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TRAUMA AND MOURNING IN DON DELILLO'S *THE BODY ARTIST*
AND *ZERO K*

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ÖZET

Zeynep Beyza Karataş, Don DeLillo'nun *The Body Artist* and *Zero K* Romanlarında Travma ve Yas, Başkent Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Amerikan Kültürü ve Edebiyatı Tezli Yüksek Lisans Programı, 2024.

Don DeLillo'nun külliyatındaki eserlerin çoğu, travma, sanat, teknoloji, tüketim toplumu ve kapitalizmi konu alır. DeLillo, eserlerindeki ironik tonu ve parçalı anlatımından ötürü en iyi postmodern yazarlardan birisi olarak kabul edilir. *The Body Artist* (2001) ve *Zero K* (2016) romanlarında, DeLillo, sanatı, sanatın travma ile ilişkisini ve travmanın iyileşmesindeki farklı yolları çeşitli bakış açılarıyla sunar. Bu tez, *The Body Artist* ve *Zero K* romanlarında, travmanın, beden, kimlik ve sanat kavramlarının geleneksel anlamlarını yıkarak, subjektif bir değişim gerçekleşene kadar muallakta kalmış bir varoluşsal eşikte olma halini ele alır. *The Body Artist* romanında, kitaba ismini veren beden sanatçısı Lauren, eşi Rey'in intiharının ardından, yaşadığı travmatik olayı sahne performansına döker. Böylece, travma anlatılamaz olmasına rağmen, Lauren sanatı travmasına karşı bir cevap ya da savunma mekanizması olarak kullanır. Lauren sanatını icra ederken bedenini ve kişiliğini defalarca dönüştürür. Fakat, *Zero K* romanında sanat, the Convergence ortamında ve kryojenik bedenler aracılığıyla sunulur. *Zero K* romanının baş karakterleri sanatı farklı yollardan ele alır. Ölümcül hastalıkların pençesinde kıvranan Artis Martineau, transhümanist idealleri benimser ve bedenin dondurularak saklanması bir çeşit beden sanatı ve ölümsüzlük olduğuna inanır. Artis'in aksine, anlatıcı Jeffrey, orada betimlenen sanatın kendi sanat anlayışına uymamasından ötürü dışlanmış hissederek. Bunun yanı sıra, Jeffrey, babası Ross Lockhart'ın Artis ile birlikte bedenini dondurma isteğini anlamlandıramaz. Roman, Jeffrey'nin çocukken annesini (Madeleine) kaybetmesinden ve babasının onu terketmesinden ötürü travmatize olduğunu ortaya çıkarır. Freud'un travma teorisine göre, Jeffrey'nin uyumsuzluğu iyileşmemiş travmalarına işaret eder. Aynı zamanda roman, Artis ve the Convergence ortamındaki diğerlerinin aracılığıyla yegane travma olan ölümü aşma isteklerinin kolektif bir travma olmasına işaret eder. Sonuç olarak, her iki romanda da ölüm sanata karşı bir güç olarak ortaya çıkar. Bu iki romanın baş kahramanları, farklı bakış açıları kullanarak, sanatı şifa verici bir iyileşme aracı ya da travmalarına bir çözüm olarak kullanırlar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Don DeLillo, Sanat, Travma, Kimlik, Transhümanizm

ABSTRACT

Zeynep Beyza Karataş, Trauma and Mourning in Don DeLillo's *The Body Artist* and *Zero K*, Baskent University, Institution of Social Sciences, American Culture and Literature Master's Degree Programme, 2024.

In his oeuvre, DeLillo's numerous works deal with trauma, art, technology, consumer culture, and capitalism. Thanks to DeLillo's ironic tone and fragmented techniques, DeLillo is regarded as one of the greatest postmodern writers. DeLillo, in *The Body Artist* (2001) and *Zero K* (2016), presents art and its relation to trauma and several ways of healing it from different perspectives. This thesis argues that in *The Body Artist* and *Zero K*, Don DeLillo presents trauma as an experience of ontological liminality between forms of process that are suspended until a transformation of subjectivity takes place by mainly subverting the conventional meanings of the notions of body, identity, time and art. In *The Body Artist*, Lauren, the body artist of the title, puts her traumatic experience into stage art after the suicide of her husband, Rey. Therefore, even though trauma is inexpressible, she uses her art as a response to or a coping mechanism for her traumatic experience. While expressing her traumatic experience, Lauren alters her body and identity multiple times throughout the novel. However, in *Zero K*, art is demonstrated through the Convergence setting and the cryogenic bodies created there. The protagonists in *Zero K* perceive art in multiple different ways. Artis Martineau, who is suffering from lethal illnesses, embraces transhumanist ideals and believes that preserving bodies is kind of a body art that is supposed to live immortally. By contrast, Jeffrey, the narrator, feels outcast due to the art represented in the Convergence which does not fit in his apprehension of art. Besides, he is unable to understand his father's (Ross Lockhart's) quest of joining Artis to be cryopreserved. The novel unveils that the narrator Jeffrey was traumatized by the loss of his mother, Madeliene, and the abandonment of his father, Ross, when he was a child. For Freudian trauma theory, Jeffrey's disorientation in the Convergence mainly points out his unhealed traumatic experiences. The novel also indicates trauma on a collective basis through Artis and the others in Convergence who attempt to skip death as an ultimate trauma. As a consequence, death stands as a counterforce for art in both novels. The protagonists of both novels attempt to use art as a tool for therapeutic healing or a solution to their traumas by employing distinct approaches.

