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Technology and the Bodily in Don DeLillo's *The Body Artist* and *Cosmopolis*

Don DeLillo has been one of the most insightful novelists of the present day American literary scene, offering a most probing analysis of the state of culture. After the epic monumentality of *Underworld* (1997), *The Body Artist* (2001) seems a radical change of scale. And yet, this sparse book, the novelist's shortest work, is a crucial stylistic exercise for the artist. There is an obvious minimalistic tendency running throughout DeLillo's output and pushing him toward the liminal exploration of the meeting ground of rationality, language, and the sense of temporality and mortality. *The Body Artist* is a condensed treatment of these relations. With its strongly withdrawn, meticulously paced mood—with its minimalistic surroundings, which have always attracted the writer, now taking up the bulk of the narrative—this insistently uneventful, almost plotless meditation seems to give us a break from the writer's usual confrontation with the large-scale obsessions of the present-day era. As such, *The Body Artist* seems to stand in stark contrast with DeLillo's next novel, *Cosmopolis* (2003). As a fatalistic one-way plot, ending in an outburst of violence and self-inflicted death of the protagonist, set in an environment suffused with the electronic media of data management and image production, *Cosmopolis* returns to DeLillo's staple interest in the fatal combination of the culture's metaphysics of representation and violence, explored earlier in *The Names* (1982), *White Noise* (1985), *Libra* (1988), *Mao II* (1991), and *Underworld*.

And yet, for all the difference between them, *The Body Artist* and *Cosmopolis* are linked as contrastive analyses of the approaches to the role of technology in shaping contemporary consciousness. *Cosmopolis'* environment is brimming with devices of electronic processing of images and data. These technologies are crucial in the life of the novel's protagonist: they constitute his sense of the world and his identity. Although removed from center stage, the same electronic technology of the instant processing of the image and modulation of the human physical materiality (including voice), is also crucially involved in the shaping of the sense of identity in Lauren Hartke, the protagonist of *The Body Artist.*

These two portrayals of technology stand in contrast. In exploring it, I hope to highlight some larger implications for DeLillo's sense of the human. I will discuss the presence that technology takes in both novels and follow up with conclusions on the difference between

both protagonists' uses of technology and the resultant senses of identity. As we will see, the difference between them points to an element which emerges as crucial for DeLillo's thinking about the evolution of the human: the ways humans relate to the bodily.

1. Technology in *Cosmopolis*

Eric Packer, the protagonist of *Cosmopolis,* is a tycoon on the post-historical, post-political, global currency markets. He deals daily in staggering volumes of money that can raise or fell entire national economies around the globe. He lives alone, in Manhattan, in the world's highest residential high-rise building, in which his 140 million dollar apartment has a rotating bedroom, a meditation cell, and a computerized room all in screens running the digitalized representation of world's currency markets. From this room—so he believes—Packer controls the world. The novel is a record of one day of his life, a shamelessly linear tale of his moving across Manhattan in search of a place where he will get what he really wants—a haircut, something real, palpable, authentic. In the course of this journey, Eric will lose all his money, and, having precipitated an encounter with his assassin, his life.

Packer—a twenty-first-century Ulysses, set on a one-way course, never coming back home—travels in a custom-made, stretched-out, bullet-proof, sound-proof limousine, which is an extravagant gesture on the part of somebody who has a helicopter and has just acquired rights to using air routes. The extravaganza comes from a wish—common to many previous DeLillo characters—to get closer to a world beyond the veneers of variously constructed hyper-realities. Packer wants to be on the ground, to smell and taste New York, to visit women and make love to them, in between the sessions with his corps of analysts. So the decision to seek something real is half-hearted, Packer making nostalgic forays after whatever he believes is a deeper, non-liquifiable reality, only as intermissions of his normal activity of being instrumental in actually turning the world into a liquefied, relentless, all-encompassing flow of electronic data. His limousine is equipped with numerous screens, computers, cameras, and the devices both bring in data—charts of global currency markets, processed media images from all over the world, or images from the immediate surroundings of the car—and transmit data, some cameras sending Packer's image outside, to broadcasting stations. For safety reasons, these outgoing images are then fed back to Eric's own system, turning his apartment, his office, and his car into a circular, self-enclosed compound of analysis and decision making.

