STUDIA UBB PHILOLOGIA, LXIX, 2, 2024, p. 109 - 124
(RECOMMENDED CITATION)
DOI:10.24193/subbphilo.2024.2.06

A(N) (ANARCHE)TYPICAL JOURNEY THROUGH NEW YORK: DON DELILLO'S *COSMOPOLIS* AS AN AMERICAN POSTMODERN ODYSSEY

Maria BARBU[1]

Article history: Received 05 February 2024; Revised 04 April 2024; Accepted 10 April 2024; Available online 25 June 2024; Available print 30 June 2024

ABSTRACT. ***A(n) (Anarche)Typical Journey through New York: Don Delillo's Cosmopolis as an American Postmodern Odyssey*.** Journeys made across the North American territories were often made in search of something: a better life, a further frontier space or the lifestyle and the bigger opportunities from the other coast. Other times, mostly towards the second half of the 20th century, these journeys were made out of the sheer pleasure of travelling, having no pre-established routes and allowing themselves to drift endlessly and leave rhizomatic traces on America's map. In the case of Don DeLillo's *Cosmopolis*, these two types of geographical narratives overlap in Eric Packer's chaotic limousine ride across New York, through which he tries to reach his hairdresser but is forever delayed by various things happening on the streets. Through an in-depth geocritical analysis of why the quintessence of the 21st century's American space proves to be unnavigable in straightforward and ordered ways anymore, this paper will use Corin Braga's "anarchetype" to define this type of movement and also to link it to the multiple and decentred identity of the postmodern subject. In addition, the protagonist's journey through Manhattan will be seen as a postmodern odyssey where the destination eludes the traveller to the point in which the journey's meaning does not even depend on it anymore.

[1] **Maria BARBU** is a PhD student at the Faculty of Letters, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca and a research assistant at "Anarchetypes. Reevaluation of marginal literary forms and genres", a grant coordinated by prof. Corin Braga and funded by UEFISCDI and the Romanian Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitalization. Her PhD thesis focuses on the analysis of anarchetypal patterns in post-1950 North American travel literature. She has a Master's and a Bachelor's degree in Universal and Comparative Literature, as well as a second Bachelor's degree in Art History, so her research interests combine the two fields and add themes or theories from philosophy, history of religions, study of the imaginary or sociology. She has published scholarly articles and literary reviews in the *Echinox Journal*, *Brukenthalia, Transilvania* and *Steaua* magazine. Email: maria.barbu@ubbcluj.ro.

Keywords: *Don DeLillo, Cosmopolis, anarchetype, geocriticism, postmodern odyssey, rhizomatic journey, American literature*

REZUMAT. ***O călătorie (anarhe)tipică prin New York. Odiseea americană postmodernă a lui Don DeLillo în*** **Cosmopolis***.* Călătoriile prin teritoriile nord-americane au fost deseori făcute în căutare de ceva: o viaţă mai bună, un spaţiu de frontieră mai întins sau stilul de viaţă şi oportunităţile mai mari de pe cealaltă coastă. Alteori, mai ales în a doua jumătate a secolului al XX-lea, aceste călătorii au fost făcute din simpla plăcere de a călători: neavând rute prestabilite, ele lasă urme rizomatice pe harta Americii şi se mişcă în derivă de-a lungul acesteia. În cazul romanului *Cosmopolis* de Don DeLillo, aceste două tipuri de naraţiuni geografice se suprapun în plimbările haotice ale lui Eric Packer cu limuzina prin New York, prin care acesta încearcă să ajungă la frizerul său, dar este mereu blocat de diverse lucruri care se întâmplă pe străzi. Printr-o analiză geocritică aprofundată a motivelor pentru care chintesenţa spaţiului american al secolului XXI dovedeşte imposibilitatea navigării sale în mod direct şi ordonat, această lucrare va folosi conceptul de „anarhetip" al lui Corin Braga pentru a defini acest tip de mişcare şi, de asemenea, pentru a-l lega de identitatea multiplă şi descentrată a subiectului postmodern. În plus, călătoria protagonistului prin Manhattan va fi văzută ca o odisee postmodernă în care destinaţia îşi pierde treptat din importanţă până la punctul în care sensul călătoriei nu mai depinde deloc de ea.