Keywords: Don DeLillo, Art, Trauma, Identity, Transhumanism

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	i
ÖZET.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. The Aim of the Study.....	1
2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND	6
2.1. Trauma Theory.....	6
2.2. Transhumanism.....	11
3. DON DELILLO'S <i>THE BODY ARTIST</i>	17
4. DON DELILLO'S <i>ZERO K</i>	39
5. CONCLUSION	64
REFERENCES	69

1.INTRODUCTION

1.1.The Aim of the Study

This thesis aims to explore the relationship between trauma, art, and technology in Don DeLillo's *The Body Artist* (2001) and *Zero K* (2016) and argues that in *The Body Artist* and *Zero K*, DeLillo presents trauma as an experience of ontological liminality between forms of identity processes that are suspended until a transformation of subjectivity takes place. The traumatized characters are entrapped within contradictory alternatives such as life, death and immortality, health and illness, matter and anti-matter, consciousness, and unconsciousness. It is the idea of transcendence, overcoming death, either through science, technology, or art, that leads these characters to develop transhumanist coping mechanisms to overcome their traumas. It is in this way, both novels become an ongoing contemplation on death as the only reality that transforms the subject. This study focuses on these two novels because they both deal with the theme of death as the central concern of DeLillo.

DeLillo, one of the leading contemporary American writers, was awarded multiple times for his fiction. For instance, *White Noise* (1985) was granted National Book Award for Fiction in 1985 and, adapted into a Netflix movie in 2022; *Mao II* (1991) was awarded PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction in 1992, and *Underworld* (1997) for American Book Award in 1998. In his works, while DeLillo praises art and portrays characters who are artists or who are either directly or indirectly connected with art, he also deals with some contemporary issues of the 21st century such as politics, consumerism, capitalism, mass culture, language, the power of media, technology, and climate issues through his characters. Graley Herren (2015) points out that art is a theme in some of DeLillo's novels and, therefore, DeLillo's "characters [are]drawn to engage repeatedly with the same artworks or art venues". And beyond that, they "return [...]to a museum, gallery, or cinema where they can gaze once again upon the objects of their obsessive desire" (p. 139). Additionally, DeLillo evaluates socially or individually traumatized characters in his fiction, such as in his 2007 novel *Falling Man*, which depicts life after 9/11 by focusing on the traumatic effects of this tragic event on both collective and individual levels. Apart from his focus on traumatized characters, DeLillo is also concerned with the association between the theme of death and trauma which he explores from different perspectives in most of his works. For instance, Lauren, whose husband commits suicide in *The Body Artist*, and Keith, who is the survivor of the 9/11 attacks in *Falling Man* are DeLillo's two characters who are

psychologically traumatized. As is observed, DeLillo also deals with political issues in his novels. In his historiographic metafiction *Libra* (1988), he constructs his plot around the conspiracy theory regarding the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. In addition, DeLillo creates some characters who stand as representatives of capitalist and consumer culture. The protagonist of *Cosmopolis* (2003), Eric Parker, is regarded to be one of the archetypes of capitalism. The novel is based on a one-day narration of Eric's life. He is a super-rich man living in Manhattan, travelling in a limousine which has been furnished with screens and in which he follows the stock market and believes that he "controls the world" (Bartczak, 2011, p.112) and "wants to live on a chip or on a disc" (Stamenkovic, 2018, p.207). Regarding the critique of capitalism in DeLillo's works, Carmen Laguarda-Bueno (2022) also suggests that "DeLillo's novels point to the fact that human beings have progressively lost their privileged position in relation to technology, to the point that technology nowadays controls them" (p.124). Additionally, Peter Boxall (2006) also argues that DeLillo emphasizes the power of technology in his novels through the plot and the characters "that is as effective, and as destructive of possibility, as any military power, an electronic rather than an atomic apocalypse" (p. 6). It can be deduced that what DeLillo wants to reveal in his writing is that technology and capitalism are closely related. In a similar vein with the suggestions above, Susana S. Martins (2005) argues that DeLillo is "a systems novelist" which means he "depicts a world of infinite connectedness where all thoughts, language, and actions fall into patterns governed by impersonal forces, a complex political and social landscape in which the individual is not just impinged upon by "outside" forces but may in fact no longer exist as an individual at all" (p.89). According to these suggestions, while DeLillo deals with contemporary life in terms of technology, politics, consumer culture, the loss of identity, and the theme of death, he also fictionalizes the real historical events by drawing our attention to the individuals who are the symbolical embodiments of these concepts

