The Market Moves Us in Mysterious Ways: DeLillo’s Critique of Transnationalism in Cosmopolis

In his article on “the deterritorialization of American literature,” Paul Giles suggests that around year 1980 the literature of the United States entered a transnational period, one similar to the early phase in the construction of the U.S. nation, “when national boundaries and habits were much less formed and settled” (55). At that time, Giles adds focusing on the emerging geography of the new nation, “the country’s sense of national identity was as uncertain, as provisional, as its cartography” (41). A connection between the limits of the national imaginary and the territorial boundaries of the nation is implied in these remarks. The term Giles uses to conceptualize the territory/imaginary nexus, “deterritorialization,” comes from Deleuze and Guattari’s theorization (in Anti-Oedipus) of “the flows of desire that traverse the boundaries of distinct, separate territories.” “Deterritorialization” of the social body is for these authors “the most characteristic and the most important tendency of capitalism” (Giles 46). The point I would like to insist on is that the “deterritorialization” that Giles applies to American literature and national identity was a term originally used to describe a “tendency of capitalism.” This relation between the economic and the social and political spheres is still active in Giles’ elaboration, since for him deterritorialization of national literature occurs along with a transformation in the economy: the global circulation of capital made possible and enhanced by communication networks.¹ In what follows, I would like to look into the connection between a nation’s sense of identity and the deterritorializing power of global capital, as sketched in this introductory theoretical excursion. The text I want to focus on is Don DeLillo’s Cosmopolis (2003), a novel that presents us with a critique of the effects of a market-driven, deterritorializing transnationalism on the U.S. polity.

¹ Frederick Buell has similarly analyzed the vicissitudes of American nationalism in the “post-national” age of globalization. Buell argues that U.S. nationalism was reconstituted throughout the 1980s and 1990s as “nationalist postnationalism.” This process took place primarily in relation to globalization, that was seen either as a threat to the nation or an opportunity for transnational solidarities. (561)
The plot of *Cosmopolis* revolves around a day in the life of Eric Packer, a young, excessively rich currency trader who controls the global flow of capital from his limousine stuck in a traffic jam in midtown Manhattan. There is more than economy to *Cosmopolis*, however, although the novel remains primarily focused on Eric’s existential questions elicited by the apparently unlimited reach and power of financial speculation. To the cybernetic present-day existence of Packer, DeLillo juxtaposes Eric’s memories of childhood, to the smooth flow of financial capital, the chaotic movement on the streets of New York, and to the detached world of the cyber-capitalist class, the scarred foreign bodies Eric encounters on his day-long ride to the barber’s. It is my contention that we can read DeLillo’s work in general, especially in its turn-of-the-century phase, as an extended narrative about the interplay between the transformative power of systemic, economic forces and the U.S. national imaginary. DeLillo himself suggested something of the kind in a 2003 interview, where he had the following to say about the writing of *Cosmopolis*:

I’d been working on it for some time before I realized that the day on which this book takes place is the last day of an era...It’s that interval between the end of the Cold War and the beginning of the current era of terror. It’s essentially the 1990s. The market began to falter when it does in the book, which is the spring of 2000. It happens faster in the novel because everything happens faster in a novel. And that’s the reason behind the exaggerated reality. There’s a sense of acceleration of time and of reality itself. (Barron)

*Cosmopolis* is thus a novel about—and coming out of—a moment of transition. It is also a novel fundamentally concerned with the power of that preeminent force of American social life: the market. As the above quotation suggests, DeLillo sees the market as the force that moves history, its oscillations marking the end of one era and the beginning of another (an idea also echoed in the opening paragraphs of DeLillo’s 9/11 essay, “In the Ruins of the Future”). In order to unearth the implications of the historical transition underwriting the novel’s vision, we need to read *Cosmopolis* as marking and being marked by a specific moment in the movement of capital. Thus, *Cosmopolis* and its “now”— the post-traumatic “now” of a post-9/11 U.S. — signal what Giovanni Arrighi called the terminal crisis of the American cycle of accumulation. Generally speaking, at the end of each cycle, when the power of the current hegemon is waning, “capital accumulation proceeds virtually exclusively through ‘financial deals,’” when “finance capital exerts its dominance over an ever-expanding capital world system” (Baucom 27). The turn of

