CHAPTER FOUR

THE BODY AS 'CYBERCAPITAL': BIOSENTIMENTALITY AND BIOMEDIATION IN *THE BODY ARTIST* AND *COSMOPOLIS*

> He took the pack out of his shirt and lit up a cigarette, the cigarette he'd been smoking with his coffee since he was twelve years old, he'd told her, and he let the match bum down a bit before he shook it out in meditative slow motion and put it at the edge of his plate. It was agreeable to her, the smell of tobacco. It was part of her knowledge of his body… the aura of the man, a residue of smoke and unbroken habit. (DeLillo, *TBA* 19)
>
> There's nothing like a raging crap, she thought, to make mind and body one. (DeLillo, *TBA* 35)
>
> The street grew quiet in time. Voices died, the sense of outlying motion faded. He felt the presence of the bodies, all of them, the body breath, the heat and running blood, people unlike each other who were now alike, amassed, heaped in a way, alive and dead together. (DeLillo, *CP* 174)

The chapter aims to explore the convergence of the biological body and postmodern technologies that reifies the location of a feeling individual. It contextualises the implications of this in the fictional frame of Don DeLillo's *The Body Artist* (2001) and *Cosmopolis* (2003). These novels foreground questions of bodily plasticity and mutability against the singular and bounded notions of the corporeal. The novels encourage us to revisit the dualist legacy of epistemological enquiries—informed, among others, by the implicit Cartesianism—and set off an emergent landscape of entanglements. It is necessary to understand that such a situation entails a revaluation of the conventional borderline between different disciplines. The novels, therefore, articulate the relevance of a trans-disciplinary engagement. DeLillo's preoccupation with media and information technology is evident in many of his narrative imaginaries. To put it differently, the novels portray ontological complexities defined by the dialogue between an organically grounded individual and technological mediations that situate the body as a site of endless negotiations. This reading shows how the chosen novels work with epithets of ambient technology as well as the cognitive neuroscience to produce a narrative discourse that critiques disciplinary boundaries.

Such issues are pertinent, especially in the backdrop of recent works on trans-disciplinary criticism and cultural theory that suggest a coming together of the sciences and humanities. This chapter draws on this perspective to examine the logic of the corporeal in DeLillo's novels. On one hand, the novels illustrate what is clearly a discursive and narrative immersion into the digital. On the other hand, they show the ways in which the interface between the visceral body and the virtual milieu is problematised. This is reflective of the contemporary cultures of technoscience that repurpose the ontological fixities in favour of a radical relationality. DeLillo's novel interrogates this position inasmuch as it shifts focus from a cognitively grounded approach to subjective experience to 'distributed' models of understanding the mechanisms of the mind. The chapter explores this position by revisiting the putative opposition between the material and the experiential. These expressions are never as polarised as we believe or are made to believe.

I. *The Body Artist* (2001)

In an essay titled "Postmodern Virtualities" (1995), Mark Poster identifies three distinctive phases in communication that characterise the progression of our cultural milieu: the era of 'oralism', prior to the development of writing systems; the era of 'written exchange' which ushered in rationalism, autonomy and scientific objectivity among others; and the current era of 'electronic exchange'. These are phases that signify shifts in dominant ontologies of their time. Such ontological shifts determine the construction of identity and its subsequent transformations. "Telephone, radio, film, television, the computer", speaking of the contemporary time Poster argues, "…reconfigure words, sounds and images so as to cultivate new configurations of individuality" (80). The relationship between postmodern constitution of the subject and the nexus of technological media has been mapped here in terms of interactivity, a phenomenon of "two-way communications" (Poster 88), which problematizes the boundaries between producer and consumer, sender and receiver, whether real or virtual. The key to this process is a fragmented notion of the self, dispersed along wired networks and hypertext terminals, which radically reconfigures any claim of essentialist organicity. We take this as an entry point into the novel to see plasticity of bodies and identities in relation to technocratic media.

At a fundamental level, the performative body signifies the ways in which the subject or the self is corporeally grounded. The cultures of neoliberal technocracy redefine the corporeal through technologically mediated embodied practices in terms of the everyday human acts of production and consumption. This is a pointer to the entanglement between human and more-than-human materialities. The philosophical underpinnings of this convergence prompt us to reevaluate the templates of subjectivity and personhood conventionally defined by human exceptionalism. For the British Empiricist John Locke, the existential aliveness of a person relies on its consciousness and the state of being conscious[1]. Conversely, the increasing reconfiguration of the cognitive and bodily boundaries encourage the contemporary philosophers to advocate a non-unitary notion of the subject. Rosi Braidotti, for instance, invites our attention to the trans-corporeal 'becomings' (2002). Her thesis draws on what Deleuze and Guattari identified as 'assemblage' (1987) formations to indicate the redistribution agency in social and spatial relations. These are notions that signify the essential mutability of postmodern subject positions.

Postmodern subjects inhabit an era of rampant advancements in technological media and bioengineered interventions at the genomic level. Eschewing the epistemic orders that endorse an essential organicity of the subject positions, postmodern cultural enterprise foregrounds fluidity and plasticity of a person's performative self and problematizes the putative binaries between "natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines" (Haraway, *Simians* 152). As such, a convergence of living and the non-living, social and the technological epistemes is central to the contemporary cultural exchanges where a subject is dispersed across networked terminals and chemically revised at its molecular architecture. Thwarting the hegemonic orders of absolutes, postmodern topography valorises a space marked by the "nonseparability of quasi-objects and quasi-subjects" (Latour, *Modern* 139). Latour's ideas serve to bridge the gap between nature and culture, material and affective markers. This position prefigures in DeLillo's novel.

The entangled ontology of the subject "explodes the boundaries at the skin level" (Braidotti, *Transpositions* 222). This is a significant move against the Cartesian legacy[2]. Renewed interest in the ontology of the human body envisaged a convergence with a sensuous corporeal world, "a reciprocal insertion and intertwining of one in the other"

(Merleau-Ponty, *Visible* 138). This has facilitated alternative avenues to locate the lived body's phenomenal and existential placement in a world of endless encounters. The collapse of the boundaries that traditionally separated the human body from the extra-human material world relocates the subject into a framework of relationality in critical theory and cultural criticism. Instead of proposing that the emotional valences of the body as possessions of the self, "feelings" are defined to be taking form in a self-world continuum. It is, in a way, an intensification of the Spinozist understanding of the body that lacks an easy determinant apropos of its capacity and capabilities[3]. It is difficult to find a vocabulary to negotiate the event in which a subject actualizes or socially externalizes a bodily sensation felt at the level of its epidermic schema. Teresa Brennan recognises a "transmission of affect" manifest in such occasioning of an event, "a process that is social in origin but biological and physical in effect" (3). As a potent theoretical import, this chapter adopts the framework of affect in order to interrogate what it postulates as "affective kinships"[4], a relational module for understanding the transactions between feeling bodies and across the phenomenological nexus they fabricate with the immediate material world.

DeLillo's recurring preoccupation with a tempering of the novelistic space with diegetic crossovers registers his status as an experimental novelist in the contemporary American literary milieu, but whether his "novels should be read as modernist fictions stylized for a larger audience or a series of postmodern fictions that operate as pastiche for older genres" (Johnston, "Generic" 261) has remained a topic of much dispute. His sixth novel *The Body Artist*, the novel with which he traversed into the new millennium, is haunted by this generic ambiguity. For Philip Nel, the author returns in this novel to the modernist poetics, "a modernism of form without the historical avant-garde leanings we find in DeLillo's other works" (738). He also alerts us to the unusual narrative of the novel— "no characters speaking essays to one another; little explicit examination of the effects of social, political, or cultural changes; no Kennedy assassination, no cold war, no nuclear waste, no suspicious corporations" (736)—which offers much less accessible an occasion for the conventional critical integers to be put inside the text. Such readings suggest DeLillo's conversation with a modernism of form or generic engagements.

However, the current reading of *The Body Artist* draws on Anne Longmuir who tells us that the novel "rethinks the concept of the body" (528) accommodating "one of DeLillo's most complex studies of the possibilities of a political aesthetic" (530). It

focuses on the performative body, an idea which is prescient in the title of the novel itself. The narrative projects a body artist whose subjecthood has been regulated and repurposed through different mechanisms in the novels. It introduces us to different levels of affectivity that reify the position of a feeling subject. In exploring the body's position within an immediate techno-saturated landscape and its evolving corporeal kinships with artifacts and others, the chapter identifies an evolving economy of the biomedically theorised notion of the body's somatic materiality. This is a valence that is premised on the ways in which the bodily interiority and exteriority, the subjective and objective realms of understanding are endlessly entangled.