The Body Artist presents DeLillo's philosophical approaches to death and art. It is considered by critics one of the best examples of trauma narrative as well as being perceived as a ghost story. The protagonist Lauren, who is the body artist of the title, loses her husband who commits suicide with a gunshot in his ex-wife's house. At the very beginning of the novel, there is an ordinary breakfast scene Lauren and Rey have in their temporarily leased coast house. In this vivid scene, it is emphasized that they read newspapers and listen to weather forecasts and the radio, which shows their daily habits and implies a slow passing

of time. Then, Lauren tells Rey that she hears some voices in the house and there is a hair in her mouth which seems to be a part of small talk. The narrative shifts after Rey's unexpected suicide, and it starts to reveal how Lauren struggles to overcome her loss and turns her grief into an art piece which is a stage performance called *Body Time*. After Rey's death, she encounters a stranger in the house whom she names Mr. Tuttle and describes him as "smallish and fine-bodied and at first she thought he was a kid, sandy-haired and roused from deep sleep, or medicated maybe" (DeLillo, 2001, p.41). She tries to understand where he is coming from and wants to communicate with this phantasmic creature by urging him to "say some words" (DeLillo, 2001, p. 55). However, Mr. Tuttle repeats whatever Lauren says; she even asks him to speak like Rey. He sometimes answers Lauren, sometimes does not. The conversations Lauren and Mr. Tuttle exchange demonstrate that the language is distorted because Lauren does not understand what he speaks.

Throughout the novel, it is observed that the conversations between Lauren and Mr. Tuttle are Rey's recordings on the tape recorder, and Lauren plays them consistently. Besides, Lauren constantly watches the highway in Kotka, Finland live streamed on the screen at night. Not only she watches the live stream, but also repetitively looks out the window and sees some birds out there and makes remarks about them. It is revealed that Lauren depicts her traumatic experience and grief through her stage performance named *Body Time*. Toward the end of the novel, the readers are provided with Lauren's friend, Mariella Chapman's review of Lauren's artistic performance and her interview with Lauren about her body art. It is narrated that during the performance, she changes her body into "an ancient Japanese woman" and into another woman who "carries a briefcase and tries to hail a taxi" and finally, into "a naked man" (DeLillo, 2001, pp. 105 -106). She not only changes her body but also changes her voice into Rey's and the naked man's on the tape recorder which Lauren lip-syncs. In addition to these, the time flow of the performance is slow, much the same as the novel's narration. At the end of her artwork, it can be said that Lauren has worked through her psychic trauma owing to her art performance by transcending her body.

DeLillo's *Zero K* also presents DeLillo's perceptions of the nature of life and death by portraying a journey to death in which death is planned to be overcome via technological transhumanist projects. *Zero K* is narrated by Jeffrey Lockhart (34), who is the son of Ross Lockhart, a billionaire who has invested in a cryopreservation facility in order to save his wife Artis Martineau, as she is hopelessly sick and waiting for the right time to be transferred to her next, infinite life.

The futuristic facility named the Convergence is located in the middle of the desert where isolation is provided. What the Convergence offers is an immortal and healthy life to its customers. Throughout the novel, both the narrator and the protagonist Jeffrey pay two visits to the facility to say goodbye to Jeffrey's step-mother Artis. Except for Jeffrey, it is narrated that there is an undoubted trust in the facility as it is enhanced with technology owing to billionaire investments. Contrary to others in the novel, Jeffrey is skeptical and does not have faith in the Convergence. Jeffrey tries to figure out the meaning of the belief to reawaken to a new life of which Artis sacrifices herself without a second thought. Along with Artis's decision, Jeffrey's dad, Ross Lockhart also agrees to join Artis to become cyborgs. Since he has doubts about the idea of cryopreservation, Jeffrey feels like an outcast who does not figure out what is going on behind the doors of the facility. Jeffrey is not the only one who feels like an outcast in the novel but his girlfriend Emma's son Stak is also portrayed as a displaced person. As Jeffrey wanders about the facility, he encounters mannequins and motionless bodies there, and he knocks on the doors which he does not find out where they lead. The facility has no windows but screens that stream some disturbing scenes from the apocalypse such as natural disasters, wars, and helpless people running away.

While Jeffrey is wandering about the facility, he bumps into the Monk who speaks in different languages to the patients of the Convergence and also talks about the end of the world. There is an emphasis on language in the novel, as well. Jeffrey is obsessed with the meanings of the words and he tries to name everyone he sees in the facility. His obsession may refer to the background story of Jeffrey who has been traumatized by his mother's death and the abandonment of Ross. Thus, he mentions his two traumatic experiences; one is losing his mother and the other one is his abandonment by his father when he was just thirteen. As he repeatedly relives the death scene of his mother, it shows that he is mentally traumatized. In addition to these, his mind is also stuck in the moment of his father's abandonment while he was doing his maths homework, writing the formula: "*sine cosine tangent*" (DeLillo, 2016, p.14) and repeating the maths formula throughout the novel.

