sexuality was probed in the light of rigid morality. Throughout the early eighteenth and nineteenth century, sexuality was repressed as well as recognized in a new way. Sexuality repression as well as the expression of sexuality in a new way occurred. No matter how productive power might be in redefining prevailing outlook on sexuality, it hardly paves the way for the true sexual freedom.

Sexualities of gays, abnormal and hysterical women were transformed into discourse not with the intention to provide sexual freedom to the excluded and the ostracized but with the intention to manage them, to control them and then to put them under surveillance. The following lines describe Foucault's view about how sex was put into discourse:

For was this transformation of sex into discourse not governed by the endeavor to expel from reality the forms of sexuality that were not amenable to the strict economy of reproduction: to say no to unproductive activities, to banish casual pleasures, to reduce or exclude practice whose object not procreation? Through the various discourses legal

sanctions against minor perversions were multiplied; sexual irregularity was annexed to mental illness. (36)

To the believers in the repressive hypothesis, singular sexuality is repressed. But Foucault puts forward different claim. He argues that various mechanisms of power generated manifold sexualities such as infantile sexualities, homosexuality, sodomy, masturbation and hysteria. The production of manifold sexuality is evidence forwarded by Foucault to show that power is not always repressive but productive too.

Foucault argues that “homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul” (43). Only the sovereign power is starkly repressive. In the disciplinary power and bio-power, power seldom exerts its repressive impact. In an indirect and subtle way, the bio-political mechanism puts everything under control.

Eric at first feels safe in the barbershop; he confides in the men and temporarily finds refuge in the past, only ultimately to abandon it in order to continue his quest for authenticity. This hegemonic community is nevertheless clearly nationally based and fundamentally underwritten by the transnational flow of capital. The novel is thus also a lamentation about the loss of U.S. economic sovereignty due to irrational expansion of financial capital. While registering this sense of loss, *Cosmopolis* also offers an insight into possible common foundations of societal ties: these are ultimately found in the memories of labor, in the waning traces of the materiality of production.

This, however, is not the path Eric, the “citizen of the world with a New York pair of balls,” will take (26). The novel ends with Eric’s murder, which is represented as an event brought about by Eric himself and the system he stands for. As the plot of

Cosmopolis shows, the threat to the totality of the capitalist system ultimately comes from Eric's suicidal speculation with the Japanese yen, and not from the streets teeming with the merely symbolic violence of the anarchist protesters. Eric's self-destructive moves in the sphere of speculation are paralleled by his desire to experience something real and authentic outside the virtuality of currency trade. Thus, Eric acts in opposition to the arguments raised in the offhand lectures of his "chief of theory," and against the advice of his security staff who warn him about the existence of a serious threat to his life: "the credible threat was the thing that moved and quickened him...Now he could begin the business of living" (107). Instead of keeping off the streets, Eric pursues the clues that eventually lead him to his would be assassin. Their encounter in the final scene is another moment in which class features prominently in the novel.

Postmodernism is an umbrella term that is used in different ways by different speakers. Speakers invoking postmodernism are committed to exploring the complex relationships of power, knowledge, and discourse created in the struggle between social groups. Additionally, it is mixed with several other perspectives that challenge the normative and socially approved conduct. According to Richard Tarnas "Postmodernism is an object of celebration and scorn, both in intellectual discourse and in cultural vernacular. Through repeated use and enduring controversy, it has assumed several forms, including a powerful theoretical resource, a political lightning rod and a cultural cliché" (247). The ambiguity of this term stems partly from the enormous work that we ask it do. That work involves adequately conceptualizing and engaging the phenomena of postmodernity.

In one sense it is quite sagacious to claim that "the theoretical doctrine of postmodernism brought a local sense of salvation from the terror of absolutism and

universalistic pretension. Yet it has darker side too. It has its own Achilles heels. The disastrous effects of postmodern thinking are unimaginable and unthinkable” (Tarnas 252). The dread and danger of clinging to the tenet of postmodernism is generative of the detrimental consequences.

Eric’s killer is his former employee, “generic labor, as he is described at one point” (60). Benno Levin or Richard Sheets, who worked for Eric as a currency analyst, confesses before shooting Eric that “your system is so microtimed that I couldn’t keep up with it” (191). Benno is thus a victim of the future-oriented rush of finance capital. It seems to be adamant about the fact that the killer is the product of the system that Eric represents, or, in other words, that the system created the conditions for its own destruction. Although Benno Levin appears deranged, his actions must be understood in this light, as a violent and impersonal return of the system’s reject. The conditions for Eric’s death are ultimately created by the tensions that he actively works to exacerbate: by defining himself against the laboring, scarred and foreign others, by rejecting his childhood memories of a working-class life, and finally by refusing to view the mad assassin as a product of the system he embodies.