Cuvinte-cheie: *Don DeLillo, Cosmopolis, anarhetip, geocriticism, odisee postmodernă, călătorie rizomatică, literatură americană*

Through its very history and construction, the North American continent has become synonymous with movement, whether referring to journeys made for leisure or to the more political and economic implications of migration. Having been discovered by chance as a result of traveling, and then colonized westward all the way to the Pacific coast through the same activity, this territory has had the idea of motion at the deepest core of its development. It has used it to adapt to the various changes that have shaped the nation from its earliest beginnings to its ever-elusive present. However, given the postmodern nature of the book analyzed in this paper, my text will focus mostly on how traveling across America took place starting from the second half of the 20th century. After underlining some of the most important implications of postmodernism on the understanding of space, my approach will dive into Don DeLillo's work to discuss how it reflects technology's intrusion in, and acceleration of, the daily lives of New Yorkers and their distorted perspective on the world around them, even when it comes to the simple activity of crossing a city to get a haircut. To this end, the

story's anarchetypal characteristics – such as the dual nature of the protagonist's limousine, which is in motion but fails to cover any distance, and the narrative episode's order, which is no longer relevant for the journey's meaning – will also be seen as a result of postmodernity's effect on the functioning of both the urban world and the texts written about it.

Understanding space in postmodernity

In postmodern times, the notion of space has acquired some new meanings relative to the discourses in which it was previously integrated. Starting from 1955, for example, when the French philosopher Guy Debord defined the concept of psychogeography as "the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, whether consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals" (Debord 1955, 23), there has been a growing interest in how space is not only available for analysis and rational categorization but can also be subjectively felt and experienced. Following the same line of thought, Henri Lefebvre's *La production de l'espace* (1974) underlines two other dimensions that need to be considered to fully understand space in its social instance, in addition to the actual, physical, and geographical space that we perceive around us and that has been shaped throughout history by various people in power: the conceived space and the lived space.

This triad, associated with "spatial practices," "representations of space," and "representational spaces," was then picked up by Edward Soja, who slightly modified the names of the elements and gave them a slightly new interpretation. In his view, "the perceived space" becomes the "Firstspace," the physical space which is "materialized, socially produced, empirical [...], directly sensible and open, within limits, to accurate measurement and description" (Soja 1996, 66). "The conceived space" becomes the "Secondspace," the imagined space that presents a mental representation of the world around us, the space associated with diverse meanings and feelings, which is also "the primary space of utopian thought and vision, of the semiotician or decoder and of the purely creative imagination of some artists and poets" (67). Lastly, the "lived space" becomes the "Thirdspace," which is seen as both different from the former two and encompassing them:

> a space that is common to all of us yet never able to be completely seen and understood, an 'unimaginable universe' [...]. Everything comes together in Thirdspace: subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious. (56-57)

Soja took these ideas even further in *Postmetropolis* (2000), where he used this term to describe the enormous American cities whose organization reflects the multiple, decentered, fragmented, and labyrinthine mental configuration of the postmodern subject. The "urban imaginary," or "our mental mappings of urban reality and the interpretive grids through which we think about, experience, evaluate, and decide to act in the places, spaces, and communities in which we live" (Soja 2000, 324), thus becomes a crucial element in the understanding of our physical surroundings, making us realize, at the same time, how much of a social construct and product the notion of space also is.

This dispersed postmodern worldview is thus reflected in the way people build their cities, but it can also be observed in how they write their stories. Corin Braga explored this aspect in depth and brought forth the concept of the "anarchetype", defined as being

> made up of three Greek etymons: the prefix a, an ('a-,' 'anti-,' or 'contra-'); árkhaios ('old,' 'original,' or 'primitive') or arkhê ('beginning' or 'principle'); and týpos ('type' or 'model'). Grouped in pairs, these roots can be found in 'anarchy' (comprised of an and of the verb árkhein – 'to lead' or 'guide') and 'archetype' ('first type,' 'original model'). Depending on how we combine all three of them, the anarchetype would denote, then, either an 'anarchic model' of text, which rejects and destroys structure, or an 'anti-archetype,' to wit, an 'exploded' or fragmented archetype. (Braga 2022, 122)

Consequently, texts composed according to this principle lack a central meaning and develop "in surprising and contradictory directions that cannot be subsumed under a single scenario," in contrast with their more ordered counterparts that respect Aristotle's rules about the unity of place, time, and action (123). This difference is highly visible in travel narratives too, as anarchetypal journeys take the form of endless wanderings across territories where the concept of boundary is either permeable or nonexistent, an aspect almost impossible in archetypal voyages where the starting and ending points are clearly established and connected by a linear route from the beginning.

