

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific
Research
Hamma Lakhdar University of El Oued
Faculty of Arts and Languages
Department of Arts and English
Language



The Representation of the City in Don DeLillo Underworld

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for Master's Degree in Literature and Civilization

Submitted by Supervised by:

Abdelghafour Tellab Dr. Hassiba Soufli

Salaheddine Anane

Board of Examiners:

Dr. Said Terek President University of El-Oued

Dr. Hassiba Soufli Supervisor University of El-Oued

Dr. Djeribai Adel Examiner University of El-Oued

Academic Year: 2024/2025

Dedication

With great honor, we hold the pen to write these words and dedicate this modest dissertation to our lovely families for their encouragement and help.

We also dedicate this work to all who have helped finish this dissertation, and to our best friends who have supported us.

Acknowledgements

First of all, all the praises to Allah and peace to our prophet Mohamed peace be upon him.

With great honor, we are thankful to our lovely supervisor: Dr.Soufli Hassiba for her help and guidance.

Finally, We are grateful to all our teachers at The University of Hamma Lakhdar our thanks and appreciation for your effort and help.

Abstract

This dissertation investigates Don DeLillo's representation of the city in *Underworld*, analyzing how urban landscapes shape and reflect the social, cultural, and psychological dimensions of late twentieth-century American life. Using a qualitative and analytical approach grounded in postmodern urban theory and literary criticism, the study examines DeLillo's portrayal of New York City and other urban spaces as complex, multidimensional environments that mirror the fragmentation, alienation, and interconnection of modern existence. The research involved a close reading of the novel's key urban scenes, characters, and historical context, focusing on how DeLillo uses the city as both a physical setting and a symbolic construct. The findings reveal that *Underworld* presents the city as a living organism—marked by tension between progress and decay, memory and erasure, individuality and collectivity. It also demonstrates that DeLillo uses urban imagery to critique consumerism, technological domination, and the loss of authentic human connection in a media-saturated society. Overall, the study concludes that DeLillo's *Underworld* redefines the American city as a postmodern space where identity, history, and culture intersect—transforming urban life into a mirror of America's moral and existential condition.

Keywords: Don DeLillo, *Underworld*, urban representation, postmodernism, identity, memory, technology, consumer culture, New York City.

Table of Contents

[Dedication](#)I

[Acknowledgements](#)II

[Abstract](#)III

[Table of Contents](#)IV

[General Introduction](#)1

[Chapter one: The City in American Literature \(Especially Postmodern Literature\)](#)3

[Chapter One: The City in American Literature \(Especially Postmodern Literature\)](#)4

[Introduction](#)7

[1- The Representation of the City in American Literature](#)7

[1-1 Defining the City](#)8

[1-2 Urban Narratives from the Colonial Era to Modernism](#)8

[1-2.1 The Colonial Period \(1600-1776\)](#).9

[1-2.2 The First National Period \(1776-1820s\)](#).9

[1-2.3 Romanticism \(1820-1860s\)](#).10

[1-2.4 Naturalism \(1860s-1900s\)](#).11

[1-2.5 Modernism \(1900-1940s\)](#).12

[1-3 Topics and Development](#)14

[1-3.1 Community and Isolation](#):14

[1-3.2 Economic Opportunity and Inequality](#):14

[1-3.3 Ethical and Moral Dilemmas](#):15

[1-3.4 Multiculturalism](#) :15

[1-4 Urban Life and Literary Expressions Before the Postmodern Turn](#)15

[1-4.1 Colonialism and the Early State Period \(1600-1820s\)](#).15

[1-4.2 Realism and the City](#):16

[1-4.3 Naturalism and the City](#):16

[2 Modernism and the City](#):16

[2-1 Urban Identity and Culture Before Postmodernism](#)17

[2-1.1 The Rise of Urban Identity](#):17

[2-2 Urban Culture and Modernity](#):18

[2-3 Social Class and Urban Stratification](#):18

[3 Cultural Diversity and the Immigrant Experience](#):19

[3-1 The City as a Site of Cultural Production](#):19

[4 Issues And Developments In Urban Identity Culture](#)19

[4-1.1 Class and Economic Inequality](#):20

[4-1.2 The Immigrant Experience and Cultural Diversity](#):20

[4-1.3 Gender and the Urban Experience](#):20

[4-1.4 Modernity, Alienation, and Fragmentation](#):21

[4-1.5 Race and the City](#):21

[4-1.6 The Rise of Mass Culture](#):22

[5 The Representation of the City in Postmodern American Literature](#)22

[5-1 Fragmentation and the Loss of a Unified Urban Identity](#):23

[5-2 The City as a Hyper-real Space](#):23

[5-3 Consumerism, Capitalism, and the Postmodern City](#):23

[5-4 Globalization and the City as a Site of Multiplicity](#):24

[5-4.1 Alienation and Disconnection in the Urban Environment](#):24

[5-4.2 Urban Violence and the Breakdown of Social Order](#):25

[5-5 Topics and Research](#):25

[5-5.1 Character and hospitality](#):25

[5-5.2 Fact vs. Reviews](#):26

[5-5.3 Story Breakdown](#):26

[5-5.4 A Critique of Consumer Culture](#):26

[5-6 Cityscapes in the Age of Postmodernism](#):26

[5-6.1 Characteristics of Postmodern Cities](#):27

[5-6.1.1 Surrealism](#):27

[5-6.1.2 Quantity and Variety](#):28

[5-6.1.3 Irony and Play](#):28

[5-6.1.4 Depression and Alienation](#):29

[6 Main Jobs are Secretaries](#):29

[6-2 Don DeLillo's White Noise \(1985\)](#):30

[6-3 Bret Easton Ellis' American Psycho \(1991\)](#):30

[6-4 Paul Auster's City of Glass \(1985\)](#):30

[6-5 David Foster Wallace's Infinite Jest \(1996\)](#):30

[6-6 Mark Z. Danielewski's House of Leaves \(2000\)](#):31

[7 Urban Chaos and Literary Innovation](#):31

[7-1 Signs of Urban Violence in Postmodern Literature](#):31

[7-1.1 Intertextuality](#):32

[7-1.2 Land](#):32

[7-1.3 Surrealism](#):32

[7-1.4 Humor and Irony](#):33

[8 Postmodern Urban Identities](#):33

[8-1 Fragmentation of Identity](#):34

[8-2 Alienation and Disconnection:34](#)

[9 The Influence of Capitalism and Consumerism:34](#)

[9-1 Multiplicity and Hybridity:35](#)

[9-2 Hyperreality and Media Influence:35](#)

[9-3 Cultural Diversity and Identity Negotiation:35](#)

[Conclusion:36](#)

[Chapter two:The Representation of the City in Don DeLillo's Underworld2](#)

[1.Introduction:42](#)

[2.Overview of Underworld and its Significance:42](#)

[3.Importance of the Urban Setting in the Novel:44](#)

[4.The City as a Symbol: 45](#)

[5.New York City as a Microcosm of America:46](#)

[5.1.Representation of Progress and Decay:46](#)

[5.2.Symbolic Meanings Attached to Urban Spaces:48](#)

[6.Other Cities in the Novel:49](#)

[6.1.Contrasts and Comparisons with New York City:50](#)

[6.2.Geographic Descriptions:52](#)

[6.3.Cinematic Approach to Urban Landscapes:53](#)

[6.4.Detailed Descriptions and Their Effects:53](#)

[7.Key Urban Scenes:55](#)

[7.1.The Polo Grounds Opening Scene:55](#)

[7.2.Other Significant Urban Settings:56](#)

[8.Characters and the City:57](#)

[8.1.The City as a Shaper of Identity: 58](#)

[8.2.The City as a Site of Memory:58](#)

[8.3.The City as a Social Arena:58](#)

[8.4.The City as a Mirror of Inner States:58](#)

[9.Influence of the City on Nick Shay's Relationship with Urban Spaces:58](#)

[9.1.The Bronx as the Locus of Memory and Trauma: 59](#)

[9.2.The City as a Mirror of Emotional States:59](#)

[9.3.Urban Anonymity and Isolation:59](#)

[9.4.The City as a Catalyst for Change:59](#)

9.5.The City as a Source of Nostalgia:	60
10.Urban Environments as Reflections of Internal States	60
10.1.Memory and Trauma:	60
10.2.Aspirations and Identity:	62
11.Migration and Mobility:	63
11.1.Depiction of Migration Across Cities	64
11.2.Economic and Personal Reasons for Mobility:	66
12.Fluidity of Identity in Urban Contexts:	67
12.1.Convergence and Dispersion of Lives:	69
13.Historical and Cultural Context:	71
14.Urban Transformation over Decades:	71
14.1.Cold War and Civil Rights Movement:	72
15.Integration of Cultural References:	74
15.1.Historical Events and Figures:	74
15.2.Popular Culture and Media:	74
15.3.Art and Literature:	74
15.4.Religion and Spirituality:	74
15.4.1.Enhancing Realism and Historical Context:	75
15.4.2.Deepening Thematic Exploration:	75
15.4.3.Creating Intertextual Connections:	75
15.4.4.Challenging and Engaging the Reader:	75
15.4.5.Art, Music, Sports, and Media:	76
16.Critical Analysis:	78
17.Urban literary theories:	78
17.1.The Systems Novel:	78
17.2.Postmodernism:	78
17.3.The City as Spectacle:	78
17.4.Psychoanalytic Theory:	79
17.5.Marxist Theory:	80
17.6.Capitalism and Consumerism:	80
17.7.Class Struggle and Social Inequality:	81
17.8.The Commodification of Culture and Art:	81

17.9.The Role of the Media:	81
17.10.The Cold War and Imperialism:	81
17.11.Cultural Criticism:	82
18.Comparison with other Literary Works	84
18.1.The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald:	85
19.Summary of the City's Representation in Underworld	87
19.1.Progress and Decay:	87
19.2.Memory and Trauma:	88
19.3.Identity and Belonging:	88
19.4.The Cold War and Social Change:	88
19.5.Consumerism and Spectacle:	88
20.Reflection on DeLillo's Critique of Modernity	88
20.1.The Erosion of the Real:	89
20.2.The Dominance of Consumer Culture:	89
20.3.The Anxieties of the Cold War	89
20.4.The Fragmentation of Identity and Community:	89
20.5.The Role of Art and Resistance:	90
21.Final Thoughts on the Urbanized Human Condition:	90

[Conclusion](#)91

[General Conclusion](#)92

[References](#)35

[ملخص](#)37

General Introduction

Background of the Study

The city has long been a central symbol in American literature, reflecting the dynamic socio-cultural, economic, and political changes of American society. From its early depictions in colonial literature to its fragmented portrayals in postmodern works, the city represents both opportunity and the challenges of modern life. Literary movements such as Romanticism, Realism, Naturalism, and Modernism each offered distinct views of urban life, which became more complex in postmodern works, like Don DeLillo's *Underworld*, where urban settings reflect deeper psychological, existential, and cultural concerns. This dissertation examines how the city has been represented in American literature, with a particular focus on postmodern literature, exploring its role in reflecting and critiquing American identity and urban experience.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to explore the evolving representation of the city in American literature, with an emphasis on postmodern works. By examining urban portrayals across literary periods—Colonialism, Romanticism, Realism, Naturalism, Modernism, and Postmodernism—the study highlights how the city is used to reflect societal changes, shape identities, and address broader historical shifts. Special attention is given to how postmodern texts, particularly *Underworld*, use urban spaces to explore themes like alienation, memory, migration, and social mobility.

Research Objectives

1. To trace the evolving portrayal of the city in American literature across key literary periods.
2. To analyze the role of urban settings in postmodern works and their reflection of the human experience.
3. To critically examine DeLillo's *Underworld* and its symbolic use of urban space.

Research Questions

1. How has the city been portrayed across different literary periods in American literature?
2. What role does the city play in postmodern works, and how does it function as a space of alienation and identity formation?
3. How does DeLillo's *Underworld* use the city as both a physical and symbolic space?

Research Hypotheses

1. The city's representation in American literature evolves alongside cultural and political shifts.
2. In postmodern works, the city symbolizes fragmentation and alienation, reflecting disintegrating identities.
3. Urban spaces in postmodern literature serve as metaphors for modern complexities like trauma, mobility, and cultural diversity.

Research Methodology

This study employs qualitative research methods, primarily using literary analysis and close reading of key texts. Textual analysis will focus on the symbolic and thematic representation of the city, while postmodern theories of space and identity will inform the discussion, particularly regarding *Underworld*. Secondary sources will also be used to provide theoretical and critical frameworks for understanding the city's role in American literature.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to a deeper understanding of how American literature, especially postmodern works, engages with urban life as a central theme. By examining the city's evolving representation, this research offers insights into how literature reflects and critiques urban experiences, identity, and modernity. Additionally, it highlights the continued relevance of urban spaces in exploring social, cultural, and psychological themes in contemporary literature.

Structure of the Study

This dissertation consists of two main chapters. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the city's representation in American literature, tracing its evolution from the Colonial period to Modernism and highlighting key literary movements such as Romanticism, Realism, and Modernism. It then focuses on the postmodern turn, examining how the city is depicted in works like DeLillo's *Underworld*, with particular attention to urban spaces as symbols of alienation and identity. Chapter 2 delves deeper into the case study of *Underworld*, analyzing the novel's portrayal of New York City as a microcosm of broader societal themes, including migration, memory, and social transformation.

Chapter one: The City in American Literature (Especially

Postmodern Literature).

Chapter One: The City in American Literature (Especially Postmodern Literature).

Introduction7

1- The Representation of the City in American Literature:7

1-1 Defining the City8

1-2 Urban Narratives from the Colonial Era to Modernism8

1-2.1 The Colonial Period (1600-1776).9

1-2.2 The First National Period (1776-1820s).9

1-2.3 Romanticism (1820-1860s).10

1-2.4 Naturalism (1860s-1900s).11

1-2.5 Modernism (1900-1940s).12

1-3 Topics and Development14

1-3.1 Community and Isolation:14

1-3.2 Economic Opportunity and Inequality:14

1-3.3 Ethical and Moral Dilemmas:15

1-3.4 Multiculturalism :15

1-4 Urban Life and Literary Expressions Before the Postmodern Turn:15

1-4.1 Colonialism and the Early State Period (1600-1820s).15

1-4.2 Realism and the City:16

1-4.3 Naturalism and the City:16

2 Modernism and the City:16

2-1 Urban Identity and Culture Before Postmodernism17

2-1.1 The Rise of Urban Identity:17

2-2 Urban Culture and Modernity:18

2-3 Social Class and Urban Stratification:18

3 Cultural Diversity and the Immigrant Experience:19

3-1 The City as a Site of Cultural Production:19

4 Issues And Developments In Urban Identity Culture19

4-1.1 Class and Economic Inequality:20

4-1.2 The Immigrant Experience and Cultural Diversity:20

4-1.3 Gender and the Urban Experience:	20
4-1.4 Modernity, Alienation, and Fragmentation:	21
4-1.5 Race and the City:	21
4-1.6 The Rise of Mass Culture:	22
5 The Representation of the City in Postmodern American Literature:	22
5-1 Fragmentation and the Loss of a Unified Urban Identity:	23
5-2 The City as a Hyper-real Space:	23
5-3 Consumerism, Capitalism, and the Postmodern City:	23
5-4 Globalization and the City as a Site of Multiplicity:	24
5-4.1 Alienation and Disconnection in the Urban Environment:	24
5-4.2 Urban Violence and the Breakdown of Social Order:	25
5-5 Topics and Research	25
5-5.1 Character and hospitality:	25
5-5.2 Fact vs. Reviews:	26
5-5.3 Story Breakdown:	26
5-5.4 A Critique of Consumer Culture:	26
5-6 Cityscapes in the Age of Postmodernism	26
5-6.1 Characteristics of Postmodern Cities	27
5-6.1.1 Surrealism:	27
5-6.1.2 Quantity and Variety:	28
5-6.1.3 Irony and Play:	28
5-6.1.4 Depression and Alienation:	29
6 Main Jobs are Secretaries	29
6-2 Don DeLillo's White Noise (1985):	30
6-3 Bret Easton Ellis' American Psycho (1991):	30
6-4 Paul Auster's City of Glass (1985):	30
6-5 David Foster Wallace's Infinite Jest (1996):	30
6-6 Mark Z. Danielewski's House of Leaves (2000):	31
7 Urban Chaos and Literary Innovation	31
7-1 Signs of Urban Violence in Postmodern Literature	31
7-1.1 Intertextuality:	32
7-1.2 Land:	32

7-1.3 Surrealism:	32
7-1.4 Humor and Irony:	33
8 Postmodern Urban Identities	33
8-1 Fragmentation of Identity:	34
8-2 Alienation and Disconnection:	34
9 The Influence of Capitalism and Consumerism:	34
9-1 Multiplicity and Hybridity:	35
9-2 Hyperreality and Media Influence:	35
9-3 Cultural Diversity and Identity Negotiation:	35
Conclusion:	36

Introduction

The representation of the city in American literature has played an important role in reflecting the nation's social, cultural, and political developments. Urban environments have been depicted as sites of opportunity and suffering throughout history, embodying the complexity of American identity. This chapter investigates the growth of the city in American literary history, specifically how metropolitan settings have been utilized to explore issues such as community versus isolation, economic injustice, and moral quandaries. The chapter examines works from several literary periods, including colonialism, Romanticism, Realism, and Modernism, to show how authors have used the city as a mirror for greater societal developments, with a focus on race, class, and multiculturalism. Ultimately, this chapter seeks to demonstrate how the city, as both a physical and symbolic space, has shaped American literature and continues to influence contemporary narratives (Sundquist, 1993).

1- The Representation of the City in American Literature:

"The Representation of the City in American Literature" investigates how urban settings have been portrayed in literary works throughout American history. The city, which is frequently depicted as a source of both opportunity and conflict, is a strong symbol of greater social, cultural, and economic processes. This portrayal captures the intricacies of American identity, from colonial villages to modern metropolises, including themes like community, solitude, and class strife. Through its literary portrayal, the city serves as a mirror through which to evaluate and comprehend the changing American experience (Lehan, 2003).

