

DOI: xyz

Post-Industrial Consumer Culture And Hyperreality: A Study Of Delillo's Cosmopolis

Uzma Shakoor^{1*}, Dr Nailah Riaz², Dr Qasim Shafiq³

¹*PhD Candidate, Department of English Language and Literature, The University of Faisalabad, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan. Uzmshah194@gmail.com

²Assistant Professor/Head, Department of English language and literature, The University of Faisalabad, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan. nailah.riaz@tuf.edu.pk

³Assistant Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, The University of Faisalabad, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan. dr.qasimirza@gmail.com

Abstract

Jean Baudrillard argues that our world is entrenched in an obsession with the hyperreal, where simulations and imitations have eclipsed the authenticity of reality itself. This hyperreality manifests distinctly within consumer culture, where products and brands are infused with symbolic meanings that transcend their practical utility. In this context, consumer goods metamorphose into symbols of identity, status and aspirations, profoundly shaping our perception of the world. This study explores the hyperreality of consumer culture to understand the superficiality of human connections with the globe and examines the relationship between consumerism and globalization, which orchestrates transformative changes across cultural landscapes and societal foundations. Jean Baudrillard, in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), explores how consumerism has created a culture of simulation and hyperreality. This study explores the riddle of postmodern/post-industrial society. Don DeLillo's *Cosmopolis* as a case highlights the misconceptions projected by consumer culture and reveals how people become entangled in the inspired attraction of consumer culture, blurring the distinction between genuine desires and manufactured ones.

Keywords: consumerism, culture, hyperreality, post-industrial society

1. Introduction

Consumer culture, an omnipresent cognitive phenomenon within contemporary society, has been extensively examined and critiqued through various communication channels. Jean Baudrillard's (1981) concept of hyperreality, a cornerstone of his theoretical framework, signifies a state in which authentic reality is replaced by representations, blurring the boundary between genuine and fictitious. Cultural hybridity and identity formation as consumption has become increasingly globalized as it can lead to the formation of hybrid cultural identities. Global cultural consumption is often obsessed by dominant cultural forces that can reinforce existing power relations and inequalities. The globalization of cultural formation refers to the increasing consumption of goods and services originating from a range of factors, including the growth of global media and entertainment industries, the rise of tourism and the expansion of international trade (Bhaba & Hall, 1990). The role of power in global and cultural consumption appears to be a democratizing force that enables individuals to access a wider range of cultural goods and services (Madurai, 1996; Hesmondhagh, 2007).

So, consumerism has become a social and cultural phenomenon (Hannerz, 1990; Tomlinson, 1999). In consumer culture, commodities acquire semantic resonance, and their valuation is determined by their symbolic connotations. This hyperreal realm redefines the economy into a conceptual abstraction, where tangible reality becomes entangled within the intricate web of simulations and symbols. The study argues the presentation of a universe in which it is impossible to distinguish between reality and delusion and hints at the constructed nature of consumer culture, wherein underlying assumptions, advertising narratives and aspirational imagery create lamination of attractiveness and satisfaction. Eric Packer, a youthful billionaire, who crosses the expanse of Manhattan within an advanced white stretch limousine, has had futuristic gadgets. This hyperbolic journey, characterized by an almost expressionless act, epitomizes Packer's surreal existence. While Packer has placed monumental bets on the Japanese yen's behavior, which is potentially destructive to his financial stability and global financial institutions, his preoccupation revolves around a simple task: getting a haircut at his preferred barbershop. Hugely leveraging bets on the Japanese yen (a bet that, if it goes wrong, will bankrupt him and destabilize banks around the world), he appears to be most concerned with getting a haircut at his favorite barbershop. Every character he meets along the way, a socialite wife whom he barely seems to know, a female aide-de-camp out on a jog, whose self-mortifying exertions stir his lust, a doctor with whom he takes a meeting in the back seat and an icy, Bond-girl mistress whose 21st-century ideas of foreplay, like licking chilled vodka jolting him unconsciously with a stun gun. Not one of these supporting figures is anything but an agenda with the face of a hyperreal world in which he is surrounded. The city bursts out in protest to each character he encounters on his expedition from a superficially familiar perspective, representing the hyperreal environment he inhabits. Notably, even his interactions with these figures underscore the extent to which his reality is simulated, rendering money and power more influential than any foundational truth. Packer's universe succeeds on screens and images and fosters a perpetual connection to an intricate web of information that raises a hallucination of control. His isolation from the tangible world is epitomized by his cocoon-like limousine, evolving into a mobile command center where business transactions and interactions transpire

through an array of screens and devices. The societal structure within this realm axes speculative investments rather than pragmatic usage. Baudrillard's assertion that commodities transcend mere utilitarian functions to acquire sign value resonates deeply within this hyperreal domain. This study explores the role of this hyperreal domain in shaping consumer experiences and identity construction.