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*Cosmopolis* is a text that might easily gain in critical appeal after the beginning of the current global financial crisis.
the twenty-first century represents such a highly financialized period in the cycle of accumulation, one that, according to this theory, marks the end of U.S. hegemony within the world system. This highly financialized moment is the historical context in which we should situate the story of *Cosmopolis*’ hero bent on self-destruction through reckless financial speculation. Vija Kinski, the novel’s “chief of theory,” offers a philosophy of finance capital that closely corresponds to the above remarks on financialization of economy: “money has taken a turn. All wealth has become wealth for its own sake. . .Money has lost its narrative quality the way painting did once upon a time. Money is talking to itself” (77). The story is thus set in the “post-historical” present of the end of twentieth century U.S., on an April day in 2000, the same year that marked the ongoing downward trend in U.S. financial markets. Adding to a sense of end of the end of history, the writing of the novel was interrupted by the events of September 11, 2001, which left subtle marks on the novel’s formal aspects (cf. Barron). Thus, the beginning of the free fall of the free market, accentuated by the traumatic spectacle of 9/11, here serves DeLillo as the background for an extended meditation on the local effects of a global, but nationally based economy of financial speculation.

Critics, generally reserved towards *Cosmopolis*, have noted a pronounced allegorical quality of the novel. “Packer and his livery are globalization,” states Jerry Varsava in his reading of *Cosmopolis* (95). This is undoubtedly so, and Varsava is right when claiming that the novel provides “a chilling portrait of a rogue capitalist running amok in the dying days of the stock-market bubble, a period marked by ‘pump and dump’ investor frenzy that Federal Reserve Bank Chairman Alan Greenspan famously, if too understatedly, termed ‘irrational exuberance’” (80). However, I disagree with Varsava’s contention that Eric is simply a “rogue capitalist,” the supposedly extreme, dark side of an otherwise well-balanced free market system. *Cosmopolis* offers a further insight: apart for “being globalization,” Eric is also what globalization is doing to “America.” As the head of Packer Capital, he embodies both the forces of neoliberal globalization and the ambiguous position of the U.S. as their hegemonic propelling center. In David Harvey’s terms, we can view Eric as the incorporation of the contradictions of capitalist imperialism (cf. Harvey 26). Comprising both the territorial and capitalist logics of power, Eric is both the fatally territorially fixed center of control and, as the embodiment of the unbound expansion of capital, out of control. In other words, through the character of Eric Packer, the novel explores the effects deterriorlization of capital has on the U.S. nation-state and its dominant imaginary. In his extreme portrayal of Eric Packer, an almost grotesque representation of the contemporary finance capitalist, DeLillo keeps the conspicuous bias against neoliberal globalization that is also evident in
his previous novels—that much has been noted by virtually all reviewers. But the other side of Packer, his status as an American, a nationally based center of the global flow of capital, has not been so much in the focus of critical attention. If Eric Packer “is globalization” in his deterritorialized cyber-capitalist existence, he is also a New Yorker and an American, ultimately defined by the memories and histories whose power over him he tries so hard to deny.

The novel opens with an insomniac Eric, 28, almost infinitely powerful but isolated from the world in his Manhattan triplex, with “no friends he loved enough to harrow with a call” (DeLillo 5). From there, we follow Eric’s ride in his stretch limousine to Hell’s Kitchen, his childhood neighborhood; there, he wants to get a haircut. His relationships with people he meets are detached, based on terse exchanges of sometimes disconnected lines of dialogue. At one point, even the sex Eric has is disembodied and touchless: “The man and woman reached completion more or less together, touching neither each other nor themselves” (52). This situation will slowly change through the novel, as Eric searches for some kind of authenticating instance that would materially ground, or territorialize his cybernetic being. But at the beginning, Eric’s spatially isolated and hyperprotected existence, his communicative and social detachment, all point to his utter inability to form affective attachments, and to a complete absence of any tangible basis of sociality. Eric, a currency trader, is all about information, and his experiential virtuality seems to replicate the virtual flow of financial capital under his control:

He understood how much it meant to him, the roll and flip of data on a screen. . .It was shallow thinking to maintain that numbers and charts were the cold compression of unruly human energies, every sort of yearning and midnight sweat reduced to lucid units in the financial markets. In fact data itself was soulful and glowing, a dynamic aspect of the life process. This was the eloquence of alphabets and numeric systems, now fully realized in electronic form, in the zero-oneness of the world, the digital imperative that defined every breath of the planet’s living billions. Here was the heave of the biosphere. Our bodies and oceans were here, knowable and whole. (24)

