

INTRODUCTION

The world is everything that is the case. The world is the totality of facts, not of things. (Wittgenstein 31)

In the process of accommodating this concrete human corporeality, the entire remaining world also takes on new meaning and concrete reality, a new materiality; it enters into a contact with human beings that is no longer symbolic but material. Here the human body becomes a concrete measuring rod for the world, the measurer of the world's weight and of its value for the individual. (Bakhtin 170-71)

Western philosophy has betrayed the body; it has actively participated in the great process of metaphorization that has *abandoned* the body; and it has *denied* the body. The living body, being at once 'subject' and 'object', cannot tolerate such conceptual division... (Lefebvre 407; emphasis in original)

This dissertation examines the logic of the corporeal, paying specific attention to the entanglements of the body with matter and metaphor making. It revisits some of the assumptions made in new materialist and posthumanist claims on the body and its various ramifications. The thesis proposes that facts do not pre-exist either materials or metaphors, suggesting instead that the body acquires meaning through entanglements.

We inhabit a world of infinite number of entities and events. Comprehending such a 'messy' reality involves, first of all, categorizing it. Philosophers, scientists and cultural theorists, among others, offer interpretative frameworks to understand the 'making' of meaning out of matter. This brings to the fore categories and classifications that presuppose hermetically sealed structures. From a 'classical' point of view, a category is a set of entities that have a common or finite set of properties. This view assumes (a) that categories have ontologically predetermined boundaries, and (b) that entities either belong to a category or they do not. Such a framework is implicated in questions of power and privilege, for classifications are crucial to structures of knowledge that pigeonhole ontologies into convenient taxonomies. In other words, categories are not neutral containers. They reflect the ways in which we make sense of the world, ways conditioned by our culture, language, and experiences. For a while now, this view has weighed down the Euro-Western assumptions about humans and the non/other-than-human material

world. It has prioritised the deterministic view of binaries—the most notable work here is that of René Descartes—that seeks to privilege gestures of oppositionality amid categories. The current dissertation revisits this position by looking at literary narratives that offer complex and fictional matrices where a dialectic may be articulated.

The thesis is premised on a philosophical position that interrogates the binaries to convey the finitude of such systems of classification and knowledge processing. As a theoretical trope, it engages with the logic of the corporeal that unsettles the putative divide between ‘mind and body,’ ‘meaning and matter,’ ‘culture and nature,’ among others. The thesis looks at select novels of Thomas Pynchon (b. May 8, 1937) and Don DeLillo (b. November 20, 1936). Both Pynchon and DeLillo are writers deeply aware of the dominant discourses of their times. Their work incorporates a polyphonic narrative where fact and fabulation are endlessly entangled. In this, it has been argued, fictional work conveys a production of possibilities by imagining alternate forms of representation against constructivist approaches of meaning making. In a way, this ‘intersectional’ quality of their fiction complicates the relationship between fantasy and facticity, historical events and fictional episodes, pushing us to recognise ambivalence and indeterminacy. This has tied their work into the conceptual category of postmodernist storytelling that playfully problematises the hegemonic orders of meaning and narrativity. In this reading, however, the figurative is not seen as antithetical to materialities, but as informed by an entangled interdependency.

Both Pynchon and DeLillo invite attention to the situatedness of the individual amidst networks of signifying practices that forms, re-forms and de-forms the experiencing subject. In so doing, the chosen literary narratives inscribe a corporeal mutability which supports this thesis’ primary contention against organically founded fixities. The texts illustrate a coming together of privately perceived awareness and socially articulated sense of the self. The dissertation looks at literary production in relation to the cultural formations of their time. In this sense, Pynchon and DeLillo extend powerful portents of postmodernity: “the public world dissolves as fact and fiction blend, history becomes derealized by media into a happening, science takes its own models as the only accessible reality, cybernetics confronts us with the enigma of artificial intelligence, and technologies project our perceptions to the edge of the receding universe or into the ghostly interstices of matter” (Hassan 93). By focusing on the experiential and embodied categories, the thesis investigates the convergence between the organic and the

inorganic, the visceral and the virtual integers. The reading situates this positionality as essentially underpinned by a landscape “caught in the process of planetization, transhumanization” (Hassan 93). Drawing on analytical perspectives from literary criticism and cultural theory, this project situates the body in a network of encounters. It foregrounds a dialectic against the singular and bounded idea of the body by re-directing attention to contact zones and interfaces that inscribe corporeal entanglements.