1-1 Defining the City

The definition of a city is inherently complex and should not be restricted to a singular, fixed interpretation, as it varies across time, location, culture, society, and economy. While some definitions reduce the concept of a city to a strictly lexical term, describing it as "an extensive built-up area where large numbers of people live and work," such a view construes the city merely as a geographical space defined by physical infrastructure. However, there is a general consensus that cities possess distinct characteristics that set them apart from towns and villages. Broadly, the city is understood as a densely populated area of considerable size, with conditions of life that are typically urban, contrasting with the rural lifestyle of the open countryside. Yet, even within this general understanding, the term "city" encompasses various meanings worldwide, with some urban settlements being relatively small. Even in contexts where the term is reserved for larger settlements, there is no universally accepted standard for the minimum size required to qualify as a city. More narrowly, a city may be defined as a permanent, densely populated area with administratively defined boundaries, where the majority of inhabitants engage in non-agricultural occupations. The difficulty in defining the city lies in its dual nature: it is both an imagined community, shaped by abstract concepts, and a material reality, shaped by tangible social and physical structures. In the context of North America, major cities carry specific cultural, social, and economic meanings for their residents and observers, further complicating a universal definition (Eade, 2002).

1-2 Urban Narratives from the Colonial Era to Modernism

The city has always occupied a special position amongst literary spaces. From the very earliest surviving literary texts, city images appear in all their contradictory complexity: as nodes of creative and destructive energy; as beacons of utopian possibility and of moral warning. In their literary emanations, cities tend to be understood through the notions of centrality and density, in implicit contrast to a (suburban, rural, colonial) hinterland or periphery.

Urban fiction in American literature developed exponentially from the colonial period to the modern, reflecting the nation's changing landscapes, cultural dynamics, and socioeconomic status. How urban themes were portrayed in those times here is a summary of the issues (Osteen, 2000).

1-2.1 The Colonial Period (1600-1776).

Early European settlers' religious, utilitarian, and exploratory motivations predominantly affected American literature throughout the Colonial Period (1600-1776). Much of the writing from this period concentrated on the difficulties of creating new colonies, the struggles for survival, and the moral and religious foundations of these early communities. During this time, writing was mostly for practical purposes, with sermons, diaries, historical reports, and religious tracts taking precedence. The most notable works of this era frequently represented the Puritan worldview, emphasizing themes of piety, providence, and the difficulties of colonial life. William Bradford, a significant character in

Colonial American literature, wrote *Of Plymouth Plantation*, a thorough narrative of the creation and development of Plymouth Colony that emphasized the residents' tenacity and religious commitment. Cotton Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana* was another significant work, chronicling the history of New England and the lives of its early religious leaders. This period's literature established the groundwork for the burgeoning American literary heritage by combining European literary tropes with the increasing realities of life in the New World. Through these works, early American authors addressed issues of identity, community, and the conflict between religious ideals and the realities of colonial life (Wright, 2002).

1-2.2 The First National Period (1776-1820s).

The First National Period (1776-1820s) of American literature is characterized by substantial transformations following the United States' declaration of independence and the establishment of a new nation. This time saw the formation of a distinct American literary voice, as writers began to investigate themes such as national identity, freedom, and the difficulties of establishing a new country. The literature of the time reflects the country's struggles to establish itself politically and culturally, as well as the conflicts between European influences and American ideals. During this time, literature began to turn away from the Colonial era's largely religious and utilitarian focus and toward works that highlighted democratic values, individualism, and exploration of the American terrain. Writers such as Thomas Paine, whose *Common Sense* advocated for independence, and Phillis Wheatley, one of the first African American poets to publish in the United States, helped to shape the emerging sense of American identity. Washington Irving's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, as well as Charles Brockden Brown's *Arthur Mervyn*, began to explore the intricacies of American life, including the effects of urbanization and the rise of new social and cultural realities. This era also witnessed the birth of the American Romantic movement, which emphasized the beauty of nature, the exploration of the imagination, and the elevation of personal experience. Authors like James Fenimore Cooper and William Cullen Bryant helped to shape the expanding body of American literature that attempted to define and celebrate the American experience. Overall, the First National Period was a watershed moment in American literature, signaling the shift from colonial influences to a more distinct and autonomous literary heritage (Wolcott, 1997).

1-2.3 Romanticism (1820-1860s).

The Romantic period in American literature (1820-1860s) was distinguished by a departure from Enlightenment rationalism in favor of a strong embrace of emotion, individualism, and nature appreciation. This age paralleled broader cultural movements that favored intuition over reason, the sublime over the mundane, and individual expression above societal rules. Romanticism in America was influenced by a developing feeling of national identity, exploration of American landscapes, and a revitalized interest in the mystical, supernatural, and imaginative capacity of the human mind. During this time,

writers frequently explored the conflict between nature and industrialization, portraying nature as a source of inspiration, peace, and spiritual insight. Key figures in American Romanticism, including Washington Irving, Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Herman Melville, used imaginative narrative to investigate the intricacies of human experience. Poe's writings, such as *The Fall of the House of Usher* and *The Tell-Tale Heart*, delved into psychological terror and the darker parts of human nature, whilst Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* criticized Puritanical New England's moral rigidity and societal pressures. In addition to these dark and contemplative themes, writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, important characters of American Transcendentalism, emphasized self-reliance, spiritual progress, and humanity's deep connection to the natural world. They advocated for the individual's direct interaction with nature and the value of living genuinely through writings like *Self-Reliance* and *Walden*. Romanticism also enabled the exploration of national identity through an idealized view of America's wilderness and frontier, as evidenced by works such as James Fenimore Cooper's *The Leatherstocking Tales*. This time was critical in the formation of an American literary canon, as it strayed from European literary traditions and strove to define what it meant to be an American in a quickly changing world. The Romantic age, with its emphasis on imagination, the sublime, and the individual, had a significant impact on future generations of American writers. (Burwick, 2010).

1-2.4 Naturalism (1860s-1900s).

The Realism and Naturalism periods in American literature (1860s-1900s) evolved as a reaction to the earlier Romantic era's idealized ideals, focusing instead on the harsh realities of everyday life, frequently emphasizing societal intricacies and regular people's problems. Following the Civil War, the United States experienced fast industrialization, urbanization, and social transformation, which was represented in these literary trends. Writers aimed to give a more truthful, unembellished picture of reality, tackling societal themes including poverty, class injustice, and the impact of the environment on human behavior. Realism, which dominated the late nineteenth century, aimed to show life as it genuinely existed, without romanticizing or idealizing it. Authors of this era sought to depict the intricacies of everyday life by focusing on characters from various social origins, particularly those in metropolitan environments. Henry James, who probed the complexities of social and psychological life in books such as *The Portrait of a Lady*, and Mark Twain, whose *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* criticized conventional standards while presenting an honest representation of race, class, and moral growth, were two prominent realism authors. Realists aimed to depict characters who were influenced by their surroundings and experiences, emphasizing individual choice and the implications of human acts in a social setting. Naturalism, which developed from Realism, took a more deterministic stance, motivated by the emergence of science and the notion of evolution. Naturalist writers thought that human conduct was heavily influenced by causes beyond one's control, such as inheritance, environment, and social circumstances. These writers frequently depicted persons who were stuck by poverty, brutality, or their own basic drives. Works like Stephen

Crane, such as *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, and Frank Norris, like McTeague's, depict characters caught in situations beyond their control, demonstrating the severe and often dehumanizing effects of urban life and socioeconomic inequity. Naturalism's emphasis on the darker parts of life aimed to demonstrate how the individual was frequently powerless against the forces of nature, society, and fate. Together, Realism and Naturalism provided a more critical, often gloomy, vision of the American experience, rejecting the idealized depictions of previous literary styles. They investigated the subtleties of human behavior, social structures, and the impact of the environment on individuals, resulting in a more nuanced and realistic depiction of life in America during a period of rapid change (Mewshaw, 1998).

1-2.5 Modernism (1900-1940s).

The Modernist period in American literature (1900-1940s) was distinguished by a radical departure from old forms and conventions, reflecting the major cultural, social, and technological transformations of the early twentieth century. Following World War I, the expansion of industrialization, and the emergence of new artistic movements, Modernist writers attempted to convey the bewildering and fragmented aspect of modern existence. The era was distinguished by experimentation with narrative techniques, a concentration on subjectivity, and an investigation into alienation, disillusionment, and the intricacies of the human psyche. Modernist writers frequently questioned literary traditions, using fragmented narrative structures, stream-of-consciousness techniques, and untrustworthy narrators to portray the complexities of the modern world. Works such as James Joyce's *Ulysses* (which, while not officially American, impacted American Modernists) and William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* exemplify this innovation, presenting stories in non-linear forms and delving into the inner workings of the human mind. Modernist writers regularly called into question literary conventions, depicting the intricacies of the modern world through fragmented narrative structures, stream-of-consciousness techniques, and untrustworthy narrators. This innovation is exemplified by works such as James Joyce's *Ulysses* (which, while not technically American, influenced American Modernists) and William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, which tell stories in non-linear forms and delve into the inner workings of the human mind. Modernism also reflected a shift in attention from the collective national identity to individual experience, typically accentuating themes of alienation, existential crises, and the search for meaning in a fast changing world. Writers such as Gertrude Stein, Langston Hughes, and Zora Neale Hurston, among others, added to the period's richness by exploring identity, race, and cultural fragmentation, particularly in the context of the Harlem Renaissance. Overall, Modernism in American literature aimed to depict the impression of a shattered society by employing new narrative forms and delving into the psychological and emotional turmoil of people living in a moment of great cultural upheaval. The movement's emphasis on subjectivity, fragmentation, and the examination of human consciousness transformed writing, laying the framework for much of the literary experimentation that occurred in the mid-twentieth century (Duvall, 1995).

1-3 Topics and Development

The portrayal of the city in American literature has altered over time, reflecting the changing dynamics of urbanization, industrialization, and social development. Key themes and topics that have evolved in this literary tradition reflect both the benefits and challenges that urban settings bring to individuals and society as a whole. As American cities developed in size and complexity, literature became a tool of addressing the social, cultural, and ethical consequences of urban life (Chudacoff, 2016).

1-3.1 Community and Isolation:

One of the most common themes in urban literature is the conflict between community and solitude. Early urban tales frequently emphasized the city as a place of opportunity, where people could find a feeling of belonging and prosperity. However, as cities got larger and more anonymous, writers began to emphasize the loneliness that frequently comes with metropolitan living. Characters in works such as Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* and T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* struggle with emotions of alienation, whereas others investigate how metropolitan populations can promote relationships or exacerbate individual isolation (Tonkiss, 2005).

1-3.2 Economic Opportunity and Inequality:

Cities have traditionally been connected with both economic opportunity and social injustice. American urban literature usually depicts the city as a place where people from many backgrounds come together in search of achievement and riches, only to confront sharp social divisions. Authors such as Theodore Dreiser (*Sister Carrie*) and John Steinbeck (*The Grapes of Wrath*) investigate the challenges of working-class people in cities, highlighting the vast disparities between riches and poverty. These depictions raise concerns about the availability of opportunity and the moral implications of economic disparities (Harvey, 2010).

1-3.3 Ethical and Moral Dilemmas:

As cities became hubs for economic and cultural interaction, literature became more concerned with the ethical and moral quandaries that come with urban living. The city, being a source of both opportunity and corruption, is frequently used as a backdrop for investigating complicated topics like as crime, greed, and social justice. Writers such as Nathaniel Hawthorne (*The Scarlet Letter*) and F. Scott Fitzgerald (*The Great Gatsby*) investigate how metropolitan environs exacerbate moral and ethical issues, exposing the darker parts of human nature and society values (Harvey, 2010).

1-3.4 Multiculturalism :

Cities expanded rapidly, especially in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and were melting pots of cultural and racial diversity. This issue is particularly significant in Harlem Renaissance literature, where writers such as Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston investigated African American realities in metropolitan settings. Hughes' poetry and Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* both stress the rich cultural exchanges that occur within cities, as well as the tensions and hardships that minority groups endure in metropolitan settings. These narratives frequently criticize the racial and social disparities that persist in cities, providing a complex depiction of urban life as both a source of cultural development and racial tension (Chudacoff, 2016).

1-4 Urban Life and Literary Expressions Before the Postmodern Turn:

Urbanism became a dominant theme in American literature, especially as cities grew and changed in different periods of history. Before the postmodern revolution, American literature explored city life through several genres, each reflecting the social, economic, and cultural developments of its time.

1-4.1 Colonialism and the Early State Period (1600-1820s).

Urban life in these times was still in its infancy, and literature often focused on the challenges of establishing new settlements and living within them. William Bradford "Of Plymouth Plantation": Focuses on the challenges early settlers faced in establishing and maintaining the community. Charles Brockden Brown "Arthur Merwin": Examines the impact of urban epidemics as well as the psychological effects of urban life.

1-4.2 Realism and the City:

In late nineteenth-century American literature, realism focused on accurately and meticulously depicting urban life, frequently reflecting the difficulties that ordinary people experience. Writers such as Henry James and William Dean Howells explored the complicated social dynamics of cities, delving into themes of class, race, and identity. Realist novels, such as Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, provided critical views of the metropolis as a source of both economic opportunity and moral depravity. In these works, the city is frequently depicted as a location of both opportunity and disillusionment, as characters face the harsh realities of metropolitan life, such as poverty, exploitation, and

social isolation
(Dragan, 2014).

1-4.3 Naturalism and the City:

Building on realism, naturalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century proposed a more deterministic vision of urban life, arguing that environmental, social, and biological forces impacted human behavior. Naturalist writers such as Stephen Crane and Frank Norris investigated the harsh realities of urban life, focusing on individuals who were frequently powerless in the face of poverty, violence, and industrial capitalism. In works like *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* and *McTeague*, the city is shown as a dehumanizing force, with protagonists fighting massive social and economic forces beyond their control (Passaro, 1997).

1 Modernism and the City:

The Modernist period, which began in the early twentieth century, marked a shift away from realism and naturalism's more plain representations of urban life. Modernist writers like F. Scott Fitzgerald, T.S. Eliot, and John Dos Passos wrote about cities in increasingly fragmented and abstract ways, reflecting modernity's unsettling and frequently alienating impact. In Modernist literature, the city is frequently used as a metaphor for moral deterioration, existential crisis, and societal fragmentation. For example, in *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald uses New York City's bustling urban landscape to highlight the emptiness of the American Dream, whereas Eliot's *The Waste Land* depicts the city as a desolate, fractured space, reflecting post-World War I society's despair (Harding, 2004).

1-1 Urban Identity and Culture Before Postmodernism

This discussion examines the multifaceted nature of urban identity and culture, addressing key issues such as class and economic inequality, the immigrant experience, gender dynamics, and the impact of race on city life. It also explores how modernity, alienation, and fragmentation shape urban environments, as well as the growing influence of mass culture in redefining urban space.

Prior to the advent of postmodernism, American literature grappled with the rapidly changing landscapes of urban identity and culture, reflecting the multifaceted experiences of life in American cities.

1-1.1 The Rise of Urban Identity:

As cities grew in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, urban identity became a key issue in American literature. The metropolis, which is frequently considered as a source of both opportunity and isolation, forced people to reconcile their rural or provincial roots with the demands of metropolitan life. Writers such as Henry James (*The Portrait of a Lady*) and Theodore Dreiser (*Sister Carrie*) investigated how new metropolitan environs

affected characters' identities. These cities were frequently portrayed as locations of moral ambiguity, where people had to traverse intricate social systems and find their place in a fast changing society. Urban individuals' concept of self frequently came into conflict with the wider social forces such as class structures and economic systems, that were central to city life (Klimasmith, 2005).

1-2 Urban Culture and Modernity:

Prior to the postmodern shift, urban culture in literature was defined by the rise of modernity, which was characterized by industrialization, mass migration, technological progress, and consumer culture expansion. In this environment, the city evolved from a physical space to a cultural construct, spawning new social standards, art forms, and intellectual movements. Modernist writers like F. Scott Fitzgerald and T.S. Eliot saw cities as symbols of modernity, often portraying them as places of excess, moral decay, and existential crises. The city serves as a backdrop for works such as *The Great Gatsby* and *The Waste Land*, which explore the tensions between the ideal and the actual, the individual and the social, and the past and future. These works reflect the sense of fragmentation and disillusionment that characterized urban culture in the early 20th century (Klimasmith, 2005).

1-3 Social Class and Urban Stratification:

Prior to the postmodern movement, cities were known for their high social stratification. The rise of industrial capitalism resulted in sharp disparities between the wealthy elite and the working poor. Urban culture, as expressed in literature, has addressed these social differences and inequalities inherent in city life. Stephen Crane and Frank Norris, in works like *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* and *McTeague*, depicted the harsh reality of urban poverty and social mobility. These stories frequently depicted persons trapped by the harsh economic structures of the city, demonstrating how the urban environment affected their fates. The city, in this sense, was not only a space of cultural exchange but also a battleground for social survival (Dear, 1999).

2 Cultural Diversity and the Immigrant Experience:

Another important feature of urban identity in pre-postmodern literature was the experience of immigrants who moved to cities in quest of better prospects. Cities like New York, Chicago, and San Francisco grew into melting pots of different cultures, ethnicities, and languages. Writers such as Abraham Cahan, in *The Rise of David Levinsky*, and Anzia Yezierska, in *Bread Givers*, investigated the obstacles and opportunities that immigrant populations encountered when navigating their identities within the greater American metropolitan milieu. These works usually showed the conflict between old-world traditions and the draw of modern American principles, as well as the cultural clashes between immigrant populations and the established urban social order (Lehan, 2023).

2-1 The City as a Site of Cultural Production:

Cities in pre-postmodern literature were not only locations for individual struggles, but also centers of cultural production. They became hubs for artistic creativity, intellectual movements, and the development of mass culture. The city's diversified population, thriving industry, and expanding consumer markets created a new kind of cultural energy. During the Harlem Renaissance, writers like Langston Hughes appreciated the vibrant nature of urban African American culture, reflecting the city's music, language, and rhythms in their writing. This era saw the growth of jazz, blues, and other cultural forms that became closely tied with the urban experience, influencing the collective cultural character of American cities (Lehan, 2023).

3 Issues And Developments In Urban Identity Culture:

Urban identity and culture reflect how people experience, shape, and express life in cities, influenced by history, migration, globalization, and technology. Examining their issues and developments reveals the tensions between tradition and modernity, as well as the ways urban spaces continually reinvent collective belonging.