The world Eric Packer both craves and eventually falls victim to is a world fully represented, based on the aggressive drive toward turning it into its representation, and

manipulated through representation. Technology has become a primary tool in this manipulation. Packer participates in the process in which technology changes the world into what Heidegger called "standing reserve." According to this well-known formulation of the technological sense of being—the way in which technology becomes a means of revealing being—Eric's tools help him measure and control the world by turning it into exposable and usable knowledge. For Heidegger, modern technology is a type of revealing the world which transforms "the actual" into such a manageable reservoir of energy: enframed, disposable, at hand. Modern technology, ensuing from modern science, is a way of revealing "which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy which can be extracted and stored…. [It] pursues and entraps nature as a calculable coherence of forces" (Heidegger 296, 303). To be sure, that work of revealing being as standing-reserve is first effected by the capital, but it is obvious that now it is the technology of electronic storage and usage of data that boosts the flow of money as a method of enframing.

Even though Heidegger's description pertains to the modernist stage of the history of science and technology, it captures perfectly Eric's sense of what technology is for. In Heidegger, technology is the last in the series of the ways of revealing being, typical of Western metaphysics, in which the subject engages the object by way of "representing" it. As Heidegger puts it, "enframing" by means of technology is a mode of the relationship of the human toward himself and toward the world that "banishes man into that kind of revealing that is an ordering" (309). Packer wants to become a part of the world which is utterly controlled. In DeLillo's portrayal of this dream of control, money, electronics and technology come together in a kind of robotic nightmare of instantaneous connectivity of the human, the technological and the pecuniary: "There were medley of data on every screen… the polychrome numbers pulsing. He absorbed this material in a couple of seconds…. He looked at the spycam on a swivel and it looked back at him…. The context was nearly touchless. He could talk most systems into operation or wave a hand at a screen and make it go blank" (13).

As Heidegger predicted, revealing as enframing through technology predominantly reveals man to himself in a way of changing himself into standing-reserve: "he comes to the point where he himself will have to be taken as standing-reserve. Meanwhile, man, precisely as the one so threatened, exalts himself to the posture of lord of the earth" (308). Wherever he looks, man sees only himself, but instead of sensing the danger of this situation, man delights in what he reads as total power of control. In the novel, we see this principle operating in Eric's belief that all the data his interconnected system brings in front of him afford him some ultimate insight into the law of all things: a complex yet accurate image of the "deep" laws of nature. To Eric, the movements of money,

changed electronically into charts and graphs, are not dead digits; they are beaming back on him with the very rhythm of the life of biosphere:

> It was shallow thinking to maintain that that numbers and charts were cold compression of unruly human energies. In fact, data itself was soulful and glowing, a dynamic aspect of the life process. This was the eloquence of alphabets and numeric systems, now fully realized in electronic form… the digital imperative that defines every breath of the planet's living billions. Here was the heave of the biosphere. Our bodies and oceans were here, knowable and whole. (24)

The power of DeLillo's prose threatens to refute Heidegger's jeremiad. What if Packer is right and the capital-technology-electronics nexus, far from turning the world into a cold warehouse, puts us, or just Packer, in touch, with the very life of the planet? Perhaps here we have the final mystery of our organic belonging to mother earth realized? This problem suggests that other theoretical models might be more useful in approaching DeLillo. Rather than Heidegger's dramatic and poeticizing narratives, DeLillo often sounds a note suggestive of his equivocal attraction to the ideas of Jean Baudrillard. For instance, Eric clearly lives in what Baudrillard described as "Integral" or "Virtual Reality." Unlike in the earlier models of simulacra and hyperreality, the "Integral Reality" is a technologically afforded system in which representations have become a reality—a final and ultimate one. It is a world not of the disappearance of the real—as was the case in Baudrillard's earlier work—but, to the contrary, ironically, a world in which everything that we ever imagined and wished for becomes real in a very specific sense of the word: "Objective reality—reality related to meaning and representation—gives way to 'Integral Reality,' a reality without limits in which everything is realized and technically materialized without reference to any principle or final purpose whatever" (Baudrillard 18).

This real is omnipresent, flat, shadowless, and banal. The Integral world is an obscenity of the visual, with no aura of distance, mystery, concealment. It is a world of surfaces connected into a system. Most importantly, it is the human subject that has been turned into such a surface, an interface connecting with other devices, the self become a device. If Heidegger, in "The Question Concerning Technology," was wary of technology's capacity for turning humanity itself, apparently a user of technology, into "standing-reserve," Baudrillard offers an advanced version of humanity's demise by its own devices: humanity become a flat integer of the system acquiring an absolute self-saturation. There is something Parmenidean at work here: an absoluteness and immovability of that which is. But the human is diminished in it: "We invested reality with the whole of our imaginary, but it is this imaginary that is vanishing, since we no longer have the energy

to believe in it…. The passion for reality and the passion for truth have gone" (Baudrillard 19).