Background of the Study

This dissertation invokes “a turn to the body” while investigating the logic of the corporeal. It is informed by recent developments in the social sciences—more specifically in sociology and cultural theory—that have focalised the lived body’s embeddedness in the environment. Within this perspective, engagements with the body as a vehicle of investigation has illustrated its capacity for thinking and experiencing in ways that unsettle the implicit Cartesianism. In disciplines such as Body Studies, recent research suggests the need to turn to the “senses and sentient body for framing relationships between the body and social and cultural processes” (Blackman 84). The thesis draws substantially on this position to theorise corporeality and matter across different sites, locations and practices. The development of this perspective coincided with the onset of “new” biology defined primarily by the Human Genome Project (1990-2003). This coming together reveals the trans-disciplinarity of the body. The uptakes of this alliance define the spirit of feminist theories of the body, theories of health/illness management and the medicalised body, studies of embodied emotions and affect, etc. In these sub-fields of inquiry, the physicality of the body emerged as a contested category against its proneness to symbolic registers.

The cultural condition at the turn of the last century coincided with the advancements in technological media (telephone, television, automobile, aircraft and computers). With these developments, bodies have been ontologically reconfigured by print, photographic, film, audio or digital technologies through processes of production and endless replication. The research in biogenetics and biomedical technologies have redefined the corporeal at a molecular level. In the laboratory work of genetic enhancement and gene therapy, for instance, the body becomes an object of technological gaze. The transaction between human and machine—say, the corporeal and the computational—transforms the ways in which thoughts, feelings, emotions and psychic

representations inform subjectivities and constitute personhoods. This has unsettled the essential organicity of the human that historically served anthropocentrism in different ways. Recent research in Science and Technology Studies (STS), Cognitive Neuroscience and Posthuman Philosophy has offered perspectives to interrogate the body as a site of endless entanglements. These are locations from which this dissertation derives strategies to situate the relationality and interconnectedness exhibited by the body. Critics and theorists have acknowledged the ways in which fiction combines discourse with lived realities. The current reading builds on this argument to analyse the transgressed borderline between interiority and exteriority, embodiment and disembodied conditions.

A Note on the Corpus

The dissertation accepts the point that the fictional frame is uniquely equipped to explore the convergence of events (material) and experience (affective). As such, it engages with the representational medium of the literary novel. The texts chosen for this project are interpreted in relation to the immediate cultural underpinnings. The corpus constitutes five American novels published between 1973 and 2013. In a way, these forty years signify significant shifts in the cultural climate of the US and the world. The dissertation begins with Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), a novel that signals the end of the most productive phase of postmodernist fiction and the beginning of a materially oriented and socially situated corpus. It ends with Pynchon's recent novel *Bleeding Edge* (2013) that informs the culmination of a posthuman entanglement. The other three novels are written by Don DeLillo: *White Noise* (1985), *The Body Artist* (2001), *Cosmopolis* (2003). These texts are situated across chronological contexts that illustrate a gradual shift in the dominant cultural imaginaries. The texts connect the cultural with the existential in ways that redefine the location of the subjects. It emerges as a fundamental premise for this thesis to look at the logic of the corporeal.

To start with, it is necessary to explain the logic behind the pairing of the two contemporary American novelists: Thomas Pynchon and Don DeLillo. In "Don DeLillo and 'the American mystery': *Underworld*", Tony Tanner describes DeLillo to have followed "in the master's footsteps" (214). The master being referred to here is Pynchon. While we do not wish to invoke the idea of apprenticeship, we do believe that Tanner's claim alerts us to a significant connection in contemporary American literature, one that yields from conventional topographies an ambiguous world of possibilities. In 2003,

Harold Bloom talks of Pynchon and DeLillo to be among the four great American novelists of his time (along with Philip Roth and Cormac McCarthy). Bloom claims this in an essay titled “Dumbing Down American Readers” which appeared in *Boston Globe*. The essay triggered a spate of controversies among critics and readers, but the association it made among writers defined the aesthetic preoccupations of their writing. The contextual affinities of their corpus have led Pynchon and DeLillo to be grouped together on more occasions than one (See McHale 1992; Allen 1994; Apter 2006; Kelly 2011; Gourley 2014). On this ground—that they communicate with each other intertextually to convey questions of embodied subjectivity and the mutations thereof—the dissertation defends the pairing of these authors.