Despite the obvious differences, Benno Levin to a certain extent functions as Eric’s double. The two are intimately connected. Russel Scott Valentino has remarked that in the final scene the confronted characters are nearly indistinguishable from each other: “The referent...is at times ambiguous, making it unclear which is original, or at least unclear enough to require specification,” as in the sentence, “The man fired a shot into the ceiling. It startled him. Not Eric; the other, the subject” (153). Although starting from different premises, from the opposite extremes of the corporate food chain, so to speak, Eric and Benno share the same vision of the decisive moment. This is Benno writing on his final act: “This is the vision of the new day. I am determined

finally to act. It is the violent act that makes history and changes everything that came before. But how to imagine the moment?" (154). Benno's thoughts on the event that will change everything thus reflect Eric's desire for the authenticating event.

"Everything in our lives, yours and mine," Benno/Richard says, "Has brought us to this moment" (189). The catastrophic event is thus envisioned as a moment of convergence of disparate life–stories, or incompatible narrative temporalities.

The loss of the real creates many hazards. The loss of the real and the normal put the followers of postmodernism creed in jeopardy. Once the idea that the real no longer exists is firmly entrenched in the mind, people begin to act out of whim, impulse, urge, rash and reckless emotion. The loss of the normal and the normative paves the way for the anarchic indulgence. "Obsessive inclination, morbid proclivity and deviant habit flourish when the postmodern thinking invades the normative spheres of life. The idea of maintaining balance and moderation in one's impulses hardly exist since the dividing line between the normative and the anomalous ceases to demarcate" (Jameson 54). One resembles the other. Clear cut boundaries fade paving the way for the emergence of anarchic irruption obsessive and morbid longings.

Aspects of consumer culture are scattered throughout the narrative. Simulating the constant presence of products and advertisements in consumers' lives constitute the major component of the novel. The view dilemma and ambiguity, the stuff out of which Haraway's cyborg was invoked. Her cyborg imagery contains two fundamental messages: one hand the production of universal, totalizing theory as major mistake and other hand taking responsibility for the social relation of science for anti-science metaphysics. The novelist visualizes:

These were old movies and new movies. Didn't matter. There was the door, there was the kick. She could tell you the actor's middle name, his marital history, the name of the rest home where his abandoned mother dozes in a chair. Always a single kick suffices. The door flies open at once. I left my sunglasses in the car or at the barbershop. I can see myself standing here whispering in vain. Nancy Babich, you fucking cunt. But then again, what? Once he said her name, maybe the firing system became operative for a specified period of time, or until every round was discharged. (80)

Packers, the protagonist obsesses with cyber capital and overconfidence leads to great financial loss. Nancy Babich herself gets dilemma in span of time to specify the marriage. The history of marriage and sex get overall to operate the system but every system gets failure in certain time without good networking. The charge of rest in sensual poses exact non transparent because the protagonist is limited without practical life.

Extreme self-reflexivity is the fatal effect of unrestrained exposure to postmodern thinking. The more an individual is exposed to postmodern practices, the more he or she is tempted to ponder upon oneself. Much more preoccupation with one's self leads to on where. As claimed by Jameson, "Self-reflexivity is no less than isolationist and self-erasing practice ultimately puts one's life in further unprecedented conditions. Unrestrained reflection on one's self begets narcissism, delusions, megalomania and manic depression" (76). Total disconnection from the external world and the subsequent onrush of malaises like split mentality are doubtless the effects of overt exposure to the dreadful doctrine of postmodernism.

As a consequence of implementing postmodern assumptions in practices,

people would lose the normal framework to evaluate what they are doing and where they are heading. The followers of postmodern mentality are ignorant about the fact that there is an ironic disparity between their thoughts and deeds. The growing ironic characteristics of “postmodern existence renders the life entirely parodic. Parodic and ironic sense of life is doubtless the effects of postmodern practices. The breakdown between high and low cultural forms is facilitated by the pervasive influence of postmodernism” (Jameson 63). When people give follow on the footsteps of postmodernism, what they encounter is the culture of pandering to their violent spree and fervent passions that are invincible. The socio-cultural trend to cater to one’s ego, impulse and fervent longing at the cost of normative ethics takes momentum. The more people plunge into the morass of postmodern pride and prejudice, the more they lose freedom and finally become trapped in the maelstrom of chaos and confusion.