In reading the novel, the chapter adopts a framework of entanglement that may appear anti-Cartesian. In fact, two crucial perspectives—of Avian Consciousness (Karnicky 2009) and Bioegalitarianism (Pfister 2015)—are of particular use here. These are framings that inform the possibility of a post-anthropocentric take on the text. In the novel, Lauren Hartke, "the body artist" (DeLillo, *TBA* 29), and her husband Rey Robles, rent an expensive old house out of the city on the New England coast. After receiving the unexpected news of her husband's suicide in his Manhattan apartment, Lauren decides to stay back alone in their coastal abode for the remainder of a six-month lease. It was as she tried to catch up with the rhythm of her life that Lauren found a "smallish and fine bodied" stranger "in a small bedroom off the large empty room at the far end of the hall on the third floor" (DeLillo, *TBA* 41) whom she eventually dubbed Mr. Tuttle. Mr. Tuttle represents an enigma in himself (or herself, it was never clear as such) throughout the novel who disappears within the course of three chapters in a mysterious and unpredictable way. Lauren is intrigued by Mr. Tuttle's uncanny dispositions and the relationship between the two informs the major inferences of this reading.

It begins by briefly focusing on the narrative aesthetic of the novel that manifests an emulation of the cybernetic matrix comprised of dots, digits and binaries. Such a narrative quality illustrates a diegetic space where subjects turn mutable and malleable. The reading moves subsequently to look at the ways in which the text stages situations of affective entanglement. It does so by looking at Lauren's companionship with her techno-material reality. As we shall see, the digital display of the computer and the aural architectonics of the tape recorder manufacture sites where the material interpellations are constantly re-configured apropos of the cognitive schema of a feeling body in the text. The reading closes off by critically considering the novel's anticipation of how the

corporeal morphs into a consumable commodity in the contemporary culture of capitalism. In so doing, it suggests a diegetic copula with a cinematic narrative of posthuman epistemology to reflect on a culture of digital domesticity[5]. By then, my reading will illustrate how DeLillo's fictional frame articulates the postmodern problematic of contemporary consumerist culture premised on technological mediations, and in doing so, dwells elaborately on the ontological complexities by affirming the conduit of the body as a site of endless entanglements.

A Piece of Mathematics

When asked in an interview about the influences on and intentions of *Ratner's Star* (1976), one of his early and acclaimed evocations of postmodern poetics, Don DeLillo says thus: "I wanted the book to become what it was about. Abstract structures and connective patterns. A piece of mathematics in short. To do this, I felt I had to reduce the importance of people. The people had to play a role subservient to pattern, form, and so on." (LeClair, "Interview" 27). In these words, DeLillo seems to have revealed the narrative modal of *The Body Artist*, a novel he was to write a few years later. The plot of the novel, minimal in its range, has been equipped with a convoluted vocabulary that stifles any possibility of referential mooring, as if accommodating a pattern of encoded binaries in a technological circuit. Such a narrativity points at a juncture where the world of the flesh constitutes a ceaseless entanglement with the domain of digital technology. The predominance of patterns, not people, suggests re-telling the Anthropos. DeLillo's preoccupation with "mathematics" and "connective patterns" in the novel anticipates the onset of an era in which "[m]edia determines our situation" (Kittler xxxix). An intimate engagement with technological media informs the literary landscape in DeLillo's novels. In this case, however, the landscape is not that of traditional televisual simulations depicting "the quintessential technological constituent of the postmodern temper" (Lentricchia 87) as in *White Noise* (1985). Against the idea that simulated opposites invoke a conflict between real and the virtual, material and the dematerialized ontology, *The Body Artist* dramatizes a deliberate defusal of the two orders. The novel combines human speech with a pixelated cyber vocabulary where characters exchange in bits and pieces and conversations happen as if in an encrypted binary transmission[6]. This suggests a re-doing of the human in terms of a machinic vocabulary that unsettles the singular and the unitary notions of the subject.

The novel opens with a breakfast scene where Lauren goes on with "blueberries", "bread", "cereal", "soya granules", "milk" and "juice" (DeLillo, *TBA* 7-10). It is an extended scene with pauses, silence and repetitions, something that resembles the way in which "the radio played traffic and talk" (DeLillo, *TBA* 14). The scene invites attention to a gustatory phenomenon. In rendering such a bodily phenomenon into a vocabulary of 'electronic exchange', the text projects an emergent landscape of entanglements. At a textual level, it does so with a semantic strategy of "deliberately glacial pace, its intentionally gnomic dialogue, its austere refusal to offer the easy pleasures of narrative" (Bonca, "Being" 60). Everything in the novel, aligned to Lauren's point of view, impedes any ontological fixity: "ever changing, plunged into metamorphosis, something that is also something else" (DeLillo, *TBA* 36). Such proneness of the events to mutability appears to registers a collapse of the Cartesian code that informs the construction of hermetically sealed categories. The novel heightens this sense of instability by suggesting that the epistemology of an individuated self is difficult to trace within the text's texture: "you become someone else, one of the people in the story, doing dialogue of your own devising. You become a man at times, living between the lines, doing another version of the story" (DeLillo, *TBA* 20). It is a pointer to the textual quality of the human that is predetermined by dominant ideologies. By allowing us to understand the constructed quality of subjects and identities, the text registers the plasticity of the human.

Such permissiveness of performing different subjectivities resonates with the production and proliferation of multiple digital avatars on virtual media platforms where "the relation of the utterance to representation is not limited to denotation as in the modern language game of science" (Poster 92). This is subtly exemplified in the instance when Lauren wonders how "Thursday seems like Friday… We're off the calendar. Friday shouldn't have an identity here" (DeLillo, *TBA* 21; ellipses added). In such cases, the materiality of an event is de-linked from its discursivity. The uniquely individuated identities in the novel are rendered unstable by their metatextual affinities toward a cybernetic discourse. This is given further weight by the narratorial record of events in the form of binary signals bereft of a semiotic cohesion: "She read and drifted. She was here and there" (DeLillo, *TBA* 23); "Then she either calls after him or doesn't and he responds or doesn't" (DeLillo, *TBA* 24); "People pick up ringing phones or don't" (DeLillo, *TBA* 34); "they come and peck, or don't" (DeLillo, *TBA* 53); "she used it just to use it" (DeLillo, *TBA* 85); "He ate breakfast, or didn't" (DeLillo, *TBA* 86) and so on.

These are events in which the text reduces the organically grounded individual into the level of automatism. In so doing, human emotions and experiences are pushed into the machinic order that operate on the logic of cause and effect. These two order are endlessly entangled in text, to the extent that one cannot pre-exist the other.

Analysing the stylistic features of the text at length, Cleopatra Kontoulis and Eliza Kitis infer how the narrative builds an "impression that the characters cannot be real people enacting unique instances of speech qua énonciations" (226). The sense of a machinic materiality is further replenished by the novel's matter-of-fact manner of narration: "…she hadn't heard about eight seconds ago" (DeLillo, *TBA* 9); "She took the kettle back to the stove because this is how you live a life even if you don't know it…" (DeLillo, *TBA* 12), etc. In such situations, human experience has been constantly conditioned with clinically qualified patterns. It is suggestive of the ways in which corporeality has been regularly reconfigured in a capitalist consumerist society intensified by ambient technologies. The text hints at this coming together of the organic individual and inorganic forces and intensities by projecting spaces of digital domesticity. It suggests a version of domestic life where intimate spaces are carefully programmed through electronic and digital devices. Such devices not only turn spaces into sites for "technology consumption", but "for making meaning of technologies" (Kennedy et al. 8). This is a crucial point that signify the coming together of the corporeal and computational signifiers. From "toasters", "telephone" and "tape recorder" to advanced digital media technology interfaced by the "personal computer", a host of postindustrial electronic appliances are present in DeLillo's novel. These devices manufacture affects that repurpose feeling individuals.