Joseph Tabbi argues that these authors (along with Norman Mailer and Joseph McElroy) “share an exemplary willingness to push beyond the limits of the literary, to bring their writing into contact with a nonverbal technological reality” (xi). While Pynchon, who started off his writing career before DeLillo, anticipates the cultures of capitalist consumption, the open-source technology of the cyberspace and the nonhuman turn, the latter invokes the unprecedented sway of the hyperreal along with a poetics of the Anthropocene. Both authors consolidate the symbolic capital of American postmodernity. Their novels complicate the cartography of the corporeal that defines the embodied engagement with the world. The current reading intervenes in this by mapping the logic of the corporeal in select novels of Pynchon and DeLillo.

Objectives

- To examine how the human body has been entangled with other bodies [human and nonhuman, animate and inanimate, living and non-living];
- To analyse the ways in which the body exhibits a ‘plasticity’ that unsettles any singular or bounded notions of the self;
- To situate the body as a multivalent, transcorporeal and protean trope that corresponds to a perpetual sense of becoming, instead of being;
- To study the ways in which the novels under scrutiny present the ‘cultural’ and the ‘literary’ in asymmetric combinations and use the configurations to investigate ‘experiential’ and ‘embodied’ categories of specific landscapes; and
- To offer a platform to understand corporeal entanglements not just as medical/material phenomena but as philosophical situations.

Hypotheses

The dissertation begins with the following hypotheses:

- That Pynchon and DeLillo offer a narrative reasoning to understand the ways in which the individual connect with extra/more-than-human artifacts. Their work does so by reorienting us towards the physicality of the body. It pushes us to recognise that material interpellations are constantly re-configured apropos of the cognitive schema of a feeling individual;
- That their work alerts us to the dominant discourses of their time. In so doing, the novels dramatize the convergence between materiality and discursivity of the current cultural climate. This connects closely with questions of postmodern technology, the nonhuman and planetary time in relation to the dominant epistemologies;
- That the interface between culture and the literary emerges as an ambivalent frame where the privately embodied individual is simultaneously portrayed as an embedded and extended entity that connects with the public spaces; and
- That such fictional formations foreground intersubjectivity and intercorporeal encounters which seek to redefine what it means to be human. As such, fiction provides scope to situate key philosophical questions into relevant perspectives.

Methodology

This research is qualitative in its approach. It frames the body as a theoretical trope to engage with works of fiction. The thesis focuses on the interpretive scope the body offers by adopting critical/conceptual imports from different disciplines. In particular, it derives analytical strategies from body studies, critical posthumanism, affect studies, science and technology studies, cognitive poetics and environmental humanities, among other allied subdisciplines to look at representations of corporeal cohabitations. The thesis undertakes a close reading of select novels by Thomas Pynchon and Don DeLillo. It is a textual analysis of literary narratives that critique as well as consolidate immediate cultural formations. The dissertation builds on the possibility the fictional frame offers to investigate the ways in which the body is situated and informed by cultural systems and signifiers of dominant epistemologies.