2. Literature Review

Pre-historic consumption practices can be traced in the ancient city of Jericho on the west bank, dating back to approximately 8000 BCE. Archeological excavations at the site have revealed a complex society with a division of labor and evidence of trade with other regions. Kenoyer (2013) highlights the obsidian blades, elaborate wall paintings, and sculptures that describe a high degree of artistic production. Postmodernism/Postindustrialism has extensively examined consumer culture and its impact on society. According to Baudrillard (1970), consumer culture has produced a new form of reality that is divorced from reality. Consumer culture has produced a world of signs and symbols (Baudrillard, 1970). According to Fredric Jameson (1991), it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism. In *The Culture of Narcissism in American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (1979), Christopher Lasch criticizes the psychological profession for promoting self-absorption and self-centeredness through a focus on individual therapy and self-help, rather than addressing larger social and political issues. For him, narcissism is a consequence of broader social and economic trends that have undermined traditional values and social structures and created a sense of malaise and despair (Lasch, 1979).

Daniel Miller (2009) examines consumer culture from an anthropological perspective. He explores how material possessions shape identity, relationships, and social dynamics. He highlights the social and cultural meanings embedded in everyday objects, emphasizing the significance of materiality in consumer culture. Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood's (2000) theory of consumer culture is rooted in the concept of 'material culture.' They explore the symbolic meanings attached to goods and how these meanings are constructed and communicated within social groups. They emphasize the social dimensions of consumption and the role of material objects in shaping social identities through which consumers negotiate and perform their identities through consumption choices (Douglas & Isherwood, 2000). Veblen's "The Theory of the Leisure Class" (1899) introduced the concept of conspicuous consumption and highlighted how individuals use material goods to display social status and wealth. He analyzed the role of consumerism in shaping social hierarchies and the emergence of the leisure class (Veblen, 1899). Ernest Dichter's *Handbook of Consumer Motivations* (1964) focused on the psychological aspects of consumer behavior and examined the motivations and desires that drive individuals to consume. He explored the role of emotions, desires, and unconscious desires in shaping consumer choices (Ditcher, 1964).

Jean Baudrillard's "The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures" (1970) explored the idea of consumer culture as a system of symbols and signs. He examined how consumerism shapes individual identities, social interactions, and the construction of meaning in contemporary society (Baudrillard, 1970). Stuart Ewen in "Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture" (1976) explored the historical development of advertising and its influence on consumer culture. He examined the power dynamics, persuasion techniques, and ideological reinforcements of advertising in shaping consumer desires and behaviors. (Ewen, 1976). Zygmunt Bauman's *Liquid Modernity* (2000) examined consumerism in the context of a fluid, fast-paced, and divided modern society. He argued that consumer culture thrives on constant change, individualization, and the pursuit of instant gratification, highlighting its impact on social relationships and identity construction (Bauman, 2000). Daniel Miller's "Stuff Compulsive Hoarding and the Meaning of Things" (2009) explored the relationships between individuals and their material possessions. Daniel examined the emotional and symbolic significance of objects, the role of consumerism in shaping personal identities, and the impact of material culture on social relationships (Daniel, 2009). Baudrillard (1970) argued that these values can be determined by signs or simulations. Consumers buy objects to demonstrate their prestige, rank and social understanding. An individual has a deep desire to distinguish himself from others through a system of social differentiation. But in postmodern/postindustrial society, the consumer displays what he buys to differentiate himself socially so the present society is fragmented and concerned by sign value. Commodities are not sold; they are signs. Individual identification is based on the type of consumer object. On the surface, it appears that the consumer is free to buy anything, but in present-day society, mass media or cyber culture are major factors that create a consumer society (Baudrillard, 1970).