3-1.1 Class and Economic Inequality:

One of the most important concerns in the evolution of urban identity and culture was the establishment of stark class inequalities in cities. As industrial capitalism gained root, cities became economic hubs, with wealth and power concentrated in the hands of a few while many others suffered from poverty and exploitation. American writers such as Theodore Dreiser (*Sister Carrie*) and Stephen Crane (*Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*) highlighted how metropolitan environs exacerbated social disparities, with people frequently caught in cycles of poverty and unable to escape their situations. The fast rise of cities created a rising chasm between the wealthy and the working poor, and these inequities influenced how urban identity was perceived. Urban culture, in this sense, became defined by its deep social stratification and the quest for upward mobility, which was often elusive (Dear, 1999).

3-1.2 The Immigrant Experience and Cultural Diversity:

The arrival of immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had a significant impact on urban identity and culture. Cities such as New York, Chicago, and Boston were melting pots where individuals from many backgrounds and nationalities converged to find better lives. The conflict between old-world traditions and the demands of urban American life was a critical factor in the evolution of urban identity. Writers like Abraham Cahan (*The Rise of David Levinsky*) and Anzia Yezierska (*Bread Givers*) investigated how immigrants managed their cultural identities in the face of assimilation pressures and economic difficulties. At the same time, the multicultural fabric of urban

spaces began to shape the cultural landscape, producing a vibrant, though often conflicted, urban culture that was defined by diverse racial and ethnic groups (Lehan, 2023).

3-1.3 Gender and the Urban Experience:

Gender had an important role in shaping urban identity, especially as cities became more autonomous and opportunity-rich, particularly for women. While metropolitan settings were frequently viewed as places of liberation, they were equally locations of gender discrimination. In books such as Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, women's urban lives were shown as affected by both the search of personal liberty and the constraints imposed by social expectations. Women were frequently shown as being caught between the promise of modernity and the realities of economic and sexual exploitation in cities. Urban culture in the early twentieth century provided a space for women to both challenge and be limited by traditional norms, so contributing to the formation of urban gender identity and expectations (Van Den Berg, 2021).

3-1.4 Modernity, Alienation, and Fragmentation:

The fast growth of cities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was inextricably linked to the rise of modernity—characterized by industrialization, mass manufacturing, and technological advancements. Modernity introduced a sense of alienation and fragmentation, which was frequently represented in literary descriptions of urban life. Writers such as T.S. Eliot (*The Waste Land*) and F. Scott Fitzgerald (*The Great Gatsby*) investigated the emotional and psychological ramifications of city life, in which people were frequently separated from themselves and their surroundings. The city became a symbol of moral decline, existential anguish, and the breakdown of community. In these images, urban identity was frequently defined by isolation, even within the thriving metropolis, as the overwhelming pace of modern life stretched human relationships and undermined a sense of belonging (Eade, 2002).

3-1.5 Race and the City:

Racial dynamics inside cities shaped the creation of American urban identity. During the Great Migration, African Americans moved from the rural South to northern metropolitan centers, giving rise to new cultural expressions and identities. The Harlem Renaissance, for example, was a watershed event in the evolution of African American urban identity, highlighting black culture, creativity, and intellectual life. Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and Claude McKay wrote about how the city provided both freedom and opportunity, as well as racial tension and strife. The racial dynamics of these cities had a profound impact on urban culture, with African Americans establishing new forms of identity and culture while grappling with the continuing reality of racism and segregation (Van Den Berg, 2021).

3-1.6 The Rise of Mass Culture:

The advent of mass culture, fueled by technological advancements such as the printing press, cinema, and subsequently radio and television, had an impact on the development of urban identity and culture as well. Urban centers became fertile grounds for new forms of cultural production, such as literature, theater, music, and film. The commercialization of culture in cities resulted in the formation of new cultural standards and expectations, as mass entertainment and consumer culture began to affect city life. Mass culture's development was simultaneously empowering and dehumanizing, producing new forms of identity while commodifying individual experiences. Writers such as Sinclair Lewis (*Babbitt*) and F. Scott Fitzgerald criticized the rise of consumer culture and its impact on urban identity, highlighting the alienating consequences of mass production and consumption (Sundquist, 1993).

4 The Representation of the City in Postmodern American Literature:

In postmodern American literature, the city is shown not only as a physical site, but also as a complicated, fragmented cultural construct that reflects the bewildering and fragmented aspect of modern life. Postmodernism's emphasis on skepticism, irony, and the collapse of big narratives calls into question earlier literary periods' portrayals of the metropolis. In this setting, cities become emblems of alienation, materialism, and social fragmentation, as well as possible centers of resistance and subversion. Writers in the postmodern era deconstruct urban spaces, blurring the lines between reality and simulation, personal and collective experience.

4-1 Fragmentation and the Loss of a Unified Urban Identity:

Postmodern literature reflects the fragmented nature of modern living, which is especially visible in its depictions of cities. Urban settings are no longer portrayed as cohesive, united entities; rather, they are chaotic, disorderly situations in which people struggle to find meaning or connection. In works like Don DeLillo's *White Noise* and Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*, the city represents the dissolution of traditional narratives of community, belonging, and identity. The postmodern city is frequently depicted as a maze of disconnected experiences, in which people negotiate a series of fragmented, media-saturated realities with no clear sense of purpose or coherence (McGuigan, 2006).

4-2 The City as a Hyper-real Space:

In postmodern literature, cities are frequently described as hyperreal settings in which the lines between the real and the imagined, the authentic and the artificial, become progressively blurred. The postmodern city, like the media-driven culture that surrounds it, is both an imagined and material world in which technology, advertisements, and mass media shape people's perceptions of reality. The image of cities in postmodern literature reflects

Jean Baudrillard's concept of the "hyperreal"—a situation in which simulations supersede reality. In D.M. Thomas's *The White Hotel* and Paul Auster's *City of Glass*, the urban environment is more than a physical area; it is an experience created by an overflow of signs and symbols, where meaning becomes elusive and self-referential. The city becomes a simulation, a space where reality is replaced by representations of reality, forcing characters to navigate an often overwhelming and contradictory urban landscape (Lehan, 2023).

4-3 Consumerism, Capitalism, and the Postmodern City:

In postmodern American literature, cities are frequently portrayed as areas dominated by consumerism and capitalist interests. The city is a commodification hotspot, with individuals reduced to customers in a system that values business over human connection. This critique of consumer society is fundamental to works such as DeLillo's *White Noise*, which examines the commodification of ordinary life, and Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*, in which the protagonist's identity is inextricably linked to consumer culture and the superficiality of urban life. In these paintings, the city is portrayed as a site of consumption and alienation, with people defined by their belongings, appearances, and consumption habits rather than deeper connections or values (Eade, 2002).

4-4 Globalization and the City as a Site of Multiplicity:

The postmodern city also shows the effects of globalization, as metropolitan areas grow more diverse, multicultural, and linked. Cities are transformed into worldwide environments in the works of authors such as Salman Rushdie and Paul Auster. These urban places are no longer uniquely American; they are part of a global network of exchange and engagement. *The City of Glass* (Auster) depicts the city as a site where cultural barriers melt and human identities become flexible, impacted by a variety of forces—technological, economic, and political. As a result, the postmodern metropolis becomes a location of diversity and hybridization, with personal and cultural identities continually negotiated and reinvented in response to global information and capital flows (Klimasmith, 2005).

4-4.1 Alienation and Disconnection in the Urban Environment:

Despite the impression of interconnection afforded by contemporary technology, the postmodern metropolis frequently fosters emotions of alienation and disconnectedness. The city, as portrayed in postmodern literature, is a place where people are cut off from one another, unable to develop meaningful interactions or bonds. In works such as Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and Paul Auster's *The Manhattan Trilogy*, metropolitan spaces are depicted as both a source of anonymity and a symbol of societal division. People become invisible in the city, cut off from one another and their own sense of self. This topic of alienation is important to the postmodern urban experience, in which the city is not a place of collective belonging but rather a fragmented, disoriented setting that exacerbates the individual's loneliness (Eade, 2002).

4-4.2 Urban Violence and the Breakdown of Social Order:

In postmodern literature, cities are frequently depicted as sites of violence, lawlessness, and moral decline. This portrayal criticizes the inability of modern societal structures to guarantee safety and stability. Authors such as Don DeLillo and Thomas Pynchon frequently depict urban surroundings as places where social, political, and economic structures fail, resulting in chaos and conflict. J.D. Salinger's novel *The Catcher in the Rye* depicts a young man's disenchantment with a city that appears to be full of phoniness and moral rot. Similarly, in Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club*, the city becomes a battleground for individuals who reject society standards, culminating in violence to recapture personal agency. In these works, the city is a symbol of postmodern fragmentation, a place where the breakdown of traditional structures leads to both existential crisis and social upheaval (Wright, 2002).

4-5 Topics and Research

The section Topics and Research highlights key areas of inquiry in literary and cultural studies, focusing on how texts engage with identity, society, and representation. Each theme offers a lens for analyzing literature's role in reflecting, critiquing, and reshaping human experience.

4-5.1 Character and hospitality:

The term "Character and Hospitality" could study the relationship between persons and hospitality in literature, focusing on how characters are shaped by receiving or delivering hospitality. It could explore issues such as charity, welcome, social exchange, and the distinction between strangers and familiars. Research could concentrate on works with hospitality as a prominent theme or motif, exploring its symbolic, social, and psychological components (Miller, 2005).

4-5.2 Fact vs. Reviews:

This title may allude to the conflict between competing facts or perspectives. It could discuss how literature, particularly in the postmodern era, deals with untrustworthy narratives or differing interpretations of events. A "review" in this context could refer to a critical examination of how facts (or interpretations of facts) are built and deconstructed in works of literature, media, or historical narratives (Hassan, 2012).

4-5.3 Story Breakdown:

A "Story Breakdown" often examines a narrative's structure, themes, characters, and overall growth. This could refer to breaking down a literary work's plot to comprehend its fundamental features, such as how the tale is conveyed, the pacing, significant turning

moments, and how the narrative supports bigger themes or societal issues. In literature, this breakdown could center on how characters' actions and decisions unfold, ultimately contributing to the story's ending (Culler, 2015).

4-5.4 A Critique of Consumer Culture:

This title would address literary and cultural critiques of capitalism, materialism, and consumer-driven culture, which are common in postmodern literature. A critique of consumer culture examines how consuming, advertising, and economic institutions shape people's behavior, wants, and identities. Authors such as Don DeLillo (*White Noise*), Bret Easton Ellis (*American Psycho*), and others may be scrutinized for how they depict the emptiness, alienation, and dehumanization caused by materialism. This critique could also look at how the characters' internal lives are frequently impacted by external consumer pressures, which represent larger social issues (Ritzer, 2013).

4-6 Cityscapes in the Age of Postmodernism

American literature in the postmodern period presents a rich and complex picture of city life. Postmodern cities are often portrayed as fragmented, surreal, and intimately connected through media and technology. These literary representations reflect the multidimensionality and challenges of navigating the contemporary urban environment.

4-6.1 Characteristics of Postmodern Cities

Postmodern cities are distinguished by their departure from traditional urban structures and ideals. They are frequently fragmented, chaotic, and formed by the overpowering influence of commerce, technology, and media. In contrast to modernist ideas of order and progress, postmodern cities are hyperreal environments in which the distinctions between public and private, real and virtual, become progressively blurred. Architectural eclecticism, disconnected urban areas, and an emphasis on spectacle over functionality are among the key traits. Cities are portrayed as chaotic, hyper-consumerist places, characterized by media saturation and the prevalence of global financial networks. This can be seen in postmodern literary works such as Don DeLillo's *White Noise* and William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, in which the city is both a physical and digital construct that is continually changing (Tonkiss, 2005).

4-6.1.1 Surrealism:

Surrealism as a movement has influenced postmodern city depictions, where the everyday becomes unusual and logic gives way to dreamlike situations. Surrealism is frequently employed in the postmodern metropolis to explore the absurdities and inconsistencies of urban life. Surrealism in postmodern literature can be seen in unexpected juxtapositions, fractured storylines, and a stress on the unconscious or illogical aspects of human experience. The city, as a realm of dislocation, reflects surrealist ideas, generating

an environment that is unsettling, dreamlike, and frequently devoid of traditional meanings. Writers such as Thomas Pynchon (*The Crying of Lot 49*) and Haruki Murakami (*Kafka on the Shore*) frequently combine surrealism with depictions of urban settings to highlight the absurdity and unpredictability of postmodern living (Daniele, 1992).

4-6.1.2 Quantity and Variety:

Quantity and variety are key aspects of the postmodern city, reflecting the vast scale and cultural diversity of modern urban surroundings. The sheer number of people, commodities, and experiences generates an atmosphere of overabundance, with personalities and ideas continuously in motion. Cities in postmodern literature are frequently shown as locations of limitless choice and perpetual change, as well as regions of overwhelming complexity that can cause emotions of alienation and disorientation. The diversity of experiences and identities found in urban environments calls into question established notions of identity and belonging. In this context, quantity and variety add to a sense of separation, as people are overwhelmed by the sheer size of the metropolitan environment. This theme appears in works like *The City & The City* by China Miéville, where distinct cities coexist with starkly different cultural realities (Wright, 2002).

4-6.1.3 Irony and Play:

Irony and play are essential components of postmodern city portrayals, expressing a rejection of fixed meanings and great narratives. In postmodern urban literature, irony is frequently employed to show the paradoxes and absurdities of city life, undermining conventional assumptions and emphasizing the fluidity of identity and truth. The postmodern city is frequently shown as a place of play, where social roles, institutions, and even the city itself are open to interpretation, deconstruction, and reimagining. The use of irony in postmodern cityscapes emphasizes the intrinsic absurdity of urban life, in which nothing is as it appears and every fact is contingent. Works like *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut or *The Crying of Lot 49* by Thomas Pynchon exemplify the use of irony and play to critique the conventional understanding of the city, consumerism, and social norms (Burwick, 2010).

4-6.1.4 Depression and Alienation:

Postmodern cities frequently serve as symbols for the despair and alienation that individuals face in an increasingly fragmented and impersonal environment. The metropolis, as a large, disconnected environment, exacerbates emotions of isolation, anxiety, and existential misery. Postmodern literature portrays metropolitan surroundings as places where people struggle to find meaning and connection, resulting in a pervasive sense of loneliness and alienation. These cities are frequently portrayed as places where traditional social bonds—family, community, and identity—break down, forcing people to negotiate an unknown and often hostile environment. Depression and alienation in the postmodern metropolis are key themes in works like Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*,

where characters experience both a tangible and figurative isolation from themselves and others reflecting the emotional toll of living in a consumer-driven, hyperreal urban space city (Tonkiss, 2005).

5 Main Jobs are Secretaries

These works together illustrate capitalism's ubiquitous influence on the urban environment, particularly in how it alters the characters' identities, relationships, and perspectives. The cities in these novels are frequently places where capitalism's dehumanizing impacts are most visible—whether via consumerism, the collapse of social connections, or the commodification of persons.

5-1 Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966):

Pynchon's work portrays the city as a convoluted realm full of conspiracy and bewilderment. Pynchon's picture of urban life emphasizes fragmentation, paranoia, and the enormous complexity of modern society. The heroine, Oedipa Maas, travels through a metropolis that is both a physical location and a psychological space, emphasizing the disintegration of traditional narratives and the growing impact of media and technology. The city is portrayed as a place where people try to find purpose and coherence in the midst of chaos.

5-2 Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (1985):

DeLillo's *White Noise* depicts a postmodern city in which commerce, media, and technology pervade all aspects of existence. *White Noise* depicts the city as a mediated and hyperreal world, rather than just a physical area. The characters are overwhelmed by their continual exposure to media and consumer culture, and the city is portrayed as a symbol of the isolation and emptiness that come with information overload and the loss of true human connections.

5-3 Bret Easton Ellis' *American Psycho* (1991):

In *American Psycho*, Ellis depicts a metropolis distinguished by excessive luxury, consumerism, and the terrible alienation of its residents. Patrick Bateman, the protagonist, floats across Manhattan's hyper-consumerist urban world, alienated from his own feelings and those around him. Ellis criticizes the capitalist system through Bateman's aggressive behavior and psychological detachment, demonstrating how materialism consumes and distorts the city's character.

5-4 Paul Auster's *City of Glass* (1985):

Auster's metropolis of *Glass* depicts New York as a metropolis of changing identities, existential ambiguity, and disorientation. Daniel Quinn, the protagonist, gets lured into a web of urban mystery and intrigue, where the lines between fact and fiction blur. The city

here represents the fractured self and the difficulties of finding true significance or coherence in today's world. Auster's depiction of the metropolis stresses the bewildering and alienating impacts of urban living.

5-5 David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest* (1996):

Infinite Jest delves into the landscape of contemporary America, with its overwhelming consumerism, entertainment culture, and profound sense of solitude. Set in the near future, the novel paints a complicated portrayal of people dealing with addiction, media, and the search of pleasure in an excess-driven society. Wallace examines the capitalist mechanisms that shape city life and how they effect people's identities, relationships, and mental health.

5-6 Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000):

House of Leaves explores the city via the fragmented and often unsettling lens of a house, but the concept of urban space remains relevant as a metaphor. The novel challenges the reader's perspective of reality and space by using a variety of typographical approaches to create a sense of disorientation. In this example, the city is viewed via a spatial and psychological lens, with an emphasis on how the physical and mental worlds intersect and collapse on one another.

6 Urban Chaos and Literary Innovation

Contemporary American literature often explores the theme of urban violence, using new storytelling techniques to convey the complexities and contradictions of contemporary urban life. This period saw a departure from traditional storytelling methods of segregation, of interlude and metaphor to capture the chaos of modern cities.

6-1 Signs of Urban Violence in Postmodern Literature

This theme investigates how postmodern literature reflects and condemns urban violence, with cities being depicted as battlegrounds for social, racial, or economic strife. Urban violence, in this sense, can be physical, psychological, or systemic, and it is frequently used as a metaphor for larger societal issues. Writers may represent violence as both a cause and an effect of the city's broken, alienated, and dehumanizing environment. Works such as Don DeLillo's *Underworld* and Bret Easton Ellis' *American Psycho* investigate how cities, with their chaotic urban environments, become locations of severe violence—both personal and societal—while also challenging the ethics of consumerism, capitalism, and media depiction (Chudacoff, 2016).

