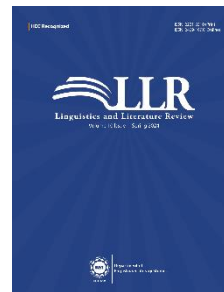
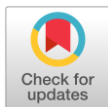


Linguistics and Literature Review (LLR)

Volume 12 Issue 1, Spring 2026

ISSN(P): 2221-6510, ISSN(E): 2409-109X

Homepage: <http://journals.umt.edu.pk/llr/Home.aspx>



Title: **Capitalism, New Materialism, and Posthumanism in Don DeLillo's *Cosmopolis***

Author (s): Syeda Saba Zahra¹ and Aamir Aziz²


Affiliation (s): ¹Eberhard Karls University, Tübingen, Germany
²University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32350/llr.121.01>

History: Received: July 14, 2024, Revised: July 29, 2024, Accepted: November 28, 2024, Published: 16 June 2026

Citation: Zahra, S. S., & Aziz, A. (2026). Capitalism, new materialism, and posthumanism in Don DeLillo's *Cosmopolis*. *Linguistics and Literature Review*, 12(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.32350/llr.121.01>

Copyright: © The Authors

Licensing:  This article is open access and is distributed under the terms of [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

Conflict of Interest: Author(s) declared no conflict of interest



A publication of
Department of English and Literary Studies, School of Liberal Arts,
University of Management and Technology Lahore, Pakistan

Capitalism, New Materialism, and Posthumanism in Don DeLillo's *Cosmopolis*

Syeda Saba Zahra¹  and Aamir Aziz^{2*} 

¹Eberhard Karls, University of Tuebingen, Germany

² University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan

Abstract

This research paper attempts to explore the questions that are raised when posthumanism and new materialism engage with feminist, anti-capitalist, anti-racist, and trans-activist strands using Don DeLillo's *Cosmopolis*. Posthumanism compels us to rethink and redefine our understanding of the term humanism. According to humanism what distinguishes human beings from machines, animals and other non-human entities is that human beings occupy a natural space, they are exceptional, central and essential to the world. Posthumanism disagrees with this notion and challenges man's authority as the privileged being in the world. Althusser wrote in *For Marx* that "the myth of Man is reduced to ashes by the mature science of historical materialism" (Althusser, 1996, p. 229). Posthumanism argues that the human being of twenty first century is no different from animals, machines and other non-human entities. This paper also explores the aspects of capitalism and anti-capitalism in DeLillo's *Cosmopolis* (2003) with the help of Karl Marx's remarks in *Das Kapital* chapter 10, "The Working-Day" and his pamphlet 1848 *The Communist Manifesto*. Technological advancement, and science have turned human beings into mere machines struggling for a future that overshadows their present. Constant fear of an unpredictable future gives birth to existentialist crisis and the protagonist of the *Cosmopolis* suffers from sleeplessness, wariness, boredom and extreme loneliness.

Keywords: animals, ecology, existentialism, feminism, machines, new materialism, politics, posthumanism, science

Introduction

In DeLillo's *Cosmopolis*, the characters are threatened by an unpredictable future that continually interrupts their present life. In a capitalist society where science and technology have advanced to the extent that human

*Corresponding Author: aamir.english@pu.edu.pk

beings have lost their essence and have become mere machines, the protagonist of the novel, Eric Paker, suffers from an existentialist crisis. He is a successful businessman with heaps of money in his pocket, but he is sleepless at nights, although he is married, he is lonesome to the extent that he is unable to recognize his own wife in the midst of a crowd. He says, “But there are times when I want to rub myself against a door or wall, for the sympathetic contact” (DeLillo, [2003](#), p. 25). This shows Eric’s extreme loneliness in a society where, although he is surrounded by people, he expects the inanimate objects to sympathize with him.