In Eric's world, as in Baudrillard's description, there is no longer a boundary between an inside and an outside. Inside/outside is a metaphor that has given way to a new metaphor, that of flows of information. Eric, to be sure, still believes he is the deep center of all operation, the very "interior" of the system. His dark-windowed limo, clearly an extension of his meditation cell at home, represents Eric's outdated idea of the deep, inaccessible subject—the Cartesian mind—doing the work of representation and control. Eric meditates and reads haiku-like poetry, because he clings to the idea of a purity, a mystery behind the noise of representations, the "glassy essence" of the transcendental mind that will integrate all data into a coherent story—the nature of reality. Thus Eric exemplifies the Western metaphysical subject in its technological and market avatar: the metaphysics of representation and controlling embodied in an aggressive, lonely, murderous man who thinks of himself as a master-mind, while actually being an adjunct to something much bigger: world technologies of the market-economies, the flow of money promulgating itself for its own sake.

As in Baudrillard's depictions of the "Integral Reality," the electronic technologies are driven by their own logic, which spans and already contains all possibilities of developments, all time: the past and the future. The real-time of televised world-wide data wields an iron grip on all narrative: everything is already inscribed inside the system, all stories, all possible scenarios, a totality of information. They are all here at hand. On numerous occasions in the novel, Eric sees himself on some of the screens surrounding him, performing gestures he is only about to perform in his physical actuality. Eric and other characters in the novel experience a strange dislocation of their sense perceptions and their sense of time. It is as if their selves had been lifted into the electronic image producing systems, where they begin to stir with a life that is eerily independent of their real ones. Such haunting, momentary delusions are DeLillo's metaphors of the situation of the self in the Virtual world described by Baudrillard: "Time itself, lived time, no longer has time to take place. The historical time of event, the psychological time of affects and passion… are all simultaneously called into question by virtual time, which is called… 'real time'" (30).

In all this, Eric Packer is a new version of a character that Don DeLillo has been working on for years: a lonely, aggressive American male, a sad relic of the ages of grand narratives, deep representing subjects, now defeated by their own mad creations. Surrounded by aggressive banalities of either simulacra, as Jack Gladney in *White Noise,* or the eerie surreal of "Integral Reality," as Eric Packer, they will seek violent self-destructive moves in search of the presupposed originary, non-mediated real, following

the logic in which the system itself seeks its own validation in violence. In the second part of the novel, Eric, having lost all his money to a currency market oddity that he for once could not mentally chart and outsmart, kills his bodyguard and pursues his own assassin, earlier classified by his security as a "credible threat." The last scene is a masterful rendering of the theme discovered earlier by DeLillo, notably in *White Noise,* of being a "stranger in one's own dying." The mad circularity of systems takes a cruel vengeance on Eric. With the relentless logic of all linear narrative enclosed in the all-pervading system, Eric can see himself dead on the miniature screen, while he is still dying in reality. We will return to the scene later.

2. Technology in *The Body Artist*

The presence of technology in *The Body Artist* is much less conspicuous. The novel is not a characteristic DeLillo work for a number of reasons. It sounds hushed up, slowed down, much more localized and concentrated than all of his other recent work. Lauren Hartke is different from DeLillo's recent male protagonists, but not radically different. My contention here is that she represents a different option, a different stance toward the same issues that are central to characters like Eric Packer.

Lauren is the eponymous "body artist." She is a performer who puts together stage acts that are a mixture of pantomime, happening, multimedia installation, strenuous physical exercise including yoga positions, but also uncanny body change entailing self-mutilation, depigmentation, and changing the texture of skin. Crucial to her performance is the ability of the artist to lose herself and almost literally become the types she impersonates on stage. Lauren's act is one of slipping into other people's skin, a mimicry of selected types, or rather situations in which human types are revealed.

The book begins with a prelude scene in which Lauren is seen having breakfast with her husband Ray Robles at a seaside summer house they rent. Later we learn that Ray commits suicide, and the central portion of the text portrays Lauren, back at the house, adjusting psychologically to the loss of Ray—devising her own way of mourning. It is a very curious form of mourning and it is central to what DeLillo is grappling with in the novel.

