

Transcendence
DeLillo, Self, Blomkamp

As we saw in the first chapter, according to Peter Sloterdijk the first and second eras of globalisation – which both entailed a particular way of conceptualising the global – have been and gone. If we have abandoned what Sloterdijk calls the ‘inclusive orb’ of the cosmos which contains both heaven and earth (2011: 64), and if we have also moved away from a concept of the globe which relies upon an outside internal to the Earth itself, then this would suggest a prevailing concept of the global which is characterised by immanence. This scenario is attested to throughout globalisation theory, from Roland Robertson, to Thomas L. Friedman, to Hardt and Negri’s more openly conceptually oriented account. It was also shown to be the case with the diverse materials examined in the previous two chapters. In this chapter, however, and in the chapter following this, we will trace an undercurrent in conceptualising the global, one in which the outside is still very much alive and well.

In the present chapter, the notion of the transcendent will mark the general point of departure from the forms of the global discussed in previous chapters. This, however, is not the transcendent cosmos which Sloterdijk evokes in his theory of an originary globalisation. Rather, what we will find are examples of a weak, or earthly transcendence. In other words, this is a version of the transcendent which remains ultimately terrestrial, which is folded into the bounds of the Earth, and yet, nevertheless, constitutes an outside in one way or another. Instead of being formed in relation to the heavens, this is a form of transcendence which is erected in relation to the mundane, material aspects of the globe. What we are presented with, then, are a series of small transcendences; not a cosmos, but what we will call a ‘micro-cosmos’ which dips in and out of the world-at-large. Two aspects of the global will be addressed then: both the micro-cosmos and the way in which this relates to global space as a whole.

The two texts that will form the initial basis of discussion here are Don DeLillo’s *Cosmopolis* (2011) and Will Self’s *The Book of Dave* (2006). After

showing what concepts of the global can be extracted from these texts, and linking these to other ways of conceptualising the global, we will link up briefly with another two pieces: Iain Banks' *Transition* (2011) and Neill Blomkamp's *Elysium* (2013). All of these pieces express a discrepancy between small and large, between a micro-cosmos and the world-at-large, a discrepancy which encodes a relation of power. One of the main tasks of elucidation here will be to uncover the way this relation of power is negotiated and portrayed via the differing attitudes towards the transcendent. In fleshing out this relation, we begin to see some of the ways in which the global is conceptualised differently to that of the prevailing model of the immanent in contemporary culture. Thus, we will witness some of the ways of thinking about global relations which do not fit easily into the rubric of the immanent, such as the cosmopolitan, and its related, contemporary sibling, the 'glocal'. The goal here is not to disprove in some way the previous chapters, and the materials explored in them. Rather, we hit upon another method of conceptualising the global here, one which sits alongside those versions which are without outside, and which contains its own problems and contradictions. As was pointed out in the Introduction, there is not one, overarching concept of the global which can be packaged neatly and presented without blemish or stain. This being said, there are two major features which continue to imprint themselves into the line of argumentation here. The first is that the concepts extracted from the texts under discussion still maintain a terrestrial vision of the global, a feature which we will not escape from until the next and final chapters, and which itself perhaps has almost an unacknowledged monopoly on the conceptual rubric of the global. The second is that what all these texts, their inter-texts, and their parallels figure is a re-emergence of the totality, which in this case is figured via the motif of transcendence, along with all the political, metaphysical and cultural baggage that this implies.

A Slow Mover

There is something which causes motion without being moved, and this is eternal.

Aristotle, *Metaphysics*

Don DeLillo's work has in recent years taken a transcendent turn, one which has largely gone unnoticed.¹ The classic way of reading the novels is in relation to systems theory and the like, with *Underworld* (1997) being perhaps the work which lends itself best to such an approach.² But more

recently, this view of the world-as-system has been replaced by a preference for centrality, which is epitomised by transcendent themes. And so, there are the angst-ridden debates and questionings which revolve around God in the wake of the attacks on the World Trade Centre in *Falling Man* (2007), for example. Or, there is *Point Omega* (2010), the title of which is a reference to Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's evolutionary-theological notion of the Omega Point, that 'one, true, irreversible essence of things' which humans, according to de Chardin, might be able to reach as a result of the terminus in the complexity of human relations and their 'planetization' (1965b: 111–116). *Cosmopolis*, whilst it conforms in a less immediate way, can be included within this trend. In this case it is in the spatial dynamics that the transcendent theme can initially be detected.

The novel's protagonist is Eric Packer, a highly wealthy financial trader, and head of 'Packer Capital' (2011: 121). Throughout the course of one day, he moves through New York (that 'world city', or 'cosmopolis') in his stretch limousine 'at an inchworm creep', being stuck in a huge traffic jam (64). Indeed, for most of the time, Packer does not move at all, and the limo is thus the predominant setting of the novel. The reason for undertaking such a journey is in order for Packer to get a haircut at a specific barber shop 'crosstown' (11). Various diversions are taken, however, in order to avoid an unspecified 'threat' to Packer's security (19). This threat mutates throughout the course of the novel, and in its end state will result in Packer's rather ambiguous death (209). The virtually nonexistent movement across Manhattan renders Packer a static kind of explorer; events and people come to him throughout the course of the day, whilst he remains in the privileged, insulated space of the limousine. In some ways, then, Packer's position is a passive one, in that he does not actively seek things out. On the other hand, he has quite an active role, achieved through the ability to pass judgement on his surroundings by virtue of a privileged, panoptic-like gaze.

If the novel relates Packer's downfall, then it also relates the (potential) downfall of capitalism itself. Things, however, are rather more muddy, as what is ultimately referred to is that staple of the capitalist mode of production, whereby what appears as a crisis to end all crises is in fact just part of the normal functioning of the system itself, a structural anomaly which re-enforces the already-existing order.³ As we will see later on, this scenario makes itself heard through two main aspects, which are the references to finance capital itself, and the hints at the evolution of technological environments and prostheses. Initially, however, it is

necessary to provide a reading of some of the spatial configurations present in the novel.

Michael Naas has provided the most comprehensive interpretation of Packer's mode of travel. Playing on the etymology of 'auto' (which comes from the Greek word for 'self'), he suggests that the limo is in fact a 'second self' (2008: 154). According to Naas, when Packer abandons his limo at the end of the novel, this constitutes a deconstruction of the 'quintessentially American dream or ideology of autonomy and independence' (154). This autonomy (or 'law of the self'), in an analogous way to the automobile (or 'mobile self'), is that which 'prevents us from experiencing anything like an event' (ibid.), or put differently, that which stops us from opening up to an outside influence. By this logic, the shedding of the limo at the end of the novel signals a movement away from the ideology of the autonomous individual, and its mobile avatar (153–154). The notion of the limo providing a shell with which to shelter the self is also expressed by Randy Laist, who suggests that 'Eric can drift through the city . . . without entering the scene in any existential way. He is in another kind of space than the world outside' (256).