Posthumanists believe that human beings have lost their centrality in this world and are no longer different from machines, animals and other non-humans. Badmington argues: “The human beings are the products of historical and cultural differences that invalidate any appeal to a universal, transhistorical human essence; are constituted as subjects by a linguistics system that pre-exists and transcends them; and are unable to direct the course of world history towards a uniquely human goal” (Badmington, [2011](#), p. 374). Post humanists reject and challenge the myth of humanism because of the rise in capitalism and the advancement in science and technology, as Althusser, for instance, says that “the myth of Man is reduced to ashes” (Althusser, [1996](#), p. 229).

There is a continuous urge in human beings of the twenty first century to secure their unpredictable future, to save and conserve for the time to come. Human beings are in a never-ending struggle to make living ‘sustainable’. They are so busy worrying about their future needs that they even forget to worry about their present. Present has become something that does not exist; what needs security is the impending fearsome future. The one who is politically strong deprives the powerless of resources. Stacy Alaimo argues that “The frenzy in the United States to conserve at the turn of the twentieth century was in part driven by the desire to mark the country’s resources as belonging to some groups and not others, as waves of immigrants came ashore” (Alaimo, [2010](#), p. 559).

Research Aim

The research aims to examine the intra-actions between human bodies (Packer's sleeplessness, the rat's presence, the protestor's body) and non-human entities (technology, money/capital as 'rat,' the limousine, and the city itself). The analysis thus moves beyond a purely thematic interpretation

of capitalism to examine how capitalist power structures are materially enacted and challenged through the text's socio-material tropes and dynamics.

Research Methodology

This study is based upon a research methodology which employs critical theoretical analysis, borrowing insights from the fields of Posthumanism and New Materialism to close read and analyze Don DeLillo's novel *Cosmopolis* (2003). The pivot of this approach is a close reading of the novel's form, rhetoric, and thematic schemes, with a specific focus on the concepts of matter/mattering, non-human agency, and socio-material entanglements. The research utilizes Posthumanist theories, for instance Rosi Braidotti's critical posthumanism, to challenge the novel's inherent modern humanist assumptions about the individual subject, particularly the 'Man' of global finance, Eric Packer. At the same time, the study also deploys a New Materialist perspective, for instance, Karen Barad's 'agential realism' or Jane Bennett's 'vibrant matter' to argue that things emerge through their intra-action with one another, and also to shift the focus from human experience of things to things themselves respectively to emphasize their shared vital materiality.

In DeLillo's *Cosmopolis*, the reader witnesses the anti-capitalist protest in a busy street of Manhattan where the incident of a man's burning himself shocks the protagonist of the novel. Capitalism steals away the rights of labors to live. Marx says in "The Working-Day", "It usurps the time for growth, development, and healthy maintenance of the body. It steals the time required for the consumption of fresh air and sunlight" (Marx & Engels, 2010, p. 672), it creates emotionless and soulless machines. In DeLillo's novel, capitalism has made people forget about eternity, they have begun to think in "measurable hours" in order to use labor-power more efficiently.

Previous scholarship on *Cosmopolis* is majorly focused upon its emphasis upon the postmodern sensibilities of the text, its critique of global financial capitalism, and its prophetic commentary on hyperreality and technology which is manifest with more rigor and clarity two decades after the first publication of this novel. However, while the novel's engagement with the *posthuman condition* is widely acknowledged, the critical link between New Materialism and Capitalism remains less-developed.

Literature as a discipline, besides various other aspects, often treats implications of capital, technology, and the environment as separate *themes* or *settings*; however, this study is an attempt to examine and situate them as active, material agents which is a core tenet of New Materialism as a theoretical framework. This research addresses this gap by arguing that *Cosmopolis* is not simply a postmodern allegory of detachment, but a New Materialist narrative that formally and thematically stages the violent intra-action between Eric Packer's decaying human body and the non-human vitality of the capitalist and technological assemblages.