6-1.1 Intertextuality:

Intertextuality refers to how texts reference or draw on other works, resulting in a web

of connections between various storylines, genres, and cultural contexts. Intertextuality can be used in urban literature to represent the interconnected character of city life, where histories, identities, and cultures intersect and collide. It also represents continuing exchanges between writers, artists, and the metropolitan areas in which they live. To further their understanding of the city, urban literature frequently draw on classical classics, mythology, or past literary traditions. Writers such as Thomas Pynchon, Paul Auster, and Don DeLillo frequently use intertextual connections, combining historical and literary references to create a multifaceted representation of the urban setting and its intricacies (Burwick, 2010).

6-1.2 Land:

"Land" in urban literature frequently represents the physical and metaphorical roots of cities, whether it is the topography of urban space or the land on which cities are built and contested. In many contexts, the concept of land refers to displacement, ownership, and the battle for power. Urban areas are built by the exploitation of land and its resources, resulting in disputes over land ownership, zoning rules, gentrification, and the displacement of vulnerable people. Land is important in the characters' sense of identification and belonging, as well as the social and economic disparities ingrained in the urban environment, as shown in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Chester Himes' *If He Hollers Let Him Go* (Harding, 2004).

6-1.3 Surrealism:

Surrealism in urban literature employs dream-like, illogical, and frequently ridiculous descriptions of city life to capture the disorienting and alienating features of modern urban life. Surrealist writers reveal cities' underlying turmoil, fragmentation, and contradictions by combining the real with the unreal. Surrealism in postmodern urban literature has the potential to blur the lines between distinct realities, creating a sense of displacement and instability. Works like William S. Burroughs' *Naked Lunch*, Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, and David Lynch's film noir works (which frequently parallel urban surrealism) are prime examples of how surrealism is used to explore the complexities of life in postmodern cities, emphasizing their absurdities, contradictions, and complexities (Daniele, 1992).

6-1.4 Humor and Irony:

Humor and irony are significant weapons in urban literature, used to criticize the absurdities of modern city life while also providing a more nuanced grasp of its complexity. Postmodern urban literature frequently employs comedy to reveal urban society's inconsistencies, ranging from individual alienation to the often strange experiences of navigating metropolitan spaces. Humor can also serve as a coping tool for dealing with the harshness and violence of the urban environment. Irony, on the other hand, frequently highlights the disparity between the idealized city and the realities of urban life. Writers such as Thomas Pynchon, Kurt Vonnegut, and Bret Easton Ellis utilize them to deflate the

larger-than-life mythologies surrounding cities, transforming their complexities into both a source of comedy and a tool for social criticism (Burwick, 2010).

7 Postmodern Urban Identities

Postmodern American literature offers a rich survey of urban identity, reflecting the complexity and pace of contemporary urban life. Characterized by fragmentation, irony, and the rejection of grand narratives, postmodernism provides a framework for examining the diverse and often contradictory individual experiences of urbanity.

« As Mike Featherstone put it, "postmodernism in the city implies a no-place-space of consumer and leisure sites in which urban identities can be eclectically and differently composed and recomposed" (Balshaw & Kennedy, 2000). This brings to light the matter of identities as they come to be formed and influenced by the urban landscape. »

7-1 Fragmentation of Identity:

Characters in postmodern metropolitan settings frequently have fragmented identities, which represent the fragmentary, bewildering quality of current existence. The metropolis, as a site of multiplicity and excess, exacerbates this fragmentation. Characters in works by authors such as Thomas Pynchon and Paul Auster frequently struggle to reconcile conflicting versions of themselves, particularly when confronted with the overwhelming and contradictory character of metropolitan life. These fractured identities represent the postmodern condition, in which individuals are no longer defined by a unified sense of self (Wright, 2002).

7-2 Alienation and Disconnection:

Alienation is a major theme in the portrayal of urban identities. In a society dominated by technology, media, and business, people frequently feel detached from their environment, other people, and themselves. Bret Easton Ellis' *American Psycho* gives a dramatic example of this detachment, where the protagonist, Patrick Bateman, is a reflection of urban alienation, cut off from real relationships and existing in a state of continual, numb violence. *Infinite Jest* by David Foster Wallace depicts a universe in which characters are estranged from one another, trapped in their own addictions and psychological pain (Wright, 2002).

8 The Influence of Capitalism and Consumerism:

Consumer culture has a significant role in shaping postmodern urban identities. The city, as a hub of capitalism, serves as both a source of identity creation and a mechanism of alienation. The temptation to adhere to market-driven standards, whether through appearance, behavior, or consumption, generates a tension between the real and commodified selves. Works such as Don DeLillo's *White Noise* investigate how consumerism and mass media overwhelm people, distorting their sense of self and

reducing them to simple goods or consumers. This frequently results in existential crises as people struggle with the hollow character of their existence within capitalism institutions (Clarke, 2004).

8-1 Multiplicity and Hybridity:

Postmodernism embraces the concept of multiplicity, in which identities are not distinct but rather a composite of numerous influences, experiences, and cultural expressions. Individuals in the postmodern city may embody numerous identities, many of which are incompatible. This is especially visible in Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*, in which people's identities become fluid and hybrid as they negotiate a world that distorts and questions their perspective of reality. Urban identities in postmodernism are diverse, with characters taking on a variety of roles and personas (Harding, 2004).

8-2 Hyperreality and Media Influence:

Hyperreality, a notion coined by thinker Jean Baudrillard, shapes postmodern urban identities by blurring the line between reality and simulation. In the postmodern city, it is becoming increasingly impossible to distinguish between the real world and the media-created world. Characters in postmodern literature, such as those in Paul Auster's *City of Glass*, are frequently caught up in convoluted networks of information and deception, where the media and technology affect their perceptions of themselves and their surroundings. The ongoing influence of advertising, television, and the internet on identity reinforces its created character, creating false narratives and ideals that people feel driven to embody (Eade, 2002).

8-3 Cultural Diversity and Identity Negotiation:

The postmodern city is frequently distinguished by its cultural diversity, with people of different nationalities, social classes, and cultural origins coexisting and interacting. This diversity allows for hybrid identities, but it also leads to tensions and conflicts. The negotiation of identity in a heterogeneous metropolitan context is a key issue in works like Don DeLillo's *White Noise* and Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*, in which the protagonists' encounters with the city are impacted by their racial, class, and cultural backgrounds. Individuals in postmodern cities are shaped not only by their local environs, but also by global cultural, informational, and political fluxes (Lehan, 2023).

Conclusion:

This chapter explored the evolving representation of the city in American literature, from its early depiction as a symbol of order and progress in the Colonial and Early National periods, to the more complex portrayals in the 19th and 20th centuries. Romanticism contrasted the city with nature, while Realism and Naturalism highlighted the harsh realities of urban life. Modernism presented the city as fragmented and alienating,

reflecting the disillusionment of the era. Literature also began to examine urban identity through race, ethnicity, and class, especially with the influx of immigrants. The analysis of *The Leaf House* showed how postmodern works continue to reflect the city's disorienting and complex nature. Overall, the city in American literature serves as a dynamic symbol of societal change, identity, and struggle, and its representation continues to evolve with cultural shifts.

Chapter two: The Representation of the City in Don --- DeLillo's Underworld

Table of Contents

- [1. Introduction.36](#)
- [2. Overview of Underworld and its Significance:36](#)
- [3. Importance of the Urban Setting in the Novel:37](#)
- [4. The City as a Symbol.39](#)
- [5. New York City as a Microcosm of America.39](#)
 - [5.1. Representation of Progress and Decay:39](#)
 - [5.2. Symbolic Meanings Attached to Urban Spaces:40](#)
- [6. Other Cities in the Novel:41](#)
 - [6.1. Contrasts and Comparisons with New York City:43](#)

6.2.Geographic Descriptions:	45
6.3.Cinematic Approach to Urban Landscapes:	46
6.4.Detailed Descriptions and Their Effects:	46
7.Key Urban Scenes:	47
7.1.The Polo Grounds Opening Scene:	47
7.2.Other Significant Urban Settings:	49
8.Characters and the City.	50
9.Influence of the City on Nick Shay's Relationship with Urban Spaces:	50
9.1.The Bronx as the Locus of Memory and Trauma:	50
9.2.The City as a Mirror of Emotional States:	50
9.3.Urban Anonymity and Isolation:	51
9.4.The City as a Catalyst for Change:	51
9.5.The City as a Source of Nostalgia:	51
10.Urban Environments as Reflections of Internal States:	52
10.1.Memory and Trauma:	52
10.2.Aspirations and Identity:	53
11.Migration and Mobility.	55
11.1.Depiction of Migration Across Cities:	56
11.2.Economic and Personal Reasons for Mobility:	57
12.Fluidity of Identity in Urban Contexts:	59
12.1.Convergence and Dispersion of Lives:	60
13.Historical and Cultural Context.	62
14.Urban Transformation over Decades:	62
14.1.Cold War and Civil Rights Movement:	64
15.Integration of Cultural References:	65
15.1.Historical Events and Figures:	65
15.2.Popular Culture and Media:	66
15.3.Art and Literature:	66
15.4.Religion and Spirituality:	66
15.4.1.Enhancing Realism and Historical Context:	66
15.4.2.Deepening Thematic Exploration:	67
15.4.3.Creating Intertextual Connections:	67

[15.4.4.Challenging and Engaging the Reader:67](#)

[15.4.5.Art, Music, Sports, and Media:67](#)

[16.Critical Analysis.69](#)

[17.Urban literary theories:69](#)

[17.1.The Systems Novel:69](#)

[17.2.Postmodernism:70](#)

[17.3.The City as Spectacle:70](#)

[17.4.Psychoanalytic Theory:71](#)

[17.5.Marxist Theory:72](#)

[17.6.Capitalism and Consumerism:72](#)

[17.7.Class Struggle and Social Inequality:72](#)

[17.8.The Commodification of Culture and Art:73](#)

[17.9.The Role of the Media:73](#)

[17.10.The Cold War and Imperialism:73](#)

[17.11.Cultural Criticism:74](#)

[18.Comparison with other Literary Works:75](#)

[18.1.The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald:77](#)

[19.Summary of the City's Representation in Underworld:78](#)

[19.1.Progress and Decay:79](#)

[19.2.Memory and Trauma:79](#)

[19.3.Identity and Belonging:80](#)

[19.4.The Cold War and Social Change:80](#)

[19.5.Consumerism and Spectacle:80](#)

[20.Reflection on DeLillo's Critique of Modernity:80](#)

[20.1.The Erosion of the Real:80](#)

[20.2.The Dominance of Consumer Culture:81](#)

[20.3.The Anxieties of the Cold War:81](#)

[20.4.The Fragmentation of Identity and Community:81](#)

[20.5.The Role of Art and Resistance:81](#)

[21.Final Thoughts on the Urbanized Human Condition:82](#)

[Conclusion83](#)

1. Introduction:

This chapter undertakes a critical examination of the role of the urban setting in Don DeLillo's *Underworld*, situating the novel within broader discourses on urban identity, cultural memory, and postmodern literary representation. By foregrounding New York City as both a geographic locus and a symbolic construct, the analysis emphasizes its function as a microcosm of America, embodying the paradoxical interplay between progress and decay, aspiration and disillusionment. The chapter further considers how DeLillo mobilizes the city as a narrative and thematic catalyst, transforming urban space into a site where questions of identity, trauma, and belonging are negotiated. Particular attention is given to Nick Shay's relationship with the Bronx, where memory and personal history intersect with broader socio-cultural currents, thereby illustrating the city's capacity to mirror interior states. The study also engages with DeLillo's cinematic approach to urban description, where detailed imagery and spatial contrasts extend the novel's thematic reach beyond New York to other urban landscapes, underscoring the interconnectedness of geography and identity. Key urban scenes, notably the Polo Grounds opening, are analyzed as emblematic of the novel's negotiation of collective memory and historical consciousness. Moreover, the chapter situates these representations within the theoretical frameworks of postmodernism, cultural geography, and urban sociology, thereby aligning *Underworld* with ongoing critical debates on the city as text and spectacle. In doing so, the discussion underscores DeLillo's engagement with consumerism, Cold War anxieties, and the commodification of culture, ultimately positioning the urban setting as a lens through which the fragmentation of modern identity and community is rendered visible.

2. Overview of *Underworld* and its Significance:

The novel is vast and complex, spanning several decades and employing a non-linear narrative structure that mirrors the fragmented nature of contemporary life. It begins with the iconic 1951 baseball game between the Giants and the Dodgers, then

jumps to the 1990s before gradually moving back in time to the 1950s, ultimately culminating in a cyberspace-infused epilogue set in the late 1990s.

The journey of the baseball hit by Bobby Thomson during the 1951 game serves as a unifying thread, connecting diverse characters and events across time and space. The ball becomes a symbol of memory, loss, and the elusive nature of the past. *Underworld* delves into a multitude of themes, including waste and its management; The novel explores the omnipresence of waste in American society, from literal garbage to the metaphorical waste of human potential and cultural values. It examines how waste management practices reflect and shape cultural anxieties and desires. The novel also revisits the Cold War era, questioning the binary oppositions of "Us" and "Them" and exploring the lingering paranoia and anxieties that continue to shape American identity. (Clippinger)

Underworld critiques the pervasive influence of consumerism and mass media, highlighting how they shape individual desires and distort perceptions of reality. The novel features various artists, including a graffiti artist and a conceptual artist, who grapple with the challenges of creating meaningful art in a world dominated by commercialism and spectacle. (Duvall, 1995)

The urban landscape serves as a central motif, reflecting the complexities and contradictions of modern life. The novel explores the interplay between memory, history, and urban spaces, highlighting the city's role in shaping individual and collective experiences.

The novel offers a profound critique of postmodern American culture, exploring themes of alienation, fragmentation, and the loss of meaning in a world saturated by consumerism and media spectacle. *Underworld* challenges traditional notions of history, presenting a "counter-history" that focuses on the marginalized and forgotten aspects of the past. It also delves into the complexities of memory, highlighting its subjective and fragmented nature. The novel's vast scope, non-linear narrative, and intricate interweaving of themes and characters showcase DeLillo's mastery of literary form and his ability to push the boundaries of the novelistic genre. *Underworld* continues to resonate with readers today, offering insights into the enduring anxieties and complexities of contemporary American society. Its exploration of themes such as waste, consumerism, and the media's influence remains strikingly relevant in the 21st century. (Hutcheon, 1989)

In essence, *Underworld* is a monumental work that captures the essence of late 20th-century America, offering a complex and multifaceted portrait of a nation grappling with its past, present, and future. Its significance lies not only in its literary achievements but also in its ability to illuminate the enduring challenges and contradictions of the human condition in the postmodern era. (Clippinger)

3. Importance of the Urban Setting in the Novel:

The urban setting in *Underworld* holds immense importance, serving as more

than just a backdrop for the narrative. It functions as a dynamic character, shaping and reflecting the lives of its inhabitants. The cities in *Underworld*, particularly New York, act as microcosms of the larger American experience. They mirror the nation's social, political, and cultural transformations, from the Cold War anxieties to the rise of consumerism and the pervasive influence of mass media. The urban landscape becomes a stage where these larger forces play out, impacting the lives of individuals and communities.

The novel explores the dual nature of the city, showcasing both its decay and its potential for renewal. The Bronx, for instance, is depicted as a wasteland ravaged by poverty, crime, and environmental degradation. Yet, amidst this decay, there are also glimpses of hope and resilience, embodied in the efforts of artists like Ismael Munoz and community figures like Sister Edgar.

Urban spaces in *Underworld* are deeply intertwined with memory and history. The characters' memories are often triggered by specific locations, and the city itself becomes a repository of collective memories and historical traumas. The novel's non-linear narrative structure further emphasizes the complex relationship between time, memory, and urban landscapes. The urban setting also plays a crucial role in shaping the characters' identities and sense of belonging. The novel explores how individuals navigate the complexities of urban life, negotiating their place within the social, cultural, and economic fabric of the city. The characters' struggles with alienation, isolation, and the search for meaning are often mirrored in the urban landscapes they inhabit. (Osteen, 2000)

The urban setting is also a site of intense consumerism and spectacle. The novel critiques the commodification of urban spaces and the ways in which advertising and mass media shape individual desires and create a culture of disposability. The proliferation of waste and the environmental consequences of consumerism are also explored within the urban context.

4. The City as a Symbol:

In *Underworld*, the city emerges not merely as a physical environment but as a multilayered symbol through which DeLillo interrogates the complexities of American modernity. New York City, in particular, functions simultaneously as a concrete setting and as a metaphorical construct, embodying tensions between order and chaos, visibility and invisibility, progress and decline. As scholars of urban literature note, cities often operate as palimpsests, where layers of history, memory, and cultural meaning converge to shape collective and individual identities. DeLillo exploits this symbolic potential by depicting the city as both a site of nostalgia and alienation: its streets, stadiums, and neighborhoods signify not only the rhythms of everyday life but also the anxieties of the Cold War, the encroachment of consumer culture, and the fragmentation of community. The symbolic resonance of the city extends beyond its materiality; it becomes a lens through which the novel articulates broader concerns about temporality, mortality, and the erosion of authenticity in a commodified world. Thus, the city in *Underworld* is not merely a backdrop

but a semiotic field in which America's cultural contradictions are inscribed and contested.

5. New York City as a Microcosm of America:

New York City in *Underworld* functions as a symbolic mirror of the United States, encapsulating the nation's cultural diversity, historical tensions, and socio-economic contradictions. Through its spaces and communities, DeLillo condenses the broader American experience into a single urban landscape.

5.1. Representation of Progress and Decay:

The representation of progress and decay in *Underworld* is a complex and multifaceted theme that permeates the entire novel. DeLillo masterfully intertwines these seemingly opposing forces, showcasing how they coexist and even interdependently shape the American landscape and its inhabitants.

The novel spans several decades, showcasing the rapid technological advancements of the 20th century, from the development of nuclear weapons to the rise of mass media and the advent of cyberspace. These advancements are often portrayed with a sense of awe and wonder, highlighting their potential to transform society and reshape human experiences. (Clippinger)

The post-war era witnessed significant economic growth and the rise of consumer culture in America. *Underworld* captures this through its depiction of suburban homes filled with modern appliances and the proliferation of consumer goods. This material abundance is often associated with progress and the fulfillment of the American Dream. (Emerson, 1985)

The novel also showcases the physical transformation of cities, with the construction of skyscrapers and the expansion of urban infrastructure. These developments represent progress and the ambition to create a modern and efficient urban landscape.

The novel highlights the environmental consequences of progress, particularly the accumulation of waste and the threat of nuclear contamination. The Fresh Kills landfill, a towering symbol of waste and decay, serves as a stark reminder of the dark side of consumerism and technological advancement.