Affective Transmissions/Affective Kinships

The radio has been a ubiquitous presence in the novel. Rey turns it on to get the weather (DeLillo, *TBA* 8), changes stations (DeLillo, *TBA* 12), turns it off and on and off (DeLillo, *TBA* 15) in the first part of the story. Rey's perception of the world is technologically informatized, whereas Lauren still reserves the senses of the human body. This is best illustrated in the episode(s) where she checks the weather report, but also "sometimes stood out front and looked into the coastal sky, tasting the breeze for latent implications" (DeLillo, *TBA* 9). In fact, at times "[a] voice reported the weather but she missed it. She didn't know it was the weather until it was gone" (DeLillo, *TBA* 24). Her husband's

unexpected death pushes Lauren to develop an affective kinship with her immediate informatized environ. This kinship redefines her experience and subjectivity. The case is evident, first, in her entanglement with the computer screen as a digitized avenue of a cybernetic world, and second, in her transactions with the tape recorder.

For phenomenologists, the corporeal schema of the body has been existentially redefined in acts of material engagements. Maurice Merleau-Ponty's work on bodily intentionality describes the ways in which objects are incorporated "into the bulk of our own body" (*Phenomenology* 166). This is a crucial point to reflect on the contemporary. In the neoliberal cultures, prosthetics does not necessarily signify an artificial support system equipped to the body via medical technology. Rather, the commonplace interactivity with electronic objects (mobile phones, smart watches, laptops and so on) is a pointer to prosthetic performativity[7]. Such objects signify a complex mediation between electronic technology and the human body. This is an affective relationship, for the mediated events redefine the sensory and the cognitive correlatives. Sara Ahmed holds that "emotions can move with the circulation of objects" (*Emotion* 11). Such cases are grounded on an ethics of relationality that unsettles the notion of an emotionally contained subject. Emotions travel across the world of "things" in which individuals are existentially embedded. This is defined by "a process that is social in origin but biological and physical in effect" (Brennan 3). In a way, "objects" acquire an emotional economy in the cultural landscapes. Their circulation as "objects of feeling" suggests a ceaseless transformation of "things" into "objects" of intensity and emotional value. "Such objects", writes Sara Ahmed, "become sticky, saturated with affect, as sites of personal and social tension" (*Emotion* 11). This takes us to examine episodes of affective kinships in the novel.

Lauren Hartke's companionship with the digital display of the computer during her lonely sojourn in the apartment after the death of her husband in *The Body Artist* can be read as a case study of affective kinship. During her first days back at the house Lauren tries to move along "shaping the day around a major thing with all its wrinkles and twists, its array of swarming variations" (DeLillo, *TBA* 32); but the days "moved so slow that day ached" (DeLillo, *TBA* 32). At this point, the narrative stages an instance of traumatic neurosis[8] experienced by Hartke. This is triggered by the painful perception of her lost husband. Her sense of the deceased individual assumes the form of a residual embodied memory, ever present and extending across time and space in a shapeless indeterminacy:

"Rey was, the thing in the air, vaporous, drifting into every space sooner or later, unshaped, but with a face that was somehow part of the presence, specific to the prowling man" (DeLillo, *TBA* 33). Her cognitive schema corresponds to the disconnect she experiences apropos her bodily performativity, "not the major breakdown of every significant function but a small helpless sinking toward the ground, a kind of forgetting how to stand" (DeLillo, *TBA* 33). At this point, Lauren experiences a dislocation of her subjectivity. The link between an emotionally accessible 'presence' and bodily 'absence' is problematised, which she deliberately tries to restore, "to make mind and body one" (DeLillo, *TBA* 35). Her efforts "to organize time until she could live again" (DeLillo, *TBA* 37) may be seen as what Cathy Caruth calls a "peculiar and perplexing experience of survival" (Caruth 60). Lauren's close correspondence with a mundane simulacrum appears to bring some sense of cohesion to the dislocation she engenders:

> She spent hours at the computer screen looking at a live-streaming video feed from the edge of a two-lane road in a city in Finland. It was the middle of the night in Kotka, in Finland, and she watched the screen. It was interesting to her because it was happening now, as she sat here, and because it happened twenty-four hours a day, facelessly, cars entering and leaving Kotka, or just the empty road in the dead times. (DeLillo, *TBA* 38)

In this case, Lauren's affiliation with the "live-streaming video feed" is virtual. However, it serves to assure her a stable ontological reference in which she could situate and subjectivize herself. In effect, the view from Kotka is a minimalistic representation of an ordinary traffic with nothing extraordinary or charismatic happening on screen. But as a spectacle for Lauren (DeLillo, *TBA* 38; 72)—someone whose location is painfully problematized by an extreme event of death—it conveys a sense of temporal consistency as "it happened twenty-four hours a day". The spectacle offers the immediate informational stability she lacks as a fractured subject.

The episodes in which Lauren deliberately engages with the virtual landscape illustrate an attempt to re-script her corporeal condition by way of withdrawing herself from "the circumstance of nothing going on" (DeLillo, *TBA* 38). Besides this, the digital *mise-en-scène* is saturated with predictable signifiers for Lauren, registering a sense ontological certainty. She grows into an informed consumer of a series of sensory data or patterns, and Kotka, "a place contained in an unyielding frame" (DeLillo, *TBA* 38), turns

into an affective extension of her enactive self[9]. This is a point of entanglement in which the electronic mediation merges with embodied experience. Crucially, the digital display of the computer is transformed into a prosthetic part here. Lauren's routine engagement with the interface becomes crucial to the epistemology of her existential self. This coming together takes place within what Husserl identifies as a "core sphere", an affectively charged arrangement of things which can be experienced "in an optimal form through seeing, touching etc." (149). The emphasis on the realm of the senses is crucial, for it suggests the ways in which artifacts acquire meanings.

These two realities—the organically grounded individual and the electronically manufactured virtual—are co-constitutive in the novel. Stressing on the essentially entangled and co-evolving architecture of the human body and non-biological matter, Karen Barad writes thus:

> Matter's dynamism is generative not merely in the sense of bringing new things into the world but in the sense of bringing forth new worlds, of engaging in an ongoing reconfiguring of the world. Bodies do not simply take their places in the world. They are not simply situated in, or located in, particular environments. Rather, "environments" and "bodies" are intra-actively co-constituted. Bodies ("human," "environmental," or otherwise) are integral "parts" of or dynamic reconfigurings of, what is. (*Meeting* 170)

From this perspective, Lauren's engagement with the digital display throws light on an "intra-active becoming" predating a posthumanist predicament[10]. This position is premised on the fact that non-human matter involves "a doing, a congealing of agency" (Barad, *Meeting* 210) in the ongoing orchestration of a phenomenal world. In a radical reversal of the subject positions, such an argument finds a theoretical ally in the domain of cognitive neuroscience which try to unravel how "non-neural factors have an effect on neural factors, and vice-versa" acknowledging a continuum of "brain-body-environment" (Gallagher "Lifeworld" 91). In the discussions that follow, we draw on this to look at the interplay between the human mind and humanoid machines.

Speaking Machine/Feeling Mind

Apart from the engagement with a visual simulacrum on screen, there is an auricular play of the sentience. This is facilitated by the technology of sonic recording and reproduction that inform episodes of affective kinship in *The Body Artist*. With the introduction of a

"tiny tape recorder" to which Rey "used to prowl the[se] rooms… reciting ideas about some weary script" (DeLillo, *TBA* 32), the novel enters into a Beckettian drama[11] of instabilities "produced when voices are taken out of bodies and bodies find themselves out of voices" (Hayles, "Voices" 75). Lauren's fervent attachment with the recorder accentuates a complex interplay between the remembering mind and the mechanical order of memorializing. Her deliberate attempts to technologically manufacture a visceral phenomenon through voice bring to the fore a permanent suspension (later apropos of her relationship with Mr. Tuttle, as we shall see next) of the organic order of memory. The auditory phenomenon "is historically linked with presence and therefore with immanence of the body" (Hayles, "Voices" 78). While carrying the the tape recorder, Lauren navigates through the interstices of a disembodied presence (taped voice) and corporeal absence (dead husband). This is implicated in a crisis of her emotionally grounded self.