Both Naas and Laist elucidate their readings with reference to the fact that Packer has had his limo 'prousted', cork-lined 'against street noise' (DeLillo 2011: 71).⁴ Indeed, Packer's limo is in fact its own little world, and this is attested to not merely by the fact that most of the novel is set inside it, but also via a figurative touch in which the limousine's ceiling contains 'the arrangement of the planets at the time of his birth, calculated to the hour, minute and second' (179). Whilst the limo may be a second self, or even, as Naas suggests further, 'a kind of pod or second city' (Naas 2008: 158), it is clear here that what is actually at stake is a miniature world; the car, in other words forms its own cosmos, separated from the outside world of the city. Whilst it is certainly interesting to view the limo as a symbol of autonomy and isolation, this misses out a fundamental detail. The same goes for the supposed impenetrability of the limo, or micro-cosmos. For example, when Packer tells his wife that he has had the limousine sound-proofed she asks whether it works or not. 'How could it work', replies Packer, who moves on to say that 'the city eats and sleeps noise. It makes noise out of every century. It makes the same noises it did in the seventeenth century along with all the noises that have evolved since then' (DeLillo 2011: 71).

In sum then, from this angle Packer's limousine appears as its own miniature world, which dips in and out of its surroundings, of the world at-large. The fact that the car has been 'prousted' does not make it an

impenetrable fortress but, rather, means that it interacts with the outside world at a more remote level than usual. Benno Levin (the character who eventually kills Packer) perhaps summarises this interaction best, albeit under a slightly different context. As he puts it, 'world is supposed to mean something that's self-contained. But nothing is self-contained. Everything enters something else' (DeLillo 2011: 60). If the word 'prousted' is an allusion to Proust's act of cork-lining his own room against street noise, we might at the same time read this in relation to an aspect of Proust's literary oeuvre.⁵ In *Remembrance of Things Past*, the text's initial, or primary setting is a bedroom, from which we branch out – through the aid of memory – to various different settings and points in time. Whilst *Cosmopolis* is not concerned with time or memory as such, a similar dynamic is in place with both novels, whereby from a fixed point in space there is an interaction with a much wider, fluctuating frame of reference.⁶ In relation to the city which it moves through, the limo in *Cosmopolis* is a fixed point in time and space, around which things evolve over time; the city appears here as that which is always in flux, each element of change being layered on top of another to produce something qualitatively new, whereas the limo is a fixed, framed world, the static celestial bodies signalling the time of Packer's birth being the most evocative example of this.

If the limo forms a stable point in the midst of this city of becoming, then this is tied with Packer's reasons for having a preference towards limousines in the first place. Initially, he suggests that this is due to the anonymity they accord, in that they are something like a 'platonic replica', the connotation here being that all limousines look alike. 'But', as we are told immediately after, 'he knew this wasn't true. . . . He wanted the car because it was not only oversized but aggressively and contemptuously so, metastasisingly so, a tremendous mutant thing that stood astride every argument against it' (DeLillo 2011: 10). Instead of being a mere replica, then, Packer's car is something which stands above this category of being. The car somehow escapes the logic of imitation, bringing it into the domain of the immutable, the large and the exceptional, the latter element figured through the description of the car as a 'mutant'.

Put together, these different descriptions of the limousine make it possible to read Packer's car as displaying some classic metaphysical symptoms. Whilst there is an evident reference to Plato and his theory of forms, the overall situation here is more readily analogous to Aristotle's theory of an unmoved mover, to which the epigraph refers. Immovable and eternal, Aristotle's prime mover is that which causes motion in the material,

everyday world, and is associated directly with the heavens (Aristotle 1966: 206–207). This concept is part of what Hubert Krivine has called a ‘dual vision of the world’ formed from Plato onwards, whereby

there was the ‘perfect’ world of the stars, eternal and infinitely regular . . . This supralunary world was governed by a rationality that it was the mission of mathematics to express. At the base of the hierarchy there was the world in which we live, changing and corruptible (Krivine 2015: 64).

Of course, Packer’s limousine does not quite attain the status of the Ancient, supralunary world. Nevertheless, it does have some similar features which will help us read further into DeLillo’s text, and ultimately link the latter to the current geopolitical situation. The car is a seemingly fixed point amidst the mutability of the city outside, to the point at which we even have an immutable image of the heavens within this miniature world. The limo itself remains virtually static, and sits at a remove from the outside world, thereby forming a version of the supralunary which is folded into the Earth itself. The limo, then, appears as a world apart from its surroundings, thus creating a dual vision of the world. All of these features contribute to imbuing Packer and his limousine with a transcendent status, an overarching presence which dips in and out of the world-at-large.

But, of course, Packer does move, even if this is only ‘at an inchworm creep’ (DeLillo 2011: 64). He is, then, what we might call a slow mover, and this is a slowness which we can link to the micro-cosmos which he inhabits. What the latter figures is a low-level form of transcendence, one which is contained within the bounds of the Earth. Similarly, Packer’s status as a slow mover suggests a weak version of Aristotle’s notion of the unmoved mover. Both of these elements, as we shall see, are linked ultimately to the political.

Sovereign Travel

The mode of transcendence in *Cosmopolis* is related to power. What kind of power? The answer would seem to be relatively obvious, bearing in mind Packer’s status: the power of finance capital, and the spatial and political impacts this has. Packer, in this light, is a ‘Master of the Universe’ to the *n*th degree (and with rather less irony), to borrow a phrase from Sherman McCoy, the financial trader in Tom Wolfe’s *The Bonfire of the Vanities* (2005: 12). This, though, is a form of power which is rather different to some of the models evoked in previous chapters, such as the society of control and its movement away from the disciplinary. It would seem that,

with the appeals towards the transcendent, we are closer to the mode of power of the sovereign. Hobbes' notion of the sovereign in *Leviathan* would be a key reference point here, as this not only has an overarching, transcendent status, but also achieves a point of stability in what would otherwise be the chaos, or state of war without a commonwealth (2008: 2, 14). But there is a further aspect to the form of sovereignty on display in *Cosmopolis*.

Staying for the moment with Packer's limousine, the traces of this can be located in one of the descriptions already quoted. When he admits that the sound-proofing of the limo is ineffective, Packer qualifies this by saying that 'it's a gesture. It's a thing a man does' (DeLillo 2015: 71). This is a gesture without direct function, something done not for utilitarian purposes, but merely for the sake of doing it. Similar gestures are found throughout the novel. There are a series of what Georges Bataille would term 'unproductive expenditures', moments which are figured as being beyond utility. It is the kind of sovereignty which Bataille once described, then, that is perhaps the most fitting to *Cosmopolis*, one in which 'we may call sovereign the enjoyment of possibilities that utility doesn't justify'. For Bataille, 'life beyond *utility* is the domain of sovereignty' (2007: 198). The model fits in not only with those aspects of the novel which point towards that which is beyond utility, but also the transcendent nature of the limousine. As Bataille suggests, the King's or Monarch's is 'a life magnified by the veneration of which he has become the object on the part of an entire people', and it expresses 'the desire to see, at one point, sovereignty produced without limitation' (98). That 'one point' at which sovereignty is produced confers upon the individual in question a transcendent status. This, of course, is a model which (at least in the West) is all but a thing of the past, and in this sense might initially seem not to fit with *Cosmopolis*' contemporary setting. Nevertheless, it fits in with the events of the novel, with certain developments in contemporary capitalism, and points us towards the way in which the global is being conceptualised here.

