

# Teletechnologies of Death and Mourning in Don DeLillo's *The Body Artist* and Nicholas Royle's *Quilt*

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## Abstract

Teletechnologies are changing the way we cope with loss and grief. Apart from their romanticized relationship with death in the history of literature, teletechnologies also figure prominently as productive metaphors in critical theories. Psychoanalysis and deconstruction view telecommunication in its various forms as intricately connected to notions of telepathy and the unconscious, a point shared by Don DeLillo's *The Body Artist* and Nicholas Royle's *Quilt*. Both novels attach great importance to how the process of individual mourning, in the presence of different forms of technologies, is inscribed with a distinctive telepathic effect. Specifically, DeLillo's text portrays the radio as an uncanny harbinger of death, and *Quilt* forges a link between the faltered telephone communication and the spectral moments when the dead is calling. The article proposes to conceive, from a psychoanalytical perspective, the subject of teletechnologies as a critical starting point to address related issues of telepathy and telecommunication and to understand death as loss in the contemporary age.

**Keywords:** *teletechnologies, death, mourning, Don DeLillo's The Body Artist, Nicholas Royle's Quilt, telepathy*

In ancient Greek mythology, Orpheus' lyre is tuned to sing grieving songs and he is thus granted a brief reunion with his dead wife in the Underworld. In spite of Orpheus' ultimate failure of bringing Eurydice back to life, this tragic tale offers a glimpse into the power of mourning that can blur and transcend the duality of life and death, even if only temporarily. This intriguing undertone of Orpheus myth has taken on new meanings as it has been rewritten by many later writers and artists.<sup>1</sup>

These variations of Orpheus myth bring to the fore modernist writers' tendency to view telecommunication instruments as tinged with supernatural connotations around life and death. By contrast, postmodernist writers, instead of showing the mystified nature of teletechnologies, are more concerned about how the potentiality of other-worldly communication may affect the way we express grief and understand loss. The shift in postmodern fictional writing of teletechnologies coincides with the larger socio-cultural

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<sup>1</sup> See among others, Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past, Volume II: The Guermites Way & Cities of the Plain*, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin (New York: Vintage, 1982), where the narrator's unresponsive calls over a suddenly disconnected telephone evoke in him an image of his aging grandmother as 'a beloved ghost that I [he] had allowed to lose herself in the ghostly world' (137); the French poet and playwright Jean Cocteau's play *Orphée* (1926) and the film *Orpheus* (1950), where the radio replaces the telephone in functioning as an instrument connecting the living with the dead and, more importantly, stage teletechnologies as a portal to the subconscious. For a detailed analysis on Proust's insights into technology, see Sarah Danius, 'Orpheus and the Machine: Proust as Theorist of Technological Change, and The Case of Joyce', *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 37.2 (2001): 127-40.

trend to demystify the matter of death and to discuss it in a less inhibited manner. According to Lucy Bregman, the ‘Death Awareness Movement’ took place in America in the late 1950s, when ‘a new popular vocabulary and set of ideas about death and dying’ were created from the necessity to understand death as loss:

Bereavement, the state of having already experienced the loss, became the second focus of the movement and its professional activities. Just as the experience of dying needed to be rescued from silence and denial, so did the experience of grieving a death, understood as coping with loss. [...] Loss is not just an event, it is a natural correlate of attachment, of love and involvement with others in a world where deaths and departures and endings are part of life. In this view, surviving death now became the situation of the griever in their loss [...].<sup>2</sup>

Bregman’s words direct our attention to those who have survived death but may eventually succumb to grief. For the bereaved, to accept death as loss requires effort and the practice of proper mourning.

One of my arguments is that mourning becomes inevitable in the post-pandemic world with its drastic changes in lifestyle and mental status. This needs to be reconceptualized, especially in relation to the prevalence of various electronic technologies. While the illusion of immortality was smashed by the COVID worldwide death, the experience of grief still looms large with ensuing struggles to understand the meaning of loss. Thus, how to re-contextualize the idea of ‘death as loss’ in the presence of telecommunication technologies becomes an imperative issue. Encroaching on the intimate corner of every household, technologies not only bear witness to the flow of emotions, but also exert influence on individuals’ psyche by registering and transmitting their most private feelings through electronic channels. These advanced technological gadgets are shown, in an unprecedented way, to be indispensable in facilitating different forms of long-distance communication, especially when mobility restrictions were at once enacted. Gone are the days when face-to-face talk and physical togetherness were taken for granted. People are forced to acknowledge their growing dependence to technologies for daily communication. Once seen as inventions that facilitate lives in a practical way, technologies have given rise to different emotional experiences with its impact on our inner lives. ‘[A]s we envision new emotional norms or recover old ones, we should also consider which technologies help us realize them.’<sup>3</sup>

Admittedly, teletechnologies are changing the way we mourn. Hence, the following questions: How can our understanding of death as loss be shaped by the application of technologies? What possible psychological experiences are thus involved? How does contemporary writing register and respond to the accelerating relations between mourning and communication technologies?

## Telephone Metaphors in Psychoanalysis and Deconstruction

With its quick response to the impact of technological revolutions on human condition,

<sup>2</sup> Lucy Bregman, ‘The Death Awareness Movement’, in *The Routledge Companion to Death and Dying*, ed. Christopher M. Moreman (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 411 and 416-17.