When alone in the house, Lauren encounters a mysterious interloper—a half-naked man, helpless, apparently lost or homeless, who is materialized in one of the upper floor rooms. He seems slightly deranged, unable to identify himself or tell any story explaining his appearance. Lauren calls him Mr. Tuttle. Initially, she takes him for a harmless refugee from a mental asylum and is taking care of him humanely with the intention of delivering him to proper institutions. But it soon becomes clear that Mr. Tuttle is an ex-

ceptional case of deviation: even though he does not use language with any competence of an adult—in fact he does not use language at all, only being able to produce half-nonsensical remarks that confound semantics, grammar, and syntax—he soon reveals an uncanny ability to mimic voices. Specifically, he mimics the voices of Ray and Lauren, based on the conversations they had in the house. The immediate explanation is that Mr. Tuttle had been hiding in the large house before, at the time when Ray and Lauren were both residing here. Perhaps he even had access to a tape recorder with recordings of Ray's voice reciting ideas for next film scripts. The problem is that Mr. Tuttle also imitates gestures—and Lauren has no logical explanation of his identity. He has no sense of the self, no sense of time dimension and that allows him to reside in a strange psychological area in which easier transitions are possible between time-space locations that are also locations or contexts in which the self—or selves—find their parameters and coordinates. He seems lost in multiple ways: in his body (he has physical features of a child), in time (his grammar makes no sense of grammatical tenses), in space (he does not know where he is). Overall, he is lost on the issue of identity: he does not know who he is—neither does Lauren, or the readers. Mr. Tuttle is an oddity.

With all this mysteriousness, however, it becomes clear that Mr. Tuttle enhances certain faculties and capacities that we see at latent stages of development in Lauren's mental frame in the introductory chapter of the novel. His uncanny mimicry clearly anticipates Lauren's art. As David Cowart puts it, "in Mr. Tuttle, Lauren encounters, as a projection of her own unconscious, the artist in herself, temporarily obtunded and disoriented by late catastrophe" (206). The novel's prelude scene is an extended description of a leisurely Sunday morning at the sea-side house, when Lauren and Ray are having breakfast. Although totally uneventful, the passage is a key to our understanding of Lauren's development as an artist and Mr. Tuttle's role in it.

The morning has no purpose, no plan, no intention. The two people, hurried by nothing, relaxed, are totally immersed in the mundane activities, gestures, routine movements that one performs when having a meal in a space that one knows very well. Lauren and Ray reach for foods, handle boxes, use cutlery, touch kitchen appliances. They are also busy reading sections of a newspaper that, incidentally, is a few days old, but is the only one available to them in their seclusion by the sea. Amidst these activities, Lauren is intermittently struck by the views of birds at the feeder outside of the house. Mostly, both Lauren and Ray are distracted, not concentrating on anything in particular, not finishing their sentences, dropping off-hand remarks. Despite the distraction, it seems that they find their coordinates and understand one another perfectly well.

The scene is a crucial stylistic exercise. It is a kind of writing that is DeLillo's artistic attempt to bring forth those properties of the self that are vital to the processes of under-

standing, memory, sense of time, and connectedness. The two people at breakfast, in a kitchen, a banal space they are familiar with, seem immersed in a web of interconnections, a web comprising their bodies (the bodies "know" the space pre-reflectively), their memories, and their immediate surroundings. It is this web that is the agent of understanding. Understanding is not the work of the human mind that is separated from anything that is out there. As participants in this active web-like system, the characters glide easily into each other's thoughts. Not only thoughts, though: the self is revealed as a more capacious structure comprising bodily movements, tics, and habitual quirks that make up the self. The unique individual is here revealed as a creation of a larger interconnectedness, surpassing mental and physical separateness. At some moment Lauren bends to get something from the refrigerator and she produces a groan which she knows is typical of her husband. To put it simply, already in this chapter, Lauren's identity seems fluid, and she is already betraying the marks of her trade as the "body artist." Most importantly though, Lauren becomes conscious of this fluidity. When reading the newspaper, she finds she can easily shift into the minds of people described in the news. She thinks: "You become someone else, one of the people in the story, doing dialogue of your own devising" (20).