Herbert Marcuse's work *One-Dimensional Man* (1964) provides a comprehensive analysis of modern society under advanced industrial capitalism, highlighting how it constrains human freedom through various mechanisms of control. Marcuse contends that technological progress, mass media, and consumerism combine to create what he terms a 'one-dimensional' society. This society employs social control and domination to homogenize human desires and suppress critical thinking (Marcuse, 1964). Don Slater in *Consumer Culture and Modernity* (1997) explores the link between consumer culture and digitalization. He elaborates on how digital technologies have shaped the production and consumption of goods, the beginning of online shopping, and the impact of digital media on consumer behavior and cultural practices. Russell Belk, in *Digital Consumption and the Extended Self* (2013), investigates that how digital technologies have enlarged the concept of the extended self, referring to the incorporation of digital possessions and online identities into individuals' self-concepts. Argo and Dhal (2004) in "The Influence of a Mere Touch on Perceptions of Product Quality" inspect how digitalization affects consumer perceptual experience of product quality and explores the haptic nature of digital interfaces and how sensory experiences are mediated through digital platforms, potentially impacting consumer product and service evaluations. Jonathan Donner and Shikoh Gitau's "New Paths: Exploring Mobile-Only Internet Use in Africa" (2014) explores the rise of mobile internet use in developing countries and its impact on consumer behavior and investigates how digitalization and mobile technologies enable new forms of consumption, including mobile banking, e-commerce, and information access, particularly in regions with limited traditional infrastructure. Tom Boellstorff's *Coming of Age in Second Life* examines the virtual world of 'Second Life' and its implications for consumer culture. He explores the digital economy within 'Second Life', virtual currency, online communities,

and the ways in which individuals engage in identity expression, socializing, and consumption within the virtual environment (Boellstorff, 2008). Arjun Madurai is known for his work on globalization and its impact on consumer culture. He emphasized the role of media, imagination, and cultural flows in shaping consumer desires and aspirations. His concept of 'scapes' (ethnoscapes, technoscapes, mediascapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes) examines how global cultural flows influence consumer identities and practices (Madurai, 1996). Ritzer is a sociologist known for popularizing the concept of 'McDonaldization' and his work on the rationalization of consumer culture. He argues that contemporary society exhibits characteristics similar to those of fast-food chains, emphasizing efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control. Ritzer's theories shed light on the standardization and homogenization of consumer experiences (Ritzer, 2000).

3. Theoretical Framework

Baudrillard explores how the hyperreal nature of cultural myths and symbols nurtures an illusion of desire and fulfillment. This magnetism of images and signs entices individuals into ceaseless pursuits of fulfillment and consumption. Baudrillard argues that this seductive power obscures deeper meanings and prolongs a rotation of insatiable consumption. The infusion of media and simulations has dissolved the boundaries between reality and fiction, making it challenging to distinguish between truth and illusion (Baudrillard, 1981). Jean Baudrillard argues that in post-industrial culture, society has become so reliant on models and maps that it has lost touch with the real world that existed before these representations. Reality now merely imitates the model, with the model preceding and determining the real world. Baudrillard argues that in post-industrial simulation and simulacra, the focus is not on imitation, duplication, or parody, but rather on substituting signs of the real for the real itself. He asserts that we have lost the ability to distinguish between nature and artifice. Hyperreality thus appears as a social construct simulated from models and detached from direct experience. Hyperreality, as theorized by Baudrillard, influences media culture and personal identity, leading to a sense of fragmentation, uncertainty and a search for alternative realities in consumer culture (Baudrillard, 1981, Jameson, 1991; Bauman, 1992). With the ceaseless reproduction of hyperreality, anything becomes real, and becomes a mere state of mind for the postmodern individual. It is perceived and constructed by the filters of the individual itself. Nicol states that Baudrillard is not only "lamenting the loss of something present and stable (the real)", but he also touches upon how our reality is constructed by simulation (Nicol 193). Baudrillard's theory encourages to critically examine the influence of media and technology on the perceptions and to attempt for a deeper understanding of the truths and realities that underlie the simulations presented to us. By recognizing the gap between representations and actual truths, individuals gain a clearer perspective on the complexities of the contemporary world.