As this passage illustrates, the immateriality of Eric’s labor is paralleled by an equal sense of immateriality of his own historical experience. At the same time, Eric’s references to “the world” and “the biosphere” stress the global reach of his actions. The “we” that Eric so often uses to refer to himself (“We need a haircut”) refers to the imperial character of his power and implicitly invokes the sociality the lack of which defines him. Although Eric clearly reduces the materiality and plurality of life to the immaterial sphere of financial speculation, the “unruly human energies,”
as the novel will show, cannot be eliminated: “How things persist, the habits of gravity and time, in this new and fluid reality” (83, my emphasis). These “things” are omnipresent in the streets that Eric is riding through. The street is filled with signs radically other to the novel’s central consciousness: a beggar woman, who seems “rooted to that plot of concrete,” speaks an unknown language, black men speak in “African murmurs,” and everywhere material commodity is being exchanged: “Cash for gold and diamonds. Rings, coins, pearls, wholesale jewelry, antique jewelry. This was the souk, the shtetl” (65). Bearing the signs of material production and exchange of actual commodities (“a form of money so obsolete Eric didn’t know how to think about it” [64]), the street is “an offense to the truth of the future” represented by cyber-capital (65). It is not difficult to see that a theory of community can be read out of these pages of *Cosmopolis*: it is as if the face-to-face exchange of material commodity establishes and materially supports societal ties, while virtual and touchless financial speculation dissolves them, as Eric’s affect-less and a-social character illustrates. The colorful community of the streets that is united in the exchange of material goods is for Eric imbued with traces of the past. As the mention of the souk and the shtetl suggest, the street is foreign, even exotic, in the palimpsestic richness of its historical references. The meaning of the passage deepens if read against Arrighi’s history of the cycles of accumulation. The street is an “offense” to Eric primarily because it displays the marks of the past in the form of material commodity and material labor. From Eric’s post-historical perspective this obsolete materiality of history is out of place in a future-oriented, financialized present based on immaterial labor (such as Eric’s own currency trading). These traces of commodity (traces of the past) are here an organic part of an image of chaotic polity shot through with markers of difference: a difference based on race, gender, religion, culture, and — above all — class. The isolated and unimaginably wealthy Eric is defined in strict opposition to everything that “the street” stands for. It is important to note just how radical the division between Eric and his others is. It is both spatial — he is in the car, they are in the street — and temporal — he lives in the present-future, and they inhabit the past. Eric thus occupies a contradictory position both inside the national polity (the urban, crowded and jammed locality which restricts his movements), and outside of it (since he is safely enclosed in his limousine and can reach any place in the world virtually). This contradiction will escalate through the novel and culminate in the final, disastrous event. In the light of my introductory remarks, I read this peculiar configuration as a complex representation of the contemporary interplay between the globalized economic sphere and the U.S. national imaginary. The deterritorialized capital that is still locally based (as Eric’s positioning illustrates), is matched by a dissolution
of societal ties represented in Eric’s “touchless” existence and the bodily offense of the street. Moreover, the sharp class divisions that are evidenced in Eric’s total separation from the life of the city speak of a further fracturing of the national polity under the pressure of a global economy. DeLillo’s equating of finance capitalism and the conflation of immaterial labor with existential inauthenticity betrays the author’s own view of the current state of global economy, one that is to a significant extent based on financial speculation, as having perilous effects for the majority of the population and—and this is the novel’s focus—for the forms of sociality contingent on a deterritorialized economic system. DeLillo’s work rests on the assumption that the absolutely virtual and self-referential work of financial speculation, where “money breeds money,” loses from sight the material basis of economy in human labor. This results in, for the figurative carrier of the immaterial labor, a disembodied sense of self and an inability to meaningfully relate to others. Eric’s sense of existential inauthenticity, his lack of territorial grounding, his inability to establish affective attachments are thus all closely related. Here, it is labor in its different forms that emerges as the background against which affective ties are either established or dissolved, and community is consolidated or undermined respectively. As I already implied, DeLillo’s novel assumes the existence of a strong link between economic forms and the forms of sociality. Indeed, as I intend to show, Comopolis hints at the possibility of grounding community in labor, both in the sense of social activity and social force.