It is not necessary for anarchetypal travel narratives to take the form of epic journeys which expand over a large period of time or which cover thousands of kilometres of land or sea. They can take place within the confines of the same city too, as it is the case of DeLillo's *Cosmopolis*, so for this reason it is important to acknowledge how the very essence of the city has been transformed during the past few decades. There has been significant research done on the changes undergone by American cities (fictional or not) during the modern and postmodern eras, and the majority of the studies point to their transformation into complex and open worlds that tend to organize themselves according to principles of

irregularity and multiplication, instead of remaining enclosed into a strictly regulated system of boundaries and organizing patterns. Due to this aspect, as Stefan L. Brandt very well underlines in an article focused on the liminality of cities portrayed in postmodern American literature and movies, these urban conglomerates begin to function as "marketplace[s] of ever-shifting borders and identities through which the American cultural self is defined, challenged, and reinscribed" (Brandt 2009, 554), precisely because their liminal character makes them obliterate any kind of distinction between the real, its copies and its imaginary counterparts, or the past and its future reiterations (something that will be easily visible in the novel analysed later on as well). And because the truth is not singular anymore, but scattered instead into countless possibilities that are reflected by the "contradictory structure of the postmetropolis", the "mega-city becomes a place in which the meta-narratives of Western society are systematically deconstructed" (559).

In turn, the ambiguity of a place "loaded with the promises of personal advancement and self-realization but also associated with the perils of decline and degeneration" (558) transforms the American postmodern city into a structure resembling more and more the one of a labyrinth, where creating a clear image of your surroundings or of your identity becomes an impossible task. There are choices to be made at every step, but the possible options are still restricted and controlled by the very organization of the space they have to be made inside. In this way, the "enigmatic assemblage of indecipherable signs" (561) that this labyrinth can be equated with leads to a suffocating sense of confusion and alienation due to the intensity with which these signs keep entering every individual's life. From another angle, it can all be seen as a deeper and uglier version of what Émile Durkheim started to notice, in the form of his "anomie" theory, from as early as the end of the 19th century: the lack of an absolute truth and of norms based on it leads to the disappearance of order and stability in society and thus to individuals who feel their existence slowly slipping away from under their control.

DeLillo's radiography of American society and his critical acclaim

When it comes to Don DeLillo's oeuvre, the connection between his texts, the characteristics of the postmodern city experience, and the cultural and political forces that keep the world moving is well-documented and analyzed by his critics. Covering over fifty years of drastic changes within North American society, DeLillo's works always create connections between these changes and a series of figures or events that left their mark on Western history: the rule and thinking of Adolf Hitler, John F. Kennedy's assassination, or the Cold War and its implications,

which served as a background for everything that happened in the second part of the twentieth century. There is a strong cause-effect relationship between these events and the American fragmented identity, as well as between the way DeLillo portrays America's road to postmodernity and the contemporary trends and events shaping this transformation. These aspects are considered by his readers and commentators, who, like Joseph M. Conte, for example, see a foretelling character in DeLillo's works as well as "the gift of the novelist for expressing the latent crises in the culture before others have fully recognized them" (Conte 2008, 180).

Indeed, in his analyses of contemporary American society, the writer seems to dedicate much ink to the future, particularly to how it has ceased to be the future and instead became a part of the present of a culture turned self-referential. For Peter Boxall, this culture "reaches past its own spatial and temporal margins, colonizes its own outsides, brings even unlived time under the jurisdiction of the global market" (Boxall 2006, 4). Moreover, starting with *Americana* (1971) and gradually advancing to the novels he wrote in the 21st century, DeLillo chronicles the development of (military) technology after the Second World War in parallel with the creation of a world where there is no longer anything impossible to think or achieve, where the concept of the possible is no longer available for exploration. In this way, Boxall points out, "the oeuvre follows a trajectory of virtualization. It produces a map of the way that information and computer technology prepares history for repackaging, for reabsorption into the weightless time of the moving image, the time of the streaming video feed" (223).

