

# BEYOND GRIEF AND NOTHING

*A Reading of Don DeLillo*

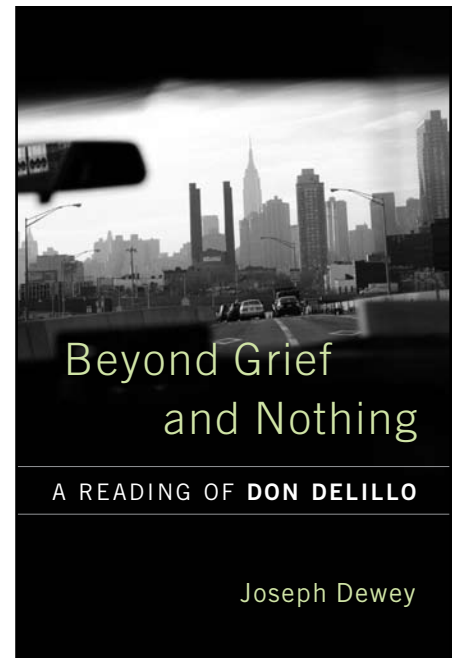
Joseph Dewey

In the closing decade of the twentieth century, Don DeLillo emerged from the privileged status of a writer's writer to become by any measure—productivity, influence, scope, gravitas—the dominant novelist of fin-de-millennium America. With a series of landmark titles beginning in 1982 with *The Names* and continuing with *White Noise* and *Underworld*, DeLillo defined himself as a provocative, articulate anatomist of American culture. In *Beyond Grief and Nothing: A Reading of Don DeLillo*, Joseph Dewey offers an astute assessment of this daunting yet important writer's four-decade cultural critique. Dewey finds DeLillo's concerns to be organized around three rubrics that mark the writer's own creative evolution: the love of the street, the embrace of the word, and the celebration of the soul.

Measuring the full weight of DeLillo's narrative achievement, Dewey takes the reader through the novelist's hip avant-garde satires of the mid-1960s, his dense interrogations of the power of language and the spell of narrative in the 1980s and 1990s, and his recent efforts to transcend the narrow parameters of the immediate. Dewey explores, among other relevant topics, DeLillo's fascination with Eastern philosophies, interest in Native American traditions, passion for jazz, and deep roots in Christian Catholicism.

Written to present an open and helpful reading of this demanding literary figure, *Beyond Grief and Nothing* traces DeLillo's achievement in a careful chronology of artistic progression. By grounding his reading in the texts themselves (novels, plays, and many of the short stories), Dewey develops an insightful arc, a thematic trajectory that takes understanding of DeLillo into significant new directions and offers a compelling and satisfying introduction to his long literary career.

September 2006, 184 pages



An associate professor of American literature at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, **Joseph Dewey** is the author of *Understanding Richard Powers*, *Novels from Reagan's America: A New Realism*, and *In a Dark Time: The Apocalyptic Temper in the American Novel of the Nuclear Age* and coeditor of *UnderWords: Perspectives on Don DeLillo's Underworld*.

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