Eric’s progress is in the novel marked by a gradual transformation during which he destroys his possessions, puts himself in danger, kills and finally, as if in a realization of his deepest desire, gets killed. This narrative progression is paralleled by an equally gradual and ambivalent tendency of the main character to variously ground his immaterial being, in memories, in culture, and in violence. As his increasing bent towards violent behavior suggests, Eric can imagine his own immersion into the materiality of communal life and the respective escape from the disembodied existence of finance capital — that is, his reterritorialization — only through acts of authenticating bodily violence. While Eric consolidates his sense of self through an ambivalent relation to others, who remain alien and essentially empty screens on which Eric’s fantasies of otherness are projected, in the process of his transformation the novel registers, if only fragmentarily, other possible societal grounding forces. (That these need exist, and that their

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3 In his article on virtue and virtuality in Cosmopolis, Russel Scott Valentino situates the novel (and the author’s critique of a virtual economy) in the American tradition of basing polity in ownership of property, or a “manner of thinking about the republic as fortified by a body of virtuous property owners” (148).
absence is disastrous, is an assumption driving the plot to its closing catastrophe.) These variously imagined foundations of the U.S. polity are in Cosmopolis multiple and can be read out of several scenes in which Eric experiences strong affective and experiential responses. I will briefly remark on three of these, since their progression culminates in the final violent event.

At the point near the end of his journey, when entering Hell’s Kitchen, Eric runs into the funeral procession of his late friend, Brutha Fez, the Sufi rapper from the Bronx. DeLillo’s description of the funeral reads like a theatrical enactment of the cultural hybridity often celebrated as the positive effect of globalization. Brutha Fez’s body is “lying in the spiral of his own vocal adaptations of ancient Sufi music, rapping in Punjabi and Urdu and in the black-swagger English of the street...Then came the breakdancers, in pressed jeans and sneakers, here to affirm the history of the deceased, born Raymond Gathers in the Bronx” (133). Here, foreign religions and cultures are grafted onto a distinctly American history — one, it is important to add, in which the industrialized mainstream of hip hop draws its energy from the urban socio-cultural margins — thus resulting in a multicultural mix that is, as the “world city” of New York itself, the emblem of globalization. But there is also an undecided, emerging sense of community here: “the crowd was still learning how to mourn a singular rapper such as Fez, who mixed languages, tempos and themes” (134). The work of mourning occurring here prepares the ground for a potential consolidation of affect, for a community to be. This communal flow of affect revolves around the dead rapper who is himself an incarnated “adaptation” of other localities to the hegemonic, American one. Through this process of hegemonic adaptation the present locality in effect becomes “global.” The community to emerge from this process of affective attachment (that is, DeLillo’s phrasing suggests, still unresolved) is itself constituted as “global.” But this ad-hoc community, which will allow Eric to feel at ease for the first time in a long time, is also clearly defined in class terms. The friends and family come in “thirty-six white stretch limousines,” precisely the kind Eric owns. There is the mayor, the police commissioner, as well as “the mothers of unarmed blacks shot by police, and fellow rappers. . . media executives, foreign dignitaries, faces from film and TV, and. . . figures of world religion in their robes, cowls, kimonos, sandals and soutanes” (134–5). The crowd is composed, in other words, of the heterogeneous variety we associate with nations. Significantly, this nation of mourners—the “global” hybrid community overflowing the New York streets—collectively gravitates towards the focal point of its consolidation: a dead body defined by a form of empowering cultural adaptation intimately connected with financial gain. Eric becomes one with this hybrid socium and is genuinely moved by the spectacle: “He wept violently. . . He wept
for Fez and everyone here and for himself of course, yielding completely to enormous body sobs” (139). As a part of this post-national, but nationally grounded community, Eric feels “thoughtful acceptance” (139). As an image of post-national nationalism, this scene recalls Frederick Buell’s notion of a national polity reformed under the pressure of global flows of capital (cf. Buell 560–1). It is no wonder then that Eric, the novel’s figure for the contradictions of globalization, here feels at home.