The problem with this continuous technological progress, however, is that it eventually estranges people from themselves. As Bruce Bawer notes, one of DeLillo's preferred themes has to do precisely with America's lack of individuality and humanness, with the "sensory overload" condition that makes the protagonists of his works search for "refuges from a technologically overdeveloped society" in the only ways this has become possible nowadays: through the use of extreme violence and a return to primitivism (Bawer 2003, 21-23). I have already mentioned the power that the postmodern city's impulses have on its inhabitants, and DeLillo makes it even more obvious: to live and be exposed to such a city means, as another critic notes, "to absorb and incorporate [its] sensory patterns" (Brandt 2009, 555). This experience can end up being so overwhelming that a separation between the private life of an individual and the public background of the place where their existence unfolds is no longer visible.

One of the novels in which the writer explores this dynamic in a particular way is *Cosmopolis* (2003), a book whose name seems not to appear so often among the critical bibliography focusing on this writer's works. There are,

nevertheless, important studies analyzing *Cosmopolis'* take on the global (cyber-) capital markets and the narrative's distorted perception of time due to it being accelerated by technology, as well as its prophetic character in relation to 9/11 and the recession of the late 2000s or a perspective that underlines the book's belonging to a flat type of aesthetics (Moraru 2023). However, my study will present only briefly some of their main ideas, connecting the postmodern changes that have occurred within the construction of space, characters, narrative episodes, and man's relationship with the world he inhabits with DeLillo's view on the subject. After that, the paper will mostly take into consideration Ian Davidson's analysis in "Automobility, materiality and Don DeLillo's *Cosmopolis*" to look at Eric Packer's journey through Manhattan from a geocritical perspective that will showcase the characteristics of an anarchetypal postmodern odyssey.

Cosmopolis at the intersection between capital and technology

Cosmopolis' plot has two main axes that traverse the entire length of the book: the billionaire protagonist's spontaneous desire to cross Manhattan for a haircut – "He didn't know what he wanted. Then he knew. He wanted to get a haircut" (DeLillo 2011, 7) – and his equally motivated attempt to bet against the devaluation of the Japanese yen to increase his profits. Both these journeys, set against the backdrop of the postmodern chronotope of American consumerism and capital markets, deviate from a linear trajectory due to Eric Packer's numerous planned and unforeseen encounters across the city. The road from his forty-eight-room apartment (presumably located in the residential complex of the Twin Towers) to the hairdresser his father used to go to is disrupted by chaos in the streets caused by a visit from the president, anti-capitalist protests, a water main break, a funeral procession, and even a death threat on his head. His various discussions with his wife, his mistresses, and his staff members (including his chief of security, chief of technology, chief of finance, chief of theory, and personal doctor) all influence his mood and strategy regarding his actions on the capital market.

Despite being considerably shorter than the usual DeLillo novels, *Cosmopolis* brings forth all the elements needed, in Conte's words, to portray "the collapse of an American future determined by the pure synergy of finance and technology" (Conte 2008, 190), especially as the plot takes place in New York, which became the most important hub of global capital towards the last decades of the 20th century. Eric Packer's road to success, starting from designing his website of "forecasting stocks" (DeLillo 2011, 75) and ending up as a top billionaire investor, mirrors the changes of a world that moved financial transactions completely into the digital sphere, accelerating their pace, and the ways in which the increasing

pervasion of technology in every aspect of people's lives changed their world perspective. As many critics have suggested, postmodern times, especially as DeLillo depicts them in his books, are as distressing and "out-of-joint" as Hamlet's: technology is easier to access than our own bodies, and "the passage of money seems more effortless, more weightless, than the passage of thought" (Boxall 2006, 6). Media of all kinds "must be reckoned with as social forces" (Duvall 2008, 2) because they are gradually losing their mediatory function and start being regarded as the real itself. Multinational corporations have come to seem more vital and influential than governments when it comes to influencing and organizing society (DeLillo 2001, 33).