Viewed from the perspective of cognitive neuroscience, Lauren embodies a profound crisis of her *conative* apparatus after the death of her husband. Her withdrawal from the immediate social environ by retreating herself to a remote coastal apartment—even to the extent that she stopped answering her phone calls (DeLillo, *TBA* 34; 76)—exemplifies the state of a compromised *conative* structure accumulating an emotional disconnect with the world. Drawing on the Spinozist idea of a *conatus*, Antonio Damasio extrapolates the markers of "self-preservation" (36) to be what characterises one's *conative* architecture. In a state of profound sadness, holds Damasio, the subject is "cut off from his or her *conatus*" (*Spinoza* 139) gravitating towards a state of emotional discontinuity with the quotidian contexts. He further asserts that:

> […] the *conatus*, is called into action when we are confronted with the reality of suffering and especially the reality of death, actual or anticipated, our own or that of those we love. The very prospect of suffering and death breaks down the homeostatic process of the beholder. The natural endeavour for self-preservation and well-being responds to the breakdown with a struggle to prevent the inevitable and redress the balance. The struggle provokes us to find compensatory strategies for the homeodynamics now gone awry… (*Spinoza* 269-70)

Lauren's preoccupation with the taped voice orchestrates "compensatory strategies" for re-situating her emotional dynamics within a field of sensory substitution for a corporeal absence. The tape recorder, "a machine capable of replacing human

communication with a prerecorded script" (Davidson 99), brings forth a symbolic system saturated with machine-induced affect. In this sense, it performs as a mimetic machine traversing the contours of time and corporeal space. Lauren's inclination towards pre-scripting her immediate temporalities informs her later rapport with Mr. Tuttle. Whenever she turns to strike a conversation with Mr. Tuttle, she always does so with "Rey's tape recorder [lay] blinking in the middle of the table" (DeLillo, *TBA* 54). At times, even when Mr. Tuttle "turned off the recorder… she turned it back on" (DeLillo, *TBA* 54; 56). This strategy of encasing a temporal frame, reinforced by voices displaced into the machine, serves to structure the lived experiences in the novel.

In turn, the recording device becomes "sticky": "She began to carry the tape recorder wherever she went. It was small and light and slipped into her breast pocket" (DeLillo, *TBA* 63). Read against the pretext of her emotional apathy ensuing from a *conative* crisis, the recorder turns into a locus of Lauren's perceptive mechanism and becomes an object of happiness or a "happy object" (Ahmed, *Happiness* 28). Such an object become "a feeling cause, it can cause feeling, so that when we feel the feeling we expect to feel, we are affirmed" (Ahmed, *Happiness* 28). It accumulates positive affective events within the shared radius of experience, a complex web of social articulations involving the subject and the object. The companionship forged here is premised on a relational recognition of the subject. It is the proximity to a familiar acoustic impulse that virtually brings about an intersubjective experience where the subject is an aural consumer of a disembodied, recorded presence. Crucially, such a complex relational interplay unfolds in *The Body Artist*. This is suggestive of the ways in which embodiment is entangled with disembodiment, a point that extends onto an epistemic dialogue between organic and inorganic, life and nonlife, among others.

Metamorphic Bodies

Analysing the thread of traumatic recuperation, Laura di Prete dwells on the psychological explanations of the subject's relational strategy that helps stabilize its markers of identity. In so doing, she argues that "DeLillo's story of metamorphic bodies and voices reminds us of the extent to which subjectivity is necessarily articulated in relation to others" (509). The text reveals a significant turn of events apropos of this relational idea across bodies and identities. Rey's voice is first displaced into the tape recorder demonstrating a play between his virtual presence and corporeal absence, and

later into the ambiguous figure of Mr. Tuttle orchestrating "an embodied voice and an omnipresent 'speaking body'" (di Prete 501). In his corporeal performance, Mr. Tuttle replicates the affective markers of Rey's identity and Lauren finds herself increasingly in an intimate loop with its bodily presence: "…it was Rey's voice she was hearing. The representation was close, the accent and dragged vowels, the intimate differences, the articulations produced in one vocal apparatus and not another, things she'd known in Rey's voice, and only Rey's" (DeLillo, *TBA* 60-61). She feeds him (DeLillo, *TBA* 86; 95), cleans him (DeLillo, *TBA* 68), comforts and consoles him by reading books about the human body (DeLillo, *TBA* 60) and throughout these instances their embodied interactions are hauntingly expressive. At times, this attachment gravitates towards a sensual affair, as it happens: "Rey is alive now in this man's mind, in his mouth and body and cock… she tries to pull him down to the floor with her, stop him, keep him here, or crawls up unto him or into him, dissolving…" (DeLillo, *TBA* 87-88). The episode underscores an act of experiencing another person through sensations (corporeal) and memory (cognitive). This is a point of entangled identities in which Lauren cannot dissociate Mr. Tuttle's corporeal performativity from her husband's memories. Her gaze ("in his mouth and body and cock") is defined by this sense of entanglement.

In events such as this, the text foregrounds the medically perceived body's relationality with other bodies and materialities. The medical gaze is a striking aspect in the novel dramatized at several junctures: when Isabel talked about Rey's suicide, she mentioned the "chemicals in his brain" (DeLillo, *TBA* 59); during the initial days when Lauren was preparing herself for the body art performance she thought of her corporeal mechanisms as a "hidden system…[of] tallowy secretions, glandular events of the body cosmos, small festers and eruptions, impacted fats, oils, salt and sweat" (DeLillo, *TBA* 84), etc. The text also registers Mr. Tuttle's articulation of Rey's voice in terms of the visceral biomechanisms: "It did not seem an act of memory. It was Rey's voice all right, it was her husband's tonal soul, but she didn't think the man was remembering. It was happening now" (DeLillo, *TBA* 87). This is a crucial point in the novel that de-mystifies the atmosphere around Mr. Tuttle. The activities of this "enigmatic figure" (di Prete 484) are variously decoded as "autistic", "ghostly", "alien" and "psychotic" (quoted in di Prete 484). In proposing that Mr. Tuttle's embodied voice is generated through a medically observable operation of the body, the text contextualises his corporeal identity. We take this point to reflect on his entangled ontology.

Biosentimentality and the Claims of the Corporeal

In *Strange Harvest* (2006), Lesley A. Sharp adopted the idea of "biosentimentality" to look at emotional interconnectedness and intercorporeal kinships. We extend this idea to examine Lauren's kinship with Mr. Tuttle that is pivoted on a logic of the corporeal. In medical anthropology, Sharp explores the emotive and phenomenal indices informing the kinship ties shared by a donor and a recipient involved in the clinical practices of organ transplantation and gestational surrogacy. In such practices, she argues, individuals share an intimate relationality "forged through the sharing of blood, flesh, and, now, even cells" (Sharp, *Harvest* 200). In DeLillo's narrative, Lauren recognises a "vocal apparatus" (DeLillo, *TBA* 60) in Mr. Tuttle that serves to structure the visceral determinant she associates with Rey. This recognition solves the erstwhile ambiguity around Mr. Tuttle. At the point, the novel is apprehensive of a "biosentimental" understanding between bodies that ontologically redefine the templates of experientiality. Lauren's companionship with Mr. Tuttle is premised on a biological phenomenon—in this case, the production of a voice—that sets off a shared horizon of subjectivity. This is suggestive of a re-cognition at the cellular level.

Lauren's affective understanding of Rey's corporeal habitat is suggested in the novel thus: "…the smell of tobacco. It was part of her knowledge of his body" (DeLillo, *TBA* 19). At this point, the sentient self interiorises a series of olfactory information in order to make sense of a person's immediate presence. In turn, the markers of Rey's subjectivity are dispersed across a network of sensory stimuli perceived by Lauren's cognitive repository. Following Rey's bodily disappearance, Mr. Tuttle's voice chips in with sonic signifiers to this affective relationality substituting a structural void in Lauren's perceptual mechanism. In essence, therefore, Mr. Tuttle's corporeal presence accommodates "a material order of emotions and feelings" and helps cultivate the necessary "economy of memory" (Malafouris 86) around Lauren's compromised *conative* apparatus. It is the "tonal soul" (DeLillo, *TBA* 87) of Rey in him that goes into the making of a somatic substitute for the former's painful absence: "…she could not miss Rey, could not consider his absence, the loss of Rey, without thinking along the margins of Mr. Tuttle" (DeLillo, *TBA* 82). His ventriloquist traits ensure an accumulation of affective value[12] by virtue of which the ambivalence circumscribing his ontology transfigures into a kind of spectacular performance. The erstwhile outcast, unwanted, uncanny corporeal presence of Mr. Tuttle who initially required "a reference to be placed

somewhere", achieves legitimacy through the affective economies he developed around Lauren's immediate environ.