There is another kind of multicultural community that Eric encounters, one that provides him with a model for reterritorialization towards which he is far more ambivalent. The barbershop he is going to is in the neighborhood where Eric’s father grew up. Although claiming that “this had never been his home or street,” Eric “was feeling what his father would feel, standing in this place” (159). This ambivalence, where Eric both recognizes his belonging to a particular history and purposefully rejects it, is significant, and marks a clear opposition to his willing sense of community with the global crowd at Brutha Fez’s funeral. As Eric will state later on, “[p]ower works best when there’s no memory attached,” and the hybrid community of Fez’s mourners is less based on common memories than on the common participation in a spectacular event (184). The barbershop, on the other hand, is suffused with Eric’s childhood memories. The old Italian-American barber, Anthony Adubato, who greets Eric “in his working outfit,” used to cut Eric’s hair when he was a child, and is now telling stories of the working-class neighborhood as it once was (160). There is a third party in the room, Eric’s (presumably) Arab-American driver Ibrahim Hamadou. Ibrahim, with a “collapsed eye” and a scar, represents one of Eric’s others that function as bearers of materiality of history: “The man had a history evidently,” Eric thinks, “[Ibrahim] looked wary and prepared, a disposition he’d learned on some sand plain seven hundred years before he was born” (164, 168). Ibrahim’s being is thus profoundly historical, it extends to an unknown but fundamental and violent past. In all these examples, Eric sees violence and its trace, the scar, as marks of historical being. This scene takes place in the old barber shop where Eric faces his own past, his childhood memories, from which he remains disconnected, and does nothing to become a participant in the nostalgic narrative of the barber. Eric, the embodiment of cyber-capitalism, thus renounces his own past and denies his own rootedness in a territorially delimited history. But unlike with other scarred foreigners on Eric’s journey, Eric engages in a dialogue with Ibrahim, whose presence eventually facilitates Eric’s newly found and immediately renounced sense of sociality. When Anthony and Ibrahim embark on an exchange of common immigrant memories, it turns out they both used to be taxi-drivers at some point in their lives. While the two are conversing about common memories of labor, Eric falls asleep:

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

Two important moments should be noted in this passage: the voices of Anthony and Ibrahim become “a single vowel” — a community is consolidated here, but of a different kind than the funeral crowd. At the same time, Eric intimates his own death. As opposed to Eric’s expropriating and/or violent attempts at establishing societal ties, barber and driver consolidate an affective community through a dialog that, significantly, focuses on their common memories of labor. Clearly, the communal tie is here established along class and gender lines. Eric’s renunciation of his memories thus corresponds to his renunciation of a particular form of labor and the corresponding class position. In this scene of solidarity, DeLillo opposes the masculine, working-class grounds of communal consolidation to the deterritorializing powers of global capitalism. Eric at first feels “safe” in the barbershop; he confides in the men and temporarily finds refuge in the past, only ultimately to abandon it in order to continue his quest for “authenticity.”

I read these two scenes, the funeral and the barbershop, as representations of two modes of community building (or reterritorialization) in the face of deterritorializing globalization processes. One, post-national in Buell’s sense, is created in interplay of local and foreign elements, finally resulting in the creation of a “global” community of consumers of otherness. This hegemonic community is nevertheless clearly nationally based and fundamentally underwritten by the transnational flow of capital. The other one, which in DeLillo’s writing appears far more fragile, is equally multicultural, but based on a nostalgic revisiting of national locality backed by common memories of material labor. That is why Cosmopolis can also be read as betraying a nostalgia for the age when capital had a more distinct territorial basis and was firmly embedded within an economically vigorous U.S. nation-state. The novel is thus also a lamentation about the loss of U.S. economic sovereignty due to irrational expansion of financial capital. While registering this sense of loss, Cosmopolis also offers an insight into possible common foundations of societal ties: these are ultimately found in the memories of labor, in the waning traces of the materiality of production. This, however, is not the path Eric, the “citizen of the world with a New York pair of balls,” will take (26). In an attempted reterritorialization of his disintegrating being, Eric — whom I tried to read as a literary figure for a “capitalist imperialist” U.S. state in Harvey’s sense — is going to end his life in a catastrophic event. The novel ends
with Eric’s murder, which is represented as an event brought about by Eric himself and the system he stands for. Considering the historical moment in which the novel was written, I deem it important to focus on the process of the production of the event in *Cosmopolis*, and on the conditions for the possibility of its emergence.