4. Textual Analysis

Consumer culture's impact is highlighted by its transformation of commodities into symbols and simulations that transcend their inherent materiality. Baudrillard's conception of hyperreality finds thoughtful resonance within the narrative of *Cosmopolis*, where the delineations between authenticity and illusion are evident. The modern landscape reflects a paradigm in which the economy thrives as a conceptual construct, accentuating the enduring relevance of Baudrillard's insights into contemporary society's complex interaction with consumerism and hyperreality. Consumer goods become signifiers of status, identity, and desires, shaping our perception of reality. The attraction of consumer culture lies not only in the utilitarian function of products, but also in the complicated web of symbolic significance. Packer, a conspicuously affluent currency trader, embarks on this enigmatic expedition equipped with an array of sophisticated gadgets, reminiscences of the iconic 'Get Smart' series. This exceptional vehicle featured multiple pop-up video screens emblazoned with a compact bathroom, thus facilitating his unconventional journey through midtown Manhattan. In spite of his high-stakes financial wagers on the Japanese yen, which could potentially herald global financial turmoil, his foremost concern appears to be a seemingly trivial task obtaining a haircut at his favoured barbershop.

In *Cosmopolis*, the distinction between authenticity and illusion becomes inextricably blurred. Packer's existence is characterized by a perpetual stream of screens and images, creating an illusion of control through a network of information. His limousine, serving as both a mode of transport and a mobile office, further isolates him from tangible reality, as he negotiates transactions and interfaces with the world exclusively through an array of screens and devices. In this constructed reality, societal dynamics revolve around speculative investments rather than the utilitarian value of products or services. Consumer goods within this hyperreal milieu are imbued with profound semiotic meaning, whose value extends beyond functionality to encompass symbolic connotations. This hyperreality redefines the economy into an abstract conception, distancing itself from the tangibility of reality. There was never any distance between my money and him. It was only a kind of raw material like pig iron. This reflects Eric's concern for money and his cognition of it as a mere tool for consumption. This shows the consumer culture mindset, where money is a means to obtain goods and services, emphasizing materialistic desires and the commodification of one's existence. Here, Eric lives in a society determined by consumerism, where individuals not only desire to be seen and admired but are also actively engaged in observing and consuming others. Eric contemplates the temptations and illusions of consumer culture. The idea of a calm and pristine place represents a fantasy or idealized image connected to the consumption of goods and services.

Cosmopolis seems to offer a critical examination of contemporary society's obsession with wealth, technology, and their effects on individuals and the broader socioeconomic landscape. Vija Kinsky, Eric's Chief of Theory, reflects his transforming relationship with money and how it has gained the power to depreciate and control him. While they travel to the backseat of Packer's limousine, she evaluates the societal meaning of property and money and its consequences for Eric's life. Property is no longer about power, personality, or command. It is not about vulgarity or tasteful display; it no longer has weight or shape. The only thing that matters is the price you pay. You, Eric, think. What did you buy for \$100,000? Not dozens of rooms, incomparable views, private elevators ... Not the swimming pool or a shark. Was it right? Regulating sensors and software You paid the money for the number itself. One hundred and four million. This is why you bought. The number justifies itself. (DeLillo, p. 34)

His obsession with money solidifies and consumes him. The process can be deemed as a 'natural' one, also, because the society in which Packer lives redeems the profile of a successful and happy individual Eric whose attitude toward money shapes his vision of the world as he perceives it through electronic images and numbers that create an artificial reality. This artificial reality is a state that can be defined as a symbolic expression of the postmodern/post-industrial imprisonment of individuals in the realm of signs and of the death of naturalness and detachment of the human being from materiality and nature. Since the latest technology is only accessible to the capital holder, his interactions with various forms of technology, especially telecommunication and computer systems, provide him with a sense of personal prestige. Here, technology is a means to express hegemonic superiority over society since economic exchange has become virtual in the digitized cyberspace of the globalized world. The fitted connection between technology and capital hazes the hierarchal limits between them, and Eric starts conceiving his possession of higher technology as a necessary means of accessing capital. He is entirely obsessed with the technological environment. Due to his incredible wealth, he can afford to prioritize his desire to be completely immersed in a technological environment. More and more, he starts to see his money-making skills as a way of immersing himself in the electronic data stream of global informatics. As the story progresses, Eric's infatuation with becoming one with technology intensifies and leads him toward a posthuman condition where is "no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism, robot technology and human goals" (Hayles qtd. in Laist, p. 261).