This paper also tends to explore the need to develop a “new theory of time” in *Cosmopolis*, “Time is a thing that grows scarcer every day” (DeLillo, [2003](#), p. 30). Advancement in science and technology has transformed the universally accepted definition of time and space in the twenty first century. Human beings in the previous times used to think of time in three possibilities i.e. past, present and future, but new technology in the present century has limited and conditioned our notion of time. There is no past; the present is almost non-existent and the sword of “unknown futures” is hanging over post humanity. In *Waiting for Godot* ([2011](#)) and *Endgame* ([2016](#)) by Beckett, the characters are imprisoned in a world where time and space do not change, there is useless repetition of language and their condition remains the same i.e. miserable and pathetic. The characters are waiting for something or someone to come and rescue them out of their misery and helplessness, there is a hope that they will be saved in the time to come i.e. future.

Analysis and Discussion

The terms ‘Humanism’ and ‘Posthumanism’ cannot be studied separately, these two terms must be studied together in order to develop a clear and better understanding. Neil Badmington *has* highlighted a vivid contrast between humanism and posthumanism. He defines humanism in the light of Rene Descartes’ *Discourse on the Method*,

The human being occupies a natural and eternal place at the very center of things, where it is distinguished absolutely from machines, animals, and other inhuman entities; where it shares with all other human beings a unique essence; where it is the origin of meaning and the sovereign subject of history; and where it behaves and believes according to something called “human nature”. In the

humanist account, human beings are exceptional, autonomous, and set above the world that lies at their feet. (Badmington, [2011](#), p. 374)

In contrast to humanism, he brings in posthumanism, a term that:

emerges from a recognition that ‘Man’ is not the privileged and protected center, because humans are no longer—and perhaps never were—utterly distinct from animals, machines, and other forms of the ‘inhuman’; are the products of historical and cultural differences that invalidate any appeal to a universal, transhistorical human essence; are constituted as subjects by a linguistic system that pre-exists and transcends them; and are unable to direct the course of world history towards a uniquely human goal. (Badmington, [2011](#), p. 374)

He further goes on to say that posthumanism arises from the “impossibility of humanism” (Badmington, [2011](#), p. 374). Human beings living in twenty first century have surpassed the level of humanism and now they live in the era of posthumanism where they are not what they were before.

Stacy Alaimo begins her article “Sustainable This, Sustainable That: New Materialisms, Posthumanism, and Unknown Futures” by quoting Jorie Graham, “mornings in the unknown future. Who shall repair this now. And how the future takes shape too quickly. The permanent is ebbing, is leaving” (Graham, [2008](#)). The idea of sustainability and permanence is in itself flawed as Grady claims “That nothing stays the same is the very basis of history and evolution theory (O’Grady, [2003](#), p. 3). Alaimo has also argued that twentieth century human beings are busy “conserving this, conserving that”. Capitalism and modernism have turned human beings into blind soulless machines who are busy conserving resources for an unknown future rather than devoting their energies and attention to the present. Those who are in power conserve for their own privileges, depriving the powerless of the resources that they need for their present use. Furthermore, Alaimo goes on to argue that climate change movements have already excluded animals and other non-human entities from the so called “universal space”.

Maria Fernandez in her article “Posthumanism, New Materialism and Feminist Media Art” gives Hayle’s definition of posthumanism, “Katherine Hayles ([2010](#)) explains posthumanism as the deconstruction of the humanist subject and the attributes normally associated with it such as free will, self-

determination and mastery” (Fernandez, [2016](#), p. 275). An unknown future awaits human beings where they will be turned into machines, and human mind will work as ‘pure data.’ Posthumanism shares some of the aspects of new materialism as it deals with the interrelations between biological, technological, human action, social and environmental processes. Fernandez further goes on to say that “New materialists argue for complex entanglements of chemical, biological, geological, social and cultural processes that shape both organisms and environments” (Fernandez, [2016](#), p. 276). The goal of new materialists is to find out the ways in which matters ‘consolidate or disrupt the power relations.

Posthumanism has detached us from our natural capabilities and our experience of self. Our consciousness is socially constructed. In the introduction to his book *Globalization and the Posthuman*, Haney II writes that “Posthumanism refers to the human-technology symbiosis. Many people, especially scientists, see the biology-machine interface as a positive development, but many also fear the possibility of its irreversibly damaging and possibly catastrophic effects on the human condition, particularly from invasive technologies” (Haney, [2009](#), p. 2). On the one hand, no matter how much progress in science and technology has been made, human beings have to return to their human self to sleep, eat, and talk. On the other hand, machines do not need sleep, eat, or need a companion to share their happiness and sorrows with.