<sup>3</sup> Luke Fernandez and Susan J. Matt, *Bored, Lonely, Angry, Stupid: Changing Feelings about Technology, from the Telegraph to Twitter* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), 362. See, for instance, the wind-phone as mourning through the medium of technologies in Japan. After the 2011 tsunami, Japanese mourners have paid visits to a telephone booth, known as the wind phone, to perform a one-way conversation with their loved ones who have lost their lives in the catastrophe.

contemporary fiction helps us find an angle to answer these questions. Peter Boxall ponders over the difference between 20<sup>th</sup>-century technologies and that of the new millennium in framing our conceptualization of the present:

[...] the attempt to place oneself in the shifting relationship between time and space is shaped by the speed of twentieth-century modernity, our own navigational and orientational apparatuses are calibrated by a shockingly new era in the technological manipulation of time, space and distance, and by a specifically twenty-first-century speed. The motor car, the railway, the cinema, the telegraph and the telephone: these are the devices that fashion the quivering present in the twentieth century and that determine the texture, weight and momentum of western modernity. Our own time is bent and crafted by the computer, the mobile phone, the satellite and the internet; by electronic communication at the speed of light.<sup>4</sup>

Boxall's diachronic perspective touches on the unquestionable significance of daily technologies in the course of modernization. While his contextualization of the evolving technologic apparatuses is necessary and to the point, I would like to suggest that modern technologies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are still relevant for two reasons. First, although outdated in the age of mobile phones and computers, telephones and the cinema continue to play an active, if not dominant, part in real life and fictional writings. Second, the thematic concern and theoretical productivity of 20<sup>th</sup>-century technologies in intellectual discussions are not undermined by their inevitable decline of usage in the wake of new inventions. The latter point finds expression in Boxall's statement that the advancing technologies share the same goal as deconstruction and psychoanalysis in '[t]he destabilisation of the category of the human'.<sup>5</sup>

It is notable that critical languages on deconstruction and psychoanalysis have lent considerable attention to technologies' effect on humanity and reality. While '[t]he advent of the telephone coincides with the institution of psychoanalysis',<sup>6</sup> deconstruction has brought into play the metaphor of teletechnologies.

An interesting analogy between the telephone and the idea of telepathy is made by Sigmund Freud who regarded the former as a 'physical equivalent of the psychical act'<sup>7</sup> of telepathy. His focus on the paranormal nature of telepathy here, however, must not be separated from his resolution to guard the science of psychoanalysis against any potential association with occultism or mysticism prevalent at that time.<sup>8</sup> Freud drew a parallel between the talking cure and the telephone, with the analyst acting like 'a receptive organ' and 'a telephone receiver', and the analysand, 'the transmitting microphone'.<sup>9</sup> In this

<sup>4</sup> Peter Boxall, *Twenty-First-Century Fiction: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 3-4.

<sup>5</sup> Boxall, *Twenty-First-Century Fiction*, 88.

<sup>6</sup> Laurence A. Rickels, *Aberrations of Mourning* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 280.

<sup>7</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'Dreams and Occultism' (1933 [1932]), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. XXII (1932-1936)*, trans. James Strachey, in collaboration with Anna Freud, assisted by Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson (London: The Hogarth Press, 1964), 55.

<sup>8</sup> In 'Dreams and Telepathy' (1922), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. XVIII (1920-1922)* (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), Freud begins by asserting that there is no ground for the anticipation that the current paper studies occult phenomenon (197). The introductory remarks of Freud's 'Psycho-Analysis and Telepathy' (1941 [1921]), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. XVIII (1920-1922)*, outline the essential differences between the tasks of analysts and that of occultists (177-81).

<sup>9</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'Recommendations to Physicians Practising Psycho-Analysis' (1912), in *The Standard*

case, it is what remains unspoken, the unconscious, rather than spoken words that needs to be transmitted. He cautioned about the presumption that understanding is possible on the spot during the talking therapy, for the truth only becomes available in hindsight when the deferred meaning reveals itself to the conscious: ‘It must not be forgotten that the things one hears are for the most part things whose meaning is only recognized later on’.<sup>10</sup>

If this form of telecommunication lays bare the reconstruction of the unconscious by psychoanalysts, we might go a step further to indicate that Freud’s analogy touches on the nexus between telepathy and the unconscious.<sup>11</sup> The term ‘telepathy’ was first coined in 1882 by Frederic W. H. Myers, founding member of Society for Psychical Research, to designate ‘the communication of impressions of any kind from one mind to another, independently of the recognised channels of sense’.<sup>12</sup> Comparatively, Freud’s explanation of the unconscious as ‘a psychic process’ or ‘the true psychical reality’ proceeds: ‘[I]n its innermost nature it is as much unknown to us as the reality of the external world, and it is as incompletely presented by the data of consciousness as is the external world by the communications of our sense organs.’<sup>13</sup> For Freud the conscious realm is in charge of sensory information, whereas the unconscious as a psychical equivalent to the physical reality marks an uncharted territory beyond any sensory input. Moreover, according to Jacques Derrida, it can be ‘[d]ifficult to imagine a theory of what they still call the unconscious without a theory of telepathy. They can be neither confused nor dissociated.’<sup>14</sup> What Freud has observed from the couch conversation, that meaning takes time to reveal itself, finds a contemporary expression in Derrida’s annulment of the deceptive simultaneity of telecommunication. Derrida’s coinage of the word ‘teletechnologies’, with ‘tele’ indicating ‘distance, lag or delay’, is a shorthand for technologies that work at a distance and more importantly, whose ‘apparent immediacy of the transmission or broadcast’<sup>15</sup> is *de facto* a lag behind its production or, using his own words, ‘a particular effect of “différance”’ (*ET*, 129).

Moreover, Derrida preferred the notion of telecommunication as a proper illustration of the act of writing. Acknowledging that ‘any form of writing [...] is already a kind of teletechnology’ (*ET*, 36), he viewed writing as an ongoing and viable act across time and space, as opposed to speech as an instant and conditioned source of knowledge: ‘Meaning, the content of the semantic message, is thus transmitted, *communicated*, by different *means*, by technically more powerful mediations, over a much greater distance

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*Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. XII (1911-1913)*, trans. James Strachey, in collaboration with Anna Freud, assisted by Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson (London: The Hogarth Press, 1964): 115-16.

<sup>10</sup> Freud, ‘Recommendations to Physicians Practising Psycho-Analysis’, 112.

<sup>11</sup> For relevant discussions on Freud’s ambivalence towards the notion of telepathy, see Rob White, *Freud’s Memory: Psychoanalysis, Mourning and the Foreign Body* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 35 and Elizabeth Rottenberg, ‘What Are the Chances? Psychoanalysis, Telepathy, and the Accident’, *Paragraph* 40.3 (2017): 310-28.

<sup>12</sup> Frederic W. H. Myers, *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death, Vol. 1* (London: Longmans, 1903), xxii.