Review of Literature

The works of Thomas Pynchon and Don DeLillo have received considerable critical attention. The stylistic features of their corpus show an aesthetic preoccupation with postmodern storytelling. This thesis, however, resists such a reading, for it privileges the view that rendering the postmodern into academic research would be “to emphasize the ‘inevitable’ closure of limits” (Nealon 2), against the open-endedness and indeterminacy of its enterprise. While critical engagements with the formal and aesthetic innovations in Pynchon’s work has elicited an “over-zealous celebration of the postmodern” (Thomas, *Pynchon* 10), investments at understanding his semiotic frame show that DeLillo writes about “postindustrial culture, America in the age of information and communications” (LeClair, *Loop* ix). Both authors accommodate insightful portrayals of the contemporary American culture. While previous readings have focalised the body as a simulation in the sequence of a pervasive hyperreality (Lentricchia 1991; O’Donnell 1992), recent turns in the criticism evince attempts to interrogate themes of the spiritual (Kavadlo 2004) and political order (Gourley 2013). The current reading draws substantially on these trajectories, but with the awareness that frames for reading the symbolic social order merely as a construct of machines and their simulacra have downplayed the complexity of the corporeal. It locates in this a serious interruption that diminishes our appreciation of the writers’ accomplishment. The rationale of our enquiry begins at this juncture which seeks to interrogate the embodied spaces, mediated social relations and the making and unmaking of the subject in DeLillo and Pynchon’s creative universe.

Kavadlo’s work resists the postmodernist literary and narrative theories by shifting attention to the “spiritual yearning that will transcend our present state, just as it has preceded it” (154) in DeLillo’s corpus. In Dwight Eddins’ *The Gnostic Pynchon* (1990), the author extends a similar engagement with the spiritual in Pynchon. Pynchon’s work, for him, projects “a fluctuating tension between nostalgia for cosmic harmony and commitment to amoral power worship, superimposed upon the fluctuating tension between the notion of a neutral, structureless universe and that of a universe infiltrated by insidious structures of Control” (Eddins 8). These works communicate the inadequacy of privileging the postmodern conceit in Pynchon and DeLillo. James Gourley builds a case on this by invoking thematic connections and consciousness the authors share. He attends to the ontology of 9/11 as a fractured point in time and examines the ways in which Pynchon and DeLillo’s fiction convey distorted temporalities. His work reinforces

the link between the two novelists by focusing on the historical materiality of fear and paranoia that their novels are riddled with. The antecedent to such a critical enterprise maybe seen in Shawn Smith's *Pynchon and History* (2005) which situate the politics of form alongside historical insights. David Cowart's *Thomas Pynchon and the Dark Passages of History* (2011) is of a similar ilk as well. Both works serve to signify the necessity of engaging with the materiality of events against postmodernism's alleged ahistoricity.

In *Narcistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (1980), Linda Hutcheon analyses the ambiguity and undecidability associated with the novelistic world. She recognises the way in which fiction "tends more to play with the possibilities of meaning (from degree zero to plurisignification) and of form (from minimalist narrative to galloping diegesis)" (Hutcheon xiii). Hutcheon acknowledges that such formations are suggestive of the postmodernist play of meanings where the reader becomes a co-producer of the text. For her, narrative narcissism includes "the use of illustrations and footnotes, the demand for moral content, adventures, suspense, the time conventions, the writer's power, the critic's demands, chapter divisions, the use of prefaces, cover pages, digressions, (as well as) stylistic uniformity" (Hutcheon 52). Pynchon inspired critics to interpret his fictions in light of the aesthetics of postmodernity. This is evident in the scholarship of the 1980s. David Cowart's *Thomas Pynchon: The Art of Allusion* (1980) remains a magisterial work that introduced the readers to Pynchon's aesthetic preoccupation. His work demonstrates a move to unpack the narrative ambiguities associated with the writer by re-contextualising the postmodern ludic.

Around this time, John O. Stark's *Thomas Pynchon and the Literature of Information* (1980) came out too. Such works shed clarifying light on Pynchon, a writer whose corpus has overwhelmed the readers for a while. By this time, however, the writer has drawn serious critical attention from two major American academics: Richard Poirier and Tony Tanner. In 1976, Poirier projects Pynchon into the tradition of great American writers which includes, among others, Hawthorne, Emerson and Melville. For him, Pynchon embodies "a distinctly American vision" (Poirier, "Pynchon" 162); while for Tanner, he "writes both to demonstrate the need for fictions and to impugn or revoke their validity" (*City* 173). The connection that Tanner draws between Pynchon and Henry Adams, Nathaniel West, William Faulkner and Dashiell Hammett, among others, reiterates Pynchon's position in the American canon. He also defends the novelist against

the overarching arcs of postmodern playfulness: “Pynchon does produce a serious study of the state of consciousness in contemporary America, while a writer like Barth, who opts to emphasize his mockery of plots at an extreme, excessively plotted length, seems to me to fall away from seriousness without discovering any compensating new sources of interest or beguilement” (Tanner, *City* 180). That Pynchon’s writing evokes “a state of affairs in which authentic inter-subjectivity has all but vanished” (Tanner, *City* 180) is a point this thesis takes great heart from.