Braidotti concludes her article “Posthuman, All too Human: Towards a New Process Ontology” by saying that a “modest witness” accepts the techno-present “without falling victim to its brutality; yearning for knowledge and depth in a fast moving infotainment-consuming culture” (Braidotti, [2006](#), p. 16). The twenty first century human beings should benefit themselves from the advancement in technology but at the same time, they should not let modernity, capitalism, new materialism, and posthumanism turn them into non-human entities. Little deeds of humanity, interaction with nature, self-recognition, and soul searching are the basic necessities that can keep our human spirit intact and alive. Braidotti furthermore says that the refusal of “hegemonic positions” in this techno-present world is possible by “modesty” and a “strong imagination”.

Similarly, an alternative ontological bond is proposed by Donna Haraway when she sees kinship between the humans and the laboratory animals that are sacrificed during experiments. The oncomouse is the “techno-body” that

has been used in laboratories for experiments regarding breast cancer. Haraway is a posthumanist who believes that she has a sort of kinship with this “transgenic animal”. She develops her association with the animal by calling her “my sibling (...) male or female, s/he is my sister” (Haraway, [2010](#), p. 79). Haraway claims that this transgenic animal is a Christ like figure who sacrifices him/herself for the cure of breast cancer and saves the precious lives of women. Many other animals are used as laboratory devices on which scientific experiments are done in order to find cures and save human beings from various diseases. According to posthumanists, these transgenic devices are not different from human beings; they sacrifice themselves for the welfare of human beings.

Haraway in her book *Simians, Cyborgs and Women* talks about the position and stability of women under the shadow of capitalist patriarchy. Haraway argues that advancement in technology and science has benefitted white patriarchy, but women have faced marginalization and disappeared from the field of “visible social agents”. White patriarchy has eaten away women like cannibals. Haraway’s cyborg creates awareness in the mind of the readers about the new technological societies being shaped that highlight the “issues of gender and sexual differences” and discusses the issues of social injustice and survival. Twenty first century is an age of informatics and it has given birth to the questions of power relations, feminist power-struggle, and political and ethical resistance.

Although Eric Parker is a successful businessman but he suffers from existentialist crisis, “sleep failed him”, “there was no friend he loved enough”, “a matter of silences, not words” (DeLillo, [2003](#), p. 1). He is a married man but lonesome to the degree that he is unable to recognize his own wife in the midst of a crowd. He says, “But there are times when I want to rub myself against a door or wall, for the sympathetic contact” (DeLillo, [2003](#), p. 25). This statement proves his extreme loneliness in a capitalist society where there are emotionless machines in the garb of human beings; he expects sympathy from inanimate objects. Eric reminds his wife that “We’re people in the world. We need to eat and talk” (DeLillo, [2003](#), p. 29). His subject position, as Ajitabh Hazarika argues, is endlessly reified due to his proximity to a nexus of cybernetic interfaces (23). And his corporeal body is reconfigured in a machinic materiality of the lived spaces of a post-urban architecture of Wall Street (Hazarika, [2024](#), p. 23). Eric’s fate in the novel is a cautionary tale of the postmodern man’s misguided faith in the

transcendental potential of technology, and transhuman delusion through technological sublime (Butler, [2025](#), p. 1). In a capitalist society, a person cannot exist on his own, his existence and reality are dependent on other people, how people see him becomes his sole reality.

It is what people think they see in another person that makes his reality. If they think he walks at a slant, then he walks at a slant, uncoordinated, because of this is his role in the lives around him, and if they say his clothes don't fit, he will learn to be neglectful of his wardrobe as a means of scorning them and inflicting punishment on himself. (DeLillo, [2003](#), p. 25)

In punishing other people, he inflicts pain and punishment upon himself. It is not possible to please everybody in this world, neither is it necessary to do so.