<sup>13</sup> Sigmund Freud, ‘The Interpretation of Dreams (second part)’ (1900), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. V (1900-1901)*, trans. James Strachey, in collaboration with Anna Freud, assisted by Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson (London: The Hogarth Press, 1953), 613, original italics.

<sup>14</sup> Jacques Derrida, ‘Telepathy’, in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other, Volume 1*, ed. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 237.

<sup>15</sup> Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, *Echographies of Television: Filmed Interviews*, trans. Jennifer Bajorek (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2002), 38-40. Hereafter *ET* with page references in the text.

[...].'<sup>16</sup> This sentence draws on the idea of telepathy to specify a tele-phenomenon rooted in the epistemological and informational aspects of technologies. Writing as a particular form of teletechnology would thus be a site where telepathic communication comes into play. Circulated within the realm of psychoanalysis and deconstruction, these technologically-related metaphors are indicative of the telepathic effect perceivable in different forms of communication, including the psychological practice of talking cure, electronic transmission and the act of writing.

That writing is a telecommunication form of telepathic effect was investigated further by Nicholas Royle, the author of *Telepathy and Literature* and an authority on Derrida. For Royle, 'telepathy and literature are weirdly in cahoots, they belong together. [...] What's going on technologically, then, inevitably has profound consequences and resonance for thinking about literary writing'.<sup>17</sup> To advance the concept of telepathy is not only to reappraise telecommunication and its cultural connotation in real and fictional life, but also to explore a new approach to writing and reading literature. In his pioneering study on the relation between telepathy and literature, Royle begins by clarifying doubts:

[I]t should be clear that telepathy is historically linked to numerous other tele-phenomena: it is part of the establishment of tele-culture in general. It is necessarily related to other nineteenth-century forms of communication from a distance through new and often invisible channels, including the railway, telegraphy, photography, the telephone and the gramophone. [...] 'Do you believe in telepathy?' need not be regarded as categorically or essentially distinguishable from questions such as 'Do you believe in the telephone?' or 'Do you believe in television?'<sup>18</sup>

His strong argument brings together the history of science and cultural history with the notion of telepathy at their intersection. As the magic of telecommunication, telepathy is at the same time a historical invention, a tech-related phenomenon and a mode of literary thinking that is crucial to the establishment of tele-culture at large.

## Contemporary Fiction and Telepathic Mourning: Case Examples

There is an uncanny moment in *Ghost Dance*, a British film on ghosts and the nature of cinema, when Derrida's improvisational speech on ghosts gets interrupted by an (un)timely phone call: 'Now the telephone is the ghost [...]', he made a quick comment on it before answering to 'the phantom voice of someone [he doesn't] know'. In his eyes, the ghostly phone call testifies to the empowerment of 'ghosts and their ability to haunt us' by modern advancements in technology and telecommunication.<sup>19</sup> After almost twenty years, Derrida's valid point can be extended to DeLillo's *The Body Artist* and Royle's *Quilt*, two texts dealing with individual loss and mourning, in which teletechnologies are an integral yet dubious part of bereavement. Their fictional exploration of the technological uncanniness finds specific expression in the

<sup>16</sup> Jacques Derrida, 'Signature Event Context', in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Baas (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 311.

<sup>17</sup> Dawne McCance et al., 'Crossings: An Interview with Nicholas Royle', *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* 47.1 (2014): 20.

<sup>18</sup> Nicholas Royle, *Telepathy and Literature: Essays on the Reading Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990), 5.

<sup>19</sup> Jacques Derrida in *Ghost Dance*, dir. Ken McMullen, 1983, quoted from the English subtitles with the original script in French, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SwkjAuN-k> [accessed 30 March 2023].

psychological experience of personal grief. These two millennial novels can shed light on the current discussion. The former is attuned to ‘tough-tied melancholy and impenetrable silence’,<sup>20</sup> and the latter ‘keeps going towards death and the thought of death, traversing its own sadness [which is] unlivable.’<sup>21</sup> Following the abrupt death of loved ones, both protagonists undergo an uncanny mourning process characterized by the telepathic effect of their interactions with teletechnologies as the spectres. Featuring long-distance transmission of messages without sensory organs, telepathy has an important bearing on the work of mourning when the living need to deal with the foreign messages sent beyond death, an issue which becomes more pertinent when it is almost impossible to ignore the psychological impact of telecommunication in fiction and real life. So far, articles on *The Body Artist* and *Quilt* have paid less attention to the spectral technological presence, in contrast to spectral figures/creatures, be it the man-like Mr. Tuttle or the rays.<sup>22</sup> In view of this, I attempt to show that the radio in DeLillo’s text and the telephone in Royle’s text give rise to telepathic communication which lies central to the individualized process of mourning.

In a recent interview, DeLillo reflected on the side effect of technologies when used unwisely: ‘[...] there are the things that individuals will do because they find a way to do it. This is what causes all sorts of disruptions in technology and people’s lives. Because an individual *can* find a way to do something technologically, he or she [...] *will* do it.’<sup>23</sup> His acute observation specifies the irresistible impact of technologies on the psychology of users. DeLillo believes that the failure to distinguish between one’s ability and willingness leads to technology misuse, an overlooked fact that easily scapegoats technological inventions. This dilemma harkens back to *The Body Artist* that relates a widow’s struggle in wavering between mourning ‘technologically’ or not. After a seemingly ordinary morning spent together, the eponymous character Lauren Hartke is widowed by her husband Rey Roble’s unexpected suicide. During the ensuing grieving process in the isolated sea-side house, she comes across a spectral figure – Mr. Tuttle, and

<sup>20</sup> Stephan Amidon, “‘Tasting the Breeze’”: Review of *The Body Artist*, by Don DeLillo’, *New Statesman* (2011): 53.

<sup>21</sup> Sarah Wood, “‘Another Light’”: Review of *Quilt*, by Nicholas Royle, *Oxford Literary Review* 35.2 (2013): 256.