The years that followed saw the publication of titles that put great stock in the fictional discourse of this writer. George Levine and David Leverenz brought out *Mindful Pleasures: Essays on Thomas Pynchon* (1976), a volume that brings together many of the early critical assessments of Pynchon’s genius, including those of Poirier’s and Tanner’s, to extend “tentative gestures in the direction of a richer experience of Pynchon’s fiction” (9). The essays in this volume recast the writer attuned to the complexities of contemporary experience. It was followed by William Plater’s monograph *The Grim Phoenix: Reconstructing Thomas Pynchon* (1978). The book begins by referring to Pynchon’s preoccupation with entropy, a concept which originated in physics. He took to the idea to produce his most anthologised and celebrated short story by the same name. It appeared in *The Kenyon Review* (vol. 22, no. 2) in 1960 and was subsequently anthologised in *Slow Learner* (1984). As a narrative trope, the entropy has become central to Pynchon’s oeuvre in the decades that followed. Pynchon has adopted the concept “not in isolation but in their cultural contexts, of which science is only one aspect” (Plater 3). In his work, the entropy “measures the disorganization of a closed system” and “its capacity to change” (Plater 3). The current thesis prioritises such a statement in analysing the ways in which Pynchon challenges the essentialist epistemologies and articulates a poetics of relationality.

In the year 1988, David Seed’s *The Fictional Labyrinths of Thomas Pynchon* came out which served to situate the formal ambiguities around Pynchon in relevant contexts. John Dugdale talks of the political contexts that Pynchon invokes. He draws our attention to the ways in which the author communicates the construction and unravelling of the American political order. This is evidenced by “a political subtext, which is the result of coded references to events, personalities, ideas, parallels or dangers which they are reluctant to mention or describe openly” (Dugdale 5). Dugdale separates this from artistic subtext of allusions. Recent works such as Martin Paul Eve’s *Pynchon and Philosophy*

(2014), Joanna Freer's *Thomas Pynchon and American Counterculture* (2014) further contextualise Pynchon scholarship. To this, Hanjo Berressem's contribution particularly stands out for its timely recognition that Pynchon is playing with the semiotics of different media, most notably of celluloid. This he illustrates in the context of *Gravity's Rainbow*: "Pynchon stages such intricate games within movie conventions, structures, and references, in a constant assembly and disassembly of filmic modes. This strategy creates an oscillating and unsettling narrative space in which thetic positions are continually transposed and shifted among various media, without ever reaching either a stable reality or representational stability" (Berressem 161). The current dissertation builds on this to look at ontological instabilities in the novel.

The recent trends in Pynchon criticism shows a perspectival nod to the ethical turn in postmodernity. This turn suggests the necessity to revisit postmodernist fiction to see the social, political and ideological investments. Such a position is prescient in the works Zygmunt Bauman, among others. By acknowledging "*the incurable uncertainty and ambivalence of the human condition laid bare by the postmodern transformations*" ("Prospects" 15; emphasis in original), Bauman suggests that "[a]mbivalence is the only soil in which morality can grow" ("Prospects" 22). His work on postmodern ethics signals a perspective that binds literature with lived realities. In "Modernity: An Unfinished Project" (1980), Jürgen Habermas advocates a similar move by suggesting an interpenetration of "autonomously articulated cultural spheres" ("Modernity" 49). This, he argues, is crucial for "the communicative praxis of everyday life" ("Modernity" 49). Habermas reasserts this point while extending the theory of communicative action. His position against sharply demarcated taxonomies is congenial to the conceptual vocabulary of this dissertation. This is implicated in his claim that critical theory "must refrain from critically evaluating and normatively ordering totalities, forms of life and cultures, and life-contexts" (Habermas, *Lifeworld* 383). Such a perspective remains instructive to the scholarly engagements with DeLillo in the 1990s.