As a consequence, his main trauma of losing his mother and the abandonment of his father resurfaces later since Artis, his stepmother, and Ross both persuade themselves to be preserved as frozen bodies to reawake in the future. The decision of Artis and Ross to be cryopreserved brings the philosophy of transhumanism into the light and the novel deals with this traumatic transition into the next life or into a posthuman state by technological

developments. The idea of a life without death makes the readers question human essence and the meaning of both being dead and alive at the same time.

2.THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1.Trauma Theory

Although trauma, as a term, is used to refer physical wounds, it has attained another meaning for mental damage since the 1990s. Since then, trauma theory has developed and has been divided into branches such as individually experienced trauma or trauma on a collective basis. Therefore, the reactions to trauma may differ according to cultural background and environment for both groups of people and individuals. In that sense, age and gender differences are also some of the key factors while witnessing or representing the trauma (Blum, 2003, p.421). For instance, the loss of a loved one or sexual abuse are some of the examples of individual trauma while wars are examples to the latter as they are witnessed by groups of people or societies. J. Roger Kurtz (2018) defines trauma as being

conceptualized in memory studies as a temporary or permanent interruption of the ability to represent the traumatic event and to make meaning of it[...] Elliptic omissions, gaps, and distortions testify to unspeakable trauma and to the response of pathological dissociation. Trauma cannot be contained by verbal exegesis but spills out in uncontrollable images and is part of a fragmented and cyclical temporality. (p.141)

Therefore, trauma is described as a physical or psychic reaction to shocking, saddening, or sudden tragic events that cannot be overtly understood in the first place by the victims. This belated understanding of trauma is mentioned by Caruth (1995) as “the inability fully to witness the event as it occurs” (p.7) and thus, it is one of the main features of trauma. Accordingly, Caruth (1996) also suggests that traumatic experience is likely to

return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena...beyond the psychological dimension of suffering it involves, suggests a certain paradox: that the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it; that immediacy, paradoxically, may take the form of belatedness. (p. 91)

In Caruthian Trauma, there is an emphasis on indefinite duration of amnesia, repression latency and, blankness (Gibbs, 2014, p.8). Therefore, Caruth (1996) states that “[t]he experience of trauma, the fact of latency, would thus seem to consist, not in the forgetting of a reality that can hence never be fully known, but in an inherent latency within the experience itself” (pp. 7-8) which means the traumatic moment cannot be understood as soon as it occurs, yet, it shows up later on which means the truth of the traumatic incident is experienced belatedly by the traumatized person. Caruth (1995) also states that as the

traumatic memories emerge belatedly, trauma survivors “keep dissociating the traumatic memory” (p. 168). Thus, they tend to avoid or escape the traumatic memory. Caruth also draws attention to Freud’s concern about the trauma and the survivor relationship: “For those who undergo trauma, is not only the moment of the event, but of the passing out of it that is traumatic; that *survival itself*, [...] can be a *crisis*” (1995, p.9). Supporting the discussion of Caruth, W. Patrick Robertson (2017) defines a traumatic event as a “missing moment that has not been fully experienced or assimilated and merely “unavailable” (pp. 21- 22). Kurtz touches upon the same pattern of trauma that it “promises us “the real” but only by paying the price of being trapped in a repetitive present of melancholic mourning” (2018, p.152). A traumatic event cannot be understood until being remembered later on by the traumatized person.

Similar to Caruth’s suggestion of amnesia of the traumatized mind, Thomas Griffin (2008) also points out that “The victim struggling to work through his or her trauma cannot know the original because, in fact, trauma comes to be wholly through repetition” (p. 6). In light of these suggestions, it can be deduced that trauma is not available as the events take place, however, it is supposed to show up repeatedly in different forms such as being belated and fragmented which obviously signifies the mental damage on the individual’s psyche. In addition, Roger Luckhurst (2013) points out that trauma disrupts memory, and therefore identity is re-experienced through flashbacks, dreams, or echo the original event (p.1). Once trauma becomes a bad memory, it overtly indicates the past experience of the traumatized person.

However, trauma manipulates present reality, which means the wounded psyche does not experience temporal time properly because the past is likely to resurface unexpectedly. The traumatized person experiences the past, the present, and the future at the same time as there are no boundaries left in the sense of time. Therefore, the temporal sense of time is lost in trauma, and “[i]t is fully evident only in connection with another place and in another time” (Caruth, 1995, p. 8), and “it is a repeated suffering of the event, but it is also a continual leaving of its site” (Caruth, 1995, p. 10). Thus, trauma cannot be stripped down to an event or a place because it consists of a continuity.