Posthumanists argue that man has lost his essence and he is no more the centre of this universe or perhaps he never was. Althusser in his book *For Marx* writes that “the myth of Man is reduced to ashes” because of the advancement in science and technology (Althusser, [1996](#), p. 229). Donna Haraway has not used the terms “posthumanism”, “posthumanist” or “posthuman” in her “A manifesto for cyborgs: science, technology, and socialist feminism in the 1980's”, but she has presented her argument on how human being has transformed into a “hybrid cyborg”. Badmington states “Humanism, Haraway noted, has always relied upon form and fierce distinctions between human and animal, organism and machine, and physical and non-physical” (Badmington, [2011](#), p. 376) but science, technology, capitalism, feminism and other related studies have challenged and shaken the imagined castle of “humanism”. Haraway further wrote that “we are cyborgs. The cyborg is our ontology, it gives us our politics” (Haraway, [1985](#), p. 66).

According to Marx and Engels, capitalism produces “its own grave-diggers” (DeLillo, [2003](#), p. 39), Eric witnesses the anti-capitalist protest in a busy street of Manhattan. “This is a protest against the future. They want to hold off the future. They want to normalize it, keep it from overwhelming the present” (DeLillo, [2003](#), p. 39). We live in a techno-scientific capitalist world where there are no human beings anymore but machines living in fear and struggling for unknown futures. The unknown future is like a dark shadow that darkens the present, making its existence doubtful, people of

twenty first century are obsessed with the idea of the future and the reason behind this obsession is given by one of the characters in DeLillo's novel, "The future is always a wholeness, a sameness. We're tall and happy in future. This is why the future fails. It always fails. It can never be the cruel happy place we want to make it" (DeLillo, [2003](#), p. 40).

Eric says, "Time is a thing that grows scarcer every day" (DeLillo, [2003](#), p. 30). Advancement in science, technology and the rise of capitalism has transformed the universally accepted notion of time and space in the twenty first century. Human beings in the earlier centuries used to think of time in three entities i.e., past, present and future, but progress and new technology has limited and conditioned our notion of time. There is no past because capitalists believe that "power works best when there's no memory attached" (DeLillo, [2003](#), p. 79), present is almost non-existent and the sword of "unknown futures" is hanging over posthumanity. In the novel, Eric Packer's desire to "to live on a disc" or a chip (DeLillo, [2003](#), p. 105) reflects this very quest to achieve digital immortality and freedom from his mortal physical existence with soft tissues over his bones and consequent limitations of aging, illness and death. Karen Barad's idea of agential realism once again becomes very relevant here. Packer has a cartesian fantasy to imagine his life based upon mind (data) without body (meat). Barad however would see Eric rely on 'interaction' between two different things i.e. man and technology to contest with her idea of 'intra-action' to state that man-machine symbiosis is an emergent new material entanglement that would involve a shared intra-action between biological cells, oxygen, silicon, environment and the material economic objects outside the living human temporalities (Murriss & Bozalek, [2022](#), p. 7). Eric, in this novel, is an embodiment of this new temporal/special reality in America which, as Stuart Noble observes, is marked by simulation, hyper reality, time-space compression and ever-increasing speeds of change (Noble, [2008](#), p.59). For instance, in *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, the characters are imprisoned in an existentialist world where time and space do not change, there is useless repetition of language, similarly, Eric wants to write a novel of ten thousand pages but is discouraged when he realizes that he is "repeating himself" (DeLillo, [2003](#), p. 25). The characters are waiting for something or someone to come and rescue them from their misery and helplessness, there is a hope that the time to come i.e., the future, will save them.