Desire Machine(s)

A diegetic resonance may be drawn here between the novel's narrative coordinates and those of "Be Right Back", an episode (02.01) in Charlie Brooker's sci-fi cinematic anthology *Black Mirror* (2011 –)[13]. Within its fictive corpus, the episode dramatizes the propensity of postmodern AI technologies to combine cyborg intelligence with social media avatars of the departed in order to reanimate the dead in their precise corporeality. After the death of her husband, Martha (Heyley Atwell) avails this facility and acquires a manufactured humanoid who looks and talks like her husband Ash (Domhnall Gleeson). The entity makes him existentially alive in all his ontological accuracy. In its phenomenal disposition, this living and breathing posthuman resurrection situates itself somewhere in close proximity to Mr. Tuttle. Their corporeal architectures fabricate sites for fetishized claims. With their affective corporeal performances, Mr. Tuttle and his advanced, technologically augmented compatriot from the filmic genre exemplify an instance of "commodified kinship"[14]. This is underpinned by the codes of contemporary consumerist societies where everything including the body can be commoditized. Elaborating on the economy of affect, Michael Hardt conceptualises labour as both "corporeal and affective, in the sense that its products are intangible: a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, passion – even a sense of connectedness or community" (96). In this sense, Mr. Tuttle's biological capabilities generate a form of immaterial affective labour. While attempting to strike a conversation with Mr. Tuttle at one point in the novel, Lauren ruminates on "the question of his usability" (DeLillo, *TBA* 81). The concern of use-value dots the parameters of worth in market economy. This is premised on the consumerist ideologies that prioritise utilitarian benefit of the users. To this end, Lauren embodies the nerves of an arch consumer navigating the realm of a neo-cannibalistic culture that thrives on augmenting, harvesting and commodifying the human body.

On more occasions than one, Mr. Tuttle has been reified into the liminal order of lifeless objects in the novel: Lauren figures him as "a dummy in a red club chair" (DeLillo, *TBA* 48); "a cartoon head and body… like the first toy ever built with moving parts" (DeLillo, *TBA* 62), and so forth. As time goes by, Lauren's modest attempts to make him articulate Rey's voice turns into fervid claims:

> She said, "Talk like him. I want you to do this for me. I know you are able to do it. Do it for me. Talk like him… Say whatever comes to your head, just so it is him. I will not ask you how you are able to do it. I only want to listen. Talk like him. Do like him. Speak in his voice. Do Rey. Make me hear him. I am asking you nice… Do this for me. (DeLillo, *TBA* 71)

At this point, one can draw a significant parallelism between the ambience created by Mr. Tuttle's verbal enactment inside the domestic space of the household and that manufactured by the interactive online personal chat agents of the recent times. These environments are managed and regulated by applications such as Apple's Siri, Microsoft's Cortana, Google's Assistant and Amazon's Alexa[15]. Such ambient technologies are designed to interact with users, respond to their queries, and address their concerns. Mr. Tuttle's identity as a mere speaking "toy" with "a dummy head" aligns him with the logistics of a chatbot whose functionality is defined by and restricted to its affective utterances. For us acclimatized into an era "peopled" with virtual assistants, the novel's narrative imaginary rife with directives such as "Do it for me", "Talk like him", "Do like him", "Speak in his voice", "Do Rey", "Make me hear him" would resonate with popular command phrases like "Play it for me, Alexa" at once. As someone who "violates the limits of the human" (DeLillo, *TBA* 100), Mr. Tuttle epitomises in him powerful portents of posthuman proclivity. However, when DeLillo was writing, enhanced humanoid artefacts and interactive machines were still a thing of the sci-fi genre. But he did offer significant pointers to negotiate the cultural epistemes around the body and situations of technologically augmented digital domesticity. He did this by pushing us to recognise the ways in which the affective markers of the corporeal are problematised in landscapes of postmodern consumerist economy.

DeLillo's fictional frame in *The Body Artist* foregrounds the entangled status of corporeal spaces by enacting a blend of physical and the phenomenological through the conduit of the body. This is witnessed once the body is embedded in a techno-material ontology. His characters not only exhibit fluidity/plasticity at the level of the subject, but also exist in an entangled world of affective investments. This is a world in which the ambivalent turns spectacular and the corporeal morphs into a consumable commodity. These are powerful pointers to the contemporary culture of capitalism. In this sense, DeLillo's narrative offers locations to interrogate the cannibalistic impetus of neoliberal economy that thrives on "an overall and comprehensive commoditization of human life"

(Bauman, *Life* 120). By tracing the postmodern logic of corporeal mutability and the posthuman turn to human-machine convergence, the text dramatizes a landscape of entanglements. In so doing, it illustrates the ways in which the body's affective relationality may transform the value and meaning of the human as a biomedical category. To this end, the text emerges as a powerful proposer of possibilities that relate to the body hitherto unacknowledged in the corpus of DeLillo.

II. *Cosmopolis* (2003)

In an early review of the novel, Walter Kim went on to assert that the characters in Don DeLillo's *Cosmopolis* (2003) are "barely corporeal, cerebral entities" (Alberts 2). In a sense, this statement is where the current reading of the novel reading starts off. Kim hints at an obsolescence of the body (psyche and soma). For this reading, his commentary appears to open up entry points to negotiate how the corporeal schema of an individual is radically reconfigured in the contemporary culture of enhanced neoliberal technocracy. By proposing a case of divergence from Kim's position, the current investigation suggests that *Cosmopolis* foregrounds a fictional realm of reasoning to accommodate the contours of corporeal mutability, instead of an absolute disappearance, apropos of the immediate urban technologized landscapes. DeLillo's media-saturated environs exemplify a narrative commitment towards unveiling an extended diagnosis of the contemporary condition. Eschewing the essentialist notions of the body, the current consumerist culture is reflective of ontological slippages that destabilise the contours of autonomous and authentic subjectivities. By accommodating pointers to investigate this problematic, DeLillo's fictional frame appears to articulate an epistemology of ambivalence where the borderlines between organic and inorganic, subjective and objective realms are increasingly unsettled. This is done through a dramatization of the simulacrum that operates like spectres of the everyday in *White Noise* (1985). Baudrillard identifies this transition by locating a historicity where "the instantaneousness of communication miniaturizes our exchanges into a series of instants" with "the body as a stage, the landscape as a stage, and time as a stage are slowly disappearing as scenes" (Baudrillard, *Ecstasy* 19). In *Cosmopolis*, as this reading argues, the cartography and configurations of the corporeal form the narrative linchpin, bringing into the fore an endless enmeshment of biogenetic materiality and algorithmic flow of information.

There is a bunch of trajectories to the critical compartment around this novel. Among others, it has been read around the trope of temporality[16]; for it encapsulates anecdotes of a single day in the life of Eric Packer, the protagonist, it finds a fictitious ally with Bloom's excursions in Joyce's *Ulysses*[17]; the narrative deployment of a post-9/11 American cityscape has prompted readings of the novel in light of "In the Ruins of the Future", DeLillo's essay published a month after the Twin Towers collapsed[18]. This chapter draws on Randy Laist who traces "Eric's psychological collapse and the collapse of the World Trade Centre as eerie analogues of one another" (257). Laist's thesis dwells on the cultural undertakings of electronic media and technoscience propounded by Paul Virilio, Marshall McLuhan, and others in order to illustrate how the novel's narrative apparatus explores a convergence of nature and culture. This reading draws on and extends this argument to look at how the novel purports templates of entangled corporeality that problematise ontological fixities of the sentient self. It adopts an interpretive framework that combines phenomenology and cognitive science apropos of the biomedical understanding of the human body.

This reading examines the ways in which the novel incorporates experiential moments where bodies are intra-actively co-constituted. It aims to untangle the epistemological mutations captured in the novel that enacts a ceaseless transaction between the corporeal schema of the individual and the digital interfaces of a posturban cityscape. Then it turns to investigate how the novel offers a fictional engagement with the bioscientific practices that situate the body as a site where medical science coincides with the dominant cultural epistemes of the time. While the body emerges as a frame for an existentialist enquiry in this reading, it does so by destabilising the organically founded fixities of biotic and abiotic materiality. How these junctures encompassed by the novel enable us to reflect on a posthuman intervention is explored in towards the end of this chapter. By accommodating a speculative realm of reasoning informed by transhumanist extremities, these readings hold, DeLillo offers a fictional frame where contours of the corporeal transgress the putative frames of epistemological certainties occasioning a landscape of endless entanglements.