While this continuity of trauma is closely related to the past and remembrance, in fact, it disrupts the linear time, which means the boundaries between past, present, and future fade

away due to the temporal confusion of the traumatic psyche. Similarly, Dominick LaCapra (1999) points out the remembrance of traumatic memories of the past as

post-traumatic situations in which one relives (or acts out) the past, distinctions tend to collapse, including the crucial distinction between then and now wherein one is able to remember what happened to one in the past but realize one is living in the here and now with future possibilities. (p. 699)

Since trauma is remembered through memories and belated, in the view of Freudian Trauma, Roger Kurtz states that “trauma is generating painful, involuntary flashbacks, it is deferred and strikes “afterwards” but is emptied of any content, which accounts for seemingly paradoxical symptoms, such as rage and numbness or feeling both possessed and empty” (p. 144). From a related point of view, Michelle Balaev (2008) provides a definition for popular trauma theory that it “depends upon the abreactive model of trauma, which is used to assert the position that traumatic experience produces a “temporal gap” and a dissolution of the self” (p.150). To exemplify the relationship between trauma and the self, the loss of a loved one can be traumatic for the survivor which later on damages the notion of the self.

Richard White (2015) argues that in the case of losing a loved one, there is an internalization and an identification with the lost object (p.181). Likewise, traumatized individuals may carry a completely split self rather than a unified self. According to Michelle Balaev (2008) “the idea that traumatic experience pathologically divides identity is employed [...] as a metaphor to describe the degree of damage done to the individual's coherent sense of self and the change of consciousness caused by the experience” (p.150). Thus, the self is distorted psychically, and the mind and memories of the past also become split. Accordingly, memories of traumatic experiences are also elusive and fragmented (Blum, 2003, p.423). Because traumatic experience is scattered in the damaged psyche, it is an ongoing process that signifies the phases of mourning, grief, and the working through.

In the light of Dominick LaCapra's explanation of the acting out process, Kate Schick (2011) states that after a traumatic event “sufferers become ‘stuck’ in the past” and “[w]orking through is a much more difficult response to trauma; it does not paint the world in stark black and white or good and evil, as acting out tends to do, and it requires *work*” (p.1842). In the mourning stage of trauma, while some express grief and pain due to the loss, for some it is not possible to access the feelings as they become numb because of the traumatic event (Schick, 2011, p. 1848). Upon the stages of trauma, David L. Eng and David

Kazanjian (2003) briefly summarize the distinction between mourning and melancholia according to Freud's *Mourning and Melancholia*

Freud contends that mourning is a psychic process in which libido is withdrawn from a lost object. This withdrawal cannot be enacted at once. Instead, libido is detached bit by bit so that eventually the mourner is able to declare the object dead and to move on to invest in new objects. In contrast with mourning, Freud describes melancholia as an enduring devotion on the part of the ego to the lost object. A mourning without end, melancholia results from the inability to resolve the grief and ambivalence precipitated by the loss of the loved object, place, or ideal. (p. 3)

Therefore, the distinguishing point between mourning and melancholia is that the former has completed its connection with the past whereas the latter means still being stuck in past traumatic experiences. Melancholia is attached to the traumatic memory while mourning is a part of the working through phase. For Richard White (2015), "through mourning we slowly erase the pain of our loss" and "mourning is for the self and we must learn to let go and continue our lives without the beloved; but mourning is also for the other, for the one who has died" (pp. 179 -180). In *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Van Der Hart and Van Der Kolk (1995) note that traumatic incidents should be re-experienced and be put into words in order to get them through (p.176). Thus, it can be deduced that retelling or facing the traumatic event remedies the traumatized person to complete the suffering phase and overcome his or her trauma. All in all, if the horrific event is expressed, the traumatic memory may alter its mode of existence, which has been intrusive and painful, into a history by leaving it in the past. Likewise, expressing trauma "hastens the process of rehabilitation" (Pederson, 2014, p.338). Additionally, trauma theory has become a major subject examined not only in psychology but also in multiple areas such as literary studies, social studies, and memory studies. Caruth (1995) suggests that

the phenomenon of trauma has seemed to become all-inclusive, but it has done so precisely because it brings us to the limits of our understanding: if psychoanalysis, psychiatry, sociology, and even literature are beginning to hear each other anew in the study of trauma, it is because they are listening through the radical disruption and gaps of traumatic experience. (p. 4)

Trauma has also become one of the leading subjects among literary genres. Trauma novels, particularly deal with both individual and collective trauma from a fictional point of view. Balaev (2008) states that

"trauma novel" refers to a work of fiction that conveys profound loss or intense fear on individual or collective levels. A defining feature of the trauma novel is the transformation of the self ignited by an

external, often terrifying experience, which illuminates the process of coming to terms with the dynamics of memory that inform the new perceptions of the self and the world. (p.150)