The last quote is taken from the essay DeLillo wrote soon after the tragedy of 9/11, a text where he also underlined some essential signs of the times that were to be explored even more later in *Cosmopolis*: "the speed of the Internet summoned us all to live permanently in the future, in the utopian glow of cyber-capital, because there is no memory there and this is where markets are uncontrolled and investment potential has no limit" (DeLillo 2001, 33). This is particularly visible in Packer's profession, who is no longer trading stocks associated with specific commercial or industrial sectors; instead, he is working with the flow of money itself, trying to find and predict the "hidden rhythms in the fluctuation of a given currency" (DeLillo 2011, 76). Almost as if the character reflects his author's ability to recognize the changes within American culture before they actually take place, Packer also succeeds in juggling cyber-capital to his advantage, understanding that nowadays nothing happens gradually anymore. Instead, things change, in Conte's view, with "the instantaneity of a paradigm shift in which suddenly none of the rules and explanations of the earlier regime applies" (Conte 2008, 181). However, technology ultimately proves to be above any outcome predicted by humans, underlining yet again postmodern man's inability to organize his life in an ordered and linear way: "[technology] helps us make our fate. We don't need God or miracles of the flight of the bumble bee. But it is also crouched and undecidable. It can go either way" (DeLillo 2011, 95).

There is one last point that needs to be made about this connection between speed, technology, capital, and the flow of time before moving on to the more geographical aspects of the story: the world has long passed the times when its progression was linear and when a clear distinction between past, present, and future could be easily made. For Boxall, this results in the fact that technological means are seen as both obsolete because their objectual, hardware form is no longer a match for their fluid, software essence, but the latter also accelerates our sense of time and reality and thus brings our imagined future into our experienced present (Boxall 2006, 222-224). No longer the untouchable metaphysical concept ruled by the gods, "[t]ime is a corporate asset now. It belongs to the free market

system. The present is hard to find. It is being sucked out of the world to make way for the future of uncontrolled markets and huge investment potential" (DeLillo 2011, 79). Consequently, everyone experiencing this ever-fleeting present contaminated with both traces of the past and glimpses of the future is living their life in a continuous hybrid, in-between state, without being able to rely on any of the certainties on which their existence has been based until now.

The immobile mobility of Eric Packer's limousine

All these aspects considered, how does a typical journey through a city reflecting these paradigmatic changes look like in DeLillo's words at the beginning of the new millennium? My argument is that a typical trip of this kind is best described as anarchetypal, since its structure conforms to the characteristics presented by Corin Braga in his theory.

Despite his opposite intentions, *Cosmopolis*' protagonist ends up following an unplanned route across Manhattan, demonstrating how the idea of traveling aimlessly (or, in this case, trying and failing to reach a place that could be regarded as a destination) is not always consciously assumed by the traveler. Sometimes it is a self-imposed consequence of the spatiotemporal circumstances within which the voyage takes place. "[F]rom dawn to nightfall and from the bastions of wealth and global power to the squalid indigence of an abandoned warehouse" (Conte 2008, 181), Eric Packer's limousine is supposed to take him across town in a maximum of half an hour if we look on a map at the distance between his residence on First Avenue and the more industrial side where he wants to go, situated after Eleventh Avenue. Yet, the ride takes him a whole day, and both its purpose and ending remain suspended. This happens, as I will soon expand based on the arguments of the already mentioned Ian Davidson, because DeLillo writes in a time when the illusions of prestige and freedom brought in the 1950s-1960s by the spread of automobile ownership among the American middle class overlap with and then are destroyed by the increasingly digitalized technologies that operate in a dual mode: they make it impossible for cars to offer such a liberating experience anymore while also adding to their construction functions that transform the car into much more than just a means of transportation (Davidson 2012, 470).

Davidson also points out how, after almost a century in which people's reliance on and possession of cars kept increasing exponentially, the experience of the road changed drastically, leading to the more efficient plane travel replacing the long road trips, which became both boring and impractical due to the frequent traffic jams (472). In relation to other famous literary travels, the one from *Cosmopolis* thus seems to belong to a category of its own: an anarchetypal journey

that reflects the chaotic, unpredictable, and fragmented nature of contemporary urban existence.