The separation is emphasized in Eric’s ability to literally see the future, while Benno or Richard, in his written fragments, remains focused on his past life. Before being shot, Eric looks at his digital watch, which is also a camera that is now recording the event: “There was an image; a face on the crystal, and it was his” (204). Then, he sees “a body now, faces down on the floor” (205). But the sight is incomprehensible: “Whose body and when? Have all the worlds conflated, all possible states become present at once?” (205) Here, in a hyperbolic embodiment of his future-oriented speculative imagination, Eric sees his own death, and, after that, his vault and his unidentified body in the morgue (206). Eric experiences his own death ambivalently. On the one hand, it represents the realization of the liberatory promise of disembodied cyber-capital: “He’d always wanted to become quantum dust, transcending his body mass, the soft tissue over the bones, the muscle and fat” (206). The future-oriented labor of financial speculation here achieves evolutionary

force: “It would be the master thrust of cyber–capital, to extend the human experience toward infinity as a medium for corporate growth and investment, for the accumulation of profits and vigorous reinvestment. But his pain interfered with his immortality” (207).

Although capital in Eric’s final vision guarantees transcendence, it does not seem to be able to overcome the ultimate material limit that resists its disembodied tendency: the body. Eric lists material, every day, bodily stuff that defines him, concluding: “He’d come to know himself, untranslatably, through his pain” (207). In the closing scene, extreme bodily experience is posited as the limit of the deterritorializing expansion of capital. Materiality of life in its bare form becomes for Eric the oppositional territorializing force, the ultimate obstacle to the smooth flow of global capital. If *Cosmopolis* offers a critique of a thoroughly financialized transnational economy, it also variously attempts to territorially ground—and thus bring back to life—what it posits as a deterritorialized national community. Death and bodily destruction that figure as the limits to the expansive movement of capital point to an imaginative double bind defining the U.S. liberal consciousness; one that condemns the effects neoliberal globalization has on the national polity, and simultaneously casts a nostalgic look at the possibility of resuscitation of an economically safe form of American nation–ness. But, the material labor that this novel offers as a possible basis for a post–national national consolidation, in a globalized economy, belongs irrevocably to transnational others.

Postmodern art follows and then challenges such principles as value, order, meaning, control, and identity. These have been the basic premises of bourgeois liberalism. Those humanistic principles are still operative in our culture, but for many they are no longer seen as eternal and unchallengeable. Regarding to this line of

reasoning, Linda Hutcheon makes the following remarks:

The contradictions of both postmodern theory and practice are positioned within the system and yet work to allow its premises to be seen as fictions or as ideological structures. This does not necessarily destroy their “truth” value, but it does define the conditions of that truth. Such a process reveals rather than conceals the tracks of the signifying systems that constitute our world. However important these systems are, they are not natural, given, or universal. (13)

Postmodernist critique must acknowledge its own position as an ideology. The formal and thematic contradictions of postmodern art and theory work to do just that. It calls attention to both what is being challenged and what is being offered as a critical response. It is criticism which would include in its own discourse an implicit reflection upon itself. It is this kind of self-implicating questioning that should allow postmodernist theorizing to challenge narratives that do presume to master status, without necessarily assuming that status for itself.

Linda Hutcheon points out how the question of identity and a cause and effect relation are involved in the logic of postmodernism. Concentrating on this aspect, Hutcheon makes the following remarks:

A poetics of postmodernism would not present any relation of causality or identity either among the arts or between art and theory. It would merely offer, as provisional hypotheses, perceived overlapping of concern, and here specifically with regard to the contradictions that I see as characterizing postmodernism. It would be a matter of reading literature through its surrounding theoretical discourses, rather than as continuous with theory. (15)

It means blaming art for having created an ingrown theory wherein specific critical and literary trends supported each other into a hegemonic network. The interaction of theory and practice in postmodernism is a complex one of shared responses to common sayings.

It would not be difficult to figure out what postmodernism challenges and what attempts at change it offers a list: cultural democratizing of high/low art distinctions and a new moral instruction, potentially radical political questioning, contextualizing theories of the complexity of art, and a contesting of visions. In fact Charles Russell argues precisely this:

Postmodern literature recognizes that all perception, cognition, action, and articulation are shaped, if not determined, by the social domain.

There can be no simple opposition to culture, no transcendent perspective or language, no secure singular self-definition, for all find their meaning only within a social framework. (51)

Clearly it all depends on who is valorizing what in this kind of theory of a break between the modern and the postmodern. The other school of thought argues a relationship of continuity or extension between the two.