The human self, as portrayed by DeLillo in this masterful passage, is not an insular subject burdened with the task of representing an outside world, but an open network, a complex web made up of sense data, cognitive operations, and physical relations to immediate space. The distractedness inscribed in the two characters in the chapter allows us to see the system at work: how understanding, reception of sense data, and decision making are stages in a systemic work that is here disclosed through minor dislocations and distortions. At one moment Lauren is having an unpleasant sensation of tasting an alien hair in her mouth. DeLillo offers the following sentence: "she scraped her upper teeth over her tongue to rid her system of the complicated sense memory of someone else's hair" (11). The self is a "system" that receives and processes data of mnemonic and imaginary nature. Memory, sense of identity, the knowledge of what and who one is, its comforts and discomforts, are all a "system" in the sense that its contents are determined by relations which confound the notions of inside and outside, of sameness and otherness, here and there, or then and now. Such a systemic network has no clearly outlined boundaries. Lauren and Ray, though the degress of their consciousness differ, are physically operating within one space. However, their sense of this space, and their sense of the moment—their spacio-temporal orientation—is made up of multiple layers of other, external spaces and moments.

This portrayal of the self as an open network brings us closer to the themes explored in *Cosmopolis*. Even though *The Body Artist* is much less suffused with technology,

Lauren Hartke as character, as a study in the network structure of the human self, is the same species that Eric Packer is: they are both humans seen as relational networks. The only important difference between them is their own interpretation of their being relational networks.

In *The Body Artist,* the sense of the self as a relational system is enhanced through the person of Mr. Tuttle. As already mentioned, his special gifts catalyze Lauren's self-understanding as an artist of mimicry. But the network sense of the self can also be enhanced by technology. Technology, as a way of revealing, may reveal the self as a network, not just "standing reserve." Importantly, as we will see, Lauren identifies Mr. Tuttle as the eerie materialization of cyberspace.

Mr Tuttle is an extreme version of the network self. In him, the sense of the inside/outside difference is gone utterly. This lack shows in language. If our linguistic competence carries with it our sense of time, space, and identity, this is precisely what has disintegrated in Mr. Tuttle's linguistic performance. His sentences sound as if they were taken from Wittgenstein's investigations, from a poem by a Language poet, or from a zen riddle. They flow too freely through Mr. Tuttle, not anchoring him in any stable points of reference.

Interestingly, when trying to make sense of Mr. Tuttle, Lauren comes up with technological analogies. Among the few references to technology in the otherwise technology-free environment of *The Body Artist* is Lauren's idiosyncratic tendency to get immersed in the images transmitted via the Internet from a traffic camera installed at a lonely crossroads in a remote place in Finland called Kotka. It is the image of a forlorn place, processed and televised in "real time" by a technology that defies time and space and comes to symbolize the idea of all time being enclosed in technological circuits, which links *The Body Artist* to *Cosmopolis*. Importantly, Mr. Tuttle seems to occupy the same detached point defying any determinate bearings in space and time that Lauren confronts in the Internet images of Kotka. Mr. Tuttle is continuous with cyberspace: "he was a man who's emerged from her computer screen in the dead of night…. he was from Kotka, Finland" (45).

A prolonged immersion in the images of a remote reality, brought in an instant continuum, gives Lauren a sense of participating in a far-off space, annulling the physical barriers. Even though not as tightly surrounded by screens receiving and cameras sending electronic data as Eric Packer of *Cosmopolis,* Lauren inhabits a world in which the dream of technology has been realized, removing a lot of the previous physical resistance of the world.

Apart from disfiguring the usual sense of spaciality, the Kotka picture, a sort of a stilled movie frame, reminiscent of Andy Warhol's experiments in filmmaking, affects the sense of temporality. Kotka is a non-place suspended in non-time. For Lauren, the

image collapses the past, present, and future, the empty road becoming a symbol of the continuum of which time is made up. By showing a vacant and immobile portion of space for extended periods of time, this kind of "film" has a capacity of abstracting the flow of time itself. The road literally becomes the flow of time. As Cowart puts it: "Kotka is the spatial emblem of a traditional view of time in which past and future—the road in, the road out—converge from different directions on the present" (207).

This is why Mr. Tuttle "is from Kotka": his "system" is made up of coalesced moments, shuffled time dimensions. He seems to occupy a spot in which time experience is different from our normal, daily, purposeful time sense that we employ amidst the business of daily routines. But it is the very technological capability of storing image, holding, processing and transmitting it, that is crucial for this kind of conceptualization. In DeLillo, the technologies of image processing are a product of the very human nostalgia to penetrate deeper into the structures of time and space.