<sup>22</sup> For discussions about technology in the two texts, see, among others, Sylvia Mieszkowski, *Disturbing Noises – Haunting Sounds: Don DeLillo’s The Body Artist*, *Thamyris/Intersecting* 18 (2007): 119-46; Kacper Bartczak, ‘Technology and the Bodily in Don DeLillo’s *The Body Artist* and *Cosmopolis*’, *Polish Journal for American Studies* 5 (2011): 111-26; Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory, Fourth Edition* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014); Arleen Ionescu, “‘Novel’ Reality Calling and Telepathy in Nicholas Royle’s *Quilt*”, *Word and Text – A Journal of Literary Studies and Linguistics* 4.1 (2014): 98-115; Arleen Ionescu, “‘Cloth speaks’”: Cloaks of Telepathy, Melancholia and the Uncanny in Nicholas Royle’s *Quilt*’, *Meridian Critic* 24.1 (2015): 93-108. For more on the Uncanny, see Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003) and his Introduction to the issue on the Uncanny that he edited for *Oxford Literary Review*: “‘We Ourselves Speak a Language that is Foreign’”: One Hundred Years of Freud’s Uncanny’, *Oxford Literary Review* 42.2 (2020): v-vii. In the same issue, see also Andrew Bennett, ‘Something One Does Not Know One’s Way about in’, 140-4; Josh Cohen, ‘Psychoanalysis Itself’, 167-70; Eric Prenowitz, ‘Uncanny Cast’, 265-8; Arleen Ionescu and Lanlan Du, ‘Chinese Versions of the Uncanny’, 205-9; Judith Still, ‘The Uncanny Indian’, 287-90; Laurent Milesi, ‘Freud’s Uncanny in the Posthuman Valley’, 247-51; David Farrell Krell, ‘Getting Unscrewed: A Brief, Unhinged Reading of E. T. A. Hoffmann and Sigmund Freud’, 229-32.

<sup>23</sup> David Marchese, ‘We All Live in Don DeLillo’s World: He’s Confused by It Too’, *The New York Times Magazine*, 11 October 2020, final ed., original italics; available at <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/10/12/magazine/don-delillo-interview.html> [accessed 10 April 2023].

is perplexed by his eerie ability, resembling a radio or a tape recorder, to reproduce the voice of the dead.

Acknowledging *The Body Artist* as an exemplary work that heeds to the uncanny encounters with quotidian technologies, Royle's coauthored work conjures 'a technics of the ghost'. He shares the view that '[w]hether in literature, psychoanalysis or philosophy, contemporary thought is irrevocably hooked up to developments in technology and telecommunications.'<sup>24</sup> Featuring a narrative structure analogous to *The Body Artist*, Royle's *Quilt* concentrates on the effect of tele-phenomenon in the process of personal grief as well. Following the accidental death of his father, the unnamed son embarks on a period of mourning that veers into a bizarre preoccupation with raising the ghostly fish of rays inside his father's house. After several baffling phone talks, his girlfriend senses something wrong and returns to the house only to find no trace of his whereabouts.

In DeLillo's text, for instance, the inward and precarious nature of private mourning culminates in a performance piece that resorts to the auto-play of telephonic sounds, the video projection of a highway and the tape-recording of weird voices. All these technological tools have been crucially involved in Lauren's bereavement characterized by her refiguration of technologies' (de)familiarizing effect. Likewise, the telecommunication system in Royle's text is closely integrated into the formidable task of mourning. To begin with, the bereaved son is offered to make phone calls at will by the hospital, where his father has died by accident, as if he wins a 'consolation prize.'<sup>25</sup> He is then told of the autopsy result by a faceless voice over the telephone, 'and the words fizzle and faint away, implausible as an electric brae' (*Q*, 40). After the funeral, the male-protagonist's descent into madness is manifested through unstable telephone communication, which enables his girlfriend to realize that 'the frailty of a telephone is not a reassuring medium for a long-term relationship' (*Q*, 95).

Admittedly, both authors foreground the dubious presence of teletechnologies to bring into play the novelistic forces of resistance, interruption and divergence to identify the precarious psychological states of those undergoing the grief-stricken period. This is in tune with Royle's conviction from his 'Afterword' to *Quilt*: 'The future of literature is inextricably linked up with these forms of teletechnologies, in the most "wireless" ways conceivable' (*Q*, 158). The next two sections will examine DeLillo's unique treatment of the radio in relation to one's bereavement and the telephone's ambivalent role in Royle's elegiac text.

## Radio 'Forecasting' of Death

Household teletechnologies intrude upon characters' lives from the outset of the two texts as the harbinger of death and the inhibitor of its message. DeLillo's work starts with a breakfast scene foregrounding a certain resemblance of interpersonal communication to man-machine interactions: 'The role that sound plays in *The Body Artist* is always tied up with the way communication does or does not work.'<sup>26</sup> For Lauren and Rey, utterances and radio sounds are equally trivial and inconspicuous. The radio is only mentioned in

<sup>24</sup> Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 166.

<sup>25</sup> Nicholas Royle, *Quilt* (Brighton: Myriad Editions, 2010), 20. Hereafter *Q* with page references in the text.

<sup>26</sup> Sylvia Mieszkowski, 'Disturbing Noises – Haunting Sounds: Don DeLillo's *The Body Artist*', *Thamyris/Intersecting* 18 (2007): 122.

passing at first: ‘There were voices on the radio in like Hindi it sounded’.<sup>27</sup> In between two paragraphs in which the narrator presents Lauren being busy with making breakfast, this fleeting observation on the obscure electronic voices is revealing of her sporadic and, thus, futile attention paid to technologies in everyday life. Lauren’s estrangement from the radio broadcast finds further expression in Rey’s repulsion for the electronic ‘nonsense’, evidenced by his self-contradictory gestures of turning on and off the radio.

‘Do you have to listen to the radio?’  
 ‘No,’ she said and read the paper. ‘What?’  
 ‘It is such astonishing shit.’  
 ‘I didn’t turn on the radio. You turned on the radio,’ she said.  
 He went to the fridge and came back with a large dark fig and turned off the radio.  
 [...]
 He gave back her spoon. Then he turned on the radio and remembered he’d just turned it off and he turned it off again. (*TBA*, 11-12)

Freud must have foreseen such absurd scenario: ‘Man has, as it were, become a kind of prosthetic God. When he puts on all his auxiliary organs he is truly magnificent;’ he proceeds, ‘but these organs have not grown on to him and they still give him much trouble at times’.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps, what man has is a mere illusion of being a prosthetic God, for more often than not they are not capable of making effective use of technological instruments. In regard to Rey, it is pathetic that ‘[b]eing in control of the medium, and thus of the establishment and/or breaking off of this stream of sound from the outside world, seems to be more important [...] than the content of the information communicated.’<sup>29</sup> Originally designed for effective news sharing, the radio is misappropriated by the couple as a source of electronic noises, meaningless and disquieting.