The pursuit of progress often comes at the cost of social cohesion and individual well-being. *Underworld* portrays characters struggling with alienation, isolation, and the loss of meaning in a world dominated by consumerism and spectacle. The urban landscape itself reflects this fragmentation, with its decaying neighborhoods and anonymous crowds. The novel also explores the decay of memory and the erosion of historical consciousness. The characters' attempts to grapple with the past are often thwarted by the relentless march of progress and the media's distortion of reality. The novel suggests that the pursuit of progress can lead to a disconnection from the past and a loss of cultural identity.

(Fitzgerald, 1993)

DeLillo suggests that progress and decay are not mutually exclusive but rather exist in a symbiotic relationship. The pursuit of progress often generates its own forms of decay, whether it's the environmental degradation caused by industrialization or the social fragmentation resulting from technological advancements.

The novel refuses to offer easy answers or simplistic judgments about progress and decay. Instead, it embraces ambiguity and contradiction, showcasing how these forces intertwine and shape the complexities of the human experience.

Art emerges as a potential force for navigating the complexities of progress and decay. The artists in the novel, like Klara Sax and Ismael Munoz, attempt to reclaim spaces of decay and transform them into sites of meaning and beauty. Their work suggests that art can offer a way to confront the challenges of the postmodern world and create a sense of connection and continuity amidst fragmentation and change.

5.2. Symbolic Meanings Attached to Urban Spaces:

The urban spaces in *Underworld* are imbued with rich symbolic meanings that extend beyond their physical presence. They serve as potent metaphors for various themes and concepts explored in the novel. The demolished baseball stadium represents a lost era of innocence and nostalgia, contrasting with the anxieties and uncertainties of the Cold War and postmodern America. It also symbolizes the commodification of memory and the media's role in shaping collective narratives. (Knight, 1999)

The Bronx embodies both urban decay and resilience. It's a site of poverty, crime, and environmental degradation, but also a place where communities strive for survival and artistic expression flourishes, as exemplified by Ismael Munoz's graffiti art. The Bronx represents the marginalized and forgotten aspects of American society, offering a counter-narrative to the dominant cultural discourse.

This massive garbage dump symbolizes the excesses of consumerism and the environmental consequences of unchecked progress. It represents the dark side of the American Dream, where material abundance leads to waste and decay. The landfill also serves as a metaphor for the accumulation of historical and personal traumas that haunt the characters' lives. The secret nuclear weapons facility in New Mexico embodies the paranoia and anxieties of the Cold War era. It represents the hidden systems of power and control that shape the lives of individuals and communities, often without their knowledge or consent. The Pocket also symbolizes the destructive potential of technological advancements and the fear of annihilation that loomed over the Cold War period.

(Fitzgerald, 1993)

The virtual realm of cyberspace in the novel's epilogue represents the interconnectedness and globalization of the late 1990s. It symbolizes the blurring of boundaries between the real and the virtual, and the potential for both liberation and control in the digital age. The novel suggests that cyberspace, like the physical city, is a space where individuals navigate complex networks of information and power, searching for

meaning and connection in an increasingly fragmented world.

6. Other Cities in the Novel:

The novel features scenes in Los Angeles, particularly highlighting the Watts Towers, a folk art monument created by Sabato Rodia from discarded materials. The Watts Towers symbolize artistic resilience and the potential for beauty and meaning to emerge from the detritus of urban life. Los Angeles, like New York, is portrayed as a sprawling metropolis shaped by consumer culture and the entertainment industry. (DeLillo, *White Noise*, 1998)

The novel's protagonist, Nick Shay, resides in Phoenix, Arizona, in the later sections of the narrative. Phoenix represents the suburban sprawl and the sanitized, consumer-driven lifestyle of the Sun Belt. It contrasts with the grittier and more historically layered urban landscape of New York.

The desolate landscape of the former Soviet nuclear testing site in Kazakhstan serves as a stark reminder of the Cold War's destructive legacy and the environmental consequences of technological progress. It contrasts with the bustling urban centers of New York and Los Angeles, highlighting the global reach of the Cold War and its impact on both human and natural environments.

New York City, with its rich history and layered urban fabric, embodies the weight of the past and the complexities of memory. In contrast, Phoenix represents the suburban sprawl and the relative newness of the Sun Belt, lacking the historical depth and cultural richness of New York. The Bronx, with its decaying neighborhoods and marginalized communities, embodies the grittier and more challenging aspects of urban life. Phoenix, on the other hand, represents a sanitized and consumer-driven suburban lifestyle, often associated with conformity and the erasure of individuality. (Hutcheon, 1989)

New York City, as a global financial and cultural hub, occupies a central position in the novel's narrative and symbolic landscape. Other cities, like Los Angeles and Phoenix, are portrayed as peripheral, reflecting the shifting power dynamics and cultural transformations of postwar America. While all the cities in the novel grapple with the challenges of waste and decay, the Bronx is particularly associated with environmental degradation and the accumulation of garbage. In contrast, Los Angeles and Phoenix are more closely linked to the consumerist spectacle, with their emphasis on advertising, media, and the commodification of urban spaces. (Kavadlo, 2001)

6.1. Contrasts and Comparisons with New York City:

The novel primarily focuses on New York City as the central urban setting in *Underworld*, but it does offer glimpses into other cities and provide some basis for contrasts and comparisons. It also allows for the inference of additional contrasts based on the characteristics and themes associated with each city.

Like New York, Los Angeles is portrayed as a sprawling metropolis shaped by consumer culture and the entertainment industry. Both cities represent the fast-paced,

materialistic nature of American society. Both cities feature artistic endeavors that attempt to grapple with the urban landscape and its challenges. In New York, this is represented by Ismael Munoz's graffiti and Klara Sax's art installations, while in Los Angeles, it's embodied by Sabato Rodia's Watts Towers. (Wolcott, 1997)

While New York is steeped in history and carries the weight of the past, Los Angeles is portrayed as a city of newness and reinvention, where individuals can shed their past identities and create new narratives for themselves.

The Watts Towers, built from discarded materials, stand in contrast to the towering skyscrapers of Manhattan. They represent a form of folk art and resilience amidst the urban sprawl, offering a counterpoint to the corporate-driven architecture of New York. Phoenix, like New York, is shaped by consumer culture and the pursuit of the American Dream. Nick Shay's relocation to Phoenix reflects his desire for upward mobility and a more comfortable lifestyle. Both cities are sites of waste and environmental degradation, though manifested in different ways. In New York, it's the Fresh Kills landfill, while in Phoenix, it's the vast desert landscape used for nuclear testing and waste disposal. (Passaro, 1997)

Phoenix represents the suburban sprawl and sanitized lifestyle of the Sun Belt, contrasting with the grittier and more historically layered urban landscape of New York. The anonymity and isolation experienced by Nick in Phoenix contrast with the vibrant, albeit chaotic, community life he remembers from the Bronx. Phoenix represents a loss of connection and a sense of rootlessness.

The desolate and contaminated landscape of the Kazakh Test Site stands in stark contrast to the bustling urban centers of New York and Los Angeles. It represents the devastating consequences of the Cold War and the environmental impact of technological progress. While New York and Los Angeles are associated with the pursuit of the American Dream and consumerism, the Kazakh Test Site symbolizes the dark side of progress and the destructive potential of human ambition. (Kavadlo, 2001)

New York, with its rich history and layered urban fabric, embodies the weight of the past. In contrast, cities like Phoenix and Los Angeles represent the relative newness and constant reinvention characteristic of certain parts of America. The Bronx, with its decaying neighborhoods and marginalized communities, embodies the grittier aspects of urban life. In contrast, Phoenix represents a sanitized and consumer-driven suburban lifestyle. New York City occupies a central position in the novel's narrative and symbolic landscape. Other cities are portrayed as peripheral, reflecting the shifting power dynamics and cultural transformations of postwar America. (Kavadlo, 2001)

While all the cities grapple with waste and decay, the Bronx is particularly associated with environmental degradation. In contrast, Los Angeles and Phoenix are more closely linked to the consumerist spectacle, with their emphasis on advertising and the commodification of urban spaces.

The contrasts and comparisons between New York City and other urban settings in *Underworld* serve to highlight the diversity and complexity of the American experience. Each city represents a different facet of the nation's cultural, social, and economic landscape, contributing to the novel's overarching exploration of identity, memory, and the human condition in the postmodern era.

6.2. Geographic Descriptions:

The geographic descriptions in *Underworld* are vivid and detailed, painting a complex portrait of the American landscape during the Cold War and its aftermath. The novel primarily focuses on New York City, particularly the Bronx, where the protagonist, Nick Shay, spent his formative years. The Bronx is depicted as a place of both decay and resilience, with its crumbling infrastructure, social problems, and environmental degradation juxtaposed with the vibrant energy of its communities and the artistic expressions of individuals like Ismael Munoz. (Clippinger)

The novel also ventures beyond New York, offering glimpses into other cities that provide contrasts and comparisons. Los Angeles, with its sprawling urban landscape and the iconic Watts Towers, represents both the allure and the superficiality of American consumer culture. Phoenix, Arizona, where Nick Shay resides in the later part of the novel, embodies the suburban sprawl and the sanitized, consumer-driven lifestyle of the Sun Belt. The desolate Kazakh Test Site in the novel's epilogue serves as a stark reminder of the Cold War's destructive legacy and the environmental consequences of technological progress. (Duvall, 1995)

These diverse geographic settings contribute to the novel's exploration of broader themes, such as the interplay between progress and decay, the complexities of memory and identity, and the human condition in the postmodern era. The detailed descriptions of urban and natural landscapes create a sense of place and atmosphere, immersing the reader in the sights, sounds, and textures of the American experience. The contrasts and comparisons between different cities further highlight the diversity and contradictions of the nation, showcasing the multifaceted nature of its cultural and social landscape. (Hutcheon, 1989)

6.3. Cinematic Approach to Urban Landscapes:

DeLillo employs a cinematic approach to portray urban landscapes in *Underworld*, drawing inspiration from techniques like montage and close-up shots to create a vivid and immersive experience for the reader.

6.4. Detailed Descriptions and Their Effects:

The novel is a demonstration of DeLillo's masterful use of detailed descriptions in *Underworld*, particularly in his portrayal of urban landscapes. These descriptions serve multiple purposes, contributing to the novel's overall impact and thematic exploration.

The detailed descriptions create a sense of sensory richness, immersing the reader in the sights, sounds, and even smells of the urban environment. The opening scene at the Polo Grounds, for instance, is filled with vivid details like the "rust-hulk of a structure," the

"enormous Chesterfield packs aslant on the scoreboards," and the "cropped grass." This sensory immersion helps the reader experience the city as a living, breathing entity, enhancing the novel's realism and emotional impact. (Mewshaw, 1998)

The descriptions often carry symbolic weight, adding depth and complexity to the narrative. The Fresh Kills landfill, described as a "soaring garbage" and a "mountain of wrack," symbolizes the excesses of consumerism and the environmental consequences of progress. The Bronx, depicted with its crumbling infrastructure and social problems, represents both urban decay and the resilience of its communities.

The detailed descriptions also contribute to character development and the creation of atmosphere. The portrayal of J. Edgar Hoover's meticulous filing system reflects his obsession with control and surveillance, while the depiction of Klara Sax's art studio reveals her creative process and artistic vision. The descriptions of the Bronx's streets and neighborhoods create a sense of both despair and hope, reflecting the complex realities of urban life. (Saltzman, 2000)

The level of detail in the descriptions can also influence the narrative pacing and tension. The meticulous depiction of the Texas Highway Killer's murder, captured on video, slows down the narrative, creating a sense of suspense and dread. In contrast, the fast-paced descriptions of the crowd's reactions during the baseball game contribute to the excitement and energy of the scene.

The detailed descriptions often serve as a vehicle for thematic exploration. The juxtaposition of consumer products and their warning labels in the "Better Things for Better Living Through Chemistry" section highlights the novel's critique of consumerism and its impact on individual lives. The descriptions of waste and decay throughout the novel underscore the environmental and social consequences of unchecked progress. (Osteen, 2000)

DeLillo's use of detailed descriptions in *Underworld* is a powerful literary tool that serves multiple purposes. It enhances the novel's realism, creates symbolic resonance, contributes to character development and atmosphere, influences narrative pacing, and facilitates thematic exploration. These descriptions, working in concert with other narrative techniques, contribute to the novel's overall impact and its enduring relevance in exploring the complexities of the human condition in the postmodern era.

7. Key Urban Scenes:

The novel highlights several key urban scenes that contribute to its exploration of urban landscapes and their symbolic meanings.

7.1. The Polo Grounds Opening Scene:

The opening scene of *Underworld*, set at the Polo Grounds during the iconic 1951 baseball game, is pivotal in establishing several key themes and narrative threads that resonate throughout the novel.

The scene masterfully intertwines the historical significance of the game (the Dodgers vs. Giants playoff, Thomson's "Shot Heard 'Round the World") with the personal experiences of individuals like Cotter Martin, a young black boy from Harlem who sneaks into the stadium. This juxtaposition highlights the interplay between grand historical narratives and the intimate lives of ordinary people, a recurring theme in the novel.

The detailed description of the stadium, the crowd, and the presence of iconic figures like J. Edgar Hoover and Frank Sinatra creates a sense of spectacle and nostalgia, capturing the essence of 1950s Americana. The scene evokes a sense of innocence and optimism that contrasts with the anxieties and uncertainties of the Cold War era that unfolds in subsequent chapters.

The presence of Russ Hodges, the Giants' radio commentator, underscores the media's role in shaping perceptions and creating narratives. Hodges's enthusiastic commentary, bordering on myth-making, highlights the power of language and storytelling to construct and distort reality.

The presence of Russ Hodges, the Giants' radio commentator, underscores the media's role in shaping perceptions and creating narratives. Hodges's enthusiastic commentary, bordering on myth-making, highlights the power of language and storytelling to construct and distort reality.

The news of the Soviet Union's second atomic bomb test, delivered to J. Edgar Hoover during the game, casts a shadow over the celebratory atmosphere. The juxtaposition of the baseball game with the looming threat of nuclear war introduces the novel's exploration of the Cold War's anxieties and its impact on the American psyche.

The Polo Grounds scene, with its rich details and symbolic resonance, serves as a microcosm of the novel's broader themes and concerns. It sets the stage for the complex narrative that unfolds, inviting readers to explore the interplay between history and memory, the power of the media, and the enduring tensions and contradictions of American society.

7.2. Other Significant Urban Settings:

Beyond the prominent focus on the Bronx and the Polo Grounds, *Underworld* features other significant urban settings that contribute to the novel's exploration of urban landscapes and their symbolic meanings.

The construction and presence of the Twin Towers throughout the narrative symbolize both progress and hubris. They represent America's economic and technological prowess, but also foreshadow the vulnerability and fragility of such power structures. The towers' eventual destruction in the 9/11 attacks, though not explicitly depicted in the novel, casts a haunting shadow over their symbolic presence in *Underworld*.

The novel vividly portrays the bustling streets and the labyrinthine subway system of New York, capturing the city's energy, diversity, and anonymity. These spaces become sites of both connection and isolation, reflecting the characters' struggles to navigate the complexities of urban life. The subway, in particular, serves as a recurring motif, representing the hidden networks and undercurrents that flow beneath the surface of the

city.

The Waste Management Conference in Mojave Springs, California setting highlights the environmental consequences of consumerism and the commodification of waste. The juxtaposition of the conference's sanitized environment with the vast desert landscape and the nearby nuclear test site underscores the novel's critique of unchecked progress and its impact on both human and natural environments.

The theater, where the characters watch Eisenstein's *Unterwelt*, represents the power of art and its potential to challenge and subvert dominant narratives. The film's depiction of oppression and resistance resonates with the novel's exploration of the Cold War's anxieties and the struggle for individual freedom in a world shaped by powerful systems and ideologies.

These additional urban settings, along with the Bronx and the Polo Grounds, create a rich and multifaceted portrait of the American landscape in *Underworld*. They contribute to the novel's exploration of broader themes, such as the interplay between progress and decay, the complexities of memory and identity, and the human condition in the postmodern era. By showcasing the diversity and contradictions of urban spaces, DeLillo invites readers to reflect on the ways in which these environments shape and reflect our lives, our desires, and our understanding of the world around us.

8. Characters and the City:

The interaction between characters and the urban landscape in *Underworld* reveals the city's role as an active agent in shaping identity, memory, and emotional experience. DeLillo constructs the city as more than a physical backdrop; it becomes a symbolic force that informs the psychological and social dimensions of his characters.

8.1. The City as a Shaper of Identity:

Urban spaces influence how characters perceive themselves and others, reinforcing social hierarchies while also enabling fluidity and reinvention. The city, with its anonymity and density, provides opportunities for both concealment and self-discovery.

8.2. The City as a Site of Memory:

Characters such as Nick Shay confront the weight of memory through their connection to specific urban locations. The Bronx, for instance, operates as a reservoir of personal and collective memory, linking private trauma to the city's historical narrative.

8.3. The City as a Social Arena:

The interactions among characters often unfold in public or semi-public spaces-

streets, stadiums, or subways-illustrating the city as a stage for encounters that reflect broader cultural and political tensions.

8.4. The City as a Mirror of Inner States

DeLillo aligns the characters' inner turmoil with the urban environment, using images of decay, fragmentation, or renewal to echo psychological and emotional conditions. In this way, the city becomes a mirror through which personal struggles acquire symbolic resonance.

9. Influence of the City on Nick Shay's Relationship with Urban Spaces:

The urban settings in *Underworld* significantly shape Nick Shay's character and experiences, influencing his memories, relationships, and sense of self. The following points illustrate the profound impact of the city on Nick:

9.1. The Bronx as the Locus of Memory and Trauma:

The Bronx, where Nick spent his formative years, serves as a repository of both cherished memories and unresolved traumas. The streets, buildings, and even the graffiti art trigger flashbacks to his childhood, his complicated relationship with his parents, and the fateful incident that led to his shooting of George Manza. The city becomes a physical manifestation of Nick's past, shaping his present anxieties and his search for redemption.

9.2. The City as a Mirror of Emotional States:

The urban landscapes often reflect Nick's emotional states. The decaying neighborhoods and the omnipresent garbage in the Bronx mirror his feelings of guilt and despair, while the clean and orderly streets of Phoenix, where he later resides, reflect his attempts to create a sanitized and controlled life. The city becomes an external projection of Nick's internal struggles.