Around this time, a substantial body of work emerged to solidify the reputation and critical relevance of Don DeLillo's novelistic career. Beginning with *The South Atlantic Quarterly's* special issue (Spring 1990) on 'The Fiction of Don DeLillo' (vol. 89, no. 2), the writer has been reinvented as one who deserves difficult and intellectually complex responses. This has been registered, perhaps more than anyone else, by the American academic Frank Lentricchia. For him, "the reading of DeLillo's writing is an experience

of overwhelming cultural density—these are novels that could not have been written before the mid-1960s” (Lentricchia, “American” 6). Besides, he pulls together “Pynchon and DeLillo” (Lentricchia, “American” 6) as representatives of the “American literary way” (Lentricchia, “American” 5) which is of specific interest for this dissertation’s pairing of the two authors. In analysing *White Noise*, Lentricchia draws a parallelism between Joyce and DeLillo, stating that the latter “plays a condensed variation on the method of *Ulysses*, with Joyce’s high-order phenomenological seismograph, the sensitive Bloom” (“Tales” 108) to create Jack Gladney in *White Noise*. Such critical conjectures pitched DeLillo into an order of significant literary import.

For Tom LeClair, a critic who preceded Lentricchia in assessing DeLillo’s relevance, his corpus constitutes “a coherent fictional system that, as a whole, presents a comprehensive critique of the ideologies—scientific, literary, and political—in which he and his readers exist” (xi). DeLillo’s novels, he argues, are premised on “communication loops ranging from the biological to the technological, environmental to personal, linguistic, prelinguistic, and postlinguistic” (LeClair, *Loop* xi). This is a crucial point which serves to support the conceptual vocabulary of entanglement that this dissertation attempts to foreground. It is given further weight in David Cowart’s *Don DeLillo: The Physics of Language* (2000) where the author asserts that DeLillo “steers a course... between two extreme positions” (161). Cowart connects DeLillo’s linguistic preoccupation with politics, culture and subjectivities formed in fiction. The same year saw the publication of Mark Osteen’s *American Magic and Dread: Don DeLillo’s Dialogue with Culture* (2000). Osteen reinforced the cultural imperative of DeLillo’s fiction by positioning the author as one who offers a substantial counterweight to the postmodern play of signifiers. Both these volumes communicate the possibility of alternatives to situate the otherwise implicitly predetermined postmodernist fiction of DeLillo. The fact that his fiction serves to diffuse and evade authoritarian ontologies of the current cultures is powerfully proclaimed by Cowart and Osteen.

Among such ontologies, Peter Boxall highlights the issues of globalization and global capital, global militarism and American dominance in the market economy. DeLillo’s novels intertwine these into “an extended enactment of the exhaustion of possibility in post-war culture” (Boxall, *DeLillo* 4). Against this predicament, his fiction incorporates “a historical counter-function, of a counternarrative that might preserve a radical revolutionary spirit” (Boxall, *DeLillo* 5). Subsequent critics such as Joseph

Dewey, Jeffrey Ebbeson and Robert Chodat reiterate this possibility in the author's enterprise. In his monograph *Beyond Grief and Nothing: A Reading of Don DeLillo* (2006), Dewey suggests the need to reinvent the novelist for the "new generation of serious readers of fiction" (5). His work is provocative inasmuch as it allows the reader an access into the artistic process both of the writer's celebrated works and the oft-acknowledged ones such as *The Engineer of Moonlight* (1979) and *Amazons* (1980). Chodat's work is significant for it combines the literary with relevant philosophical frames to reflect on issues of agency and subjectivity by looking at the sentient individual and cultural artifacts. He manages to offer a compelling discussion of DeLillo (along with Stein, Bellow and Ellison) from the point of view of embodiment and experientiality. In this, Chodat's book traces many of the analytical tools to which the current thesis drifts. The weight he has given on "[e]scaping Cartesianism once and for all" by shifting focus to "material bodies" and "embodied conditions" (Chodat 12) is what makes his work of particular interest to the current reading. While Chodat's book is revelatory in emphasising nonhuman agency, it leaves open the scope to engage with the technological and planetary ontologies. This thesis responds to this gap to say the least.