A Postmetropolitan Transition

At the centre of the novel is Eric Packer, a twenty-eight-year-old multimillionaire currency trader based in Wall Street. Packer's position is endlessly reified by his

proximity to a network of cybernetic interfaces. His corporeal body exhibits a refabrication of subjectivity. This is seen through the interplay between bodily and machinic materiality that reconfigures the experience of a feeling individual navigating the lived spaces of posturban imaginary. It is a textual mediation on the transitions in subjecthood and agency. The novel shows this to critique the cultures of neoliberal technocracy. One is likely to find it difficult to situate Eric in historical time for he lacks sufficient contexts. Throughout the novel he emerges as one whose subjective habitat serves to structure a postmodern position that leads up to "consequent weakening of historicity" (Jameson 6). Jameson's point suggests a deliberate blurring/erasure of referents that leads to centreless systems of hypervisibility. Edward Soja links these metatextual features of the self to a postmetropolitan landscape in which the visual medium of the digital image complicates the split between the viewer/controller and the viewed/controlled.

Eric Packer embodies the hyper-consumerist affinities of a capitalist culture. His susceptibility toward hyper-visible media and technologies of surveillance illustrates a "postmetropolitan transition" of the cityspace that undergoes "[p]ostfordist economic restructuring, intensified globalization, the communications and information revolution, the deterritorialization and reterritorialization of cultures and identity, the recomposition of urban form and social structures" (Soja 324). In Eric, the novel portrays character slippages in which we find DeLillo looking at the ambivalence around the organically founded notions of the self. His degeneration into a 'new' self is a pointer to corporeal entanglements: he is both technologically augmented and biomedically repurposed. It is through the ambivalent articulations of Eric (and his compatriots) that this reading tries to negotiate the epistemology of the mutable self by highlighting facets of entangled corporeality.

Eric's existential performances are inextricably linked to the high-rise edifice in which he lives and runs his business. His subsequent collapse at the end of the novel is difficult to determine without acknowledging the immediate resonance with the fall of the Trade Centre towers. For Randy Laist, "Eric himself is a kind of third Twin Tower" (258). The proposition holds close affinity to Keith Neudecker's observation on the morning of September 11, 2001, that "[t]hat was him coming down, the North Tower" (DeLillo, *FM* 5). This is a pointer to the fact that posturban edifices exemplify an embodied phenomenon. In fact, Packer's reflections on his skyscraper workplace from

outside as he sets foot on his day-long journey in order to have a haircut throws light on his existential continuity with the non-person architecture that lies beyond his epidermic confinement:

> He went outside and crossed the avenue, then turned and faced the building where he lived. *He felt contiguous with it*. It was eighty-nine stories, a prime number, in an undistinguished sheath of hazy bronze glass. They shared an edge or boundary, *skyscraper and man*. It was nine hundred feet high, the tallest residential tower in the world, a commonplace oblong whose only statement was its size. It had the kind of banality that reveals itself over time as being truly brutal. He liked it for this reason. (DeLillo, *CP* 8-9; emphasis added)

In a way, the edifice serves as a performative index for Eric's digital currency trading industry without which his subjective proclivities would turn redundant and pointless. A convergence of discursive practice and material phenomena ("skyscraper and man") is crucial to take note of at this juncture which encourages us to consider how Eric's position as a subject is "intra-actively co-constituted through the material-discursive practice" (Barad 168). He "liked it" for "the kind of banality that reveals itself over time as being truly brutal". This is a statement that signifies the affective transactions that "the tallest residential tower in the world" strikes with its owner/inhabitant.

Posturban Geographies

Such intra-active interplays underpin forms of agency into the non-human/extra-human apparatuses that influence social and cultural mechanisms. It is heuristic to read Eric's white limousine as a significant marker of this arrangement. The limo embodies a techno-scientifically augmented futurized environment equipped with "dashboard computer screens and a night-vision display on the lower windshield" (DeLillo, *CP* 11). Its interiority shows a microcosm of posturban geography of which it is an essential constituent. Debra Shaw theorises the contemporary posturban as "a space uniquely fitted to the cyborg politics" (122) drawing on Donna Harraway's conceptualization[19] of an era that thrives on the endless proliferation of a symbiotic relationship between "the flesh and the machine" (Braidotti, *Metamorphosis* 223). Contemporary cityscapes showcase advanced biopolitical regimes where bodies are endlessly enmeshed in mechanisms driven by ambient machines. Eric's incorporation into the mechanised ontology of the limousine (and the city, as a metonymic extension) fabricate one such landscape of

entangled corporeality. He is portrayed as someone who inhabits "[t]he interaction between technology and capital. The inseparability" (DeLillo, *CP* 23). It is an ironic presentation of a metonymic order which is suggestive of a (re/de)configuration of corporeal signifiers. This stance finds a contextualization when DeLillo describes the experience Eric acquires while setting foot into the limo:

> He sat in the club chair at the rear of the cabin looking into the array of visual display units. There were medleys of data on every screen, all the flowing symbols and alpine charts, the polychrome numbers pulsing. He absorbed this material in a couple of long still seconds, ignoring the speech sounds that issued from lacquered heads. There was a microwave and a heart monitor. He looked at the spycam on a swivel and it looked back at him. He used to sit here in a hand-held space but that was finished now. The context was nearly touchless. He could talk most systems into operation or wave a hand at a screen and make it go blank. (DeLillo, *CP* 13)

The automobile embodies the architectural equivalence of the posturban geography where the tactile dimension of technology is gradually on the wane. Though networks operate via wired terminals, the techno-material ontology morphs into the touchless. His immersion into the nexus of technoscientific ambience that lacks a tangible interface emblematize the idea of "inseparability" where the mechanisms of the machines that we manufacture affect and determine the agency of the individuals. The words used to describe the on-screen display of market data—"flowing", "pulsing"—carry semiotic resonance with medicalized vocabulary of the body. This is a moment that instantiates a deliberate defusal of the visceral and virtual. Eric admits a sense of phenomenal continuity with the world forged by a tangible "surface" that "separates inside from out and belongs no less to one than the other" (DeLillo, *CP* 9). But the text repeatedly foregrounds a de-hierarchization of these two orders—either structural, or symbolic—by articulating a sense of the shifting surface.

In a way, the technospace of the city suggests a "dissolution of the divide between interiority and exteriorization, the flesh of [the] body and the flesh of the world" (Hansen 91). The ebb of electrically generated information in "flowing symbols" and "pulsing" numbers require someone like Michael Chin, Eric's currency analyst or Vija Kinski, his "Chief of Theory", for an effective translation of data into material reconfigurations. They track currencies, survey the ups and downs in financial exchanges in the form of dots and

digits, and predicts investment strategies following which Eric has to operate his capital in order to hold sway in the market economy. These enactments constitute an emergent otology where the material and immaterial are endlessly entangled through the body. For someone like Kinsky or Chin, their corporeal dynamics have been reconfigured through ceaseless interactions with the network of algorithms on screen. It is the flow of data across "[t]he regulating sensors and software" (DeLillo, *CP* 78) which eventually determines their performance (in the form of information processing) and sustains the foundation of who they are in a posturban cityscapes.

Entangled Gaze(s)

Crucially, one prefers to perceive their sense of the self through technological representations in the posturban moment: "His own image caught his eye, live on the oval screen beneath the spycam. Some seconds passed. He saw himself recoil in shock" (DeLillo, *CP* 93). Situations such as this are defined by a virtual phenomenon that re-scripts the bodily. But there is also a will for the phenomenal world underpinned by a corporeal transaction with the tangible at times, for Eric wants "to rub [himself] against a door or wall, for the sympathetic contact" (DeLillo, *CP* 58). Here, the sense of a "sympathetic contact" conveys a mechanism of the lived body's affectivity. Such states activate specific neurons in the brain and register a sense of feeling in the sentient selves. However, Eric's position points toward more than just that. He exemplifies a gradual reconfiguration of the individual cognitive schema. The result is dramatized through a series of events that mark off a delayed cognition through digitized interfaces.