Capitalism exploits powerless human beings, it believes in the myth of creativity through destruction, “the hallmark of capitalist thought. Enforced destruction. Old industries have to be harshly eliminated. New markets have to be forcibly claimed” (DeLillo, [2003](#), p. 40). Capitalism has developed the fear of unknown futures in human beings, people are struggling to save and secure whatever resources they can for the future, and they are least worried about their present. “Destroy the past, make the future” (DeLillo, [2003](#), p. 40), the past and the present are to be destroyed in order to make the future possible. In the midst of the anti-capitalist protest, Eric witnesses a protestor who burns himself; this incident disturbs him mentally and physically. He believes that the act of a man burning himself live is “such starkness and horror. This thing was outside its reach” (p. 44), the man’s act is beyond the reach of capitalism. Such an act cannot be hushed away or done away with by capitalism, but people around him contest with his ideas and say that such acts lack originality, these things cannot be taken seriously. These remarks infuriate Eric and he bursts out saying, “Does he have to be a Buddhist to be taken seriously? He did a serious thing. He took his life. Isn’t this what you have to do to show that you’re serious?” (DeLillo, [2003](#), p. 44). However, as Victor Li explains, in globalization, those times and subjects that cannot conform to its rationality of hyper productivity, accelerated tempo and future oriented temporality are (mis)translated as anachronistic, and are eventually othered, devalued, deemed obsolete and seem no longer to count (Li, [2016](#), p. 257).

Twenty first century is a world where suicides are not taken seriously because no one worries about things happening in the present, everybody is busy destroying his or her present in hope of a shadowed future. Eric is the only one who is disturbed and shocked by the horrible incident, he wonders and imagines “the man’s pain, his choice, the abysmal will he’d had to summon. He tried to imagine him in bed, this morning, staring sideways at a wall, thinking his way toward the moment. Did he have to go to store and buy a box of matches? He imagined a phone call to someone far away, a mother or lover” (DeLillo, [2003](#), p. 43). It seems like Eric has not lost the essence that makes us human, he thinks and feels for the victim of capitalism as a human being. He is surrounded by people who are emotionless machines, least concerned with other people’s pain and miseries, and their only concern is their own unknown futures.

Posthumanism has detached us from our natural capabilities and our experience of self, and our consciousness is socially constructed. Haney II has provided two perspectives on posthumanism in the introduction to his book *Globalization and the Posthuman* he writes, “Posthumanism refers to the human-technology symbiosis. Many people, especially scientists, see the biology-machine interface as a positive development, but many also fear the possibility of its irreversibly damaging and possibly catastrophic effects on human condition, particularly from invasive technologies” (Haney, [2009](#), p. 02). The techno-scientific world has advantages as well as disadvantages; it has given birth to countless phobias and fears in people. In *Cosmopolis*, DeLillo has brought to light the issue, pains, and damaging effects that technology and capitalism have created for everybody. Eric goes into a club where young people are dancing in an erotic manner and his friend Danko wonders why people at such a young age would need beer, he questions Eric “But what pain do they feel too young to buy beer?” (DeLillo, [2003](#), p. 54). In reply, Eric tells him that, “there’s pain enough for everybody now” (DeLillo, [2003](#), p. 54). Using Jane Bennet’s framework of vibrant matter, it becomes very obvious that Eric is one of the many competing human and nonhuman assemblages of forces in this novel. She would call the agency of the non-human materials ‘thing power’ (Bennett, [2020](#), p. 20). In the novel, they serve the purpose of actants which work as ‘assemblages’ or working-group in a shared collaboration between their human and non-human ontologies. Eric’s Limousine (a lively armored actant in an urban assemblage), digital data, the fading vitality of Eric’s body after his prostate problem, trash and anticapitalistic protest outside, The Yen and the evolving dynamics of the market, the buzz of the urban space etc. are some of the symptoms which are enough to break the digital bubble to force Eric to acknowledge the intensity of non-human things outside the screen. All of them provide a dense swarm of competing materialities. French theorist Jean-Francois Lyotard also argues that capitalism and advancement in technology can have a disastrous dehumanizing impact on human beings (Lyotard, [2010](#)).