The whole book might be read as one long series of exuberances, and this is most readily apparent in its erotic episodes, of which there are many. One example serves to prove a point here. Packer is having his prostate examined by his doctor (in the limo) whilst he converses with another colleague of his on the state of the financial markets. This moment, as if not absurd enough, turns into an erotic one. Whilst the prostate examination is ongoing, a connection is established between Packer and his colleague: 'something passed between them', we are told. Packer feels 'some vast sexus

of arousal drawing him towards her, complicatedly, with [the doctor's] finger up his ass' (DeLillo 2011: 48). The episode continues for a couple of pages after this. Both a functional conversation and a clinical procedure are given the status of the erotic, then; the strictly utilitarian, in other words, passes into the realm of non-utility, whilst at the same time the realm of the financial is overlaid with the squandering of resources.

The link between the two is in fact a main element of the book, the financial squandering of resources being the most pronounced. Packer's self-inflicted demise is caused, in the main, by him hedging his bets on the financial markets that the 'yen will fall', against all odds. Predictably, this does not happen, and 'Packer Capital's portfolio' is 'reduced to near nothingness in the course of the day', Packer's 'personal fortune in the tens of billions' also being lost as a result (DeLillo 2011: 121). His wife offers to 'help [him] financially' (122), but briefly afterwards Packer ruins himself completely by transferring all of her money into his company account, and losing it purposefully: 'he did this to make certain he could not accept her offer of financial help' (123), we are told. Packer's own downfall causes a wider, global financial crisis, due to his huge wealth and influence: 'there were currencies tumbling everywhere. Bank failures were spreading. He found the humidior and lit a cigar' (115). Packer's post-ruin smoke (analogous to a post-coital smoke) highlights the link here between a squandering of financial resources and the erotic. Further, we are informed, 'there was trembling pleasure to be found, and joy at all misfortune, in the swift pitch of markets down' (107). This squandering of resources on both an erotic and a financial level signals a move away from utility, one which confers on Packer and his limousine (in which the majority of these events take place) a sovereign status. At the epicentre of a crisis in the world-system, Packer becomes that single point on which all things hinge, and from where everything can be ruined.

Paul Crosthwaite has also examined the resonances between financial crises and the thought of Bataille, particularly in relation to *Cosmopolis*. There are libidinal forces at work when it comes to the contemporary financial crisis, the web of which can be thought about not only through the work of figures such as Bataille, Jean Baudrillard and Jean-François Lyotard, but also via novels such as DeLillo's (Crosthwaite 2005: 8).⁷ According to Crosthwaite, the instance of Packer's wilful downfall not only points towards the 'death drive', but also to Bataille's notion of unproductive expenditure as being characteristic of today's crisis-driven economy (8–9). Whilst Crosthwaite does not associate Packer and his limousine with the aspect of sovereignty described, this serves to further

embed such a concept in the way the novel is being read here. Further, in this sense DeLillo's novel proposes, in relation to the figure of Packer, a much more general mutation in the sensibility and structure of present-day capitalism, whereby, as Jean-Joseph Goux has also pointed out, Bataille's model of unproductive expenditure – despite the latter's attempts to suggest otherwise – seems all the more valid, the increased emphasis on consumerism creating 'the paradoxical situation of postindustrial capitalism where only the appeal to compete infinitely in unproductive consumption . . . allows for the development of production' (Goux 1990: 219).⁸

Packer's journey through the city is what we might term a sovereign journey, a day-long blow-out which occurs as he moves through the urban landscape in that transcendent micro-cosmos which is a limousine. The journey is, essentially, one of wealth and privilege. This, then, is not a godly form of transcendence, but, rather, a weak one which is concerned solely with the power resulting from the accumulation of capital. It is not merely Packer's super-rich status which confers on him and the limousine a transcendent status, though. Rather, it is the ability to squander the resources of the planet with ease, to send the effects of his actions ricocheting across the globe. Taking the link with the era of sovereignty (loosely defined) further, we might draw an additional parallel here with the way in which Zygmunt Bauman has described the current capitalist system in relation to the 'absentee landlords of yore'. According to Bauman, there is 'a new asymmetry emerging between [the] extraterritorial nature of power and the continuing territoriality of the "whole life"'. This is expressed best in relation to the absentee landlord, the difference for today's financial elite being that 'thanks to the new mobility of their now liquid resources, [they] do not face limits sufficiently real . . . to enforce compliance' (these limits being expressed best in the situated nature of the estate) (1999: 9–11).⁹ Whilst not strictly a reference to the idea of sovereignty then, one can see here how certain tropes associated with this era have become more potent. Bauman's analysis also conforms here to the notion of two separate territories; that of the extraterritorial and the 'whole' or the world as such, and there are evident resonances here with Packer's miniature world.

In light of the reading of *Cosmopolis* advanced here we should, to an extent, read an additional aspect of the novel against the grain. Whilst Packer is in conversation with one of his colleagues, it is suggested that 'the market culture is total', and that any resistance to it is merely incorporated back into the system, thereby suggesting that 'there is no outside' (DeLillo 2011: 90). The formulation is of course by now familiar and we are

reminded of the various instances in which it occurred in the previous two chapters. What *Cosmopolis* suggests instead – through a certain configuration of space – is a definite outside to the market culture, one which is situated at the power end. This is expressed through the various appeals towards the transcendent in the text, whereby a small world reaches out to the globe as a whole, the former having the ability to determine the fate of the latter.

The Cab as Cosmos

Similar themes find their way into *The Book of Dave*. The novel's protagonist – Dave – is a London cab driver whose various journeys through the city form a major part of the novel, along with the loss of his son and wife through divorce. At some point, fuelled by depression resulting from being unable to see his son and having entered into a form of psychosis, Dave decides to commit some of his experiences to paper, in what he calls '– unconscious of any precedent, devoid of any irony – . . . THE BOOK' (Self 2006: 352). Much of Dave's book is concerned with either the Knowledge (the area of London which cab drivers have to memorise) or ruminations on the loss of his son and his wife, and his proposed (rather misogynistic and bigoted) resolution to such problems via 'a complete re-evaluation of the way men and women should conduct their lives together' (348). At one point, whilst writing about the Knowledge, Dave imagines himself 'ascending, chattering up over the wide river valley', and becoming a 'Flying I' (346). Whilst flying over London, we are told, Dave 'grasped the metropolis in its entirety, he held in his shaky, nicotine-stained fingers each and every one of the billions of tiny undertakings its inhabitants engaged in. Which, taken in sum, added up to chaos' (347). This fantasy of transcendence, of being able to grasp the totality from an overarching position, is linked to the fact that Dave imagines himself as his 'own prophet' (345) when writing his book; in his mind, then, Dave reaches the state of the divine by virtue of the memorisation of the streets and landmarks of London.