A few of the more recent publications respond to this gap as well. Randy Laist's *Technology and Postmodern Subjectivity in Don DeLillo's Novels* (2010), for instance, revitalises the ways in which to look at the technological sublime in DeLillo's novel. Towards the wrapping up of this research project, Tore Rye Andersen's *Planetary Pynchon: History, Modernity, and the Anthropocene* (2023) and Lalla Sougri's *Representations of Technoculture in Don DeLillo's Novels* (2024) came out. These are works that contextualise many of the crucial questions that this dissertation poses in the context of Pynchon and DeLillo's corpus. Henry Veggian's book on DeLillo intervenes in the contextual convergences between the imagistic space and its ontological opposite. For him, DeLillo's art alerts us to the immediacy of a "threshold" where two worlds converge: "one more permanent and tangible, the other ephemeral and numinous" (Veggian 25). This point about threshold connects closely with the idea of entanglement that this thesis builds itself up on. Graley Herren's *The Self-Reflexive Art of Don DeLillo* (2019) and Phillip Wolf's *Death, Time and Mortality in the Later Novels of Don DeLillo* (2022) are among the other recent publications that followed. It will be appropriate to close by referring to one particular critic stands out for his "rather unconventional work of literary criticism" (Naas x). Michael Naas' attempts to eschew the conventional have

seen him produce two books on DeLillo, one following immediately the other: *Don DeLillo, American Original: Drugs, Weapons, Erotica, and Other Literary Contraband* (2020) and *Apocalyptic Ruin and Everyday Wonder in Don DeLillo's America* (2022). Works such as these serve to generate a renewed interest in the author's corpus by extending reference points for readers and researchers alike. Part of this dissertation's purpose is to add to this body of work that seeks to rekindle the possibilities that Pynchon and DeLillo scholarship showcases.

Chapter Plan

The dissertation comprises five chapters excluding the Introduction and Conclusion. While the first frame chapter underscores a critical roadmap for the analytical trajectories, the rest of the chapters are designed to deal with the texts in a chronological manner.

Chapter 1, "Framing the Body: Approaches to Matter-Metaphor Entanglement(s)," presents the theoretical framing of this thesis. This includes a critical overview of the key theoretical tropes that this research adopts to contextualise the logic of the corporeal. The chapter incorporates an outline of the analytical perspectives drawing on six "turns" in critical theory: the New Materialist Turn, the Affective Turn, the Cognitive/Neuroscientific Turn, the Posthuman Turn, the Nonhuman turn, and the Planetary Turn/Planetaryity. By allowing us to situate the body in terms of its physicality and the socially signifying practices, these turns enable this thesis to interrogate the production and prohibition of dominant epistemologies of our time. The chapter also explores and historicises the key-words of this dissertation by tracing their contextual correspondence with the theoretical framework. In so doing, the chapter highlights the trans-disciplinary scope that this thesis offers while investigating the entangled body, its patterns and variations.

Chapter 2, "The Cellular and the Celluloid: Re-purposing the Body in *Gravity's Rainbow*," takes up Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* to look at the ways in which the text anticipates the demise of dualist understandings. It examines the interplay between celluloid and cellular materialities and investigates how the pathological body is repurposed by the informational body that emerges in the form of electronic image projections. The text encodes epistemic crossovers and diegetic convergences blurring the borderlines between different ontologies. Pynchon's text verbalises this condition by shifting focus to the nonhuman and the planetary. The novel incorporates significant

episodes of animality, biotechnological interventions, lithic time and geophysical processes, the production and perpetuation of waste to dramatize a landscape of entanglements. In so doing, the text participates in the making and remaking of the feeling individual. The chapter contextualises this by focalising the prospect of biochemical interventions. This is a point that connects the chapter to the next.