As such, however, the products of the nostalgia have equivocal ramifications. In another sense, what Lauren and Eric experience is the breakdown of the traditional description of the human species, the breakdown described in a different way by philosophers like Jean Baudrillard. Don DeLillo has long been given to suggestive depictions of post-modern anomalies and fatalities, very much in Baudrillard's spirit. Of the two novels discussed here, especially *Cosmopolis* is next in the continuing flirtation with these ideas: Eric is the self as described in Baudrillard's later writings, such as *The Intelligence of Evil or the Lucidity Pact*. This self has become a surface in continual connection with other surfaces, a screen, an interface for the flow of data. This condition is nowhere to be seen with more devastating force than in the scene of Eric's death. Seeking his own end as an occurrence beyond the system—a location that would validate Eric's conviction that he himself is beyond it—Eric finds himself enclosed in more technological circuitry. His own hand watch, with its built-in camera and display screen, is turning the moment of death into another processed representation: "This is not the end. He is dead inside the crystal of his watch, but still alive in original space, waiting for the shot to sound" (209). Technology has shuffled time again, turning the would-be moment of transcendence into more data on a screen.

3. Conclusions: The Body as Agent

In Baudrillard, the change in humanity is a dramatic event inside history, caused by the exceeding of a certain critical point of saturation of the human environment with electronic technologies. However, Lauren Hartke, the body artist, represents a different

take on the matter, and, unlike Eric Packer, she is much more DeLillo's modification than illustration of Baudrillard's post-philosophical musings. In *The Body Artist,* technology is not quite an invading element, submerging and transforming its own creator, as merely a neutral extension of a so-far undisclosed capacity of the creator. The story of Lauren Hartke reveals all the qualities of the human self to be that of a network, and the relation between her and technology is considerably different than in the case of Packer. The special capacity of entering new, possibly disorienting and confounding constellations of time and space, the capacity that is first signaled as a certain quirky characteristic and then changed into a talent, is not so much caused by the technology as brought out of Lauren with the help of it. It seems that with Lauren, DeLillo is describing the workings of human identity that are just a different hypothesis than the subject-object model of western philosophy. While the subject-object model is based on the view that the human self is based on a certain essence—the essence of the subject tasked with representing stable reality, including the reality of the subject itself—the view of the self as network makes the self a centerless and non-essential entity. As one of human creations, technology effects a change in humanity. But this may be a change in self-perception, a transformation: not a demise. The human changes, but the change was only long in coming. It is not a dramatic event dwelled upon by writers such as Baudrillard. It is another link in the vaster chain, usually referred to as evolution.

Baudrillard may be sounding too apocalyptic a note. The self as an open network is what Heidegger already described while characterizing the relations between *Dasein* and everyday objects in well-known spaces. Commenting on Heidegger's operations in *Being and Time,* Hubert Dreyfus has repeatedly pointed out how the normal everyday relation of the self to its space is one of an open-ended flow, a stream of activities which connect us continuously to our places, defying any rigid inside/outside divide. This mode of being, called "originary transcendence" by Heidegger, is a basic level of human relatedness to the world and prior to intentional action. Dreyfus is especially helpful in understanding how Heidegger's description of *Dasein*'s everydayness departs from the transcendental subjectivity of Husserl, revealing it to be a form of interconnection with familiar environments (Dreyfus 143-147). This is exactly what is revealed in DeLillo's characters in *The Body Artist* and their space in the initial chapter of the novel. To reach further back in time, before Heidegger, Dreyfus reminds us that Heidegger's description of *Dasein*'s "originary transcendence" is a radicalization of the views of William James and John Dewey, who described the self as a collection of habits the self forms as it gets socialized into its environments (6). These habits, just as the originary transcendence described by Heidegger, may experience defects and temporal breaks. In moments of distraction or relaxation, the system may stall, fail locally, as it happens in DeLillo's

characters, but such occurrences only confirm that what is at work is not a two-way relation of subject and object but an open—ended network, or system.

But if we agree that both Lauren and Eric Packer are the same species, how do we explain the difference that is yet so pronounced between them? They are both open-ended systems, post-modern selves opened up to streams of data. Yet, they fare and cope much differently in habitats that, although differing in their suffusion with technology, belong to one world. What differentiates the characters are their uses of and attitudes toward technology. Eric, as already mentioned, entertains the delusions of a deep subject whose task is the old Cartesian dream of control (certainty) through representation. He thinks of technology as an extension of his mind, a tool of representation. Additionally, his sense of time is also typical of the western metaphysics of representation: it is a linear time speeded up with *telos*, an aim, a future.