Ambient technology's existential potency determines Eric's relationship to his own body. He wants to see himself as a biological extension of his densely technological environment and this desire becomes problematic throughout the narrative as technology melts into everyday life and conceals its material existence. Consumerism is not only an economic system; it is also the way society functions. Products are emblematic and say much more than we might realize. While it is easy to conclude that the consumption of products leads us to develop a sense of who we are as individuals, it actually does much more than that. Consumerism helps us determine where individuals are primed in society and how to change social circumstances. It is easy to understand consumerism as shallow and devoid of meaning. Baudrillard's ideas on consumerism lead us to a sense of loss, as there is no real identity and no way of gaining fulfilment. *Cosmopolis* by Delillo, explores the effects of consumer culture and technology on society. It takes place in a near future, New York city, where the protagonist is portrayed both as an individual and a personification of consumer culture and the capitalist system: Worlds where owning and consuming make up the backbone of a person's worth. "He lived in a city of the future, he had never known hunger, never known want. He was free to invent his future and more than this he was living the future" (Delillo, p. 78). Eric is representative of the hyperworld in which appearances are a sign of status. "He thought about his wrist watch, the tiny gears and intricate movements, the ruby bearings and gold screws, the hand-wound mechanism and the accuracy of time. He loved this watch because it was a symbol of his life, his time and his position in the future" (Delillo, p. 100). Baudrillard's notion of hyperreality is particularly relevant to the analysis of *Cosmopolis*, as it highlights the extent to which the characters in the novel are disconnected from any underlying reality. The hyperreal world is where meaning and value are constructed through simulation and representation. Packer's pursuit of his haircut becomes a journey through a world where everything is a sign and where he is constantly confronted with the emptiness of his existence: Throughout the way, the media plays an important role in shaping and constructing hyper-reality. Packer's encounters with the media, including interviews and live broadcasts, highlight how the media creates a spectacle around his life, blurring the lines between his public persona and his actual existence. The continual presence of screens and the obsession with capturing and disseminating images contribute to the hyperreal nature of Packer's world.

Packer's immersion in technology contributes to the hyperreality portrayed in the novel. He rarely interacts directly with the physical world; instead, he experiences it through screens, monitors, and virtual representations. For instance, his limousine is equipped with advanced technology that allows him to conduct business, and communicate, and engage with the world without being physically present. This disengagement from the immediate environment strengthened the hyperreal nature of his experiences. Packer's Manhattan journey in *Cosmopolis* involves encounters revolving around abstract ideas, reflecting a hyperreal society. This discussion emphasizes simulation over genuine experiences, critiquing a world detached from authentic emotions. This study mirrors Baudrillard's hyperreality concept, where symbols outweigh underlying realities and explores a modern existence where interactions are filtered through a lens of simulation, leaving characters disconnected. Financial hyperreality in the character of Packer is visible; he stands as a living embodiment of the capitalist ethos, his opulent lifestyle serving as a testament to his triumph within the current economic landscape. His possession of a lavish \$104 million penthouse, complete with extravagant features like a shark tank and a lap pool, became a striking symbol of his ascendancy to economic hierarchy. Packer epitomizes the ideals of capitalism—accumulation of wealth, unabashed indulgence, and conspicuous consumption. His success and wealth represent the heights of contemporary economic aspirations. In a pivotal moment, Packer's downfall mirrored a major change in the global economy. His powerful image collapses, likened to a third twin tower, a symbolic representation of the dominant world economic order now shaken by systemic inequalities. This explores a society grappling with the excesses and consequences of capitalism. The essence of luxury and detachment reverberates with striking clarity. When Didi Fancher expresses her intention to purchase a Rothko painting, Eric's response exposes a reflective viewpoint that underscores the unassailable privilege of extreme wealth. As he rebuffs her assertion that the Rothko Chapel belongs to the world, his words convey an almost serene self-assuredness that is rooted in the power that comes with wealth. Eric reply, "Let them buy it. Let them outbid me" (Delillo, p. 24), captures a paradigm in which financial prowess is synonymous with control, where possessions become trophies of victory in the economic arena. As Baudrillard argues, the value of commodities extends beyond their material functionality. In consumer culture, commodities acquire a sign value; their worth is determined by the symbolic meanings attributed to them. This hyperreal world is one where the economy has become a concept.