> It's a journey that certainly does not have the teleology of that of the Joads, whatever the consequences of arrival in California, or even the futility of those in Kerouac's *On the Road* […]. Nor is it a journey of discovery of land and identity as in Steinbeck's *Travels with Charley*, or an escape route into an unknown future for the villain as in Patrick Hamilton's *Gorse* trilogy. The car in *Cosmopolis* is a vehicle that was never meant to go anywhere, and can't anyway because of the density of the traffic. (473)

DeLillo creates a powerful contrast between the physical immobility of the journey and the speed of abstract financial transactions, currency changes, and the continuous flow of market information. "Never mind the speed that makes it hard to follow what passes before the eye. The speed is the point. Never mind the urgent and endless replenishment, the way data dissolves at one end of the series just as it takes shape at the other. This is the point, the thrust, the future. We are not witnessing the flow of information so much as pure spectacle, or information made sacred, ritually unreadable" (DeLillo 2011, 80). Despite the fast pace at which everything happens in the digital world, including the characters' way of talking about it, movement in the real world advances only in time, as geographically it seems to return "to the pace of the 1865 locomotive act, where a vehicle was limited to 4 mph (and 2 mph in towns) and preceded by a man with a red flag" (Davidson 2012, 477).

The more traditional function of the car—taking its owner where they need to go or taking the open road to help them escape their daily routine—is thus replaced by one that keeps something else in motion: data and money (478), i.e., precisely the things that keep the capitalist world from crashing down. The car acquires a hybrid, in-between state that renders it both mobile and immobile at the same time, an aspect that also becomes valid for the urban environment that serves as a background for all the narrative episodes. Postmodern depictions of cities in books or movies often highlight their artificially constructed character, and New York, in particular, appears as a place without a fixed past or a linear history, one whose "present invents itself, from hour to hour, in the act of throwing away its previous accomplishments and challenging the future" (De Certeau 1993, 127 quoted in Brandt 2009, 566). Brandt's analysis on the liminality of such cities correlates their structure, made of overlapped surfaces without any depth, with the individual's similar lack of a core identity, ultimately reaching an image where the apparent order of such fictional spaces is essentially just labyrinthine, regulated chaos that takes its component parts from the real and the imaginary world equally (576).

In this view, American cities lose their individuality and begin to resemble one another, especially in post-apocalyptic narratives where all are equally destroyed by different cataclysms. Alan J. Gravano, another researcher of New York's characteristics in DeLillo's novels, also emphasizes how postmodernity fragmented the urban world and made artificial things like commodities and consumerism dominate the spiritual or moral values, which have almost completely disappeared (Gravano 2011, 181). This annihilation of elements that could have given life some sort of essence or sense leads to people feeling as empty as the ultra-modern and technologized cities they live in (183, 188), which remain paradoxically empty despite being permanently full of tourists. Experiencing the city in postmodernity thus feels overwhelming from a sensory point of view—both due to the masses flooding any metropolis and the ongoing flux of information interrupting our personal life from the technological devices around us. At the same time, it also gives the impression of a sterile environment lacking specificity or a deeper meaning than what can be seen on the surface.

It becomes clear now how, within this chronotope where spatial boundaries (between one city and another), temporal boundaries (between past, present, and future), and ontological boundaries (between the real and its imaginary – or not – copies) are not so strict anymore, an ordered, finite, purpose-driven, and clearly structured journey is no longer possible. "A ride crosstown does not happen unless we make a day of it, with cookies and milk" (DeLillo 2011, 19), Packer hears from his bodyguard. The length of a day will indeed be needed for him to reach his hairdresser, even though that scene will not represent the end of his journey, as I have already mentioned. And yet, anarchetypal as it may be, this slow-motion and rhizomatic car ride across Manhattan is only a logical consequence and reflection of this new postmodern (dis)order of things, an argument that I will further explore.