Don DeLillo's novels deal with traumatic events and trauma survivors. In his novels, DeLillo reveals trauma either explicitly or implicitly through the characters and the events that have occurred before. He not only writes about trauma itself but also fictionalizes the phases of trauma in terms of cause and effect relationship with the traumatic event and the survivor's psyche. Accordingly, Mikko Keskinen (2008) refers to death as a theme in Don DeLillo's *The Body Artist*, *The Names*, *Libra*, and *Underworld* "as the liminal phenomenon" which points out the "intertwining of the real and the surreal, the natural and the supernatural, and, indeed, the normal and the paranormal" in *The Body Artist* (pp. 31-33). Supporting the discussion of Keskinen, it can be argued that in *Zero K*, the readers are told about a bardo state where a transition from one state to another is aimed to be achieved where death and transhumanist purposes are opponents.

2.2. Transhumanism

Transhumanism is a philosophical movement that mainly discusses the life extension of humans or seeking immortal life through the improvement of technologies. It not only seeks infinite life but also changes “the human biological existence itself” according to Tirosh-Samuelson (2012, p.711). It is believed that illnesses and diseases will be reduced or eliminated in time thanks to the developing technologies. Though transhumanism is a school of thought, it seeks to achieve its objectives through technological developments by covering multiple areas in science such as nanotechnology, biology, and artificial intelligence since it seeks to achieve its goals through technology. (Tirosh-Samuelson, 2012 p.711). While aiming to enhance human life, transhumanism questions the notions of life and death as they tend to lose their traditional meanings. The skeptical approach to transhumanist thought brings multiple questions like existential issues due to the idea of infinite life and, the elimination of death might turn the state of living into meaninglessness.

Max More and Natasha Vita-More (2013), who are the leading critics in transhumanist studies, define transhumanism as

a class of philosophies that seeks the continued evolution of human life beyond its current human form as a result of science and technology guided by life-promoting principles and values. Transhumanism promotes an interdisciplinary approach to understanding and evaluating the opportunities for enhancing the human condition and the human organism opened up by the advancement of technology. (p.1)

Transhumanism utilizes its own canonical approaches and it suggests that by the use of supreme technologies human beings should be enhanced biologically. In accordance with More, Benjamin Ross (2020) also defines the fundamental meaning of transhumanism as follows:

The intellectual core of transhumanism is that human beings are in transition to the next phase of humanity – radical technological interventions to the body and mind will soon result in capacities presently unavailable. A cornerstone of transhumanist philosophy is the commitment to epistemological certainty in order to validate the possible creation of enhanced beings that represent the next phase of humanity. (pp. 5-6,14)

In the light of the definitions above, it can be deduced that the primary source of human progress is knowledge along with technological developments. Likewise, transhumanism also signifies the transition of humans into another state of being. In *Transhumanist Reader* (2013) More provides a unique perspective to the emergence of transhumanism in the

Enlightenment period, which promoted human knowledge, intelligence, and development (p.10).

However, More (2013) points out the mere distinction between humanist thought and the philosophy of transhumanism as “humanism tends to rely exclusively on educational and cultural refinement to improve human nature whereas transhumanists want to apply technology to overcome limits imposed by our biological and genetic heritage” (p.4). In a similar view to More, Nick Bostrom in *Transhumanist Values* (2005) also discusses that

transhumanism has roots in secular humanist thinking, yet is more radical in that it promotes not only traditional means of improving human nature, such as education and cultural refinement, but also direct application of medicine and technology to overcome some of our basic biological limits” (p. 2).

Supporting the former arguments, Ross (2020) affirms that “a cornerstone of transhumanist philosophy is the commitment to epistemological certainty” which is being devoted to science and applied reason where the roots of transhumanism meet humanism and the values of the Enlightenment. Providing dual meaning for transhumanism, Hava Tirosh-Samuelson (2012) states that “one focuses on human enhancement in the present, whereas the other focuses on cyber-immortality in the future” (p. 716). In *In Pursuit of Perfection: The Misguided Transhumanist Vision* (2018), Tirosh-Samuelson provides a further definition of transhumanism claiming that it is a process that leads ultimately to a posthuman state. Its main concerns are “the increase of human choice and control over one’s body, one’s mind, and one’s future, the minimizing of pain and suffering, and the postponement of aging and perhaps even death” (p. 203). In the light of Samuelson’s definitions of transhumanism, it can be deduced that transhumanism promises individualistic freedom, autonomous lives, and a life without mortal concerns. However, while transhumanist philosophy offers freedom of choice, Tirosh-Samuelson gives a controversial view that “the critics of enhancement worry that these technologies threaten our efforts at achieving authenticity and regard enhancement technologies as procedures that separate us from what is most our own and from how the world really is” (p. 206). Tirosh-Samuelson (2018) also refers to transhumanism as “a technological project that secularizes the ancient belief in the resurrection of the dead, one of the oldest patterns of transcendence in Western culture” (p. 209). Bostrom (2001) also argues that transhumanism idealizes “individual freedom and individual choice” and prevent “involuntary deaths among people whose lives are worth living” (pp. 9-10). However, while transhumanism aims to improve humanity through technology, it does not treat every human being in the world equally. Therefore, some ethical questions are raised regarding the value