Such episodes illustrate an ironic reversal of the roles embodied by the perceiver and the perceived. On one occasion in the novel, "Eric watched himself on the oval screen below the spycam, running his thumb along his chinline. The car stopped and moved and he realized queerly that he'd just placed his thumb on his chinline, a second or two after he'd seen it on-screen (DeLillo, *CP* 58). At this juncture, the screen assumes analogues functionality as that of the skin. It transfigures into a site where the body obtains sensory stimuli to be processed inside its cognitive repository. Eric's sensory data has been displaced from his epidermic realm ("thumb on the chinline") to the pixelated interface ("on-screen") to be ultimately perceived as an ocular input/visual data. There is a delay in his apperception ("a second or two after…"), but for Eric this alignment is emancipatory for "[c]omputer power eliminates doubt" (DeLillo, *CP* 86). By proposing

that cybernetic structures can occasion cognitive correlatives for the individual sensory apparatus, the novel instantiates a deliberate defusal of the biotic and abiotic. Both these realms—of sensors and sentience—are co-constitutive in the processes of the self. These are processes that mark the existential and phenomenological position of the individual endlessly enmeshed in a corporeal weld with the touchless digital avenues.

Speaking of posturban cartographies, Shaw enunciates the aspects of "digital spaces of social media, GPSs and practices of electronic surveillance" (50) in relation to the bodily distributions. This relationality is what defines the quotidian frame of lived experiences in the life of Eric Packer. Inside his limousine, Eric is under the gaze of two armed guards and a nurse "on constant watch at three monitors in a windowless room at the office" (DeLillo, *CP* 15). Medical technologies that monitor his health transform his corporeal dynamics into pixelated patterns on screen. Contemporary culture of neoliberal capitalism "tends to construct, view, and evaluate bodies primarily as objects of bioscientific knowledge" (Belling 380) which can be tempered with and reengineered for desired pharmaceutical purposes. This situation has generated a hyperconscious outlook towards the mechanisms of one's corporeal parameters to such an extent that "we are all—here, now—more or less hypochondriac", accustomed to experiencing ourselves "as always already the objects of particularly medical reading" (Belling 380). It is suggestive of a culture in which the corporal body transforms into a biomedical commodity that can be repurposed for therapeutic as well as cosmetic rearrangements[20]. DeLillo's novel offers a powerful proposer to engage with this cultural episteme.

Inside/Outside: Ontic Entanglements

From the very beginning, Eric obsesses over the fact that "[h]is prostrate [is] asymmetrical" (DeLillo, *CP* 8), even after his physician assures that it is not a serious issue. This physiognomic aspect of his body is repeatedly conveyed to the reader. It so happens that Eric is made to share this fact with Benno Levin, the man who finally murders him at the end of the novel (DeLillo, *CP* 144). For a wealthy consumer like Eric, this unease regarding the body underscores the idea that had there been the facility for a biomedical reconstruction of the organ, he would have availed it in the first place in order to ensure the economy of uniformity[21]. His hyperconsciousness regarding the body again come to the fore when Eric contemplates, as "he felt a sneeze begin to develop in his immune system", thus:

> The streets emptied fast, barricades loaded into trucks and hauled away. The car moved forward now, with Torval seated up front. He sneezed and then felt a sense of incompleteness. He realized that he always sneezed twice, or so it seemed in retrospect. He waited and it came, rewardingly, the second sneeze. What causes people to sneeze? A protective reflex of the nasal mucous membranes, to expel invasive materials. (DeLillo, *CP* 140)

This is an ironic reflection on the Foucauldian idea of a "medical gaze", one that "detaches the physician from the patient emotionally, linguistically, and morally" (Rich et al. 225). However, in this case it is the subject who is contemplating on his corporeal behaviour and not the clinician. Towards the end of the novel, we are told that "the stuff that he sneezes when he sneezes, this is him" (DeLillo, *CP* 207). This is again a metonymic play on subjectivities. It directs our glance at the elements which form and re-form the phenomenal selves. This attention to body fluids is not a one-off event in the novel: when Eric took out his handkerchief after sneezing it was described as "sourced by his own secretions of the testes and seminal vesicles and various other glands, collected earlier in the day when he'd used the square of cloth to clean himself after one or another expulsion of fluid" (DeLillo*, CP* 141). Secretions from the body, albeit natural, are often regarded as aberrations or that which unsettles the narratives of normative order. It is a pertinent pointer to forms of ontic entanglements. "Body fluids", holds Elizabeth Grosz, "attest to the permeability of the body, its necessary dependence on an outside, its liability to collapse into this outside (this is what death implies), to the perilous divisions between the body's inside and its outside" (193). Much like Mr. Tuttle, Eric's subject position corresponds to "simultaneous insides and outsides" (DeLillo, *TBA* 48) illustrating an order of entangled corporeality. His "fluids" define him. To take into account these bodily secretions, one has to encounter an ontology that defies the deterministic view of the self. This view is premised on hermetically sealed categories of inside(s) and outside(s). Destabilising the idea of solidity, Eric here emerges as someone who is composed of both organic and inorganic, visceral and virtual signifiers.

The episode where Doctor Ingram visits Eric for a check-up with his set of clinical instruments reveals yet another facet of this entangled order. Stethoscopes to Eric lacked purpose. He wondered "why stethoscopes were still in use. They were lost tools of antiquity, quaint as blood-sucking worms" (DeLillo, *CP* 43). At times, he "stopped looking at computer screens and turned to the streets" (DeLillo, *CP* 64), but only to

realize afterwards that the "street was offence to the truth of the future" (DeLillo, *CP* 65). The streets are presented as an ontological opposite to the screens. This oppositionality is given further weight as the pixelated digital image assumes a more convincing status than the kinaesthetic inputs of the body in a posturban milieu. At the doctor's appointment too, it is the informatized version that lures Eric:

> He wasn't sure whether he was watching a computerized mapping of his heart or a picture of the thing itself. It throbbed forcefully on-screen. The image was only a foot away but the heart assumed another context, one of distance an immensity, beating in the blood plum raptures of a galaxy in formation… How dwarfed he felt by his own heart. There it was and it awed him, to see his life beneath his breastbone in image-forming units, hammering on outside him. (DeLillo, *CP* 44)

Eric, in essence, is finally a consumer of his own internal body-image reflected on screen that constitutes a discursive virtual phenomenon. His corporeal data is simultaneously consumed by his physician via the same informatized avenue. It suggests a situation in which "total subjectivization… coincides with total objectivization" (Žižek, *Plague* 173). It is computerised information that makes Eric anxious to witness the uncanny replica of the visceral parameters. Such transactions subvert the traditional doctor-patient relationship where illness is considered as "an unlucky breakdown in a body that is conceived on mechanistic lines" (Frank 88). Any medical diagnosis aims at noting symptoms with which the patient's ailing body can be narrativized. But the electronic intervention accentuates a codification of the illness narrative into a series of algorithms[22]. The digitized receptacles construct a version of Eric which is temporally distant, but at the same time identifiable as himself through his sensory apparatus. He is also used to perceiving himself through the storage feed of his security cameras which are a regularly seen in the posturban cityspaces. In such situations, Eric as a discursive phenomenon (of being streamed on-screen) and his corporeal dynamics (as a living, breathing organism) merge through a ceaseless "intra-action" (Barad 2007) inside the technologically intensified interior of the limousine and the technospace of the city. The affective registers of this phenomenon have been conveyed to and consumed by the individual through a set digitised visual discourse that reconfigure the immediate temporality.

Biomediated Bodies/Posthuman Selves

It is necessary to note that the conduits of ambient technology are also the tactile constituents of the cityscape in which biological bodies are existentially embedded. In essence, therefore, "the city itself has become not only the domain of [one's] networked cognitive system, but also… the spatial and material embodiment of that system" (Mitchell 19) accommodating a weld of computerised sensors and human sensorium. DeLillo's spatial imaginary in the novel articulates this problematic as the city acquires an embodied portrayal as "a city of stunned flesh" (DeLillo, *CP* 172), a viscerally alive territory that "eats and sleeps noise" (DeLillo, *CP* 71), reconfiguring spaces experienced and occupied by individuals enmeshed in a techno-corporeal entanglement.