Within this exchange, a subtle yet powerful dialogue unfolds a commentary that commodities exist solely for the sole purpose, regardless of historical value, future, or interests. An even unique art is the packer, which he acquires without any concern for

others. He needs to buy the Rothko Chapel for himself, and his only intention is to own it rather than benefit others. The concept of financial hyperreality, in which material possessions become entangled with abstract forces of power and perception, subtly weaves through these lines. This dialog captures a fragment of a larger narrative in which wealth's transformative influence on reality skews the conventional understanding of possessions, power, and the collective good. The protagonist's journey is undeniably a distressing journey. Across a span of just a day, which extends into two, Packer embarks on a trajectory beginning with financial speculation on the yen's devaluation. As he borrows staggering sums of yen to fuel his stock market ventures, he propels himself from a position of prosperity toward an impending downfall.

Packer's journey mirrors a symbolic march from affluence to decline, paralleled by an incremental awakening of the surrounding world. Within the amalgamation of his immense riches and material wealth, he distorts into an embodiment of unfettered capitalism, entangled with his complex psyche which is characterized by high intelligence, intense self-absorption, and a sense of strength to define his character. His fixation on financial markets and currency values mirrors the hyperreal quality of consumer culture. The fluctuating value of currencies becomes a detached, hyperreal game that disconnects users from real commodities and services. Packer's immersion in abstract financial models and his pursuit of predicting market dynamics serve as a vivid portrayal of how hyperreality infiltrates the core tenets of economic existence. Amidst his hyperreal financial pursuits, Packer's immoderate wealth is evident. His extravagance was epitomized by personally purchasing elevators that played his favorite music at a fraction of normal speed, a testament to his indulgence. His financial capacity grants him the autonomy to spend without constraining his effectively ignoring others' opinions or interests, a trait that almost renders him inhuman in his self-centeredness.

The weird disconnection between financial abstractions and perceptible reality shows the intricacies of a character whose ascent and descent mirror the complexity of contemporary capitalism. It portrays the dominance of media, the intervention of technology and the occurrence of simulations and representations. Packer's interactions with various individuals depict the ways in which personal connections and intimacy have become objects of exchange and transaction in his hyperreal world. "Capitalism is distressing the city and its inhabitants" (Dellio, p. 27). *Cosmopolis* is actually a graphic novel without the pictures, a mythopoetic vision of a moment of crisis in American history, and a portrait of a great American supervillain. Packer has throughout the day with the eye candy in James Bond films and the state in DC comics. Packer seemed to have rejoiced as he picked up a fight with the market and kept betting against the yen, because that was the only fight worth having: one between his own intellect and the market. He says to one of his staff: "For someone your age, with your gifts, there's only one thing in the world worth pursuing professionally and intellectually, the interaction between technology and capital" (DeLillo, p. 23).

Sexual Transactions: Packer is a slave to his body

Obsessed with his asymmetrical prostate, he attends daily doctor visits to monitor it. He is always hungry; he craves red meat and chewy food. He is also permanently on the prowl for sex with his wife (who denies him) and with his female advisers and bodyguards (who don't) and he always refrains from it. Although he has sexed several times during the day—in 47th street hotels and in a limo, it is not enough. After a particularly vigorous coupling with his bodyguard, he asks her to fire her stun gun at his chest. He is saying more. "Show me something I don't know. Finally, it seems he gets relief from the compulsions of mind and body" (DeLillo, 203). Packer's relationships with women often revolve around sex as a transaction. He engages in casual sexual encounters, sometimes paying for the services of sex workers. These encounters are depicted as transactions devoid of emotional connection, highlighting the commodification of intimacy and physical pleasure. Packer's marriage to Elise is portrayed as strained and distant. Their relationship has become transactional and lacks emotional depth. Packer's focuses on his work and financial pursuits further alienates him from his wife, highlighting the way in which personal connections can be sacrificed and commodified in the pursuit of material success. Packer's relationships with women are fragmented and disconnected, mirroring the fragmented nature of the hyperreal world. His encounters are brief and lack continuity and are often limited to specific moments or locations. This fragmentation reflects the disjointed and fragmented nature of hyperreality, where experiences and identities are split and confused. The concept of hyperreality may be evident in the blurred lines between language, ideology, and economic systems that govern society. Packer's sexual escapades and obsession with his health throughout *Cosmopolis* suggest a corporeal element that links rogue capitalism. Packer's sexual encounters connote a business deal; they are quick and efficient (for Packer), and the sexual situations are transactional. When in the jewelry district in New York City, the people Packer sees are so distant that they physically cannot touch each other or look at each other: "A quarter of a second of a shared glance was a violation of agreements that made the city operational. ... No one wanted to be touched. There was a pact of untouchability" (Dellio, p. 66). Packer is a rogue capitalist who deals with cyber capital—technology mediates his business—and to him physical contact should only be sexual in nature. Packer's sex repeated his solipsistic power and control over his body. Packer reverts to technology and capitalist ideology as coping mechanisms; specifically, he practices rogue capitalism, too, to assert his dominance over others.