In the sharp radiography of contemporary America that he constructs in *Cosmopolis*, DeLillo introduces an episode that proves beyond doubt that the existence of human beings has been altered to its very core by technology's interference with the limits between the present and the future: the episode of the protagonist's death. Eric Packer experiences this particular event in advance, as he sees himself dead on his smartwatch before Benno Levin, an angry former employee whose confessions make up the inter-chapters of the book and who wants to kill him to hold him responsible for the economic and political implications of his financial activities, gets to shoot his gun. This sensation, called by Peter Boxall a "reverse déjà vu, a kind of future anterior" (Boxall 2006, 231), creates an expectation for the readers and a presumptive ending for Packer's story. However, the very last sentence of the novel seems to contradict this assumption: "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" (DeLillo 2011, 209). Henry Veggian, another of DeLillo's analysts, notes how anachronistic scenes where effects are experienced before their causes appear several times throughout the novel, including when Levin describes Packer's corpse lying on the floor before they even meet. These episodes create chronological disruptions that, as the critic argues, reflect the "out of sequence" narrative organization used to "dramatize the novel's characters" (Veggian 2015, 93).

When it comes to DeLillo's way of choosing to close the novel, the fact that the protagonist remains suspended between life and death is significant. As Veggian explains, "the novel uses anachronism and discontinuity to dramatize the asynchronous time of global capital markets: Eric expires but he does not. Rather, he continues to exist as a numerical quantity on a spreadsheet, in the form of debt, as an image broadcast for media consumption, as a shock wave washing over collapsing global markets" (89). The anarchetypal character of Packer's journey (both the physical one through Manhattan and the ontological one through time) is exemplified to the fullest here. Boxall's analysis supports this claim by identifying all the elements that situate the plot, especially its ending, in between any fixed categories that could give it a more ordered structure.

On the one hand, the organizing principle that has set some decade boundaries in DeLillo's previous novels is no longer functioning in *Cosmopolis* (Boxall 2006, 215). We see Packer encountering an anti-capitalist protest during his limousine ride, a manifestation that is actually "against the future. They want to hold off the future. They want to normalize it, keep it from overwhelming the present" (DeLillo 2011, 91). However, within this "unboundaried" chronotope from the beginning of the new millennium, when nothing is yet clearly framed (Boxall 2006, 216) and both places and days seem to look alike everywhere (11), this separation between the present and the future is no longer possible. The resulting confusion is defining for the postmodern individual who is condemned to experience all the possible realities intersecting at that moment at once (226). This can be best observed in two distinct scenes: in the first one, Packer is questioned by his wife about what he was doing in the hotel she saw him getting out of, and he lists a large variety of options which could all be true precisely because the truth is not unique anymore and all the possibilities hold the same value within the potentiality field. In the second one, we find him stuck in the middle of the street, towards the end of the novel:

> There was nothing to do. He hadn't realized this could happen to him. The moment was empty of urgency and purpose. He hadn't planned on this. Where was the life he'd always led? There was nowhere he wanted to go, nothing to think about, no one waiting. How could he take a step in any direction if all directions were the same? (DeLillo 2011, 180)

This happens right before he hears a gunshot and his name being called by Levin, who seems to be urging his former boss to take some action in this overwhelming list of choices among which he is lost and some responsibility regarding the implications of his rush for money and global power.

On the other hand, beyond Boxall's focus on how the book's finale places Packer's journey (of life) in the gap between what happens in real time and what cyberspace has already shown will happen in the future (232), a gap he calls "the stretched time of an ending that continued to go on" (226) or a "finishedness which is also in process" (230), we must mention another aspect that gives the story its anarchetypal character. Packer's financial transactions influence the entire banking system and eventually cause its downfall because he cannot properly understand the yen. Benno Levin's speech in the novel's last pages also explains why this downfall occurred. Instead of trying "to predict the movements of the yen by drawing on patterns from nature" and "looking for balance, beautiful balance, equal parts, equal sides," Packer should "have been tracking the yen in its tics and quirks. The little quirks. The misshape. […] That's where the answer was, in your body, in your prostate" (DeLillo 2011, 200), which was also asymmetrical, as Packer is told during his regular medical check-up in his car.

What DeLillo emphasizes here is, again, the idea that the laws of nature, which built everything according to ordered and clearly structured patterns, are not capable of functioning anymore in a world where technology is so advanced that it brings into the present fragments of an unknowable future that have not happened yet. What people need to consider now when trying to "organize" their lives is the asymmetrical, the hybrid, the slightly-off, the chaos, and the disorder themselves.