In addition to the episode here, transcendence develops into an overarching theme in other parts of the book.¹⁰ The novel is split into two parts, each with a distinct time-frame. The part distinct from Dave's is set sometime in the future, in the fifth century AD, the acronym in this case standing not for Anno Domini, but 'After Dave' (Self 2006: 1). By a strange turn of events, Dave's book has actually become a sacred text, its tenets and themes permeating the way life is lived in this future scenario. The first

glimpse of this scenario is the main setting for this half of the narrative, that of the island of Ham (1), which stands where the now Hampstead does. On Ham, Dave's cabbie jargon and slang has been transcribed onto everyday speech and thought, to the point at which the sky is called a 'screen', and the Milky Way is a 'dashboard'. Dave himself is also up there, 'lookin froo ve screen', as one character says (22), at the inhabitants of Ham, and the whole of Ing, as England has come to be named. The common greeting in Ham is 'warez, guv' (3), and the names of certain routes which pertain to the Knowledge are read out in the manner of prayer and incantation.

In what is perhaps a partial homage to Ballard's *The Drowned World* (2011), in *The Book of Dave* London has been completely transformed through flooding, turning Hampstead into an island, and the centre of the metropolis into a series of lagoons and expanses of ocean. The inhabitants of Ham are part of a society which is markedly feudal, in which people are made to use up the majority of their resources in order to pay high levels of rent to the landowner, or as it is phrased 'substantial tickets' to the 'Hack'. They are depicted as 'beasts of burden' (Self 2006: 174, 488), and are 'broken on the wheel', a huge torture device in the shape of a steering wheel (171, 187). Russell Hoban's *Riddley Walker* (2002) can also be cited as an influence here. But whereas Hoban's novel features a series of metaphysical tropes related to an apocalyptic event precipitated by nuclear war, the cause of such an event is left relatively unclear in *The Book of Dave*, at least in terms of the inhabitants' knowledge of it (even though we might well speculate that it has something to do with global warming).¹¹ The metaphysical and/or transcendent tropes are still present, but these are related almost solely to Dave, his cab, and as we shall see also the world in which he lived.

As with Packer's limousine, the taxi in Self's novel is given the privileged status of a micro-cosmos. The small world of the taxi-cab becomes a unifying force in which (rather like the cosmos of Antiquity) heavens and earth intermingle with each other. It is the disjuncture, however, between the space of Dave's cab and the sky and planets themselves, which leads us back to the idea of the micro-cosmos. The heavens in *The Book of Dave* are always related back to the small space of the automobile; indeed, for the inhabitants of the novel, the heavens are not shaped like an orb at all, but like a car. This process is cemented by the constant exchange between chapters dealing with the roughly contemporary world of Dave and his work as a cab driver, and the future, post-apocalyptic world of the car-cosmos. M. John Harrison has suggested that *The Book of Dave* is

‘a mapping that works both ways, not just of one topography on to another but one time on to another, one culture on to another, one psychic space on to another – a psychogeography summed up in the subtitle, ‘revelation of the Recent Past and Distant Future’ (Harrison). The same goes, then, for the space of the car, its topography being transferred (from Dave’s narrative) onto the sky or heavens (in the future world), thereby transforming the heavens into a micro-cosmos in the shape of a car. The form of psychogeography identified by Harrison – a kind of science-fiction version of something like Ian Sinclair’s own brand of psychogeography – is also one which would fit with the general model of transcendence being discussed in this chapter, expressed by divergent worlds (temporal, spatial, cultural and so on) which dip in and out of one another.¹²

Botched Mimesis

That a taxi is elevated to the status of the transcendent is somewhat ridiculous in itself, and we might well leave any argument at this which seeks to explicate the way in which *The Book of Dave* mocks the notion of transcendence and its effects. But there is another sense in which the novel discredits, or undoes this. In some sense, *The Book of Dave* can be read as working out the logic and potential consequences of reconstructing events from their remnants, of a whole being created from a part. That part is Dave’s book, along with its main subjects of the topography of London and the taxi. The novel, then, is not only concerned with the destruction of London, but also its rebuilding. What is termed ‘New London’ is constructed somewhere north of the archipelago, and makes for a very rough copy of the original (Self 2006: 357). There are various alterations, including, for example, the millennium wheel being shaped like a huge steering wheel. What once partly inspired Dave’s writings on the Knowledge has become a rather different city, built in a completely different location. Through being documented, or represented in some way, then, the structure of things (in this case London) is fundamentally altered. Rather than a strict mimetic system, we are dealing with an affective relationship with the city, in which the latter undergoes various alterations as a result of the impact it once had on Dave during a period of psychosis.

From this point of view, then, the reconstruction of events and structures in the novel is also that which questions the notion of transcendence it puts forward. The association between the two in Self’s novel, between mimesis and transcendence, is made clear through

the fact that Dave becomes not only the resident deity of Ing, but also becomes the model, through his various writings concerned with the Knowledge and the jargon of the taxi driver, for the reconstruction and re-enactment of London and its navigation. We are very close here, then, to a Platonic system, in which there exists an ideal form of the object (say, a bed or in this case a city), one which is created by a God.¹³ It is this particular model which is ultimately questioned in *The Book of Dave*, a task which is again achieved in general terms through the juxtaposition of time frames. As M. Hunter Hayes has pointed out, ‘rather than a new Iron Age the residents of Ham, Chil, New London, and all of Ingerland exist in an Ironic Age, from the misprision stemming from the eponymous text to iron’s renaming as “irony”’ (173). To add to this, we can say that the form of irony to be found in *The Book of Dave* hinges on the discrepancy between the two worlds of the novel, a discrepancy which ultimately undoes the form of transcendence proposed in it.

The questioning of the transcendent model in Self’s novel allows us to reflect briefly on the situation outlined in *Cosmopolis*. We can read DeLillo’s novel, broadly, as offering an exposition of the dynamics of power within the global, neoliberal model. This exposition, however, has its own, inherent drawbacks. To give something a transcendent quality, as is undertaken with Packer and his limousine, is to suggest that it is wholly necessary, to posit it as an immovable force. In uncovering a dynamic of power, then, DeLillo’s novel runs the risk of suggesting that this form of power and the unequal relations it creates is part of the immutable order of things, that any suffering which has arisen as a result was necessary and unavoidable. Whilst the model of transcendence in *Cosmopolis* serves to draw our attention towards the dynamics of power in operation in the contemporary climate, and provides a certain way of conceptualising them, this comes with its own risks. That *The Book of Dave* conforms to such a model, but simultaneously rejects it, provides a rather more sophisticated approach towards the transcendent, and its various spatial affinities. As outlined, this mode of transcendence is related directly to an oppressive regime, and in this sense the book might be said to be making a general comment on the falsity of totalitarian systems which often rely on such tropes (such as the transcendent, or a system of ideal forms) for the maintenance of power. But the standpoint towards the transcendent can also be read in relation to more specific aspects of the novel, and to some further aspects of the contemporary world-system.

World City

It is not merely the car which takes on a transcendent status in *The Book of Dave*, but also the city. This has already been touched on briefly. As a further example, we might cite what is called in the novel 'The Sentrul Stack', a series of large ruins protruding out of the sea, which are actually the remnants of old London's financial district. The tops of the skyscrapers are still visible to the people of Ham, who view them as 'natural features' and ascribe a 'brooding personality' to them (Self 2006: 131). There are local legends about the stack, and visits to it are considered to be of a divine, or 'dävine' nature (60). There is a ritual carried out on these semi-submerged pieces of architecture, in which a male inhabitant must jump from one piece of The Stack to another. This marks both the passage to manhood, and confers on the person who undertakes the act a certain sense of privilege (129–130). The recounting of the jump between the two towers becomes an integral part of the ritual also, it being 'a vital addition to the story the community told itself, one of the humans spitting in the indifferent face of nature' (139). All this suggests that the old financial area of the city is a definitive part of the transcendent aspect of this future world. This, however, also invites us to posit what kind of a take the novel provides on the current status of the city, the 'Sentrul Stack' not only being a site of ritual for the inhabitants of Ham, but also a recognisable aspect of London today. The transformed nature, in other words, of London's skyscrapers allows us to extract a concept of the way in which urban space, in the relief of the capitalist world-system, is configured today.