Eric’s driver Ibrahim Hamadou has a history where he and his family members were tortured and oppressed for religion, clan-hatred or politics. Ibrahim is a “victim of rooted violence”, he does not feel comfortable to communicate or share his history of torture with Eric or anybody else because he believes that they are strangers, “who will nod and forget, this must seem a betrayal of his pain” (DeLillo, [2003](#), p. 7), this confirms that

Ibrahim has been a victim of racism and filthy politics. Although Ibrahim does not feel appropriate to live through the same pain again but Eric remembers how Ibrahim was tortured and beaten by “an army coup. Or the secret police. Or they thought they’d executed you. Fired a shot in your face. Left you for dead. Or the rebels. Overrunning the capital” (DeLillo, [2003](#), p. 72). Eric brings Ibrahim’s painful history to life, this perturbs Ibrahim and he looks wary and seems to have lost his sense of belonging.

DeLillo has presented a contrast between people who belong to the American culture and other people who live in America but belong to another culture. DeLillo represents Edward Said’s theory of “us” and “them.” In an American society, people from another culture are acceptable only as “fanatics” belonging to “fanatical tropics”, they seem interesting to American people because they belong to a backward and remote culture. Eric says

You’d accept the way I think and act if I came from another culture. If I were a pygmy dictator or a cocaine warlord. Someone from the fanatical tropics. You’d love it, wouldn’t you? You’d cherish the excess, the monomania. Such people cause a delicious stir in other people. People such as you. But there has to be a separation. If they look and smell like you, it gets confusing. (DeLillo, [2003](#), p. 11)

In this capitalist techno-scientific world, the powerful have forgotten to see the powerless as human beings, rather they have associated colors, races, and religion to define their identities and recognize them. Capitalism steals away the rights of labors to live, Marx says in “The Working-Day”, “It usurps the time for growth, development, and healthy maintenance of the body. It steals the time required for the consumption of fresh air and sunlight” (Marx & Engels, [2010](#), p. 672), it creates emotionless and soulless machines. In DeLillo’s novel, capitalism has made people forget about eternity, they have begun to think in “measurable hours” in order to use labor-power more efficiently.

Haraway in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women* talks about the status of position and endangered stability of women under the shadow of capitalism patriarchy (Haraway, [1991](#)). Likewise, DeLillo has highlighted feminist issues and feminist struggle to survive in a capitalist techno scientific world, Elise says she took up smoking when she was fifteen. “It’s one of those things a girl takes up. It tells her she’s more than a skinny body no one looks

at” (DeLillo, [2003](#), p. 50). Haraway’s cyborg creates awareness about the new technological societies that are being shaped, and highlight the “issues of gender and sexual differences” (Haraway, [1985](#)). Another female character in *Cosmopolis* argues, “Never mind what women think. We’re too small and real to matter here” (DeLillo, [2003](#), p. 46), this statement proves the disappearance of women from the field of visible social agents and the disastrous circumstances that capitalism has created for women. Haraway argues that the cyborg has been created by “material and patriarchal capitalism” (Haraway, [1985](#), p. 68), and from “one perspective, a cyborg world is about the final imposition of a grid of control on the planet, about the final abstraction embodied in a Star Wars apocalypse waged in the name of defense, about the final appropriation of women’s bodies in a masculinist orgy of war” (Haraway, [1985](#), p. 72).

Twenty first century is an age of informatics and it has given birth to the issues of power relations, feminist power-struggle, and political and ethical resistance. Modernity, capitalism, technology, and science have given birth to existentialist crisis and unknown phobias. Capitalism has turned human beings into blind soulless machines that are busy conserving resources for an unknown future rather than devoting their attention and energies to their present. Those who are in power conserve for their own privileges depriving the powerless of the resources that they need for their present use. In other words, as Nicole M. Merola states, Don DeLillo rescripts Marx’s concept of alienation for the contemporary age illustrating how postmodern cyberlabor estranges its workers from themselves, their fellow workers and the natural and built world (Merola, [2012](#), p. 830). On the one hand, no matter how much progress in technology has been made, human beings are still different from machines, because they have to return to their human self to sleep, eat and talk. On the other hand, machines do not need sleep, food or a companion to share their sorrows or happiness. Braidotti suggests human beings of twenty first century to accept the techno-present as modest witnesses, “without falling victim to its brutality” (Braidotti, [2006](#), p. 16). Small deeds of humanity, self-recognition, interaction with nature and soul searching are the basic necessities that can keep us from becoming posthuman beings.