Based on Marshall McLuhan’s view that the medium ‘shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action’,<sup>30</sup> a link can be forged between the seemingly redundant radio and the laborious and pointless exchange of words between the couple. Whereas Rey’s agency is undermined by his inconsistency in operating the radio, the couple’s relationship is strained by their frequent evocation of the peculiar word ‘what’. For example, when Rey is trying to tell Lauren something about their rented house, he starts by saying ‘I want to say something but what’ (*TBA*, 4). This testifies to Rey’s desire to communicate, on the one hand, and the fact that the communication has failed from the very beginning, on the other: ‘The sense of being discontinuous with ourselves, therefore, chimes with a discontinuous relation to the other [...], which forms the shaky grounds for shared communication’.<sup>31</sup> In the absence of Lauren’s response, Rey continues: ‘Something I meant to tell you’ (*TBA*, 4). Again, Lauren is too immersed in washing blueberries and toasting breads to reply, and a moment later, Rey restates in a manner of speaking to himself: ‘Yes exactly. I know what it is’. Until now, Lauren opens her mouth for the first time: “‘What?’” Meaning what did you say, not what did you want to tell me’

<sup>27</sup> Don DeLillo, *The Body Artist* (London: Picador, 2011 [2001]), 6. Hereafter *TBA* with page references in the text.

<sup>28</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1962), 38-9.

<sup>29</sup> Mieszkowski, 132.

<sup>30</sup> Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 1994), 9.

<sup>31</sup> David Coughlan, *Ghost Writing in Contemporary American Fiction* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 33.



(*TBA*, 5). As an uncanny reminder of the couple's estrangement, this mechanical repetition of 'what' resorts to a particular tele-phenomenon that conforms to the general law of *différance*.

Derrida's term *différance* captures the meaning-making/-losing process that relies on notions of differentiation and deferral. Two alternative meanings of 'what' is indicated here: it can be an inquiry of either the content of speech ('what did you say') or its implication ('what did you want to tell me'). Obviously, 'what' Lauren cares about is utterances as acoustic phenomenon other than as communicative signs. Her prioritization of the signifier over the signified is resulted from her lack of attention to Rey's words as well as his attempts to start a conversation. Meanwhile, *différance* is to temporize, as Derrida explains, 'in the temporal or temporizing mediation of a detour that suspends the accomplishment or fulfillment of "desire" or "will," and equally effects this suspension in a mode that annuls or tempers its own effect';<sup>32</sup> such is the case of Rey's will to say something. This effect of undecidable suspension is reinforced by the word 'what' which haunts almost every page of the first chapter, with its meaning hanging on a wavering chain. The couple's conversation is frequently cut off, suspended or redirected by the baffling 'what' that repeats itself to undermine the idea of communication, to manifest what Boxall named a 'temporal contradiction between immediacy and deferral, between void and plenum, evacuation and inhabitation.'<sup>33</sup> In this way, their relationship is characterized by their response to the radio as something they overhear or ignore rather than listen to. A Baudrillardian paradox arises here: although technologies are expected to produce an effect of reality, it is our experience of reality that is radically transformed by technological forces, with the real becoming '*that which is already always reproduced*'.<sup>34</sup> Thus, the ominous role of the radio in *The Body Artist* gives rise to a deferred process of transmission-reception-signification, with any communicative signs having already lost their efficacy.

At the narrative level, Lauren's hindsight realization of Rey's intention to commit suicide is emblematic of the deferred effect. Rey's death is telepathically inscribed, again and again, in the couple's indifferent and heedless attitude towards the radio and each other. Sandwiched between the first and second chapter, Rey's obituary announces his death and informs readers that the breakfast scene is but Lauren's retrospection of that 'final morning that they were here at the same time' (*TBA*, 3), with the word 'final' referring to a parting forever. On one occasion, Derrida recalled his experience of rewatching *Ghost Dance* and seeing actress Pascale Ogier who had passed away, speaking on screen about believing in ghost 'now', a strange and singular 'now' that evoked in him an 'unnerving sense of the return of her specter' (*ET*, 120). Readers of *The Body Artist* may encounter the same uncanny feeling of being haunted when Rey's obituary renders him a spectral figure returning to haunt the very beginning.

According to Royle, the veering of literature is 'an uncertainly perverse, unfinished movement *in the present*' and it 'entails an experience or event of difference, of untapped and unpredictable energy.'<sup>35</sup> The novelistic force in defying time is showcased here in

<sup>32</sup> Jacques Derrida, 'Différance', in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Baas (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 8.

<sup>33</sup> Peter Boxall, *Don DeLillo: The Possibility of Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 219.

<sup>34</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton and Philip Beitchman (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983), 146, original italics.

<sup>35</sup> Nicholas Royle, *Veering: A Theory of Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 4, original italics.

the sudden revelation of Rey's death as a deliberate twist of plot. Utterly unprepared, as Lauren must have been for Rey's demise, readers are veered back to rediscover several telepathic moments characterized by an advancing sense of foreboding that accompanies the radio: 'A voice reported the weather but she missed it. She didn't know it was the weather until it was gone' (*TBA*, 22). It turns out that the weather broadcasting was not the only thing missed by Lauren, as she also failed to know that it was their final morning. She missed that morning, in a double sense of being unable to get the sinister implication of Rey's joke about wanting God to see his face, and trying to hold on to the memory of their last time spent together.<sup>36</sup> In addition, 'the radio reported news about a missile exploding mysteriously [...] and she didn't catch if it was armed or not' (*TBA*, 21). Likewise, Lauren was not aware that Rey was 'armed' with a gun when he left home to shoot himself. In both cases, Lauren's failure to acquire information from the radio concerns, in an eerie foresight, her fatal negligence of Rey's suicidal plan. Radio broadcasting thus becomes radio 'forecasting'.