If the city takes part in the transcendent aspects of the novel, then we are perhaps moving close here to the heavenly upper regions of the city in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927). The spatial dynamics, however, are somewhat different. *Metropolis* gives us what is now perhaps a classic filmic model of a city which contains both an earthly, lower level and a heavenly one, the level of the workers and the leisurely ruling-class respectively. This is a model of the city as cosmos, then, the lower part of the metropolis and its upper echelons forming together their own, integrated world. Self's novel, by contrast, gives us a city which (through its transformation into an object of ritual) still retains an element of the transcendent and the over-arching, and yet remains at a fixed point within the landscape. This is still, however, a point which spreads itself out, in the sense that it structures the ways in which the inhabitants of Ham experience their daily lives. From this point of view, the city becomes another micro-cosmos, another world

which dips in and out of the world at large, secreting its essence as it does so.

But if the re-configured financial centre in *The Book of Dave* does not share the same spatial dynamics with *Metropolis*, it nevertheless makes a similar point when it comes to class, and power relations. If we view the version of the city in Self's novel as a comment on the current, actual city, then this would surely be in relation to its status as a capital of financial trade, from where the fate of the entire world-system can be determined. The transcendence in play, then, serves to highlight the position of dominance over and against an entire world population. Indeed, as we have seen, this is something that David Harvey has commented on in relation to the configuration of the current geo-political moment. As he puts it, 'the need for accurate information and speedy communication has emphasized the role of so-called 'world cities' in the financial and corporate system'. The erasure of spatial barriers brought about through teletechnologies and the logic of capital brings about, according to Harvey, a 'reaffirmation and realignment of hierarchy within what is now a global urban system' (1989: 295). In a similar vein, Saskia Sassen has posited that, contrary to the pervasive understanding of decentralised operations when it comes to multi-nationals and the like, the logic of today's global economy goes hand in hand with 'centralised service nodes for the management and regulation of the new space economy'. Consequently, 'through finance more than through other international flows, a global network of cities has emerged, with New York, London and Tokyo and today also Frankfurt and Paris the leading cities' (Sassen 1991: 330–333).

Writing specifically in relation to London, Doreen Massey too has taken on this notion of the world city, tying this particular 'spatial reorganisation' with the economic reorganisation inherent in the birth of neoliberalism. But there are a number of problems with such a conceptualisation, and Massey charts these quite systematically. First, one would have to concede that this is an almost solely Western affair, the nevertheless huge cities outside of such a framework not figuring on the map of the world city. The discourse of the world city, then, 'mobilises universalist assumptions that obscure the fact of situatedness' (2007: 33–35). If the world city is 'a global centre of command, playing a crucial role in framing the world economy in neoliberal form', then this picture is also a rather one-sided view of the urban environment, in terms of its status at a local and a global level (39). Indeed, the reality for the majority of those who live in urban areas across the globe is one of extreme poverty. Mike Davis highlights this,

in pointing out that across the world more than one billion people inhabit what he calls 'postmodern slums', located in and on the periphery of urban centres (2006: 2). This is the dominant, world-wide reality of urbanisation according to Davis, under which, 'instead of cities of light soaring toward heaven, much of the twenty-first century urban world squats in squalor, surrounded by pollution, excrement and decay' (7).

If *The Book of Dave* fits in with the model of the world city as just elucidated, particularly via its elevation of a financial district of London to a transcendent status, then it also displays some of the scepticism proffered here. We have already seen how the novel discredits the notion of transcendence which it figures, via a botched form of mimesis. If we were to read this strategy in direct relation to the idea of the world city as outlined, then this would entail, simultaneously, a recognition of the way in which cities can become and are being conceptualised as a transcendent prominence, and a realisation that this prominence is if not merely reductive and/or one-sided, then also unfounded when we reach the full heights of an overarching structure of awe and inspiration. In terms of Davis' comments on the slum, one can trace a similarity here too with Self's novel. The village of Ham is, more or less, a slum on the periphery of the ruins of the financial district. It is in this sense, then, that we might interpret the feudal aspects of the novel in relation to the contemporary moment. The novel, in sum, proposes a model of a world city which soars above the everyday landscape of squalor, not unlike today's global make-up of the urban, in which the financial centre is privileged over the rest of both the urban and global geography. To reiterate, though: this soaring nature is one which is always discredited throughout the novel, and we will examine some of the broader, conceptual implications of this further down.

World Picture

Putting aside, for now, this discrediting of transcendence, what *The Book of Dave* and *Cosmopolis* display, in general conceptual terms, is a certain way of viewing the world which we might elucidate through Tim Ingold's questioning of the common phrase 'global environment'. It is evident that what is *not* meant by this phrase is the environment *of* the globe, or that which encompasses the globe. Instead, as Ingold puts it, 'it is *our* environment' which is evoked here, 'the world as it presents itself to a universal humanity'. Yet this is still a strange, paradoxical formulation, as it suggests that we are surrounded by a globe, when in fact it is us humans who surround the particular globe we inhabit (2000: 207). Ultimately, Ingold thinks the source

of this paradox can be traced back to an increased separation of the human from its environment, which is concomitant with an increased awareness of the Earth as a globe, as an object of thinking: 'with the world imagined as a globe, far from coming into being in and through a life process, it figures as an entity that is, as it were, presented to or confronted by life. The global environment is not a lifeworld, it is a world apart from life' (210). Ingold's view here is strikingly similar to Martin Heidegger's 'world picture', a concept which he used to articulate the Modern propensity to conceive of the world as picture (1977: 128). This propensity can be exemplified through the advent of Modern scientific research, or even historical research, whereby, as Heidegger puts it, 'nature and history become the objects of a representing that explains' (127). For Heidegger, the Modern age places a priority on 'man's knowing and of his having disposal', on relating to being as a whole through representing or placing things before the human, as opposed to the Medieval world view, whereby to relate to being as a whole means to be *within* a set order ordained by God (130). Like Ingold's global environment which is a world apart from life, Heidegger's world picture denotes a separation, an objectification which is at the heart of the way in which the totality of being and life are formed and apprehended.¹⁴

It is the micro-cosmos in DeLillo's and Self's novels which denotes this separative way of viewing the world; each way of interacting with the world involves a dynamic of transcendence, whereby the privileged viewpoint opens out onto the whole, and vice-versa. From this point of view, we are dealing not merely with an operation, or relation of power, but also a general mode of conceptualisation, whereby the standard metaphysical notion of transcendence is shrunk down, and folded into the terrestrial globe, whilst simultaneously retaining an inherent element of anthropocentrism.