In *Cospompolis* this linearity is shown to undergo a paradoxical distortion. This is where Baudrillard's description comes true: the combined system of the capital and the technological network have all the time enclosed in them. The future is here, pending, erasing the present. Eric lives on the edge of time at a palpable disappearance of the present, and he is painfully aware of how the capitalistic technological frenzy makes objects—and thus reality as a whole—almost instantaneously obsolete: "the hand device itself was an object whose original culture had just about disappeared. He knew he'd have to junk it" (*Cosmopolis* 9). A way of being dictated by the teleological narratives of purpose—the way of being of capital and technology—fires back, killing the present. The speedy corrosion of objects and language, is accompanied, and even accelerated, by the growing capacity of the capital, helped by appropriate technological devices, to zoom us into ever tinier units of time measurement. But this kind of operation is the result of thinking of time itself as commodity, and rather than giving us more time, it threatens its ordinary phenomenology, turning it into usable, and thus soon exhausted, material:

> 'It's cyber-capital that creates the future. What is the measurement called a nanosecond?'
> 'Ten billionth of a second,' he said.
> 'There are zeptoseconds.'
> 'Because time is a corporate asset now. It belongs to the free market system. The present is harder to find…. The future becomes insistent.' (*Cosmopolis* 79)

Interestingly, Lauren is also fascinated by the technological ability to break down time and the physical human presence into ever smaller units. When calling up her friend in a remote city, she is enthralled by the synthetically generated human voice of the ans-

wering machine reciting its formula. Lauren realizes she is hearing a human voice divided meticulously into spaced-out units, a production of the human body analyzed at the level of fractions of seconds, then fed into a system, and recombined—a robot of a voice. But while in *Cosmopolis,* a similar operation—reducing time to millionth parts of the second—spells out the mechanization of human decisions subjected to the dictates of efficiency and human resources management, in *The Body Artist* the technological operation is an inspiration: if human voice can be so broken down, divided, analyzed and recreated, so can identity be broken down and recreated—a helpful realization for the artists whose routine is impersonation.

Lauren's slipping into other identities involves an alteration in the experience of time: from a one-way narrative to a non-narrative feel of time. This type of temporal phenomenology does not belong with the Cartesian mind-centered consciousness displayed by Eric. While Eric thinks he controls time from his enclosed chambers, metaphorical of the Cartesian isolated subjectivity, he is himself enclosed in a one-way narrative whose destiny is violence and death. Lauren, in contrast, participates in the lost-ness of Mr. Tuttle, in the experience of the non-narrative time sensation. In her performance, she tortures the audience with the non-eventfulness of the sequence of her postures. At one point the narrative gives us a glimpse of Lauren, already turned into the body artist, being interviewed by a journalist and commenting: "I know there are people who think the piece was too slow and repetitious… and uneventful. But it's probably too eventful… It ought to be sparer, even slower than it is, even longer than it is. It ought to be three fucking hours" (106).

The slowness of time is literally inflicted on the body. The fictitious piece of journalism describing Lauren's performance that DeLillo inserts in the novel is significantly called "Body Art In Extremis: Slow, Spare and Painful" (103). The treatment of the body is the crucial difference between her and Eric Packer. For the protagonist of *Cosmopolis,* the body, exercised, and meticulously taken care of by doctors in daily check-ups, is just an extension of the machine. For Eric, the body is an object he controls by medical measurement and full exposure. He has it medically examined daily. In one scene he has his prostate examined by palpation by a doctor inside his limo, while continuing a conversation with one of his analysts (52-54). Eric's body literally becomes the body of knowledge: it is turned into a docile controllable object, in classic Foucaultian schema, by its very owner. Lauren, by contrast, is not the *owner* of her body: she becomes an embodied self. In her case, the body becomes an active agent, a residue of the potentiality for assuming different roles; here the body is a living matrix enabling the shifts between identities and a closer experience of temporality.

DeLillo's narrative returns body to the very center of his heroine's identity. The progress of her mourning after Ray's death begins with diarrhea, a cleansing turmoil that

makes the body present to her: "at least she had her body back" (35). After this, Lauren proceeds, led by an intuition of the body being the proper locus of the mystery of identity. When she thinks of who Mr. Tuttle is, or who her husband was, she pictures the men sleeping, with all their being so blatantly reduced to the bodily form, and yet so mysterious, the bodily form alive with dream: "The shrouded body feebly beating…. this is the secret that sleep protects in its neural depths" (54). The bodily is thus turned for Lauren into the very palpable meeting ground of life and death, matter and spirit. Not quite knowing what she is doing, Lauren devises her own exercises whose major idea is putting the body through a gymnastic regime and acting on its skin.