In this sense, Lauren's recollection of the last moments spent with Rey constitutes her grieving experience. More specifically, in reflecting on their stuttered communication, Lauren's mourning occurs through the recognition of 'a loss of language through language'.<sup>37</sup> For Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, the ability 'to remember the past, recall what was taken from us, understand and grieve over what we have lost to trauma' is the first step to a renewed self,<sup>38</sup> which, nevertheless, is destined to be a perilous journey. One recalls the opening remark of *The Body Artist*: 'Time seems to pass. The world happens, unrolling into moments, and you stop to glance at a spider pressed to its web' (*TBA*, 3). For the bereaved, time stops, other than passing, as a result of the sustained clinging to the lost object which might turn into the ego-loss, a melancholic state in the eye of Freud. In 'Mourning and Melancholia' Freud identifies the 'inhibition and circumscription of the ego [as] an expression of an exclusive devotion to mourning which leaves nothing over for other purposes or other interests.'<sup>39</sup> This situation in which 'self experienced as split from the world' would always elicit a sense of timelessness when '[t]ime [is] experienced as not moving'.<sup>40</sup> That being said, DeLillo's poignant sentence on the stagnation of time offers a glimpse into the prolonged and painful investment in mourning, and further enacts what Derrida describes as the spectral moment that 'no longer belong[s] to time'.<sup>41</sup>

Lauren's friend Mariella Chapman, a writer from New York reviews Lauren's

<sup>36</sup> In *Beyond Grief and Nothing: A Reading of Don DeLillo* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), Joseph Pewey thinks that Lauren is 'an artist estranged from her surroundings' with 'strained relationship to their world' (134).

<sup>37</sup> J. Heath Atchley, 'The Loss of Language, The Language of Loss: Thinking with DeLillo On Terror and Mourning', *Janus Head* 7.2 (2004): 338.

<sup>38</sup> Nicholas T. Rand, 'Introduction: Renewals of Psychoanalysis', in Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel, Volume 1*, ed. and trans. Nicholas T. Rand (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 13.

<sup>39</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia' (1917 [1915]), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. XIV (1914-1916)*, trans. and ed. James Strachey, with Anna Freud, Alix Strachey, Alan Tyson, et al. (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957), 243. Hereafter *MM* with page references in the text.

<sup>40</sup> Peter Hartocollis, 'Time and Affect in Psychopathology', *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 23.2 (1975): 392-3.

<sup>41</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), xx. Hereafter *SM* with page references in the text.

performance piece as follows: 'Her art in this piece is obscure, slow, difficult and sometimes agonizing. *But it is never the grand agony of stately images and sets. It is about you and me.* What begins in solitary otherness becomes familiar and even personal. It is about who we are when we are not rehearsing who we are.' (*TBA*, 116, my italics) Her art piece has given access to individuals' most intimate and intricate feelings when they are caught off-guard by the loss of loved ones. What Lauren tries to convey as a body artist is therefore tellable of her grappling with the loss of her spouse. In *The Shell and the Kernel*, Abraham and Torok developed the terms of introjection and incorporation into a counterpart to what Freud meant by mourning and melancholia. As 'the process of psychic nourishment, growth, and assimilation', introjection 'represents our ability to survive shock, trauma, or loss; it is the psychic process that allows human beings to continue to live harmoniously [...]. In short, introjection coincides with life as it advances through an infinity of forms; but introjection can also rescue life when faced with the threat of destruction.'<sup>42</sup> Lauren's courage to confront the pain of loss and her creation of a new form of mourning indicate her ability to progressively overcome the grief and to reconnect with the surrounding world. Unlike public mourning that can be represented in part by the metanarrative, private mourning is singular, solitary and unspeakable. It requires what Royle speaks of as 'nanotinking' in *Quilt*, a coinage to introduce 'a new literature [that] does something new with people. It has different slownesses and spectralities' (*Q*, 82).

## When the Line Goes Dead

Whereas DeLillo explores the ways in which death is implied in characters' interactions with the radio, Royle interprets the experience of loss and mourning as (failed) telephonic communication.<sup>43</sup>

The unsettling force of telecommunication is evoked when *Quilt* begins with a ringing telephone that predicts an impending death: 'In the middle of the night the phone rings, over and over, but I don't hear it. First it is the hospital, then the police' (*Q*, 3). The piercing electronic sound, coming from what Arleen Ionescu notes as a 'telepathic phone-call of death'<sup>44</sup> that the male-protagonist refuses to pick up, creates an eerie sense of urgency by demanding a receiver who is doomed to miss it, for telepathy does not assure that any message would always arrive at its destination.<sup>45</sup> The ringing sound comes to a sudden halt, which is followed by a new scene in which the male-narrator is preparing his ill father for the hospital with tears streaming down uncontrollably. A dozen of pages later, after the son has settled his father in hospital and returned home alone, the ghostly phone rings again: 'In the middle of the night the phone rings. It rings and rings, but I don't hear it. The hospital calls. Then the police call' (*Q*, 17). An echo of the opening, these words not only restage the telephonic ringing on the textual level, but also fit into the

<sup>42</sup> Rand, 14.

<sup>43</sup> For a thought-provoking book on telephones' immateriality and cultural significance, see Avital Ronell's *The Telephone Book: Technology, Schizophrenia, Electric Speech* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), where she interrogates the multifaceted modalities of communication enabled or disabled by the telephonic logic as explored in modern thinking: '[I]odged somewhere among politics, poetry, and science, between memory and hallucination, the telephone necessarily touches the state, terrorism, psychoanalysis, language theory, and a number of death-support systems.' (3)

<sup>44</sup> Ionescu, "'Novel' Reality Calling and Telepathy in Nicholas Royle's *Quilt*", 100.

<sup>45</sup> Derrida, 'Telepathy', 239.

chronological order of what happens during that night. It conforms with a certain logic of haunting as both repetition and the first time, as captured by Derrida's invention of the term 'hauntology' to reflect on those spectral movements when the dead would return by coming back (*SM*, 10).