of human life and others' welfare. To shed light on the ethics of transhumanist goals, Bostrom (2005) comments that if using technology for human enhancement leads to an unfavorable effect on others, there should be a limitation on it (p.9). Drawing from Bostrom's statements, transhumanism seems to be lacking some moral values of human beings due to its possible future impacts on those who do not approve of being physically or biologically enhanced via technological developments. By aiming to eliminate the boundaries of mortal life, transhumanism tends to diminish the individual rights of human beings. Likewise, what is ironic about the aim of transhumanism is that, on the one hand, it promises freedom to its advocates, but on the other hand, it violates the rights of the rest. Ross (2020) also points out the uncertainty of equal opportunities transhumanism is expected to offer.

In a further discussion of inequality among people, Dr. John Doyle (2018) points out that "human enhancement technologies would debase us and undermine our human dignity, or concerns that such technologies would be deployed unfairly, benefiting only the wealthy" (p.134). In doing so, transhumanism overlaps with preserving and respecting the values of the human race. Such ethical issues should not only concern humans but "any artificial being (robot, cyborg, humanoid, computer, etc.) would be classified as to consciousness and rights based upon its behavior and its properties just as humans, animals, embryos and plants are classified in the Hughes classification" (Doyle, 2018, p. 71). In other words, non-human entities created by transhumanists according to their purposes should also have the right to be treated according to a set of moral values. In addition to these, transhumanism carries some similar purposes as religious conventions in that they both offer "immortality" and "the betterment of society by eliminating social ills such as poverty, sickness, and suffering" (Tirosh-Samuelson, 2012, pp. 715, 721). As a consequence, the idea of overcoming death committed in the transhumanist movement brings some questions into light such as "what is a human?, what is death?, is progress possible?, what is human nature?" (Kyslan, 2019, p.71).

In the light of those questions above, since the primary aim of transhumanism is to transcend the human life and to create immortal beings, Ross (2020) points out that transhumanists seek to create posthuman individuals whom he describes as "an engineered being who no longer dies, possesses unlimited intelligence, and does not experience suffering" by enhancing human life through technological developments (p.11). Ross continues by defining human limitations which are "mortality, ignorance, and suffering" that transhumanism attempts to subvert the core of being a human (2020, p.11). He claims that

transhumanism “transforms the meaning of being human” by aiming to create posthuman individuals (p.12). While transhumanism transforms the meaning of being human, several other questions arise regarding the meaning of life, the notion of self and identity. From a related point of view, James Hughes (2013) suggests that transhumanism subverts the ideas of the Enlightenment because it diminishes personal identity, which is the core of human beings, by aiming to create artificial beings (p.229).

Besides, the transhumanist view not only focuses on physical immortality but also attempts to enhance individuals’ minds and knowledge. More (2013) puts forward that it anticipates “more intelligence, wisdom, and effectiveness, an open-ended lifespan, and the removal of political, cultural, biological, and psychological limits to continuing development” (pp. 4 -5). Cryonics, one of the human enhancement technologies is defined by Kyslan (2019) as “an experimental medical procedure that seeks to restore life to the person” who is to be resurrected as a technologically enhanced being (p.75). However, Doyle (2018) criticizes cryonics because it promises immortality through cryopreservation yet, it is “selling the false hope in the extreme” (p. 57) which makes cryonics seem implausible. Besides, art forms and human enhancement are associated with each other because

new media’s interpretations of the human form, visual landscapes, literary narratives, and musical scores move us from one mental state to another – offering experiences that shift perceptions of ourselves and the world around us. Human enhancement may impact traditional notions of classical style as contextualized by history in experiencing, examining, and understanding works of art. (More and Vita-More, 2013, pp. 18, 20)

Especially in science-fiction movies or novels, such transhumanist elements are provided through some characters who were once humans transform themselves into cyborgs or robots. As an actual example of art and its relation to transhumanist notions, Stelarc, who is a famous body artist aims to show that

the human body is outdated and needs to be improved, and in that context, he cooperates with engineers and scientists to find ways to improve the human body. Through his performances, where he is usually adorned with various mechanical extensions, he shows what it would be like if a man connected to a machine. He is best known for creating an artificial ear from cultivated cells, and implanting it into his forearm. (Brudar and Peric, 2021, pp. 123-124)

Stelarc demonstrates that bodily transformation tends to diminish the boundaries between humans and robots by intertwining them. Hence, transhumanist aspects might alter the conventional perception of art. As such, *Zero K* presents a facility where people are seeking

to become cyborgs as they wish to be freed from their terminal illnesses or they expect to live eternally. In doing so, while the novel makes the readers question the meaning of being a human because of the quest for becoming a cyborg, transforming into a flawless body and mind are also praised as if they were artworks. Likewise, *The Body Artist* offers an unusual work of art through Lauren's body performance on the stage. Because the readers witness a vivid, transitional, and developing body performance throughout the novel, transhumanist elements and art can be related in terms of the representation of art and its relation to technology in the novel.