Packer engages in casual sexual encounters, often with a sense of detachment and objectification. His interactions with women were often based on fulfilling immediate desires and physical pleasure rather than emotional connection. Packer's relationships with women tend to prioritize external appearances and physical links. In DeLillo's *Cosmopolis*, the portrayal of Eric Packer's relationships with women is a nuanced exploration of the complexities and strains that define his quest for intimacy. The narrative highlights a poignant internal turmoil. Contemplating Elise, his wife, Eric confronted a troubling truth. He had once believed in their intimacy, perhaps even loved her, or so he had convinced himself. Now, however, that connection appeared distant, a relic of days gone by a poignant echo in the corridors of memory. As they stood together in the bedroom, Eric's gaze was fixed upon her. But he carried an icy detachment, a chilling void where intimacy should have lived. The yearning for closeness remained elusive, but it was replaced by an unsettling emptiness. She drew nearer, her lips gently grazing on her own. At that moment, Eric could feel a flicker of desire, a brief ember of connection. Yet even within that passionate embrace, a

lingering sense of distance lingered, as if intimacy were a mirage, forever beyond his grasp (DeLillo, 2003). Desiring closeness, reached out to touch her, and bounded in the warmth of another human being. But his touch was mechanical, devoid of fervor or ardor. Intimacy, like grains of sand, slipped relentlessly through his fingers (DeLillo, 2003). They lay side by side in the bed, their bodies intertwined. However, Eric's thoughts were far removed from his relentless pursuit of wealth and power. The intimacy of the moment is felt transient, a mere diversion from his relentless obsessions. Eric yearned for profound intimacy, a connection that transcended the superficiality of his world. Yet, his relationships with women remained shallow, dominated by transactional desires and the icy embrace of technology. These lines underscore Eric Packer's profound struggle to forge authentic intimacy with women trapped in the web of his technological obsessions and his diminishing ability to establish meaningful connections. This narrative serves as a poignant commentary on the challenges and limitations of intimacy in the postmodern/post-industrial era, where technology and social disconnection have become formidable barriers to genuine human connection.

Social connectivity and Hyperreality

Packer's interactions with his employees and colleagues also reflected his sense of commodification. His employees are treated as tools for achieving his financial goals rather than individuals with their own needs and desires. The hierarchical structure of his business reinforces the notion of relationships as instrumental and transactional, occupied by power dynamics rather than genuine human connections. Packer's wealth and influence enabled him to control and manipulate others, further emphasizing that relationships were depicted as opportunities for gaining power and advantage rather than sources of emotional fulfillment or mutual growth. "He studied the terminal screens, trying to penetrate the coded mysteries of the futures market. These screens were the face of the age, dark windows into an artificial world" (DeLillo, p. 78). "Eric watched as the world of money and power shimmered through the prism of electronic transactions. The numbers are flashed and scrolled. Technology was the nervous system of the age, a network that spanned the globe" (DeLillo, p. 67). He moved through the city in a glass-encased limousine, protected and detached from the outside noise and chaos. Technology had insulated him from the street-level reality. "In the heart of the limo, Eric was surrounded by screens and monitors. The world is pouring in through these windows, mediated by technology. He was the center of the universe, manipulating the strings of finance. "As the limo crept through the city, it could feel the pulse of technology reverberating through his veins. The hum of computers, the click of keyboards, the constant stream of data—it was the soundtrack of his existence" (DeLillo, p. 122). The screens in the limo showed a world in constant motion, a whirlwind of financial transactions and global events. Technology has collapsed distance; DeLillo delineates American society and its extreme changes. Society not only experiences an altered state of mind but is also progressively moving forward in change. The city is portrayed as a state of confusion wretched and broken by clustered post-traumatic stress. Technology is clearly seen as DeLillo (2003) writes, "Humans and computers merge ... Furthermore, a never-ending life begins ... Why die when you can live on a disk?" (p. 105). Here, it seems that Packer wants a change from humans to technology. Packer wants to live his life on a disk by being immortal and existing as both a bodily existence and a computer simulation. It seems Packer wants to blend his physical activity with technology. People are no longer considering feelings or any other subjects that actually make them human beings.