The descriptions of these activities are interspersed in the novel with the enigmatic conversations with Mr. Tuttle. In this way, the disfigurations of the body that Lauren practices are found in a rhythm with the disfigurations of language. Since Mr. Tuttle's lost monologues bring in the theme of one's own recognition in time-space, so does Lauren's bodily regime seem to give her access to the organism's feel of spatial and temporal coordinates. At the same time, Lauren's senses become sharper, her sight and hearing expanding their range. As these combined procedures continue, Lauren's body itself seems to change identity: its much increased flexibility, in connection with the sanding and depigmentation of the skin, make the body a more fluid, more indeterminate entity. Lauren's body begins to defy all sorts of material inertias that constrain one's personal identity to the seeming stability of the physical. DeLillo's heroine senses that that stability can be removed. With this removal, she obtains a different kind of control over identity in general:

> This was her work, to disappear from all her former venues of aspect and bearing and to become a blankness, a body slate erased past resemblance. She had a fade cream she applied just about everywhere, to depigment herself…. In the mirror she wanted to see someone who is classically unseen, the person you are trained to look through, bled of familiar effect, a spook in the night static of every public toilet. (84)

To be sure, the body is also a part of the system, not an independent, purely "natural" unit, free from participation in the network of connections. Lauren reads books on physiology, and her exercises and her sense of access to the body are contingent on the state of scientific knowledge. As we noted earlier, she is also inspired by voice processing and other technologies. In her skin operations she uses creams, bleaches, and lotions. The body is not the ultimate given reality; it is just retrieved from the dead Cartesian inertia as a platform of the permeability of the human and its environment. Lauren's art is one of participating in the flow of her experience of the environment, by accepting the inessential nature of her self, which she reveals to be a fully embodied self. Here, though,

embodied paradoxically means fluid and indeterminate. This form of one's relation to the bodily is dramatically different from Eric's treatment of his own body as matter to be measured, controlled, and mastered.

It is as such a site of indeterminacy, a meeting ground of being and nothingness, that the body becomes Lauren's primary instrument of the mourning practice. In this form of the work of mourning, the central role is given to the bodily as the primary and pre-cognitive site of all cognition, including the sense of identity and the sense of time. David Cowart has stressed this junction of time and body in the following way: "DeLillo emphasizes Lauren's view of time as a *bodily* experience…. From his post-modern perspective, DeLillo emphasizes the body… in which time literally pulses" (207). In her interviews with Mr. Tuttle, Lauren is confronting the memory of her husband Ray, and then she is finding Ray's self, as a "system," inside her own: her memory, her language, and her body as a collection of habits. Lauren's mourning, then, is the process of relocating certain fluid elements in her network self. She is literally getting rid of her husband's presence from what she has been, severing her relation with the ghosts of the past. But to do so, Lauren must get in touch with the very process of change as dying. Mourning as the erasure of a part of the network is partly a participation in dying. But such death is different from the mere cancellation of the present that Eric confronts. Packer, cut off from his body, enclosed in one-dimensional channeling of time, is also cut off from his mortality, from death as a nourishing presence in life.

Lauren, a woman who can lose her identity and become other persons, paradoxically regains her own self through the mourning process: the loss of her personality, the experience of participating in slightly deranged, mind-altering sessions with Mr. Tuttle, gives her back her own self. Mr. Tuttle is a ghost, but he is no apparition emerging from the subconscious: he is a ghost of the system of Lauren's connectedness to her husband. Mr. Tuttle is a memory of the space Lauren and Ray co-created in the house. He disappears at the end of the novel and it is a symbolic freeing of Lauren from the earlier connection, her successful relocation—through mourning—of her system, which now will have to work again, with changed bearings, because Ray, a vital part of the system, is no longer there.

Mourning as an opening to the presence of death in the basic structure of life becomes a practice of renewal for Lauren. But here the renewal is the discovery of the systemic mutability of the embodied subject. Technology, in this context, is revealed not as an enemy, but a natural product of the human as system. The condition, however, for such reception of the presence of technology, is the radically non-Cartesian treatment of the body as the site of agency. Language, memory, time and space dimensions, are what they are not because of the "categories of the mind," but because they are parts of complex embodied organisms.

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