As the plot of *Cosmopolis* shows, the threat to the totality of the capitalist system ultimately comes from Eric’s suicidal speculation with the Japanese yen, and not from the streets teeming with the merely symbolic violence of the anarchist protesters. (If there is a terrorist force in *Cosmopolis*, Eric Packer is its figure.) Eric’s self-destructive moves in the sphere of speculation are paralleled by his desire to experience something real and authentic outside the virtuality of currency trade. Thus, Eric acts in opposition to the arguments raised in the offhand lectures of his “chief of theory,” and against the advice of his security staff who warn him about the existence of a serious threat to his life: “the credible threat was the thing that moved and quickened him...Now he could begin the business of living” (107). Instead of keeping off the streets, Eric pursues the clues that eventually lead him to his would-be assassin. Their encounter in the final scene is another moment in which class features prominently in the novel. Eric’s killer is his former employee, “generic labor,” as he is described at one point (60). Benno Levin (or Richard Sheets), who worked for Eric as a currency analyst, confesses before shooting Eric that “your system is so microtimed that I couldn’t keep up with it” (191). Benno is thus a victim of the future-oriented rush of finance capital. DeLillo seems to be adamant about the fact that the killer is the product of the system that Eric represents, or, in other words, that the system created the conditions for its own destruction. Although Benno Levin appears deranged, his actions must be understood in this light, as a violent and impersonal return of the system’s reject. The conditions for Eric’s death are ultimately created by the tensions that he actively works to exacerbate: by defining himself against the laboring, scarred and foreign others, by rejecting his childhood memories of a working-class life, and finally by refusing to view the mad assassin as a product of the system he embodies. Despite the obvious differences, Benno Levin to a certain extent functions as Eric’s double. The two are intimately connected. Russel Scott Valentino has remarked that in the final scene the confronted characters are nearly indistinguishable from each other: “The referent...is at times ambiguous, making it unclear which is original, or at least unclear enough to require specification,” as in the sentence, “The man fired a shot into the ceiling. It startled him. Not Eric; the other, the subject” (153, 187). Although starting from different premises, from the opposite extremes of
the corporate food chain, so to speak, Eric and Benno share the same vision of the decisive moment. This is Benno writing on his final act: “This is the vision of the new day. I am determined finally to act. It is the violent act that makes history and changes everything that came before. But how to imagine the moment?” (154). Benno’s thoughts on the event that will change everything thus reflect Eric’s desire for the authenticating event. “Everything in our lives, yours and mine,” Benno/Richard says, “has brought us to this moment” (189). The catastrophic event is thus envisioned as a moment of convergence of disparate life-stories, or incompatible narrative temporalities. The separation is emphasized in Eric’s ability to literally see the future, while Benno/Richard, in his written fragments, remains focused on his past life. Before being shot, Eric looks at his digital watch, which is also a camera that is now recording the event: “There was an image, a face on the crystal, and it was his” (204). Then, he sees “a body now, facedown on the floor” (205). But the sight is incomprehensible: “Whose body and when? Have all the worlds conflated, all possible states become present at once?” (205) Here, in a hyperbolic embodiment of his future-oriented speculative imagination, Eric sees his own death, and, after that, his vault and his unidentified body in the morgue (206). Eric experiences his own death ambivalently. On the one hand, it represents the realization of the liberatory promise of disembodied cyber-capital: “He’d always wanted to become quantum dust, transcending his body mass, the soft tissue over the bones, the muscle and fat” (206). The future-oriented labor of financial speculation here achieves evolutionary force: “It would be the master thrust of cyber-capital, to extend the human experience toward infinity as a medium for corporate growth and investment, for the accumulation of profits and vigorous reinvestment. But his pain interfered with his immortality” (207). Although capital in Eric’s final vision guarantees transcendence, it does not seem to be able to overcome the ultimate material limit that resists its disembodying tendency: the body. Eric lists material, everyday, bodily stuff that defines him, concluding: “He’d come to know himself, untranslatably, through his pain” (207). In the closing scene, extreme bodily experience is posited as the limit of the deterritorializing expansion of capital. Materiality of life in its bare form becomes for Eric the oppositional territorializing force, the ultimate obstacle to the smooth flow of global capital. But, DeLillo seems to suggest, at the moment capital reaches its final limit and meets its radical otherness—no matter how disappointing or unexpected form it might take—disaster occurs.

It is here, in this ambiguous image of transcendence through destruction, that we can discern the limits of DeLillo’s version of anti-capitalist critique. If *Cosmopolis* offers a critique of a thoroughly financialized transnational economy,
it also variously attempts to territorially ground—and thus bring back to life—what it posits as a deterritorialized national community. Death and bodily destruction that figure as the limits to the expansive movement of capital point to an imaginative double bind defining the U.S. liberal consciousness; one that condemns the effects neoliberal globalization has on the national polity, and simultaneously casts a nostalgic look at the possibility of resuscitation of an economically safe form of American nation-ness. But, the material labor that DeLillo offers as a possible basis for a post-national national consolidation, in a globalized economy, belongs irrevocably to transnational others.

Works Cited