9.3. Urban Anonymity and Isolation:

The vastness and anonymity of the city contribute to Nick's feelings of isolation and disconnection. Despite his successful career and material comforts, he grapples with a sense of emptiness and longing for deeper connections. The urban environment, with its bustling crowds and impersonal interactions, reinforces his sense of detachment and his yearning for a more meaningful existence.

9.4. The City as a Catalyst for Change:

The city also serves as a catalyst for change and transformation in Nick's life. His return to the Bronx in the later part of the novel forces him to confront his past and grapple with the consequences of his actions. The encounter with the graffiti artist, Ismael Munoz, and his connection with Klara Sax offer glimpses of hope and the possibility of redemption amidst the urban decay.

9.5. The City as a Source of Nostalgia:

Despite its challenges and complexities, the city also evokes a sense of nostalgia for Nick. He longs for the "days of disorder" in the Bronx, when he felt more alive and connected to the world. This nostalgia reflects a yearning for a simpler time and a deeper sense of belonging, which he struggles to find in his sanitized suburban life.

The city plays a pivotal role in shaping Nick Shay's character and experiences in *Underworld*. The urban landscapes serve as a constant reminder of his past, his emotional states, and his ongoing search for meaning and connection. The city's complexities and contradictions mirror Nick's own internal struggles, highlighting the challenges and possibilities of navigating urban life in the postmodern era.

10. Urban Environments as Reflections of Internal States:

The urban environments in *Underworld* serve as powerful mirrors, reflecting the internal states of the characters who inhabit them. The documents you provided highlight several instances where the external world of the city becomes an extension of the characters' inner lives.

10.1. Memory and Trauma:

The theme of memory and trauma is deeply embedded in the urban fabric of *Underworld*, particularly in the portrayal of the Bronx and its impact on Nick Shay. The following points highlight the intricate relationship between memory.

The Bronx serves as a physical embodiment of Nick's past, with its streets, buildings, and landmarks triggering a flood of memories, both cherished and painful. The novel suggests that the urban environment itself becomes a repository of personal and collective memories, shaping individuals' identities and their understanding of the past.

The Bronx is also associated with trauma, particularly the incident in which Nick, as a teenager, fatally shot George Manza. This traumatic event haunts Nick throughout his life, influencing his decisions and relationships. The urban landscape becomes a constant reminder of his guilt and the unresolved consequences of his actions. (Hutcheon, 1989)

The novel challenges the notion of memory as a reliable source of truth. Nick's

memories are often fragmented, distorted, and influenced by external narratives, such as media representations and the stories told by others. The urban environment, with its constant changes and transformations, further contributes to the instability of memory, highlighting its subjective and elusive nature.

Nick's return to the Bronx in the later part of the novel represents a journey of confronting his past and seeking redemption. The urban landscape becomes a battleground for his internal struggles, as he attempts to reconcile his memories and traumas with his present life. The novel suggests that the city, despite its challenges, can also offer opportunities for healing and transformation.

The novel also explores the collective trauma of the Cold War era, with its anxieties about nuclear annihilation and the pervasive fear of the "other." The urban environment, particularly the "Pocket" in New Mexico, symbolizes the hidden systems of power and control that shaped this era, leaving a lasting impact on the characters' psyches and their perceptions of the world.

The exploration of memory and trauma in *Underworld* is deeply intertwined with the novel's portrayal of urban spaces. The city becomes a physical manifestation of the characters' past experiences, shaping their present lives and their understanding of themselves. The novel's complex narrative structure, with its fragmented memories and shifting perspectives, further emphasizes the fragility and subjectivity of memory, highlighting the challenges of navigating the urban landscape and confronting the traumas of the past.

10.2. Aspirations and Identity:

The urban settings in *Underworld* play a crucial role in shaping the characters' aspirations and identities. The dynamic and often challenging urban environments serve as a backdrop against which the characters grapple with their dreams, ambitions, and sense of self.

The Bronx, with its working-class neighborhoods and immigrant communities, represents the struggles and aspirations associated with the American Dream. Characters like Nick Shay and Ismael Munoz navigate the complexities of this environment, striving for success and recognition while also grappling with the limitations and contradictions of their social and economic realities. The Bronx becomes a symbol of both the promise and the disillusionment of the American Dream, reflecting the characters' aspirations and their evolving identities in the face of societal challenges. (Mewshaw, 1998)

The urban environment, with its anonymity and diverse opportunities, offers characters the chance to reinvent themselves and pursue their dreams. Nick Shay's journey from a troubled youth in the Bronx to a successful waste management executive in Phoenix exemplifies this theme. The city becomes a stage where characters can shed their past identities and create new narratives for themselves.

The urban landscape also fosters artistic expression and the search for meaning. Characters like Klara Sax and Ismael Munoz use their art to reclaim and transform urban spaces, expressing their unique perspectives and challenging dominant narratives. The city

becomes a canvas for their creativity, reflecting their aspirations to create beauty and meaning amidst the chaos and decay. (DeLillo, *Underworld*, 1997)

The urban environment can be both isolating and a source of community and belonging. Characters like Sister Edgar and the residents of the Bronx squat find solace and connection in their shared struggles and collective efforts to create a sense of place and identity within the city. The urban landscape becomes a space where individuals navigate their sense of belonging, seeking connection and purpose amidst the anonymity and fragmentation of modern life.

The urban environment can also be a site of disillusionment and the loss of innocence. Nick Shay's traumatic experience in the Bronx, where he fatally shoots George Manza, marks a turning point in his life, shattering his youthful idealism and forcing him to confront the harsh realities of the world. The city becomes a symbol of lost innocence and the complexities of moral choices in a challenging environment. (Tanner, 1998)

The urban settings in *Underworld* play a crucial role in shaping the characters' aspirations and identities. The cities, with their diverse opportunities and challenges, become mirrors reflecting the characters' dreams, ambitions, and struggles for meaning and belonging. The novel's exploration of the relationship between individuals and their urban environments offers a profound insight into the human condition in the postmodern era, highlighting the complexities of navigating the urban landscape and forging a sense of self amidst its ever-changing dynamics.

11. Migration and Mobility.

The theme of migration and mobility is woven into the fabric of *Underworld*, reflecting the characters' journeys across physical and psychological landscapes. The novel explores the complexities of movement, displacement, and the search for belonging in a rapidly changing world.

The novel features characters who migrate across vast distances, both within the United States and internationally. Nick Shay's journey from the Bronx to Phoenix represents a physical and psychological relocation, as he attempts to escape his past and create a new life. The movement of the baseball across different owners and locations further emphasizes the theme of physical migration and the interconnectedness of lives and events.

The novel also explores the concept of social mobility, particularly in the context of the American Dream. Characters like Nick Shay and Klara Sax achieve upward social mobility through their careers and artistic endeavors, while others, like Ismael Munoz, remain trapped in marginalized communities. The novel suggests that social mobility is often elusive and fraught with challenges, reflecting the complexities of class and identity in American society. (Duvall, 1995)

The characters also experience internal migrations and shifts in their psychological landscapes. Nick Shay's journey of confronting his past and seeking redemption represents a form of psychological mobility, as he attempts to reconcile his memories and traumas with his present life. The novel suggests that true mobility involves not just physical

movement but also the ability to navigate and transform one's internal world.

The urban environments in *Underworld* are inherently dynamic and fluid, reflecting the constant movement and flux of modern life. The characters navigate the bustling streets, crowded subways, and ever-changing landscapes, mirroring their own journeys of migration and self-discovery. The city becomes a symbol of both the possibilities and the challenges of mobility in the postmodern era.

The urban environments in *Underworld* are inherently dynamic and fluid, reflecting the constant movement and flux of modern life. The characters navigate the bustling streets, crowded subways, and ever-changing landscapes, mirroring their own journeys of migration and self-discovery. The city becomes a symbol of both the possibilities and the challenges of mobility in the postmodern era.

11.1. Depiction of Migration Across Cities:

The depiction of migration across cities in *Underworld* is closely tied to the novel's exploration of the American Dream, social mobility, and the search for identity and belonging. The characters' movements across different urban landscapes reflect their aspirations, struggles, and the changing dynamics of American society during the Cold War and its aftermath.

The most prominent example of migration is Nick Shay's relocation from the Bronx to Phoenix. This physical journey symbolizes his attempt to escape his troubled past and reinvent himself. The contrast between the decaying urban landscape of the Bronx and the sanitized suburban sprawl of Phoenix reflects Nick's desire for a fresh start and a more controlled life. However, the novel suggests that true transformation involves confronting one's past, not escaping it. Nick's eventual return to the Bronx signifies his need to reconcile with his memories and traumas in order to find a sense of closure and redemption.

The relocation of the Brooklyn Dodgers to Los Angeles in 1958 represents a significant cultural shift and the commodification of sports and urban identity. The move reflects the changing dynamics of American society, with the rise of the Sun Belt and the decline of traditional urban centers. The Dodgers' relocation also symbolizes the loss of innocence and nostalgia associated with the 1951 baseball game, highlighting the novel's exploration of memory and the passage of time.

The novel also depicts the migration of waste, both literal and metaphorical, across different urban landscapes. The Fresh Kills landfill on Staten Island becomes a repository for the detritus of consumer culture, symbolizing the environmental consequences of unchecked progress. The novel also explores the international trade in toxic waste, highlighting the global impact of American consumerism and the exploitation of less developed countries. The migration of waste serves as a powerful metaphor for the interconnectedness of global systems and the far-reaching consequences of human actions.

The depiction of migration across cities in *Underworld* is a complex and multifaceted theme that contributes to the novel's exploration of identity, memory, and the changing dynamics of American society. The characters' physical and psychological journeys across

different urban landscapes reflect their aspirations, struggles, and the search for belonging in a world characterized by constant movement and transformation. The novel suggests that migration, while offering the possibility of new beginnings and self-reinvention, also entails the challenges of displacement, loss, and the need to confront one's past.

11.2. Economic and Personal Reasons for Mobility:

The characters in *Underworld* are driven to migrate and seek mobility for a complex interplay of economic and personal reasons, reflecting the dynamic and often turbulent nature of American society during the Cold War and its aftermath.

The desire for upward social mobility and financial success is a powerful motivator for many characters. Nick Shay's relocation from the Bronx to Phoenix exemplifies this pursuit, as he seeks to escape the limitations of his working-class background and achieve a more prosperous life. The novel suggests that the American Dream, while alluring, can also be elusive and fraught with challenges.

The economic boom of the postwar era created new opportunities and possibilities for individuals seeking to improve their lives. The characters' migrations often reflect their pursuit of these opportunities, whether it's Nick Shay's career advancement in waste management or Klara Sax's success in the art world. The urban landscape, with its diverse industries and potential for growth, becomes a magnet for those seeking economic advancement.

The novel also portrays the negative consequences of economic disparity and the struggles of those left behind in marginalized communities. The Bronx, with its high poverty rates and limited opportunities, serves as a stark reminder of the economic challenges faced by many Americans. The characters' migrations often reflect their attempts to escape these harsh realities and find a more secure and prosperous future.

The desire to escape personal traumas and the burdens of the past is a significant motivator for migration. Nick Shay's relocation to Phoenix is partly driven by his desire to distance himself from the guilt and memories associated with his childhood in the Bronx. The novel suggests that while physical relocation can offer temporary relief, true healing and redemption require confronting one's past.

The characters' migrations also reflect their search for identity and belonging in a rapidly changing world. The urban environment, with its diverse communities and opportunities for self-reinvention, becomes a space where individuals can explore different facets of themselves and forge new identities. However, the novel also highlights the challenges of finding a sense of belonging in an increasingly fragmented and anonymous society.

The characters' migrations are not solely driven by economic or external factors but also by their personal desires and aspirations for a more fulfilling life. Klara Sax's pursuit of her artistic vision leads her to relocate to the desert, where she can create her large-scale art project. The novel suggests that personal fulfillment often involves stepping outside of one's comfort zone and embracing new challenges and experiences.

The characters' migrations in *Underworld* are motivated by a complex interplay of economic and personal reasons. The pursuit of the American Dream, the lure of opportunity, the escape from trauma, the search for identity, and the desire for personal fulfillment all contribute to their movements across different urban landscapes. The novel's exploration of these motivations offers a nuanced and insightful perspective on the complexities of migration and mobility in the context of postwar American society.

12. Fluidity of Identity in Urban Contexts:

The urban settings in *Underworld* serve as dynamic spaces where identities are fluid and constantly evolving, reflecting the complexities and uncertainties of the postmodern era. The characters' interactions with the urban landscape, their encounters with diverse communities, and their exposure to various cultural influences contribute to the fluidity of their identities.

The cities in *Underworld*, particularly New York, are portrayed as melting pots of diverse cultures and identities. The characters navigate this multicultural landscape, encountering individuals from different backgrounds and social classes. This exposure to diversity challenges their preconceived notions and forces them to confront the fluidity of their own identities.

The urban environment, with its vastness and anonymity, allows characters to experiment with different personas and explore hidden aspects of themselves. The city becomes a space where individuals can shed their past identities and create new narratives for themselves, reflecting the postmodern notion of the self as a fragmented and constantly evolving entity. (Clippinger)

The pervasive influence of consumer culture and mass media in urban settings further contributes to the fluidity of identity. The characters are bombarded with images and messages that shape their desires, aspirations, and perceptions of self. The novel suggests that in a world saturated by consumerism and spectacle, identities become malleable and subject to external influences.

The characters' search for belonging and community in the urban landscape often leads to the adoption of new identities and affiliations. The Bronx squatters, for instance, create a sense of community and shared purpose amidst the urban decay, forging new identities based on their collective struggles and aspirations. The novel suggests that the search for belonging can lead to the formation of new identities and the redefinition of existing ones.

The novel's non-linear narrative structure and its focus on memory and trauma further emphasize the fragmented and fluid nature of identity. The characters' memories are often unreliable and subject to revision, reflecting the postmodern notion of the self as a collection of fragmented narratives and experiences. The urban environment, with its constant changes and transformations, mirrors this fragmentation, highlighting the challenges of maintaining a stable sense of self in a constantly evolving world. (Duvall, 1995)

The urban settings in *Underworld* serve as fertile ground for exploring the fluidity of

identity in the postmodern era. The characters' interactions with the city, its diverse communities, and its cultural influences contribute to the constant evolution and redefinition of their sense of self. The novel challenges the notion of a fixed and stable identity, suggesting that in the dynamic and complex urban landscape, individuals are constantly negotiating and reinventing themselves in response to their surroundings and experiences.

12.1. Convergence and Dispersion of Lives:

The theme of convergence and dispersion in *Underworld* is intricately linked to the novel's exploration of interconnectedness and the complexities of human relationships within the vast urban landscapes. The narrative weaves together the lives of numerous characters, highlighting the ways in which their paths intersect, diverge, and ultimately converge again, often in unexpected and meaningful ways.

The journey of the baseball, from the 1951 game to its eventual acquisition by Nick Shay, serves as a physical representation of the convergence and dispersion of lives. The ball passes through the hands of various individuals, connecting their stories and highlighting the ripple effects of seemingly insignificant events. The baseball's journey symbolizes the interconnectedness of human experiences and the ways in which our lives intersect, even across vast distances and time periods.

The novel is filled with chance encounters and coincidences that bring characters together, often revealing hidden connections and shared histories. Nick Shay's unexpected meeting with Klara Sax, his former high school classmate, and his later encounter with Brian Glassic, his wife's lover, exemplify this theme. These encounters highlight the unpredictable nature of life and the ways in which our paths can intersect in surprising and meaningful ways. (DeLillo, *Libra*, 1988)

The urban environments in *Underworld*, particularly New York City, serve as spaces where lives converge and disperse. The bustling streets, crowded subways, and diverse neighborhoods create opportunities for chance encounters and the formation of unexpected connections. The city becomes a melting pot of human experiences, where individuals from different backgrounds and social classes intersect and interact, shaping each other's lives in subtle and profound ways. (Fitzgerald, 1993)

The Cold War serves as a backdrop against which the characters' lives converge and disperse. The anxieties and uncertainties of the era, the threat of nuclear annihilation, and the pervasive fear of the "other" create a sense of shared experience and interconnectedness, even as individuals grapple with their own personal struggles and aspirations. The novel suggests that historical events, like the Cold War, have a ripple effect that extends across generations and continents, shaping the lives of individuals in ways they may not even realize.

The novel's non-linear narrative structure, with its fragmented memories and shifting perspectives, initially creates a sense of dispersion and disorientation. However, as the narrative progresses, the seemingly disparate threads begin to converge, revealing hidden connections and patterns. This narrative convergence mirrors the characters' own journeys

of self-discovery and their growing awareness of the interconnectedness of their lives and experiences. (LeClair, 1987)

The theme of convergence and dispersion in *Underworld* is central to the novel's exploration of human relationships and the complexities of the postmodern era. The characters' lives intersect, diverge, and ultimately converge again, often in unexpected and meaningful ways, reflecting the interconnectedness of human experiences and the enduring power of the past to shape our present and future. The urban landscape, with its dynamic and diverse spaces, serves as a stage where these convergences and dispersions play out, highlighting the complexities and possibilities of human connection in a rapidly changing world. (Osteen, 2000)

13. Historical and Cultural Context.

The historical and cultural context of *Underworld* is deeply intertwined with the Cold War era and its profound impact on American society. The novel spans several decades, from the 1950s to the 1990s, capturing the anxieties, tensions, and cultural shifts that defined this period.

14. Urban Transformation over Decades:

The novel highlights the dynamic urban transformations that occurred over the decades, particularly focusing on the shift from the post-WWII era to the postmodern late 20th century. The changes are not merely physical but also reflect deeper cultural, social, and economic shifts.

The novel depicts the era of post-WWII as a time of relative innocence and optimism, symbolized by the bustling crowds at the Polo Grounds and the sense of community in neighborhoods like the Bronx. However, this era is also marked by the looming threat of the Cold War and the anxieties associated with nuclear proliferation. The urban landscape reflects this duality, showcasing both the vibrancy of American life and the underlying tensions and fears.