Author Contribution

Aamir Aziz: Writing – review & editing. **Syeda Saba Zahra:** writing – original draft.

Conflict of Interest

The authors of the manuscript have no financial or non-financial conflict of interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

Data Availability Statement

Data availability is not applicable as no new data was collected.

Funding Details

No funding has been received for this research.

Generative AI Disclosure Statement

The authors did not use any type of generative artificial intelligence software for this research.

References

- Alaimo, S. (2010). *Bodily natures: Science, environment, and the material self*. Indiana University Press.
- Althusser, L. (1996). *For Marx* (B. Brewster, Trans.). Verso.
- Badmington, Neil. (2011). Posthumanism. In *The Routledge companion to literature and science*. Routledge.
- Beckett, S. (2011). *Waiting for Godot*. Grove Atlantic.
- Beckett, S. (2016). *Endgame*. Brightsummaries.com.
- Braidotti, R. (2006). Posthuman, all too human: Towards a new process ontology. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 23(7–8), 197–208. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276406069232>
- Butler, P. J. (2025). Don DeLillo's *cosmopolis*: The transhuman delusion. *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, 67(1):1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00111619.2025.2486358>
- DeLillo, D. (2003). *Cosmopolis*. Scribner.
- Fernandez, M. (2016, 16–22 May). *Posthumanism, new materialism and feminist media art* [Paper presentation]. 22nd International Symposium on Electronic Art, Hong Kong.
- Graham, J. (2008). Sea change. In *Sea change*. Harper Collins.
- Haney, W. S., II. (2009). *Globalization and the posthuman*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Haraway, D. J. (1985). A manifesto for cyborgs: Science, technology, and socialist feminism in the 1980s. *Socialist Review*, 80, 65–107.

- Haraway, D. J. (1991). *Simians, cyborgs, and women: The re-invention of nature*. Routledge.
- Haraway, D. J. (2010). Socialist feminism in the 1980s. In V. B. Leitch, W. E. Cain, L. A. Finke, J. McGowan, & T. D. Sharpley-Whiting (Eds.), *The Norton anthology of theory and criticism*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Hayles, N. K. (2010). How we became posthuman: Virtual bodies in cybernetics, literature, and informatics. In V. B. Leitch, W. E. Cain, L. A. Finke, J. McGowan, & T. D. Sharpley-Whiting (Eds.), *The Norton anthology of theory and criticism*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Hazarika, A. (2024). The city eats and sleeps noise: Don DeLillo's *Cosmopolis* and the contours of entangled corporeality. *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, 65(1), 22–32. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00111619.2022.2142086>
- Li, V. (2016). The untimely in globalization's time: Don DeLillo's *Cosmopolis*. *Globalizations*, 13(3), 256–269. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2015.1056493>
- Liotard, J.-F. (2010). Defining the postmodern. In *The Norton anthology of theory and criticism*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Marx, K., & Engels, F. (2010). The working-day. In V. B. Leitch, W. E. Cain, L. A. Finke, J. McGowan, & T. D. Sharpley-Whiting (Eds.), *The Norton anthology of theory and criticism*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Merola, N. M. (2012). *Cosmopolis*: Don DeLillo's melancholy political ecology. *American Literature*, 84(4), 827–853. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00029831-1901454>
- Morris, K., & Bozalek, V. (Eds.). (2022). *In conversation with Karen Barad: Doings of agential realism*. Taylor & Francis.
- Noble, S. (2008). Don DeLillo and society's reorientation to time and space: An interpretation of *Cosmopolis*. *Aspeers*, 1, 57–70. <https://doi.org/10.54465/aspeers.01-06>
- O'Grady, J. P. (2003). How sustainable is the idea of sustainability? *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, 10(1), 1–10.