Moving into the realm of full-blown science fiction, we find some similar means of conceptualisation. Ian Banks' novel *Transition* deals with a group of people who are part of 'the Concern', a world-wide organisation, established over thousands of years and created to retain order across the globe (2011: 157). 'World-wide', however, does not refer to just one world, but a multitude of possible Earths, each one being readily accessible to members of the Concern. The novel in this sense reads like a meditation on some of the possible implications of quantum physics. Cities, in this case, provide the prime areas for those members of the Concern who wish to 'transition from one reality to another' (99–103). Whilst the universe in *Transition* is described as a 'sphere' which has 'no outside', there is in fact a rather different spatial dynamic in operation when it comes to the multitude of possible Earths available to the Concern

(122). There is one world – the world in which the Concern is based – which is ‘close to unique’, and is the ‘ultimate Open world’, the prime place from which to make a transition. This is also where ‘the true consciousness of a transitioner’ remains whilst they make the transition from this particular world to another; ‘there could only be one world’, we are told, ‘that was perfectly Open, and that unique Earth was this one’ (247).

This ‘Open world’ is another example of the micro-cosmos; it forms the one privileged point at which one can dip in and out of other worlds, a unique vantage point in the midst of so many versions, mutations and replications. For all the attempts at imagining a world without outside, then, what we end up with is in fact a transcendent version of the quantum.¹⁵ That cities are a site from which the transition to other worlds is best undertaken strikes another similarity with the type of world city described in Self’s novel; the urban environment in *Transition* takes part in that privileged capacity which the Open world is endowed with in the novel. The transcendent nature conferred on the unique world in Bank’s novel is mirrored, in other words, by the network of cities which facilitate the transition into other worlds. We get a similar view of the world-city here, then, as we did in *The Book of Dave*, and which is propagated in *Cosmopolis*, as we shall see shortly. This particular appeal towards the transcendent, however, is a disavowed one, stripped too of the incredulity on display in Self’s novel. *Transition* does not offer an ironic, or even a very self-conscious meditation on the transcendent. Conceptualising the world-city in this way, then, runs the risk of creating a model which is transposed onto our own supposed centres of global command and control, of unwittingly imbuing the city and the global force of control in our own world-system, with a transcendent status. Indeed, with their ability to flit in and out of other worlds, and even other peoples’ bodies, the members of the Concern seem like they have access to the extra-territorial potency of Being itself, a Being which would seem all too easily analogous to what Fredric Jameson calls ‘the massive Being of capital’ (1991: 47).¹⁶

Neill Blomkamp’s *Elysium* offers another larger-scale version of the interplay between micro and macro. In this case, the micro-cosmos is a satellite in a future Earth’s orbit, a satellite built to house the remaining minority of the super-rich, the rest of the population being left to wallow in an environmentally ravaged planet, along with severe levels of poverty and an oppressive police-state. The class dynamics could not be clearer here, then, along with the transcendent aspects of the micro-cosmos in question, with its overarching presence in relation to the whole of the Earth, and its

other-worldly, heavenly title. There is even a properly eschatological ending, whereby the inhabitants of Earth and Elysium are united, both through gaining equal citizenship and having access to panacea technology which is itself denied or awarded through computer-network technology. We might follow, then, Christopher Holliday's interpretation of the film, as being 'not about the future, but about a world we already know' (2014: 434). But the transcendent motifs on display here make it so that we have to view this world made up of two unequal worlds as a certain *conceptualisation* of our own world, or even the Earth itself.

Putting a transcendent cadence on things leads to two main implications. The first is that the suffering undergone by the inhabitants of the Earth appears in this light as a necessary ill on the road to the final eschatological terminus, and in this sense the film's political message would be one of a quiet stoicism, or better a Christian acceptance of the status quo in the belief that all of humanity will be levelled at the transcendent end-point. This viewpoint, of course, discourages political action in the here and now, and discourages from addressing the type of inequality which *Elysium* itself portrays. The second implication here is a more fully conceptually orientated one. If *Elysium* and *Transition* both also take part in the schema of the world picture, then this would initially appear to be in a slightly different way to *The Book of Dave* and *Cosmopolis*, as the former two pieces offer a world picture from a vantage point outside the Earth, at a small remove from the planet's interior; in other words, they offer not just a version of the world picture, but also a picture of the world. A picture of the world and the world (as) picture cannot be directly equated with one another, but, as Charlie Gere points out, 'it would seem obvious that making pictures of the Earth is only possible in a time when the world is conceived as a picture, with the concomitant emergence of the human as subject, with the world standing at its disposal' (2011: 50). We can therefore incorporate Banks' and Blomkamp's works into the logic of the world picture, but the slight difference between these works and others makes clear the mutation of this logic in the contemporary world. The key point to be made here about these pieces is that they still remain, ultimately, concerned with the bounds of the terrestrial, albeit being at a very slight remove from this. Thus, the micro-cosmos in *Elysium* remains within the orbit of Earth, whilst the multiple planets in *Transition* are always just variants of our own planet. These works figure, then, a transcendence which remains ultimately within the bounds of the terrestrial, and, additionally, remains ultimately anthropocentric. The realm of infinite potential resides within the folds of the Earth, and in this sense what we have here

is a variation of the incorporation of the infinite into the bounds of the terrestrial, as explored in Chapter 1. Indeed, the scenarios presented in all of the pieces thus far explored propose a similar scenario to what Hans Blumenberg sees as one of the main outcomes of what was originally set in motion by the Copernican revolution, which brought about the possibility of space-travel in the human conceptual apparatus (1987: 675). Faced with the barrenness – organic, somatic and noetic – of the world outside Earth, realised following the various space explorations undertaken in the twentieth century, Blumenberg thought that we were forced to turn back towards Earth, to accept that ‘for man there are no alternatives to Earth, just as for reason there are no alternatives to human reason’ (685).¹⁷ By creating a world picture at a slight remove from the Earth, what *Transition* and *Elysium* draw our attention towards is the anthropocentrism and the terracentrism still inherent in our conceptualisations of the global *despite* our knowledge of the outside of Earth, and our ability to produce an actual picture of the latter. Consequently, our view of the infinite remains folded within the bounds of the Earth, just as it is in the various other examples we have discussed in this chapter.

Singularity?

In response to the types of transcendence identified in *Elysium* and *Transition*, we can identify three main schemas of the transcendent, all of which have their own politico-philosophical implications. The first, most sophisticated schema is found in *The Book of Dave* which, whilst it appeals towards the transcendent in articulating a concept of the global related to power and class-relations, ultimately discredits the very basis on which this was formed. A transcendent motif is built up only to be destroyed, the ultimate message being that class and power relationships are not in themselves necessary functions within a pre-ordained, ordered cosmos. The second schema is found in *Elysium* and *Cosmopolis*, whereby a transcendent dynamic between the micro-cosmos and the world at-large is created, thereby producing a certain conceptualisation of the global, and of global power relations. Whilst this helps in identifying the sites of power and domination, however, there is a potential problem here, in that to give something a transcendent quality makes it appear wholly necessary, and the same goes for all the inequalities and suffering this may create. The final model is found in *Transition*, whereby a transcendent motif is set in place unwittingly, and has the potential to imbue our conceptual apparatus itself with the idea of a transcendent micro-cosmos,

a site of privilege and command to which the rest of the earthly population reacts.