N. Katherine Hayles identifies a posthuman convergence that "privileges informational pattern over material instantiation" (*Posthuman* 3). Eric's recognition of "people moving past each other in coded moments" (DeLillo, *CP* 66) is a pointer to this transition which characterises the posturban landscape of the novel. For him:

> […] data itself was soulful and glowing, a dynamic aspect of the life process. This was the eloquence of alphabets and numeric systems, now fully realised 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. (DeLillo, *CP* 24)

Eric epitomizes the nerves of a "biomediated" individual whose corporeal body has been recontextualised through a series of technological assemblages. When Benno gives an account of Eric's mundane atmosphere, he notes how "[Eric's] bathroom mirror had a readout telling him his temperature and blood pressure at the moment, his height, weight, heart rate, pulse" (DeLillo, *CP* 153). This is a crucial moment of convergence where the body is registered simultaneously in terms of corporeal and computational integers (hypertext). Eugene Thacker introduces the trope of "biomedia" to conceptualise "a situation in which a technical, informatic recontextualization of biological components and processes enables the body to demonstrate itself, in applications that may be biological or nonbiological, medical or militaristic, cultural or economic" (78). DeLillo's novel points at this phenomenon by depicting the ways in which bodily biomechanisms are constantly reconfigured in terms of digital data. This is a significant position to interrogate posturban individualities.

To this end, Eric illustrates a merger of two disparate epistemic facets with his corporeal performativity. This is implicated in the ways in which the body unspools a twofold exegesis: "first, as a biological body, a biomolecular body, a species body, a patient body; and second, as a body that is "compiled" through modes of information processing, modelling, data extraction, and *in silico* simulation" (Thacker 58; emphasis in original). His position summons forth posturban medical imaginaries where citizens are engrossed in quantifying the biomechanical aspects of their body so that they can both monitor and be monitored and regulated via the electronic interfaces to which they are linked. An individual such as Eric metonymizes such situations of techno-corporeal assemblages. His body foregrounds a complex entanglement of the biological province and biomedical technology. In such cases, the existential position of the human cannot be negotiated within the bodily boundaries.

In fact, Benno's own reflections on himself corroborate the idea of entangled corporeality of posturban individuals: "I have my exercise bike where I real-pedal with one foot, simulate with the other" (DeLillo, *CP* 149). By dramatizing technologically mediated forms of kinesthesis, the text partakes in a reconfiguration of the sensory architecture where modes of sentience are no longer localised within the body's corporeal limits. What Benno/Eric accentuates is a sense of the self that is contingent on the technoscientific refashioning of the body's corporeal framework. In them emerges a posthuman subjecthood that defies the "essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism" (Hayles, *Posthuman* 3). In fact, DeLillo even takes us a bit further by introducing transhumanist portents of someone who would accommodate a somatic interplay with "digital tissue" (DeLillo, *CP* 126) to "move around only by means of prostheses regulated by a computer" (Žižek, *Plague* 172). In this, the novel maybe seen to have depicted a dystopia that both futuristic and contemporary at once.

Such episodes are implicated in the ways in which the wearable and mobile digital devices have become a "part of us, part of our bodies as prosthetics of the self" (Lupton 268) through an unceasing incorporation into the everyday. These are devices that repurpose the neural networks of the human by approximating an epistemology of emotions. Advancements in cognitive neuroscience reveal how the close alliance between neurobiology and artificial intelligence in the recent years necessitates a rethinking of the idea of cognition as an extended and distributive phenomenon which is not merely

confined to the limits of the cranium. Speaking of the "extended mind"[23], Andy Clark and David Chalmers argue that the quotidian transactions between human beings and extra-human electronic devices foster an entangled ontic framework in which the agentic self is embedded. DeLillo offers a narrative realm of reasoning for this phenomenon by fabricating Torval, Eric's security personnel, who navigates the immediate posturban temporalities through aural signifiers received through electronic exchanges.

When we are introduced to him in the novel, "[h]e was speaking into a mouthpiece concealed in his lapel. He wore an ear bud. The handset of his cell phone was belted under his jacket not far from his voice-activated firearm…" (DeLillo, *CP* 18). Torval acquires information in the form of cellular data through a cognitive apparatus exhibiting a two-way interaction: first, he interprets the electronic inputs and perform, and second, the "voice-activated" devices semiotise his spoken commands and respond. By positioning the individual at this juncture, the text interrogates the structures of ambivalence that characterise the cultures of contemporary technoscience. These are events that unsettle the margin between nervous nodes and electronic sensors equipped to data devices—"mouthpiece", "ear bud", "firearm"—that "jointly govern the behaviour in the same sort of way that cognition usually does" (Clark & Chalmers 8). These devices ensure an effective enactment of Torval's agentic self, without an integration to which his "behavioural competence will drop" (Clark & Chalmers 9). Individuals like Torval or Eric embody the prospect of an extended consciousness and the novel constitutes a point of divergence where neuroscience conflates with ambient technology. At this point, consciousness that tends to inscribe a sense of the self may not necessarily emerge from the biological body. In such situations, nervous nodes and neurons act in tandem with electronic transmissions.

Read against this thread, Russell Scott Valentino argues that "the split between technologically mediated mind and the physical grounding of body must be seen as fundamental to Packer's, and the book's, exploration of meaning and mortality, a recurrent theme in DeLillo's opus" (146). While there is the imminence of death lurking everywhere in the life of Eric, there is also an extreme transhumanist assertion at times: "Why die when you can live on disk? A disk, not a tomb. An idea beyond the body" (DeLillo, *CP* 105). In his demise at the end of the novel, we see the willingness to revise the event of death. This is one moment that inscribes a re-scripting of the eschatological understanding of the human race:

> He'd always wanted to become quantum dust, transcending his body mass, the soft tissue over the bones, the muscle and fat. The idea was to live outside the given limits, in a chip, on a disk, as data, in whirl, in radiant spin, a consciousness saved from void…. The technology was imminent or not. It was semi-mythical. It was the natural next step. It would never happen. It is happening now, an evolutionary advance that needed only the practical mapping of the nervous system onto digital memory. (DeLillo, *CP* 206-207)

The image approximates ("quantum") and parodies ("dust") the physicality of death that looms large as a recurring motif in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Eric's unique subjectivity[24] appears to transcend the bodily foundations of the self with a consciousness that is aided and augmented by its interplay with the virtual topography. The current culture of social media offers portals for such forms of digital afterlife and posthumous personhood by looking at "ontological possibilities for animating the deceased" (Arnold et al. 125). What emerges in Eric is a serious slippage between narrative and epistemic notions of the feeling human. The human corporeal schema is problematised by temporal extremes of a neurogenetic dissolution into the algorithmic domain. This is pushed to the extremes in recent cinematic narratives such as Wally Pfister's *Transcendence* (2014)[25]. Steeped in a radical speculative frame of transhumanist worldview, the novel appears to embrace the idea of extracting oneself from the biological substrate in order to achieve a disembodied consciousness as "the natural next step" of technocratic progression. Such a view repurposes the logic of the corporeal. It is an estrangement that DeLillo seems to endorse by devising an epistemic flux where the body's organicity cannot be traced back into a hermetically sealed structure. The narrative encapsulates pointers of a posthuman convergence where the boundary between biotic materiality and electronic data, human and the non/extra-human ontologies, organic and inorganic seems increasingly untenable. It is an instantiation of "science and ego combined" (DeLillo, *CP* 70) that predates "the practical mapping of the nervous system onto digital memory" in an emergent entangled ontology of the self.

By portraying Eric, Torval and Benno Levin as embedded in a perpetual transaction with ambient technology, the novel brings up entangled orders of corporal performance. This is indicative of a posturban landscape determined by the cultural logic of capitalism. In these, the reading argues, DeLillo engages inventively with the affective and existential state of the feeling human. Such states correspond to a point of convergence in which the

corporeal is constantly reconfigured by ways in which biogenetic matter extends into and coincides with algorithmic flow of electronic data. The novel's narrative frame appears to foreground significant pointers to interrogate such a problematic. It invites attention to situations of epistemic ambivalence by unsettling the putative ontologies of subject and object in an endless intra-active entanglement. The novel does so by focusing on the medically perceived notion of the human body through which DeLillo shows us portents of a posthuman convergence. This is what unsettles the neatly conceived hermetically sealed ontology of the organic human. It anticipates an entangled realm of transhumanist extremities on which the current capitalist culture thrives. By looking at the location and articulation of the self, the text proposes pointers to examine the reconfigurations of the corporeal, pushing the narrative into a world of endless entanglements.