Cosmopolis also sheds light on what happens with the advent of cyber- capital. It explains that “the more visionary the idea, the more people it leaves behind. This is what the protest is all about. Visions of technology and wealth.” (6) Money in electronic form is playing an essential role in dominating and oppressing the average person. There becomes less space for ordinary people in cyber- transactions. Furthermore, cyber-capital helps multinational transactions to easily bring about “a wholeness, a sameness.” (7) For example, not only Coca-Cola and McDonald’s but also Apple’s products are ubiquitous. We can see the actual individual subject

engulfed in a society of a wholeness and a sameness in the capitalist system. Moreover, “cyber-capital . . . creates the future. Because time is a corporate asset now. It belongs to the market system. The present is hard to find. . . . The future becomes insistent.” (8) People are threatened by a fear of the loss of a sense of space, time and being. Therefore, violent demonstrations against capitalism erupt to break out of such a stultifying capitalism and restore their balance.

Eric trusts computer analysis so much that he rides around in a limousine with leading-edge medical equipment, which provides him with great satisfaction because he sees “a medleys of data on every screen, all the flowing symbols and alpine charts, the polychrome numbers pulsing” (9) while his body is connected to such devices. He gains a sense of even physical health and security by checking data on computer monitors not only in his office but also in his limousine. He has indeed become addicted to technology. His close but risky connection to data is clearly attested to by his response to market quotes on the tickers of the tower. When anti-capitalist protesters attack the tower, the market quotes disappear from the ticker, and he suddenly loses his belief in technology. Surprisingly, however, as soon as the tickers begin to work again, he is revitalized. It goes without saying that his personal existence is enormously fragile in that it heavily depends on virtual data on computer screens.

Regarding to the role of adaptation, Linda Hutcheon says that “In the telling mode—in narrative literature, for example—our engagement begins in the realm of imagination, which is simultaneously controlled by the selected, directing words of the text and liberated— that is, unconstrained by the limits of the visual or aural”(23). Hutcheon adds the following view in this regard:

We can stop reading at any point; we can re-read or skip ahead; we

hold the book in our hands and feel, as well as see, how much of the story remains to be read. But with the move to the mode of showing, as in film and stage adaptations, we are caught in forward driving story. And we have moved from the imagination to the realm of direct perception—with its mix of both detail and broad focus. (23)

Visual and gestural representations are rich in complex associations. Music offers aural equivalents for characters' emotions. It provokes affective responses in the audience. Sound can enhance, reinforce, or even contradict the visual and verbal aspects. On the other hand, however, a shown dramatization cannot approximate the complicated verbal play of poetry or the interlinking of description, narration, and explanation.

Identifying postmodern texts is a matter of determining which elements within them are especially dominant, in this sense. In Bran Nicol's view, the most important features found in postmodern texts are:

A self-reflexive acknowledgement of a text's own status as constructed, aesthetic arte-fact an implicit critique of realist approaches both to narrative and to representing a fictional 'world' a tendency to draw the reader's attention to his or her own process of interpretation as s/he reads the text. The reason why the concept of the dominant is useful is that none of these features are exclusive to postmodern fiction. (18)

It is also important to consider how these dominant features correspond to the specific historical context of postmodernism. Certain social and cultural factors have caused them to be more dominant than they are in modernism. The trend to excess, waste and sense of anarchic happiness receives momentum in the high days of postmodernism.

The postmodern trend opens a new avenue for nihilism.

Cosmopolis focuses particularly on immortality in cyber space. Eric is deeply addicted to technology, which gives him the delusion of living forever. He wants to achieve an existence external to his own body. His idea of immortality in cyber-space is invoked when he talks with his assistant, Kinski, who introduces the following prophecy: “People will not die. . . . People will be absorbed in streams of information. . . . Humans and computers merge. . . . An idea beyond the body.” (11) This speculation that humans will become immortal after the merger of computers and humans sounds incredible, but it drives him forward with an irresistible desire for eternal life. He says that he has “always wanted to become quantum dust, transcending his body mass, the soft tissue over the bones, the muscle and fat.” (12) He fantasizes continually about living for ever in cyberspace.