Cosmopolis, for its part, manages to retain a degree of complexity within its own schema, and this is made evident in two main aspects of the text, the second of which allows us to trace further a common theme running throughout the book. The title of the novel almost makes it mandatory for us to discuss what type of world city is given in *Cosmopolis*. A clue to this is given, again, in the form of some bank towers. These are described by Packer as being

made to be the last tall things, made empty, designed to hasten the future. They were the end of the outside world. They weren't here exactly. They were in the future, a time beyond geography and touchable money and people who stack and count it (DeLillo 2011: 36).

The bank towers here take on a spectral presence, neither wholly in the present, nor wholly in the future, bridging the gap between the potential and the actual. Peter Boxall reads these buildings as the two towers which constituted the former World Trade Center. As he has it, these towers 'appear throughout DeLillo's oeuvre as a kind of delicate antenna, as a radio tuned in to tomorrow, a structure that can somehow negotiate between the spacetime of the twentieth century, and the unanchored time of electronic global capital' (2006: 223). In this case, the towers can be read as preparing 'for their vanishing act', hence their spectral nature (223).¹⁸

Retaining Boxall's idea of the towers being 'a radio tuned into tomorrow', and yet setting aside the towers' possible allusion to the World Trade Center, we can suggest that, if the towers bridge the gap between the potential and the actual, then this would indeed (as Boxall implies) point to a scenario in which two time frames are in some way being negotiated. But it also confers on the towers the ability to enter into an alternative state, which is in this case framed as a potential state. With one foot in the present and another in the future, these buildings would seem to be in the process of entering another, alternate world, one which is rather like some of the descriptions of our current world. Again, though, we should read against the grain of the novel to an extent here. It is evident that the towers are not, in fact, the end of the outside world, but actually a site which bridges the gap between two qualitatively different worlds, between an actual present and a potential future. It is not, then, that the novel proposes here that geography has been wholly done away with, the bank towers appearing as 'immaterial 'nodes' in the universe of digital capital', as Crosthwaite puts it (2005: 5). What is at stake instead is an element of

the city (in this case the financial centre) which is both part of the present world and not, both material and immaterial. If the scenario proposed here is one in which the gap between two worlds is bridged, then the city, or the financial centre, begins to take on some of the qualities of Packer's limousine. The financial centre in *Cosmopolis*, then, instead of being a thing of the past, is figured as something akin to the micro-cosmos in the novel, as a world city in the sense already mentioned.

This contradiction, or discrepancy between two different worlds (one material and the other immaterial, one the locus of power and the other the world at large, one the site or the ground of potential and the other the place where its effects are felt) is carried further in the more technologically orientated aspects of the novel. Throughout the novel, there are various moments in which it is suggested that the self is being fused with media and digital technologies, the scenarios whereby these technologies anticipate Packer's movements and the events in which he is involved being pertinent examples of this. This is most overtly expressed at the end of DeLillo's book, when Packer undergoes his ambiguous death. When Benno Levin shoots Packer, both the shot he fires and Packer's death are only ever realised in the screen of the latter's watch, the camera of which, we are told, is 'almost metaphysics' (DeLillo 2011: 204). In the final paragraph of the novel, Packer is left 'dead inside the crystal of his watch but still alive in original space, waiting for the shot to sound' (209). There is a sense, then, that Packer's actual death is trying to catch up with the screen of the watch, that the privileged domain of events is in fact a new, digital hinterland, a point of origin from which the everyday takes its cue. This view of the digital as another realm into which the human can be smuggled in fits with an attitude which Margaret Wertheim links with the history and development of religious cosmology. In the contemporary era, as Wertheim puts it, 'the electronic gates of the silicon chip have become, in a sense, a metaphysical gateway, for our modems transport us out of the reach of physicists' equations into an entirely 'other' realm' (2000: 226).

Whilst this parallel is a valid one, it misses out the particularly anthropocentric character of this interaction between the human and its prostheses. In order to tackle this, we are lead back to theorists like de Chardin, who as we have seen proposed a theory of what he called the omega point, that true essence of things which is reached through the increasing complexity and inter-relatedness of humanity and its prostheses on a global scale (1965b: 111–116). In effect, de Chardin saw the whole of the universe as a disparate form of consciousness, gradually being cobbled together into what he called a 'super-Brain', an alternative

way of referring to the omega point (1965a: 162). Steven Connor has traced this idea back to Schelling's and Hegel's versions of the 'world-soul', or *Weltgeist*, and in general to the system of thought known as '*Naturphilosophie*'. As Connor puts it, 'we have witnessed a remarkable return of Naturphilosophie in the twentieth century', and this is exemplified best through thinkers like de Chardin and Vladimir Ivanovich Vernadsky, both of whom employed the concept of the 'noosphere' in their thought (Connor 2010: 34). A contemporary correlate of these ideas is the notion of the 'Singularity', which is what Ray Kurzweil (amongst others) has used to designate a future point at which humans break out of their biological constraints, and are able to undergo a fusion between mind and technological prostheses.¹⁹ If we can see Packer's watch as being an emblem for the fusion between the human and its prostheses, then we can read this alongside de Chardin's omega point, or in more contemporary terms the notion of the Singularity. All of these instances are concerned with a moment of transcendence, an eschatological end-point at which human and machine, mind and information become one. *Cosmopolis* adds to this discourse by highlighting the power relations involved not only in a potential fusion between the technological and the human, but also in relation to the digital and the culture of information in general. Packer, at least in terms of the dynamic between him and Benno Levin, remains in a position of power, even at the point of his death, which itself is imbued with a transcendent status. This death, then, comes to be associated with the various other aspects of the transcendent in the novel, and the movement towards the fusion between mind and machine is thus put in the light of privilege and power, as opposed to a moment of liberatory levelling as it so often is.

To extrapolate the broader conceptual point here, it is clear that this moment in the text, along with its wider inter-texts, fits in with the idealist strain of the Global Brain, identified in the previous chapter. What initially seems to be an expression of human finitude and remoteness from the world in these contemporary versions of the world picture tips over into a conceptualisation of the global which has a radiant human at its centre, along with a transcendent end-point or transition. This is particularly clear in the case of *Cosmopolis*, through the hints towards technological fusion and the links with concepts such as the Singularity. But it is also the case with all of the materials discussed in this chapter. The over-riding issue here – as in previous chapters – is a development of a way of viewing the world in its totality, a re-instatement of the human on the level of the infinite within the horizon of our own historical juncture.