By the time the son knows about his father's accidental death in the hospital, readers have already confronted twice the unnerving death call. Because of this narrative prolepsis, readers are told, and meanwhile not told, something that is going to happen in the future, which brings about the so-called telepathic experience featuring 'strange upsets in the experience of time, in particular as regards its entanglements with fortune-telling and prophecy'.<sup>46</sup> Being denied to the whole picture, readers' frustration and bewilderment engender a parallel to the son's devastating and remorseful realization of his belated knowledge about what happened during last night. This narrative technique confirms to what Leona Toker identifies as the 'parallel experience' when 'an intellectual predicament analogous to that of the characters [...] can turn into a direct means of conveying to us the specific emotional climate of the novel's world.'<sup>47</sup>

The son receives later a telephone report of the result of his father's post-mortem: 'And then he hears again from this faceless voice with his father's body: the cause of death is two, two causes, and the two causes divide into three, just in case one or two wouldn't suffice, and over the phone they are specified and the words fizzle and faint away, implausible as an electric brae.' (*Q*, 40) The son is confused by the weird feeling of speaking to a voice over the phone about the deceased parent, as well as by the poor electric connection which proves the electronic signals as untrustworthy messengers of death. What follows then is another 'chain reaction of phone calls and correspondence: the undertaker, the bank, the pension company, the solicitor's office holding the will, and the vicar to conduct a funeral and the undertaker to liaise with the vicar and the body to be returned to the neighbouring town' (*Q*, 41). These agents expose the side effect of the telephone network when it comes to dealing with all sorts of affairs relating to death, especially the registering at official bodies. Expected to facilitate communication, telephones nevertheless generate meaningless and troublesome contact for those suffering from the pain of loss. The enumeration of a bunch of calls for administrative purposes displays the son's reluctance to go through a formalized procedure to announce his father's death: 'What's pouring out of my [his] face has never happened before' (*Q*, 7), nor is his personal grief to be lessened by making routine calls to 'official bodies of death', which partly foresees his uncommon and personalized project of building a ray pool inside the house. Indeed, in foregrounding telephones' indispensable role in making official registration of death, Royle interrogates the overly bureaucratic intervention in the process of individual mourning. He underlines the limitations of telecommunication when telephones are hooked up with the idea of death and, moreover, when they might fail as communicative tools to ease the pain and sorrow involved in death-related moments.

Furthermore, the telephone system in *Quilt* is conspicuously plugged into two interrelated fatal events: one is the accidental death of the father and the other, the symbolic death of the son in the end. Apart from making bureaucratic announcement of his father's death, the son is engaged in intimate phone talks with his faraway girlfriend, 'enabling her to follow [his] life by telephone' (*Q*, 83). Supposedly to be securing and

<sup>46</sup> Nicholas Royle, 'Telepathies', *Oxford Literary Review* 20.2 (2008): viii-ix.

<sup>47</sup> Leona Toker, *Eloquent Reticence: Withholding Information in Fictional Narrative* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1993), 4.

comforting, their daily chat on the line is clouded by electric anxiety caused by the physical separation and the possibility of being disconnected at any moment. Hundreds of miles away, she has been dubious about the telephone as a reliable communication tool, considering 'there's no knowing which way the conversation might go' (*Q*, 88). Staying in the house of the deceased, he is left in complete solitude to perform the task of mourning. Her worry soon comes true as the telephone line begins to fail frequently.

There is a strikingly eerie link between the failed telecommunication and the call from the dead in Royle's text. Whenever the line is cut off, it is because the dead is calling telepathically. A case in point is when the following phone talk is suddenly cut off by the son (at this point in the story, his partner has become the narrator, and the following sentences marked with a '-' are their verbal exchanges over the phone).

- [the son] Everything is being stripped away. [...] It's a kind of upside-down space of coincidence, a portal. I can't *stay*...
- [the girl's thoughts] Your voice is strained and I'm having real difficulty following what you are saying.
- [the girl] What is happening there? Are you missing me?
- [the son] I can't *wait* to see you again. But the weirdest thing has just happened. I wonder if I'm not going completely off my head.
- [...]
- [the girl] What do you mean?
- [the son] I'll write. I love you.
- Then you hang up. I call back but there's no answer.' (*Q*, 95, original italics, my insertions between brackets).

Apparently, what the son says on the telephone makes no sense to the girl. For her, '[e]verything here seems cryptic, seems to await interpretation and to require an ingenious and sophisticated effort of decoding', to borrow Andrew Bennett's comment on a nuanced telephone episode in Elizabeth Bowen's writing.<sup>48</sup> Stripped away of his loved object and ego, the son suffers from an unconscious loss of ego that Freud attributed to the state of melancholia (*MM*, 246), and the incoherent utterances hint at his inclination to mania.

After the phone line has gone dead, an email arrives informing the girl about his recent hallucination. He hears an uncanny voice resembling that of his mother's loud shriek one night twenty years ago, when she went mad and had to be given a dose of morphine to calm down. This scenario indicates an early trauma of the son 'on the occasion of the first death, the deciding death' (*Q*, 99) of his mother. For the bereaved male-protagonist, although her mother has died over two years by the time his father passed away, her cry still resounds in 'a resting place in every mental archive, a discrete space of effects walled up without a listener's awareness' (*Q*, 98). This re-experience of the traumatic event is termed by Dominick LaCapra as 'acting-out', in which 'the past is performatively regenerated or relived as if it were fully present rather than represented in memory and inscription'.<sup>49</sup> Subsequently, the son hallucinates talking with his deceased mother about the father's death. It is as if he hears the phone ringing (the crying sound) and picks it up to be connected to the dead.

Yes, you [the son] think, before or beyond any religious belief, *the dead speak*. You don't choose them any more than they choose you. Masters and mistresses of restraint, they hardly

<sup>48</sup> Andrew Bennett, 'Elizabeth Bowen on the Telephone', in *Elizabeth Bowen: Theory, Thought and Things*, ed. Jessica Gildersleeve and Patricia Juliana Smith (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 187.