The later decades witness a transformation towards a postmodern landscape dominated by consumerism, media spectacle, and a sense of fragmentation and alienation. The rise of suburban sprawl, the proliferation of advertising, and the increasing reliance on technology contribute to a sense of disconnection and the erosion of traditional communities. The urban environment becomes a reflection of these changes, with its decaying neighborhoods, anonymous crowds, and the dominance of commercial interests. (Wallace, 2001)

The postwar economic boom led to a surge in consumerism, with material possessions becoming symbols of success and identity. The documents describe the proliferation of consumer goods and the influence of advertising in shaping desires and aspirations. The urban landscape is transformed by the presence of billboards, shopping malls, and other symbols of consumer culture.

Technological advancements, from television to the internet, revolutionized

communication and information access. The documents explore how these changes impacted social interactions, individual perceptions, and the construction of reality. The urban environment becomes increasingly mediated and shaped by the virtual world.

The rise of suburbia and the atomization of society contributed to the decline of traditional communities and a sense of belonging. The documents depict the Bronx as a symbol of this decline, with its decaying neighborhoods and fragmented social fabric. The urban landscape reflects the loss of connection and the challenges of forging meaningful relationships in the postmodern era.

The documents highlight the environmental degradation and the accumulation of waste that accompanied industrial and technological progress. The Fresh Kills landfill serves as a stark reminder of the ecological costs of consumerism and the unsustainable practices of modern society. The urban landscape becomes a dumping ground for the detritus of progress, reflecting the novel's critique of unchecked growth and its impact on the environment.

The urban transformation depicted in *Underworld* is a complex and multifaceted process, reflecting the broader cultural, social, and economic shifts of the postwar era. The novel's portrayal of the changing urban landscape serves as a powerful metaphor for the challenges and contradictions of the American experience in the late 20th century.

14.1. Cold War and Civil Rights Movement:

DeLillo highlights the intricate relationship between the Cold War and the Civil Rights Movement in *Underworld*, showcasing how these two historical forces intersected and shaped the American landscape and its inhabitants.

The Cold War, with its ideological conflict and anxieties about nuclear annihilation, serves as a pervasive backdrop in the novel. The characters' lives are influenced by the tensions and uncertainties of this era, shaping their perceptions of the world and their interactions with others. The novel suggests that the Cold War fostered a sense of national unity while also fueling paranoia and suspicion, impacting both personal and collective experiences.

The novel also touches upon the Civil Rights Movement and the struggles for equality and social justice during this period. The characters' experiences, particularly those of African Americans like Cotter Martin, reflect the ongoing fight against racism and discrimination. The novel suggests that while progress was made, the legacy of racial inequality continued to haunt American society.

The documents highlight how the Cold War and the Civil Rights Movement intersected and influenced each other. The anxieties and fears of the Cold War era often exacerbated racial tensions, while the Civil Rights Movement challenged the notion of American exceptionalism and exposed the contradictions between the nation's ideals and its realities. The novel suggests that the struggle for racial equality was intertwined with the broader geopolitical conflicts of the time.

The urban environments in *Underworld*, particularly the Bronx, become sites where the tensions of the Cold War and the Civil Rights Movement play out. The novel depicts the

struggles of marginalized communities, particularly African Americans, to navigate the complexities of urban life and fight for their rights and recognition. The urban landscape reflects the social and political struggles of the era, highlighting the ongoing battle for equality and justice.

Underworld explores the complex relationship between the Cold War and the Civil Rights Movement, showcasing how these two historical forces intersected and shaped the American experience. The novel's portrayal of urban landscapes and the characters' experiences reflects the tensions, anxieties, and struggles for change that defined this era. By examining the interplay between these two historical forces, DeLillo offers a nuanced and insightful perspective on the challenges and contradictions of American society during the Cold War and its aftermath. (Saltzman, 2000)

15. Integration of Cultural References:

Don DeLillo skillfully integrates a wide array of cultural references into *Underworld*, enriching the narrative and deepening its thematic exploration. These references span various domains, including:

15.1. Historical Events and Figures:

The novel incorporates real-life events and figures, such as the 1951 baseball game, the Cold War, J. Edgar Hoover, and the Cuban Missile Crisis. These references ground the narrative in a specific historical context, allowing DeLillo to explore the impact of these events on individual lives and collective consciousness.

15.2. Popular Culture and Media:

The novel references popular culture icons like Frank Sinatra, Jackie Gleason, and Jayne Mansfield, as well as cultural phenomena like the Rolling Stones and the Zapruder film. These references reflect the pervasive influence of mass media and consumer culture on American society, highlighting their role in shaping desires, aspirations, and perceptions of reality.

15.3. Art and Literature:

The novel engages with various forms of art and literature, including Bruegel's painting *The Triumph of Death*, Eisenstein's film *Unterwelt*, and the writings of T.S. Eliot and James Joyce. These references enrich the narrative's aesthetic and intellectual dimensions, inviting readers to make connections and draw parallels between the novel's themes and broader cultural and artistic movements.

15.4. Religion and Spirituality:

The novel incorporates religious and spiritual references, such as the anonymous

14th-century mystical text *The Cloud of Unknowing* and the writings of St. John of the Cross. These references contribute to the novel's exploration of faith, doubt, and the search for meaning in a postmodern world. The juxtaposition of religious imagery with consumerist symbols and the spectacle of media further highlights the novel's critique of the commodification and displacement of spiritual values.

The integration of these cultural references serves several purposes in *Underworld*:

15.4.1. Enhancing Realism and Historical Context:

The inclusion of real-life events, figures, and cultural phenomena grounds the narrative in a specific historical and cultural context, enhancing its realism and allowing readers to connect with the characters and their experiences.

15.4.2. Deepening Thematic Exploration:

The cultural references often serve as metaphors or symbols, adding depth and complexity to the novel's exploration of themes such as memory, identity, consumerism, and the human condition.

15.4.3. Creating Intertextual Connections:

The references to other works of art and literature invite readers to make connections and draw parallels, enriching their understanding of the novel and its place within broader cultural and artistic traditions.

15.4.4. Challenging and Engaging the Reader:

The wide array of cultural references challenges readers to actively engage with the text, making connections and interpreting the symbolic meanings embedded within the narrative. This intertextual engagement enhances the reading experience and encourages deeper reflection on the novel's themes and messages.

The integration of cultural references in *Underworld* is a testament to DeLillo's literary skill and his ability to weave a rich and multifaceted tapestry of American life. These references contribute to the novel's realism, thematic depth, and intellectual engagement, making it a powerful and enduring work of literature.

15.4.5. Art, Music, Sports, and Media:

The significant role of art, music, sports, and media in shaping the cultural landscape of *Underworld* lies reflecting the complexities of American society during the Cold War and its aftermath.

Klara Sax's ambitious project of painting decommissioned B-52 bombers in the Arizona desert serves as a powerful symbol of artistic reclamation and transformation. The project repurposes the remnants of war into a massive artwork, challenging viewers to

reconsider the legacy of the Cold War and the destructive potential of technology.

The graffiti art of Ismael Munoz, known as Moonman 157, represents a form of resistance and self-expression within marginalized communities. His vibrant murals on subway trains and the Bronx Wall memorialize the forgotten victims of urban violence and social injustice, offering a counter-narrative to the dominant cultural discourse. (O'Donnell, 2000)

The screening of Eisenstein's fictional film *Unterwelt* serves as a metafictional commentary on the power of art to challenge and subvert dominant narratives. The film's depiction of oppression and resistance resonates with the novel's exploration of the Cold War anxieties and the struggle for individual freedom. (Wallace, 2001)

The documentary film about the Rolling Stones' 1972 tour captures the excesses and contradictions of rock 'n' roll culture. The film's depiction of drug abuse, self-destructive behavior, and the commodification of rebellion reflects the novel's critique of consumerism and the disillusionment of the counterculture movement.

The nostalgic music playing in the condom store creates a sense of irony and contrast, juxtaposing the innocence of the past with the commodified sexuality of the present. The music serves as a reminder of the passage of time and the ways in which cultural values and norms have shifted over the decades.

The iconic 1951 baseball game between the Giants and the Dodgers serves as a touchstone for the novel's exploration of memory, nostalgia, and the complexities of American identity. The game, with its dramatic ending and cultural significance, becomes a symbol of a lost era of innocence and optimism, contrasting with the anxieties and uncertainties of the Cold War. (Clippinger)

The novel also critiques the commodification of sports and the ways in which athletes become symbols of consumer culture and national identity. The portrayal of Bobby Thomson and Ralph Branca as aging celebrities highlights the fleeting nature of fame and the exploitation of athletes for commercial purposes.

The novel explores the pervasive influence of television and film in shaping perceptions of reality and constructing narratives. The characters' obsession with the *Zapruder* film and the "Cocksucker Blues" documentary reflects the media's ability to capture and distort historical events, blurring the lines between truth and fiction. (Saltzman, 2000)

The media's constant pursuit of sensationalism and its focus on the extraordinary contribute to the creation of a culture of spectacle. The novel critiques the media's tendency to prioritize entertainment over substance and its role in shaping public opinion and reinforcing dominant ideologies.

The integration of art, music, sports, and media in *Underworld* creates a rich and multi-layered tapestry of American culture during the Cold War and its aftermath. These cultural references serve as both mirrors and lenses, reflecting the complexities of the era and offering insights into the characters' aspirations, struggles, and search for meaning in a rapidly changing world.

16. Critical Analysis.

17. Urban literary theories:

The novel refers to various urban literary theories and concepts that can be applied to the analysis of Underworld. The most prominent ones include:

17.1. The Systems Novel:

The novel aims to analyze Underworld within the framework of the systems novel, a genre that explores the complex interactions between individuals and the systems that govern their lives. The novel's portrayal of characters navigating the interconnected systems of the Cold War, consumer culture, and waste management aligns with this theoretical framework. (Osteen, 2000)

17.2. Postmodernism:

A fundamental theory relevance of Postmodernism influence DeLillo's writing style and thematic concerns. The novel's fragmented narrative, its blurring of boundaries between reality and fiction, and its critique of consumerism and media spectacle are characteristic of postmodern literature. The "Don dellilo.docx" file specifically discusses the debate surrounding DeLillo's relationship to postmodernism, questioning whether his work is a symptom, diagnosis, or endorsement of the postmodern condition. (O'Donnell, 2000)

17.3. The City as Spectacle:

The "In the American cities represented in Don DeLillo.docx" file references Guy Debord's concept of the spectacle, suggesting that the overabundance of visual stimuli in urban environments paradoxically prevents city dwellers from truly seeing their surroundings. The novel's portrayal of the commodification of urban spaces and the media's role in constructing reality aligns with this theory.

These urban literary theories and concepts provide a framework for analyzing the complex portrayal of urban spaces in Underworld. They offer insights into the novel's thematic concerns, narrative techniques, and its critique of postmodern American society. By engaging with these theories, readers can gain a deeper understanding of the novel's exploration of the relationship between individuals and their urban environments, and the challenges of navigating the complexities of modern life.(Dragan, 2014)

17.4. Psychoanalytic Theory:

Underworld themes and characters within the novel lend themselves to such an analysis. The text provides ample material to explore the characters' psyches, motivations, and anxieties through a psychoanalytic lens.

The novel hints at the possibility of interpreting Nick Shay's relationship with his brother's teacher's wife through the lens of the Oedipus complex. The text notes that Nick's father abandoned his family, potentially creating a void that Nick seeks to fill through this illicit relationship. The complex dynamics between Nick, his brother, and the teacher's wife could be further analyzed using psychoanalytic theory to understand Nick's underlying motivations and desires.

The recurring motif of death and the characters' anxieties about mortality could be interpreted through the Freudian concept of the death drive. The novel's preoccupation with waste, decay, and the destructive potential of technology could be seen as manifestations of this drive. The characters' actions, such as Nick's shooting of George Manza and his fascination with the baseball as a symbol of loss, could be analyzed in terms of their relationship to the death drive and the unconscious desire for self-destruction.

The characters' various coping mechanisms and their attempts to suppress or deny their anxieties and traumas could be examined through the lens of psychoanalytic defense mechanisms. For example, Nick Shay's relocation to Phoenix and his pursuit of a sanitized and controlled life could be interpreted as a form of repression, an attempt to bury his past and avoid confronting his guilt. The novel's exploration of memory and its fragmented nature could also be analyzed in terms of the characters' attempts to repress or distort traumatic experiences. (Knight, 1999)

The novel's rich symbolism and its focus on dreams, fantasies, and hidden desires lend themselves to a psychoanalytic interpretation. Baseball, for instance, could be seen as a symbol of lost innocence and the unattainable object of desire. The characters' interactions with the urban landscape, with its hidden meanings and symbolic representations, could also be analyzed in terms of their unconscious desires and anxieties. (Passaro, 1997)

The novel's rich symbolism and its focus on dreams, fantasies, and hidden desires lend themselves to a psychoanalytic interpretation. The baseball, for instance, could be seen as a symbol of lost innocence and the unattainable object of desire. The characters' interactions with the urban landscape, with its hidden meanings and symbolic representations, could also be analyzed in terms of their unconscious desires and anxieties. (Duvall, 1995)

17.5. Marxist Theory:

The novel's themes and portrayals offer fertile ground for applying Marxist literary theory. The following points highlight potential areas where a Marxist lens could illuminate the novel's complexities:

17.6. Capitalism and Consumerism:

The novel extensively critiques capitalism and its impact on American society. The pervasive influence of consumer culture, the commodification of everyday life, and the characters' relentless pursuit of material possessions align with Marxist concerns about the

alienating and dehumanizing effects of capitalism.

17.7. Class Struggle and Social Inequality:

The novel portrays a stark contrast between the privileged elite and the marginalized underclass. The disparity between the wealthy residents of Manhattan and the struggling communities in the Bronx highlights the social and economic inequalities inherent in capitalist systems. The characters' aspirations for upward mobility and their struggles against systemic barriers can be analyzed through a Marxist lens, examining the power dynamics and class conflicts that shape their lives. (O'Donnell, 2000)

17.8. The Commodification of Culture and Art:

The novel critiques the commodification of culture and art, highlighting how artistic expression is often subsumed by market forces and used to reinforce dominant ideologies. The portrayal of the Rolling Stones in the "Blues" documentary and the commercialization of Klara Sax's art project exemplify this theme. A Marxist analysis could explore how capitalism shapes and constrains artistic production and consumption.

17.9. The Role of the Media:

The novel's portrayal of the media's influence on public perception and the construction of reality aligns with Marxist critiques of the media as a tool for ideological control and the reinforcement of capitalist values. The characters' obsession with television, advertising, and the spectacle of celebrity culture can be seen as evidence of the media's power to shape and manipulate individual desires and beliefs.

17.10. The Cold War and Imperialism:

The novel's exploration of the Cold War and its impact on American society can also be analyzed through a Marxist lens. The ideological conflict between capitalism and communism, the arms race, and the pursuit of global dominance can be seen as manifestations of capitalist expansion and imperialism. The novel's critique of American foreign policy and its portrayal of the exploitation of less developed countries align with Marxist concerns about the global reach of capitalism and its negative consequences. (Dragan, 2014)

By applying Marxist theory to *Underworld*, one could uncover the underlying power structures, class conflicts, and ideological forces that shape the characters' lives and the broader social landscape. This approach could offer a critical perspective on the novel's portrayal of American society, highlighting the ways in which capitalism and its attendant systems of power and control impact individuals and communities. (Fitzgerald, 1993)

17.11. Cultural Criticism:

Don DeLillo offers various perspectives on how *Underworld* functions as a work of cultural criticism, dissecting and commenting on the complexities and contradictions of American society during the Cold War and its aftermath. The novel's engagement with themes like consumerism, media, waste, and the legacy of the Cold War allows for a multifaceted critique of American culture.

The novel exposes the hollow promises of consumer culture and its impact on individual values and social relationships. The characters' relentless pursuit of material possessions, often driven by advertising and media manipulation, is portrayed as a futile attempt to fill an existential void. The accumulation of waste, symbolized by the Fresh Kills landfill, serves as a stark reminder of the environmental and spiritual costs of unchecked consumerism. The novel suggests that the pursuit of material wealth often leads to alienation, isolation, and the erosion of genuine human connection. (Hutcheon, 1989)

The novel critiques the media's power to construct and distort reality, shaping public perceptions and reinforcing dominant ideologies. The characters' obsession with television, advertising, and the spectacle of celebrity culture highlights the media's influence in creating a culture of superficiality and distraction. The novel questions the authenticity of mediated experiences and challenges readers to critically engage with the information they consume.

The novel explores the lingering anxieties and paranoia of the Cold War era, even as the conflict itself fades into the past. The characters' experiences reflect the ongoing impact of the Cold War on American identity, shaping their fears, desires, and relationships. The novel suggests that the Cold War's legacy continues to haunt American society, influencing its foreign policy, its cultural values, and its collective psyche. (Clippinger)

The novel offers a nuanced critique of the American Dream, highlighting its promises and its pitfalls. The characters' pursuit of success, material wealth, and social mobility is often met with disillusionment and the realization that the dream is not equally accessible to all. The novel explores the complexities of class, race, and identity in American society, challenging the notion of a monolithic national narrative.

The novel also suggests that art and cultural expression can serve as a form of resistance and critique. The characters' engagement with art, music, and literature allows them to challenge dominant narratives, express their individuality, and find meaning in a world saturated by consumerism and spectacle. The novel celebrates the power of art to offer alternative perspectives and to create spaces for reflection and connection. (Tanner, 1998)

Underworld functions as a powerful work of cultural criticism, offering a multifaceted critique of American society during the Cold War and its aftermath. The novel's engagement with themes like consumerism, media, waste, and the legacy of the Cold War allows DeLillo to expose the contradictions and complexities of the American experience, challenging readers to critically examine the cultural forces that shape their lives and their understanding of the world.

18. Comparison with other Literary Works:

The novel draws parallels between *Underworld* and modernist works like James Joyce's *Ulysses*. The novel's vast scope, attention to detail, and use of language, particularly in the Bronx sections, echo the modernist tradition. The character of Arthur Bronzini is even compared to Leopold Bloom, both serving as contemplative urban wanderers (*flâneurs*) who observe and interpret the city's complexities. This also suggests that the novel's engagement with history and memory aligns with modernist concerns. (Osteen, 2000)

The documents also situate *Underworld* within the context of postmodern literature, comparing it to works by authors like Thomas Pynchon, Robert Coover, and Norman Mailer. The novel's fragmented narrative, self-reflexivity, and critique of consumer culture and media spectacle are characteristic of postmodern fiction. However, the documents also note that *Underworld* distinguishes itself through its accessibility and its focus on the human element amidst the postmodern landscape.