The Glocal, or Cosmopolitanism, Pt. 1

A final, more general spatial dynamic present in all of the materials discussed here allows us to demonstrate more fully the implications of the ways of conceptualising the global in this case. The incongruences identified between small and large in this chapter, between a micro-cosmos and the world at-large, indicate what many have termed a 'glocal' way of thinking, one which, as Roland Robertson phrases it, involves 'the interpenetration of what are conventionally called the global and the local, or in more general terms the universal and the particular' (2012: 196). The various small-scale transcendences identified (whether it be a limousine, a taxi, a city, or a planet) proffer a local site which is always embroiled in the global, and the converse; as stated a number of times now, we are dealing with a scenario in which two opposing, unequal worlds enter and exit one another. That Eric Packer is, by his own admission, 'a World Citizen with a New York pair of balls' (DeLillo 2011: 26) is not just an off-hand, chauvinistic remark. It also projects a glocal dynamic onto the body, one which emphasises a dynamic of power. It speaks of being at once part of the mass of the global and at the same time an autonomous and in this case testosterone-fuelled individual who is in a position of dominance. It also speaks of being a world citizen by virtue of a specific, local location, which is in this case New York. In this sense, also, and in the wider sense of the idea of the micro-cosmos, the local is that which defines the global. But this reverses the assumptions made by the theorists of the glocal, as local is usually defined as something like everyday relations, something set apart from universalist, capitalistic relations, a notion which is demonstrated by Robertson's evocation of the universal and the particular. That these two are mixed in the notion of the glocal is part of an effort to identify what influence the local has within global relations and how the former might be empowered, instead of putting the emphasis purely on the latter. It is in this spirit that Edward Soja suggests that 'interjecting the local into the global (and vice-versa)' poses 'a disruptive challenge to the widespread view that globalisation and localisation . . . are separate and opposing ways of thinking' (2000: 199).

The local, in other words, is rendered in the figure of the micro-cosmos a site of power, that which configures overall global relations, that which functions as their driving force. If the spirit of the local is altered here, then this has something further to do with the notion of a world citizen. Indeed, a brief examination of the connotations of this term and some of its history, will serve to establish a link between the glocal and the cosmopolitan

outlook. This will in turn allow the concept of the micro-cosmos to be thought through more fully. From here, some of the implications of glocalism and its links with cosmopolitanism can be assessed.

It was Diogenes the Cynic who first declared himself a cosmopolitan. As Diogenes Laertius (the Ancient biographer) records, ‘asked where he [Diogenes the Cynic] came from, he said, “I am a citizen of the world [κοσμοπολίτης – literally, world citizen, or cosmopolitan]”’ (1958: 64–65). As John L. Moles has pointed out, the statement can either be read as an affirmation of non-citizenship (‘world’ cancelling out ‘citizen’), or as an affirmation of an intimate connection with the cosmos in its entirety, the ‘Cynic “state” (*politeia*) or ground of citizenship’ being ‘nothing other than a moral “state”: that is, the “state” of being a Cynic’ (1996: 111). This latter connotation of the term was taken up by the Stoics, who thought that it was Reason, that spark of the divine in humans, which united all of humanity in an all-encompassing world-city.²⁰ The mass of humanity, then, spanning the globe, is connected to each citizen and its ground by virtue of universal Reason; from a single, individual point, the entire population of the cosmos is linked together. The Stoic concept of the cosmopolitan is made particularly stark in Hierocles’ notion of an ever-widening series of circles, which start with the individual and their immediate milieu, moving onto the town and the nation, and eventually on to the ‘whole human race’. The goal, then, for a ‘well-tempered man’ would be to ‘draw the circles together somehow towards the centre’ (Qtd. in Long and Sedley 1987: 349). By drawing the circles of milieu together, by creating a form of world citizenship, one connects with the whole of humanity, and yet at the same time re-establishes the ground of the individual within the world-encompassing.

In this light, the glocal becomes very similar to the Cynic and related Stoic concept of cosmopolitanism. Both notions conflate the global and the local, the universal and the particular, the individual and the world. Drawing the cosmos into the ground of the individual and their intimate surroundings and thereby mixing them up, is akin here to the notion of the glocal in which (in contemporary terms) the global is drawn into the local and vice-versa. The main difference, of course, is that we no longer believe in the cosmos, in the way that the Ancients did. Neither is there present in the conception of the glocal any form of divine Reason, providing the basis for the relation between the citizen and the cosmos, and the general order of things. To suggest that capitalism provides something akin to divine Reason in today’s world in the way it conditions social and spatial relations is to add nothing new to the debate on the glocal. What the comparison

with the Cynic and the Stoic version of cosmopolitanism brings to the discussion, however, is to highlight the elevation of capital in such discourses to a wholly natural, immovable force, one which takes on a quality of the transcendent.

A similar operation is under way in contemporary writings on cosmopolitanism, Ulrich Beck's writings on the subject being a case in point. Again, the driving force of a potential cosmopolitanism is openly acknowledged. Cosmopolitanism, as we are told, 'is accelerated by the dynamics of capital and consumption, empowered by a global market which undermines state borders' (2006: 72). Cosmopolitanism is also, for Beck, directly correlative with the idea of the glocal: it is a 'dialectical process in which the universal and the particular, the similar and the dissimilar, the global and the local are to be conceived . . . as interconnected and reciprocally interpenetrating principles' (73). It is only in a 'transnational framework', as Beck elsewhere suggests, that these 'glocal' questions, questions, that is, which are part of the cosmopolitan outlook, can be posed (2005: 15). Whilst Beck is at pains to stress that his conception of the cosmopolitan is not philosophically orientated, it is hard not to assess it on these terms, not least due to the wealth of philosophical background which pertains to such a concept.²¹ In light of the previous remarks, the equation made here between glocalism and cosmopolitanism suggests already a link with the Ancient way of conceptualising cosmopolitanism in the era of a divine cosmos. The global and the local interpenetrate one another, and this is all by virtue of the now fully formed international capitalist network. Beck even supplements the argument here with an appeal towards the dialectic. There is a trace of the dialectic, particularly in the Stoic conception of the cosmos (one which Hegel turns to, eventually, in his own philosophy): the movement and desired interpenetration between universal and particular, between the ground of the individual and the cosmos itself is perpetuated by Reason, that spark of the divine. That the motor of this dialectic in the cosmopolitan outlook is – almost unequivocally – identified as being capital itself, portrays not only a political-conceptual vortex, but also a way of viewing the current political system as itself entirely necessary.

In this respect, then, we find a concrete connection between theories of cosmopolitanism and the dynamics identified in the material throughout this chapter. What is viewed as a liberatory theory which places an emphasis on local, everyday interactions is merely another way of articulating the relations between the universal and the particular within the capitalist world-system. The local becomes merely a function of the very system of which it forms a part, to the point at which we can view its partial reconfiguration in

the other materials discussed here not just as an oblique critique of the notion of the glocal or cosmopolitan (achieved through exposing its mirror image), but also as pushing things to their logical conclusion. Hanging over all of this is a conception of the global which is still definitively concerned with an outside, a way of thinking of the totality as that which has a series of infinite potencies folded throughout it. As was pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, this suggests an opposing way of conceptualising the global to the notion of a disappearance of the outside. Overall, we are presented with a transcendent view of the global, one which ushers in a necessary outside that determines relations across the globe, whether this is in the guise of an all-powerful human figure, a micro-cosmic world, or a radiance of Reason in its various forms and transformations. This does not imply, however, that all of the materials discussed here adhere to a simple view of the totality; indeed, as we have seen, there are various different strategies when it comes to dealing with a conception of the global predicated on transcendence. In the next chapter, we will again encounter some different strategies which tackle some of the problems posed by viewing the global as characterised as an interplay between inside and outside. In effect, we will see again how transcendence can be transfigured, and moulded to suit various different agendas. The main source of transfiguration here, however, develops into its own theme, and that theme is the contingent.