<sup>49</sup> Dominick LaCapra, 'Trauma, Absence, Loss', *Critical Inquiry* 25.4 (1999): 716.

ever raise their voices. They try, if anything, to keep their commentary in wraps, their interventions airy nothings, their refrains mere janglery. Yet life is mostly a matter of *how you listen to them*. (*Q*, 100, my italics)

Teletechnologies have always been endowed with an uncanny power to connect the living with the dead.<sup>50</sup> In asking about her Alzheimer's, the son realizes that it is the first time he had used this word in a conversation with his mother. This other-worldly communication, 'fresh as reality' (*Q*, 104), gives vent to the once silenced grief for his mother. Obviously, the son's mourning for his father brings forth the repressed emotions toward his late mother. Put otherwise, it 'awakens the pain of the first loss, i.e. that of his mother.'<sup>51</sup> The son is then numbed and exhausted, physically and mentally, by his overly intense sorrow at losing both parents.

This near-death experience is revealed later when the female narrator, after calling repeatedly to no avail, finally receives his call about what has happened in the end: 'I'm lying on the floor, I have wet myself and my mouth is full of the taste of blood. I've beaten my tongue, I realise, coming round, and I see no sign of her [...]. I take a shower and feel cold, as if I'm dead myself' (*Q*, 105-6). Whereas for Carine Nibakure, '[t]he protagonist enters a liminal space where he identifies with the deceased mother to the point of experiencing her death as if it were his own', I would like to suggest that the son is more likely to experience the death of his father.<sup>52</sup> Besides, as noted by Laurence A. Rickels, telephone communication is at once telepathic and Oedipal.<sup>53</sup> As a result, every telepathic transfer will have been 'plugged back into the father's death.'<sup>54</sup>

The end of *Quilt* is marked by another failed call that the son will never pick up again. Increasingly concerned about his mental state, the girl decides to return to him as soon as possible and calls him before leaving, but 'the reception was very poor. The line went dead, or possibly he hung up. [She] called back but got no answer' (*Q*, 144). Previously, the telecommunication failure coincides with the telepathic call from his dead mother. This time, however, the dead line symbolizes a death call for the son himself. Upon arrival, the girl calls out his names but gets no reply: her voice 'seemed eerie and out of place', and she 'heard nothing but the absurdity of [her] own voice' (*Q*, 146; 148). The telephonic communication usually relies on two parties and it is impossible to get through the line in the absence of either party. Here, the girl's calls remain unanswered and she becomes, in hearing her own voice, both the caller and the receiver, which implies the fact that the son is no more plugged into the telephone system. Hence, the disappearance of the bereaved son can be understood from three perspectives: his disconnection from the telecommunication system, his dissociation from the story world, and the dissolution of self. For Abraham and Torok, incorporation is 'the refusal to reclaim as our own the past of ourselves that we placed in what we lost; incorporation is the refusal to acknowledge the full import of the loss [...]. In fine, incorporation is the

<sup>50</sup> For more on the belief that 'the dead were in communication with the living through mediums who "channeled" the spirit world,' see Jeffrey Sconce, *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000), 24.

<sup>51</sup> Carine Nibakure, 'The Poetics of Fidelity in Max Porter's *Grief Is the Thing with Feathers* (2015) and Nicholas Royle's *Quilt* (2010)', *Études britanniques contemporaines* 60 (2021); available at <http://journals.openedition.org/ebc/10729> [accessed 4 May 2023].

<sup>52</sup> Nibakure.

<sup>53</sup> Rickels, 280.

<sup>54</sup> Rickels, 282.

refusal to introject loss.’<sup>55</sup> The son’s disappearance leaves a critical void in the text, and therefore symbolizes an eternal loss that cannot be properly introjected by him.

## Concluding Remarks

For Christine Berthin, ‘[t]o give birth to a text might simply be to acknowledge that there can be no communication without tele-communication [...]. The task of the reader could well be to decipher the ghostly messages also.’<sup>56</sup> It is imperative that we not only recognize teletechnologies’ practical convenience, but also give serious consideration to its values in aesthetic and critical discourses. DeLillo and Royle’s texts are exemplary of such reflection. Featuring teletechnologies as indispensable from contemporary experience of loss and mourning, they invite readers to see the telepathic transmission of messages between characters and teletechnologies, as well as between the living and the dead. Whereas in *The Body Artist* the radio is endowed with an uncanny power to forecast an impending death, *Quilt* is concerned about the telephone when it gets ‘wrongly’ plugged into the dead. On both occasions, notions of telepathy and telecommunication lie central to an understanding of death as loss in the experience of personal mourning.

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<sup>55</sup> Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, ‘Mourning or Melancholia: Introjection versus Incorporation’, in Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel, Volume 1*, ed. and trans. Nicholas T. Rand (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 127.

<sup>56</sup> Christine Berthin, *Gothic Hauntings: Melancholy Crypts and Textual Ghosts* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 106.

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## **Teletehnologii ale morții și ale doliului în romanele *The Body Artist* (Don DeLillo) și *Quilt* (Nicholas Royle)**

Teletehnologiile schimbă modul în care acceptăm pierderea celor dragi și durerea. Dincolo de relația lor romanticizată în istoria literaturii, teletehnologiile apar în mod notabil ca metafore ale telecomunicației în teoria criticii. Psihoanaliza și deconstrucția văd telecomunicația în formele ei diverse ca fiind strâns legată de noțiunile de telepatie și subconștient, un punct care e comun în romanele lui Don DeLillo (*The Body Artist*) și Nicholas Royle (*Quilt*). Ambele romane acordă o mare importanță modului în care doliul unor personaje, în prezența a diferite forme de tehnologii, se înregistrează prin intermediul unui efect telepatic distinct. Mai precis, textul lui DeLillo portretizează radioul ca un vestitor straniu al morții, iar *Quilt* stabilește o legătură dintre comunicarea telefonică întreruptă și momentele spectrale când sună cel de dincolo de moarte. Articolul propune ca punct de plecare critic o interpretare dintr-o perspectivă analitică a subiectului teletehnologiilor pentru a investiga probleme de telepatie și telecomunicare și pentru a înțelege moartea ca pierdere a celor iubiți în epoca contemporană.