The novel highlights thematic parallels between *Underworld* and other works, such as the exploration of waste and its impact on society, which resonates with T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. The novel's portrayal of paranoia and conspiracy theories echoes themes found in Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* and DeLillo's own *Libra*. The depiction of the media's influence on reality and the construction of narratives can be compared to works like Don DeLillo's *White Noise*. (DeLillo, *Underworld*, 1997)

While acknowledging these connections, this work also points out contrasting approaches to similar themes. For example, while Pynchon's writing is often characterized as dense and hermetic, DeLillo's prose in *Underworld* is considered more accessible and engaging. The novel's focus on the human element amidst the postmodern landscape distinguishes it from some other postmodern works that prioritize fragmentation and abstraction. (O'Donnell, 2000)

The comparisons with other literary works enrich the understanding of *Underworld* by situating it within broader literary and cultural traditions. The novel draws inspiration from modernist and postmodernist techniques while also offering its own unique perspective on themes like urban landscapes, memory, identity, and the human condition in the late 20th century.

18.1. The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald:

Both works draw insightful parallels and contrasts between these two iconic American novels, considering their shared themes and divergent approaches.

Both novels critically examine the American Dream, exploring the allure of wealth, success, and social mobility, as well as the disillusionment and moral compromises that often accompany its pursuit. *Gatsby's* relentless pursuit of Daisy and Nick Shay's journey from the Bronx to Phoenix exemplify this theme. Both novels suggest that the American Dream, while offering hope and opportunity, can also be a source of corruption and emptiness. Both novels are set in periods of significant social and cultural change. *The Great Gatsby* captures the exuberance and excess of the Roaring Twenties, while *Underworld* spans the Cold War era and its aftermath, reflecting the anxieties, tensions,

and transformations of that period. Both novels explore the impact of these historical contexts on individual lives and collective consciousness. (Mewshaw, 1998)

Both novels delve into the complexities of social class and the disparities between the rich and the poor. *The Great Gatsby* contrasts the lavish lifestyles of the wealthy elite with the struggles of the working class, while *Underworld* portrays the stark divide between the privileged residents of Manhattan and the marginalized communities in the Bronx. Both novels suggest that social mobility is often elusive and that the American Dream is not equally accessible to all. Both novels explore the enduring influence of the past on the present. Gatsby's obsession with recapturing his lost love for Daisy and Nick Shay's haunting memories of his childhood in the Bronx demonstrate the characters' struggles to reconcile with their pasts and find a sense of closure. Both novels suggest that the past, whether idealized or traumatic, continues to shape individuals' identities and their understanding of the world. Both novels explore the enduring influence of the past on the present. Gatsby's obsession with recapturing his lost love for Daisy and Nick Shay's haunting memories of his childhood in the Bronx demonstrate the characters' struggles to reconcile with their pasts and find a sense of closure. Both novels suggest that the past, whether idealized or traumatic, continues to shape individuals' identities and their understanding of the world. (DeLillo, *Libra*, 1988)

Both novels employ rich symbolism and metaphor to explore their themes. However, *The Great Gatsby* often relies on more concrete and visually striking symbols, such as the green light and the eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg. *Underworld*, on the other hand, employs more abstract and multi-layered symbols, such as the baseball and the concept of waste, inviting a wider range of interpretations.

The Great Gatsby primarily focuses on the inner lives and personal struggles of a few central characters, particularly Gatsby and Nick. *Underworld*, in contrast, adopts a more expansive approach, weaving together the lives of numerous characters across different social classes and historical periods, creating a sense of collective experience and interconnectedness.

The Great Gatsby is firmly rooted in the specific historical context of the Roaring Twenties, capturing the zeitgeist of that era. *Underworld*, while also grounded in the Cold War period, offers a broader cultural critique that extends beyond a specific historical moment, exploring the enduring anxieties and contradictions of American society.

while *The Great Gatsby* and *Underworld* share thematic concerns about the American Dream, social class, and the power of the past, they differ in their narrative styles, symbolic language, and focus on the individual versus the collective. Both novels offer profound insights into the American experience, but *Underworld*, with its expansive scope and multifaceted approach, provides a more comprehensive and nuanced critique of the complexities and contradictions of American society in the late 20th century. (O'Donnell, 2000)

19. Summary of the City's Representation in *Underworld*:

The city in Don DeLillo's *Underworld* is not merely a setting, but a dynamic entity that

embodies the complexities and contradictions of American society during the Cold War and its aftermath. The novel primarily focuses on New York City, particularly the Bronx, portraying it as a site of both decay and resilience. The Bronx's crumbling infrastructure, social problems, and environmental degradation contrast with the vibrant energy of its communities and the artistic expressions of individuals like Ismael Munoz, a graffiti artist who reclaims urban spaces and memorializes the forgotten victims of violence.

The novel also explores other urban landscapes, such as Los Angeles, Phoenix, and the Kazakh Test Site, each offering a unique perspective on the American experience. The Manhattan skyline, dominated by the Twin Towers, symbolizes both progress and hubris, while the streets and subways of New York capture the city's energy, diversity, and anonymity. The waste management conference in Mojave Springs highlights the environmental consequences of consumerism, and the condom store, with its overwhelming array of products, represents the excesses of consumer culture. The "Radio City Music Hall," where characters watch Eisenstein's *Unterwelt*, serves as a space for artistic expression and resistance.

The city's representation in *Underworld* is multifaceted, reflecting the interplay of various themes:

19.1. Progress and Decay:

The urban landscape showcases both the advancements and the downsides of progress, from technological innovation to consumerism and its accompanying waste.

19.2. Memory and Trauma:

The city serves as a repository of personal and collective memories, triggering both nostalgia and the confrontation of past traumas.

19.3. Identity and Belonging:

The characters navigate the complexities of urban life, searching for identity and belonging amidst the anonymity and fragmentation of the postmodern city.

19.4. The Cold War and Social Change:

The urban environment reflects the anxieties and tensions of the Cold War era, as well as the struggles for equality and social justice during the Civil Rights Movement.

19.5. Consumerism and Spectacle:

The city is portrayed as a site of intense consumerism and media spectacle, where individuals are bombarded with images and messages that shape their desires and perceptions of reality.

Through its rich and detailed descriptions of urban landscapes, *Underworld* offers a

powerful critique of American society, exploring the complexities of the human condition in the postmodern era. The city becomes a dynamic character in its own right, shaping and reflecting the lives of its inhabitants while also embodying the larger forces that define the American experience.

20. Reflection on DeLillo's Critique of Modernity:

The novel provides ample evidence to reflect on DeLillo's critique of modernity in *Underworld*. The novel serves as a mirror reflecting the anxieties, contradictions, and transformations of American society during the Cold War and its aftermath. The following points encapsulate DeLillo's critical perspective on modernity:

20.1. The Erosion of the Real:

The novel portrays a world where the distinction between reality and its representation has become increasingly blurred. The proliferation of images, simulations, and media spectacle creates a hyperreality where the authentic and the artificial are intertwined. The characters' struggles to navigate this landscape reflect the challenges of discerning truth and meaning in a postmodern world.

20.2. The Dominance of Consumer Culture:

The novel critiques the pervasive influence of consumerism and its impact on individual values and social relationships. The characters' relentless pursuit of material possessions, often driven by advertising and media manipulation, is portrayed as a futile attempt to fill an existential void. The accumulation of waste, symbolized by the Fresh Kills landfill, serves as a stark reminder of the environmental and spiritual costs of unchecked consumerism.

20.3. The Anxieties of the Cold War:

The novel explores the lingering anxieties and paranoia of the Cold War era, even as the conflict itself fades into the past. The characters' experiences reflect the ongoing impact of the Cold War on American identity, shaping their fears, desires, and relationships. The novel suggests that the Cold War's legacy continues to haunt American society, influencing its foreign policy, its cultural values, and its collective psyche.

20.4. The Fragmentation of Identity and Community:

The novel portrays a world where traditional communities and social structures are eroding, leading to a sense of alienation and isolation. The characters' struggles to find belonging and connection in an increasingly fragmented and anonymous society reflect the challenges of navigating the complexities of modern life. The urban landscape, with its decaying neighborhoods and anonymous crowds, serves as a visual representation of this

fragmentation.

20.5. The Role of Art and Resistance:

Amidst the challenges and contradictions of modernity, the novel suggests that art and cultural expression can offer a form of resistance and critique. The characters' engagement with art, music, and literature allows them to challenge dominant narratives, express their individuality, and find meaning in a world saturated by consumerism and spectacle. The novel celebrates the power of art to offer alternative perspectives and create spaces for reflection and connection.

In essence, DeLillo's critique of modernity in *Underworld* is a multifaceted exploration of the anxieties, contradictions, and transformations that have shaped American society in the late 20th century. The novel challenges readers to confront the complexities of the postmodern world and to seek meaning and connection amidst the fragmentation and alienation of contemporary life.

21. Final Thoughts on the Urbanized Human Condition:

In *Underworld*, DeLillo paints a complex and often unsettling portrait of the urbanized human condition, one that is deeply intertwined with the anxieties, contradictions, and transformations of the late 20th century. The novel suggests that the urban environment, while offering opportunities for progress and self-reinvention, also fosters alienation, fragmentation, and the erosion of traditional values and communities. The characters' struggles to navigate the complexities of urban life, their search for meaning and connection amidst the anonymity and spectacle, and their confrontation with the legacies of the Cold War and consumer culture reflect the challenges and uncertainties of the human condition in the postmodern era.

The novel's final thoughts on the urbanized human condition are perhaps best captured in the closing scene, where Sister Edgar, now residing in the virtual realm of cyberspace, reflects on the "grip of systems" and the "paranoia of the web." This suggests that even in the digital age, the human condition remains intertwined with the complexities of technology, power structures, and the search for meaning and connection. The novel leaves readers with a sense of both hope and unease, acknowledging the potential for both liberation and control in the ever-evolving urban landscape. The human condition, DeLillo seems to suggest, is one of constant negotiation and adaptation, a perpetual struggle to find balance and meaning amidst the chaos and contradictions of the modern world.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the urban setting in Don DeLillo's *Underworld* operates as a central organizing principle, both structurally and thematically, within the novel. By examining the city as symbol, New York City as a microcosm of America, and the

representation of other urban landscapes, the discussion has shown how DeLillo transforms geography into a narrative device that embodies cultural, political, and psychological tensions. The analysis of key scenes and characters revealed that urban spaces are not mere backdrops but dynamic forces that shape memory, identity, and interpersonal relations, particularly in the case of Nick Shay, whose trajectory is inseparable from his relationship with the Bronx and other cityscapes. Furthermore, the exploration of migration, mobility, and the fluidity of identity highlighted the city's role as a site of convergence and dispersion, where individual lives intersect with broader historical and cultural currents. Through intertextual references to art, media, and history, DeLillo situates the city within a dense symbolic economy, reinforcing its function as a repository of memory and a stage for collective anxieties. Critical frameworks including postmodernism, Marxist theory, and psychoanalysis helped situate the novel within wider debates about consumerism, class struggle, and the commodification of culture, underlining the city's capacity to reflect and critique the conditions of late modernity. Ultimately, the chapter concludes that in *Underworld*, the city is more than an environment: it is a living metaphor for America itself, embodying both its aspirations and its disillusionments, its vitality and its fragmentation.

General Conclusion

In conclusion, this dissertation has demonstrated that Don DeLillo's *Underworld* represents one of the most compelling literary meditations on the modern city and its complex relationship with American identity, history, and consciousness. Through its layered narrative and multifaceted urban imagery, the novel transforms the city particularly New York into a living metaphor for the contradictions of late twentieth-century life. DeLillo's urban spaces are simultaneously sites of memory and amnesia, connection and alienation, order and chaos. They serve not only as physical settings but as dynamic agents that shape characters' identities, reflect cultural anxieties, and reveal the moral and

psychological tensions of postmodern existence.

The analysis has shown that DeLillo's depiction of the city extends beyond geographical representation to encompass a broader critique of modernity. The city becomes a mirror through which the reader perceives the fragmentation of identity, the erosion of authenticity under the dominance of consumerism and technology, and the persistence of Cold War paranoia in shaping collective consciousness. By examining these dimensions, this study has situated *Underworld* within the wider framework of postmodern urban literature, revealing how DeLillo's work dialogues with theoretical currents in Marxism, psychoanalysis, and postmodernism to expose the mechanisms of cultural production and social control in late capitalist society.

Moreover, this dissertation has argued that DeLillo's vision of the city captures the essence of the human condition in an era defined by speed, excess, and uncertainty. The city emerges as both a refuge and a labyrinth a space where humanity continually negotiates its sense of self amidst technological dominance, ecological decay, and spiritual exhaustion. Yet, despite its portrayal of fragmentation and decay, *Underworld* also gestures toward the enduring potential for art, memory, and human connection to resist dehumanization and reclaim meaning within the urban maze.

Ultimately, the findings affirm that DeLillo's *Underworld* is not merely a representation of city life but an inquiry into the very fabric of civilization and its moral contradictions. The novel's urban spaces reveal how personal and collective histories intertwine, how social systems shape identity, and how individuals attempt to find coherence within the overwhelming complexity of the modern metropolis. DeLillo's urban vision thus contributes significantly to our understanding of how literature captures the pulse of late modernity and its enduring tensions between hope and disillusionment.

Suggestions for Further Studies:

While this research has focused primarily on *Underworld*, further studies could extend this inquiry by comparing DeLillo's urban vision with that of other postmodern writers such as Thomas Pynchon, Paul Auster, or David Foster Wallace, whose works similarly interrogate the spatial and psychological dimensions of modern life. Future research might also explore the evolution of the city in DeLillo's later novels particularly in the context of globalization, digital surveillance, and ecological crisis. Additionally, interdisciplinary approaches drawing from urban sociology, environmental studies, or media theory could deepen our understanding of how literature reflects the intersections between urban experience, technology, and the human psyche in the twenty-first century.

In essence, *Underworld* reminds us that the city, like literature itself, remains an unfinished text one that continually invites reinterpretation, rediscovery, and reflection on what it means to live, remember, and belong in the modern world.

References

- Clippinger, D. (n.d.). Material encoding and libidinal exchange: The capital culture underneath Don DeLillo's *Underworld*. *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses*.
- DeLillo, D. (1988). *Libra*. Penguin Books.
- DeLillo, D. (1997). *Underworld*. Scribner.
- DeLillo, D. (1998). *White Noise*. Penguin.
- Dragan, R. (2014). Leaving the Bronx: Depicting urban spaces in Don DeLillo's "Baghdad Towers West" and his early short stories. *Journal of the Short Story in English*, 62, 1–13. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.4000/jsse.1429>
- Duvall, J. N. (1995). Baseball as aesthetic ideology: Cold war history, race, and DeLillo's 'Pafko at the wall'. *Modern Fiction Studies*, 41, pp. 283–305.
- Emerson, R. W. (1985). The American scholar. In G. McMichael (Ed.). (Macmillan, Ed.) *Anthology of American Literature* (pp. 1031–1045).
- Fitzgerald, F. S. (1993). *The Great Gatsby*. Wordsworth Editions Limited.
- Hutcheon, L. (1989). *A poetics of postmodernism history, theory, fiction*. Routledge.
- Kavadlo, J. (2001). Recycling authority: Don DeLillo's waste management. *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, 42, 379–388.

- Knight, P. (1999). Everything is connected: Underworld's secret history of paranoia. *Modern Fiction Studies*, 45, 807–828.
- LeClair, T. (1987). *In the loop: Don DeLillo and the systems novel*. University of Illinois Press.
- Mewshaw, M. (1998, February 1). The uses of junk. *New Statesman*, 127(4366), 52.
- O'Donnell, P. (2000). *Latent destinies; cultural paranoia and contemporary U.S. narrative*. Duke University Press.
- Osteen, M. (2000). *American magic and dread: Don DeLillo's dialogue with culture*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Passaro, V. (1997, November 1). The unsparing vision of Don DeLillo. *Harper's Magazine*, 295(1770), 73–78.
- Saltzman, A. M. (2000). Awful symmetries in Don DeLillo's Underworld. In T. E. H, *Critical essays on Don DeLillo* (pp. 303–324). G.K. Hall & Co.
- Tanner, T. (1998). Afterthoughts on Don DeLillo's Underworld. *Raritan*, 17(4), 53–67.
- Wallace, M. (2001). 'Venerated emblems': DeLillo's Underworld and the history-commodity. *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, 42(4), 365–377.
- Wolcott, J. (1997). Blasts from the past. *New Criterion*, 16(4), 68–72.

ملخص

تبحث هذه الأطروحة في تصوير دون ديليلو لمدينة نيويورك في رواية "العالم السفلي" محلله كيف تشكل المناظر الطبيعية الحضرية والابعاد الاجتماعية والثقافية والنفسية للحياة الأمريكية في اواخر القرن العشرين وتنعكس عليها. باستخدام نهج نوعي وتحليلي قائم على نظريته ما بعد الحداثة الحضرية والنقد الادبي تدرس الدراسة تصوير ديليلو لمدينة نيويورك وغيرها من المساحات الحضرية كبيئات معقدة ومتعددة الابعاد تعكس التشرذم والاعترا ب والترابط في الوجود الحديث.

تضمن البحث قراءه متعمقة للمشاهد الحضرية الرئيسية في الرواية وشخصياتها و اشاراتها التاريخية مركزة على كيفية استخدام ديليلو المدينة كبيئة مادية وبنية رمزية في أن واحد. تكشف النتائج أن رواية "العالم السفلي" تقدم المدينة ككائن حي يتميز بالتوتر بين التقدم والانحطاط والذاكرة والمحو والفردية والجماعية. كما توضح ان ديليلو يستخدم الصور الحضرية لنقد الاستهلاكية والهيمنة التكنولوجية وفقدان التواصل للإنسان الاصيل في مجتمع مشبع بوسائل الاعلام. بشكل عام خلصت الدراسة الى ان العالم السفلي لديليلو يعيد تعريف المدينة الامريكية كفضاء ما بعد الحداثة تتقاطع فيه الهوية و التاريخ والثقافة محولا للحياة الحضرية الى مرآة للحالة الأخلاقية والوجودية لأمريكا. الكلمات المفتاحية: العالم السفلي التمثيل الحضري ما بعد الحداثة الهوية و الذاكرة التكنولوجيا ثقافه الاستهلاك مدينة نيويورك.