Packer's immersion in screens, virtual encounters, and transactional interactions reflects detachment from the immediate physical world. The pursuit of profit and the commodification of all aspects of life contribute to a hyperreal environment where signs and images take precedence over reality. Furthermore, *Cosmopolis* raises questions about the impact of hyperreality on personal identity, human connection, and the nature of truth, challenges the notion of authenticity and emphasizes the ways in which hyperreality can lead to a sense of disconnection, fragmentation, and alienation. This study serves as a critique of contemporary societies' obsessions with consumption, technology, and the hyperreal. This reflects the consequences of living in a world where reality is increasingly replaced by simulations and representations. Eric Packer takes on extreme individualism and does everything out of his own interests. On the one hand, when he speculatively tries to manipulate the share market, he greedily desires to accumulate a pot of money during the turbulence in the American stock market against the backdrop of the Dot-com crisis. As the embodiment of American financial capital, he constantly sought greater profits. Eric determines to push 'the logic of cyber-capital to new extremes' for the sake of making money. In particular, Eric tends to be on the way of self-destruct by killing his loyal bodyguard after understanding that the bodyguard is useless.

Global Interdependencies and Hyperreality

Hyperreality is portrayed in *Cosmopolis* as a fundamental force that shapes the narrative and the characters' experiences. It explores the globalized nature of capitalism and its impact on the characters. Eric Packer, a billionaire financier, operates in a global financial market, continuously monitoring currency fluctuations and engaging in cross-border transactions. This highlights the interconnectedness of financial systems and the influence of global capitalism on individuals' lives. Globalization's effects on culture as characters move through the cosmopolitan setting of Manhattan, they encounter a varied range of cultures and influences and how globalization, particularly through technological advancements, has connected individuals across vast distances. Packer's constant use of digital devices and his ability to communicate instantly with people from different parts of the world reflects the borderless nature of communication that is facilitated by globalization. Globalization's impact on physical mobility is also depicted in *Cosmopolis*. Packer's frequent trips around the world in his high-tech limousine symbolize the ease and speed with which individuals can traverse geographical boundaries in a globalized world. It portrays the blurring of borders and the fluid movement of people and ideas. Global Interdependencies and interconnectedness among states and economies are woven into the narrative. Packer's financial decisions and their effects on global markets highlight the ways in which actions in one part of the world can have far-reaching effects in another place. Against this global canvas, the characters grapple with their sense of self and autonomy, heightening the tensions caused by hyperreality and the all-consuming tides of consumerism. Baudrillard's insights into consumer culture and hyperreality provide us with theoretical scaffolding to dissect Eric Packer's hyperreal existence, his immersion into the whirlpool of consumer desires, and the overarching resound of a world tightly woven by globalization. The convergence of hyperreality, consumption,

sexuality, and globalization within the tapestry of *Cosmopolis* signals us to engage in a profound examination of the effects of residing in a realm dominated by simulations and facsimiles. The exploration we have undertaken urges us to introspect, to forge connections that spring from authenticity to counter the seductive magnetism of hyperreality and the complicated intricacies of postmodern life.

Conclusion

Eric Packer's life, subjugated by technology and financial power, mirrors thoughtful estrangement from authentic human connection. His transactional sexual encounters and commodified relationships portray the hyperreal site of postmodern, post-industrial society. The hyperreal nature of these sexual transactions signifies the commodification of human experience, where even the most intimate aspects of life are subsumed by the logic of exchange and spectacle this technological obsession, governs both his professional and personal life. Packer's life, as seen through the dark windows of his limo screens, exposes the emptiness of a world governed by electronic transactions and technological advancement. The "artificial world" of hyperreality becomes his reality, where numbers, codes, and financial power substitute for genuine human experiences. The hyperreal nature of these sexual transactions signifies the ultimate commodification of human experience in society, where even the most intimate aspects of life are subsumed by the logic of exchange and spectacle.

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