Lastly, this analysis of *Cosmopolis* will address one final aspect: the possibility of Packer's journey being equated with a postmodern odyssey. Classical odysseys like Homer's and Virgil's or medieval ones like Dante's and the Irish legends from Celtic mythology usually involved a long and sometimes wandering series of travels that had a clear purpose and ultimately led to the initiation of the hero who completed them. Such archetypal voyages were later continued by the Renaissance's exploration journeys attempting to reach the Far East and the 17th-18th century trend of extraordinary voyages, but texts like Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* reversed the perspective, satirizing this genre and destabilizing the ordered patterns on which such travel narratives were written. Ultimately, setting aside the migratory journeys across or toward North America for economic or political reasons, the majority of modern and postmodern voyages on this continent turned into voyages of discovery of land,

authentic life, or identity, thus having an idea as a purpose rather than a physical destination.

However, regardless of the century or culture they were a product of, what all of these texts had in common was the duration of the journey, which expanded considerably in both time and space, covering months, if not years, from the protagonist's life and thousands of kilometers across various continents or seas. By contrast, in *Cosmopolis* everything happens in just one day in the same city, and the impression we are left with throughout the journey and at its end is neither one of advancement nor one of completion: "there is no sense of a journey being completed, but rather of a vehicle in endless circulation" (Davidson 2012, 473). Nevertheless, the numerous obstacles, detours, and secondary episodes that together constitute the actual plot of the novel still qualify it as an odyssey, albeit one constructed according to the principles of the postmodern worldview. At the turn of the millennium, a single city is portrayed as being labyrinthine enough for a simple ride across it to turn into an entire odyssey, and since this odyssey's destination eludes the traveler to the point where the journey's meaning does not even depend on it anymore, the order of the narrative scenes becomes irrelevant as well. Even if Packer's limousine had first been blocked by the street protests instead of the water-main break, or if he had been consulted by his doctor only after meeting his chief of theory, his hair would still have been only half cut by the end of the day, and his life would still hang in expectation of the gunshot sound by the end of the novel.

Conclusions

"The trouble with a tale where anything can happen is that somehow nothing happens" (Updike 2003), reads a review written shortly after *Cosmopolis* was published. It can easily be observed how DeLillo depicts here a journey seemingly devoid of movement compared to any tradition of literary journeys, yet a bit more relatable when seen in the context of America's traffic jams and chaotic big-city boulevards. Postmodern times transform a typical journey through New York into an anarchetypal one, a simple ride across the city to get a haircut into an odyssey that not only involves navigating through a labyrinth of obstacles but also ends with suspended closure as Eric Packer gets only part of his hair cut and will probably lose his life but has not yet lost it by the time DeLillo writes the last word of his book. Being the center of global cybercapital, New York is affected and transformed along with its inhabitants and their worldview equally. Thus, a different approach to understanding the intersections of space and time is needed to make sense of anything.

To put it simply, things look different now in a country haunted by the specter of capitalism, whose essence is reduced to "the investment banker, the land developer, the venture capitalist, […] the software entrepreneur, the global overlord of satellite and cable, the discount broker, the beaked media chef, […] the exiled head of state of some smashed landscape of famine and war" (DeLillo 2011, 10). These figures are driven around the city by taxi drivers to various places where they change the course of world events. If DeLillo's work is often seen as "an authentic, moral reaction against what are often characterized as the 'excesses' of the postmodern" (Boxall 2006, 14), the fact that these excesses can take the form of individuals being overwhelmed by constant impulses from the past and future simultaneously and thus permanently stuck in the middle should not come as a surprise.

Finally, through its analysis of the economic, financial, technological, and political climate illustrated in the book, as well as the paradoxically disordered way in which a journey through a geometrically structured American metropolis looks from a geographical point of view at the beginning of the 21st century, this paper has demonstrated that the "order at some deep level" and the "pattern that wants to be seen" (DeLillo 2011, 86) are actually not discoverable anymore, neither by billionaires like Eric Packer nor by the simple people protesting in the street. Covering physical distances now becomes less important and visible than covering digital ones. Bringing a constant flux of information into everyone's life and manipulating the financial strings of the world to drag even the future into the present are signs that the postmodern world is heading more and more towards an anarchetypal understanding of how things should work.

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