Chapter 3, “Real Bodies/Conditioned Stimuli: Media, Medicine and Planetary Crises in *White Noise*,” focalises Don DeLillo’s novel in order to unpack the ways in which bodies in neoliberal technocracy can be therapeutically remodelled and clinically repurposed. It foregrounds the body as a site of corporeal interplay with extra-human matter by looking at episodes of biomedical interventions. The text serves to articulate a dialectic of ecological vulnerabilities and the chapter argues that an encounter with nonhuman dimensions strains the limits of the historically and biologically grounded human. DeLillo’s novel touches upon this by accommodating narratives of radiation and toxicity that elide the possibility of human interventions. It also sheds light on the materiality of waste that the cultures of capitalism produce and prohibit at once. These episodes, along with the text’s profound meditation on the coming together of algorithmic data and the cognitive schema of individuals, contribute to the demise of strict biological determinisms and anticipates a posthuman predicament.

Chapter 4, “The Body as ‘Cybercapital’: Biosentimentality and Biomediation in *The Body Artist* and *Cosmopolis*,” explores the two novels by DeLillo to show the entanglement between the visceral and the virtual phenomena. It looks at electronic mediation to analyse the interplay between embodiment and disembodiment. The ways in which faceless information reifies the affective and interiorised world of the individual is what the novels serve to communicate. Through episodes involving “biomediation” and “cybercapital”, both texts highlight the condition of corporeal interconnectedness and inseparability where the machines that we manufacture affect and determine our agency. The texts provide pertinent pointers to examine the current culture of digital media, advanced medical technologies and enhancement ethics that point at a transhuman convergence. In such settings, the chapter argues, the body morphs into a capital that combines social and cyberspace imaginaries. Both novels inform the mutability of the subject and dramatize the logic of entangled corporeality.

Chapter 5, “Entanglement as Telos: The Body as Code and Coding Practice in *Bleeding Edge*,” engages with Pynchon’s novel to see the entanglement between automatism and human desire. It critically analyses this situation by turning to the conceptual frame of “codification of life”. The chapter also focuses on the convergence between cognitive and computational signifiers. It analyses the body as a merger between aesthetic priorities of a culture and the ecological forms of the planet. The virtual discourse that combines the corporeal and the numerical anticipates an emergent posthuman condition. In positioning the narrative at the complex crossroads of financial capital and postmodern technology, the text partakes in a landscape of entanglements. The Deep Web rhetoric of the plot articulates a cultural moment in which the epistemologies of experience are destabilised. The novel reflects on this by dramatizing the convergence between privately embodied autobiographical memory and publicly available information, wilderness of waste and aesthetics of high-tech civilization, the real and hyperreal.

Relevance

This dissertation examines how late postmodernist fiction engages with corporeal entanglements that such narratives produced and proscribed at once. The conceptual framework of the thesis envisages a coming together of political theorists, geographers, physicists, art historians, philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists and literary theorists in exploring and enriching the idea of the body. Such an engagement illuminates the trans-disciplinary scope this thesis offers. In so doing, it serves to bridge the disciplinary divide between what C. P. Snow famously called “the two cultures”. In his Rede Lecture in Cambridge (1959), Snow lamented the split between “the two cultures” of science and literature in the academic environment and pleaded for a less polarised climate of exchange. His hope to see a common ground for both cultures to meet and interact is partly realised through modes of theoretical engagements that challenge the disciplinary contradictions.

Drawing on this perspective, the thesis draws on transdisciplinary thoughts to look at the literary frame as a ‘medium’ of representation. The thesis responds to a significant research gap in Pynchon and DeLillo scholarship as it shifts its focus to ‘materially-grounded’ bodies. In fact, in the novels under scrutiny, the corporeal is invariably entangled with things within and outside the world. A key argument in the thesis comes

from the belief that the body is produced by *a* convergence of ‘within’ and ‘outside.’ Here, the instrument of convergence is provided, among others, by physical, fictional, biomedical, planetary and machinic acts. The ‘human,’ to this end, is not to be figured in an ‘either/or’ format. Simply put, materialism and metaphors are biogenically entangled, where ‘re-purposing’ is as significant as historically or culturally determined ‘purposes’ of objects, bodies and emotions. Pynchon and DeLillo’s fiction allows us the freedom to analyse this position. The texts chosen for this dissertation re-situate the relationship of postmodernism to posthumanism and planetarity. To this extent, the present work opens up five novels by these two writers for further analysis and adds to the corpus of critical writings on this theoretical trajectory.