Where does Eric’s firm belief in immortality in cyberspace come from? The idea that immortality can be obtained by uploading one’s data into a computer is a fantastic notion based on our desires in various fictions and philosophies. This notion clearly can be derived most directly, however, from the theory of cybernetics introduced by Norbert Wiener, an American mathematician – simply put, the concept that humans and technology can be fused, popular in the late 20th century. According to Wiener, if human functions are saved onto a disk in data format and then uploaded to another device, human functions can be duplicated on the storage device. If this theory can be made to work in Eric’s individual case, he can theoretically live forever by converting his body functionality into some sort of pulse data. Even if Eric becomes immortal in a virtual society, however, can we say that his existence is eternal? Ironically, when he is shot by a fired former employee, he sees himself on his high-tech watch screen, even though he is still alive. He exists on the border of

immortality and mortality. Instead of feeling a sense of satisfaction, he feels unbearable pain.

The gradual loss of established norms of aesthetics generates nihilistic impact. To certain time span, the atheistic trend gives the unique dose of freedom from the restrictive measures of universalistic pretensions. But in the long run, its adverse impact appears in the prospect of humanity. Viewed from the normative perspective, this impact seems to be normative. But it is the constant source of happiness approved within the framework of postmodern context.

The postmodern ethos is the ethos of challenging the tradition. It is the 'lightning-flash' which brightens the sky for an instant only to reveal the immensity of the darkness within. Whatever transgression takes place, it would further reveal hidden primitive instinct in its crude and raw form. In this regard, Bran Nicol illustrates this issue in the following way:

Postmodernism rests on the assumption that fiction – no matter how realist or experimental. Transcription is in fact impossible because the act of representing something external to the text actually ensures that a separate, aesthetic version of it is created in the pages of the novel.

The mode of consuming culture has veered off to an unexpected direction. (23)

When the surface of normative and the rationally approved conception are torn apart, what arises outside is the dark forces which, if irrupts suddenly, can make entire human life vulnerable. The dark forces and instinctive urges put life on the path of abnormality. At the postmodern moment of the eruption of latent primitive and dark forces, people can move and fro between ecstasy and agony. When the primitive instinct and passion come out in an irresistible way, people will have to live on the

violent edge. They will have no option other than getting lost between fascination and lament. The calm and tranquil psyche can be made violent, restless and hallucinogenic.

According to Ross, “popular music and movies began to exert a greater influence on adolescents, questioning the norms and illusions of the affluent society to which many belonged. By packaging the culture of delinquency in a marketable form, popular culture of the mid-Fifties challenged the generation of outdated parents and advocated a spirit of fun and adventure” (87). It came to represent the burgeoning teenage culture of the Fifties.

Thus, it can be concluded that unrestrained immersion in practice of cyber culture yields unexpected dreadful consequence. A crass marketing term becomes transformed into something mystical and beautiful, despite the genuine expectation of people. Individuals are likely to degenerate into a fragile unit beset with hostile facts. No access to true knowledge is found. Only the flood of arid facts and boring information circulate.

III. Constraints of Cyber Culture in *Cosmopolis*

The core finding of this research is that cyber culture produce damaging and painkilling effects in those who followed unduly its cult and spree. DeLillo's *Cosmopolis* documents some of the cases of how human dignity and decent concern for creativity are badly affected by youths' uncritical and excessive indulgence in practice of cyber culture. This novel presents dramatically the worst effects caused by the unrestrained immersion and assimilation of practice of cyber culture like digital mode of communication, simulated reality and artificial means of entertainment.

Packer's voyage is obstructed by various traffic jams caused by a presidential visit to the city, a full-fledged anti-capitalist riot, and a funeral procession for a Sufi-rap star. Along the way, the hero has several chance meetings with his wife and sexual encounters with other women. Packer is also stalked by two men, a comical "pastry assassin" and an unstable "credible threat". Through the course of the day, the protagonist loses incredible amounts of money for his clients by betting against the rise of the yen.

Billionaire Eric Packer (Pattinson) rides slowly across Manhattan in his limousine that he uses as his office while on his way to his preferred barber, even though there are traffic jams. The traffic jams are caused by a visit of the president of the United States and by the funeral of Eric's favourite musician, whose music he plays in one of his two private elevators. He has recently married. In the car and elsewhere, he has meetings with his wife, who does not want sex with him, to save energy that she needs for her work. Instead, he has sex with other women. In his car, while having a meeting, he has his doctor carry out his daily medical checkup; Eric worries about the doctor's finding that he has an asymmetrical prostate.

Thus, it can be summed up that this novel foregrounds the unexpected effects which can arise from an individual's unrestrained immersion and engagement in the cult of handling life dictated by institutions of cyber culture. Since no normative ethics and values are credited by doctrine of cyber culture, unrestrained immersion in the ethos of cyber culture leads to the degradation of an individual's psyche.

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