All in all, transhumanism is a process committed to enhancing humans both physically and biologically by applying scientific and technological improvements. The major aim of transhumanism is to have better lives and to boost the well-being of humans through science. Another aim of transhumanism is to make immortality possible by eliminating diseases and illnesses that human beings suffer. By diminishing diseases, transhumanism aims to preserve healthy cells and bodies of the ones who are seeking to be cryopreserved.

However, the experimental processes of biological enhancement attempts bring some doubtful questions about the result of the process and whether cryonics will work or not in the future. Besides technology and science are the main resources of transhumanism, it is an interdisciplinary philosophy that deals with ethics, art, and moral values. Ethics of transhumanist purposes and moral issues concern every human being in the world. Therefore, there is an ambiguity about whether human enhancement is moral or not. Tiros-Samuelson (2018) argues regarding the possible future results of human enhancement that "cyborgization is the shift from seeking to improve life by overcoming biological limits to seeking to abolish biological humanity altogether by designing a postbiological, posthuman species" (p. 210). Moving from this point of view, not only biological destruction would take place but also human dignity would be devastated if transhumanist goals are achieved.

Chapter 1 deals with the body artist Lauren and her traumatic experience that is depicted through her artwork called Body Time. *The Body Artist* will be analyzed by exploring her psychological trauma by employing trauma theory mainly through the critics Cathy Caruth, Dominick LaCapra, Laure Di Prete, Lucy Bond, and Stef Craps. Throughout the novel, art stands for a coping mechanism for healing Lauren's trauma. While performing her art, Lauren disguises other bodies and multiple identities. At the end of the novel, she is recovered owing to her stage art and comes to terms with her traumatic experience.

Chapter 2 mainly focuses on the protagonists Jeffrey and Artis in *Zero K* and explores traumas on an individual and collective basis. Jeffrey is traumatized twice by the loss of his mother and the abandonment of his father, Ross. Unlike Jeffrey's individual traumatic experiences, Artis seeks an infinite life owing to technology to escape the trauma of death. The idea of overcoming death will be explored from the perspective of transhumanist philosophy mainly by crediting to the critics Max More, Natasha Vita-More, Nick Bostrom, Benjamin Ross, and Carmen Laguarda-Bueno. Then, the association between body and art will be discussed through transhumanist ideals. Artis hopes to wake up in the future with a new body, but the end of the novel remains ambiguous as it is not narrated whether she wakes up or not.

The conclusion will have resolved the complexities regarding the themes of death-life, trauma, loss, body, and art juxtaposed in *The Body Artist* and *Zero K*. By doing so, it will also have revealed that art has a therapeutic meaning and therefore, trauma is attempted to be healed through art. The chapter will highlight that the protagonists mainly use body and art as tools to come to terms with their traumatic experiences in multiple ways. Both aiming to overcome death, Lauren performs art on the stage, and Artis dedicates herself to technology, which she believes is a new kind of art.

3. DON DELILLO'S *THE BODY ARTIST*

The Body Artist portrays a traumatized woman, Lauren, due to the unexpected suicide of her husband, Rey, a film producer. Lauren is the body artist of the title and she expresses her grief through an artistic performance on stage, called *Body Time*. Lauren's artwork, which includes her suffering due to the loss of her husband, is presented throughout the narration. However, the readers are not told about the original event straightforwardly which refers to the aspect of silence in an experienced traumatic event in the first place that is not to be revealed at once. Toward the end of the novel, it is found out that what is displayed is a spectacle, an art piece that attempts to exhibit Lauren's mental trauma. Thus, DeLillo demonstrates how a traumatic experience is represented specifically through art. Most of DeLillo's characters are somehow engaged with art in his oeuvre. His characters are not only artists themselves but they become one with art. Lauren is one of those characters for whom art becomes a means of therapeutic healing. In terms of the meaning of art in DeLillo's work, art is manifested in multiple ways as well as carrying a curative meaning.

Accordingly, it can be stated that art presents a healing effect on maintaining individual or collective entities. In DeLillo's fiction, art is kind of a holy institution that enhances whatever it touches. In Lauren's case, it is possible to deduce that art has a healing power for Lauren's psychic wound. Pavlina Radia (2014) states:

unlike DeLillo's earlier novels, such as *White Noise* (1985), *Libra* (1988), *Mao II* (1991), or *Underworld* (1997), which explore the dehumanizing, disembodiment effects of American capitalism, *The Body Artist* takes this dynamic to a whole new level by returning us to the human subject as a living organism *cum* human art-form, or a kind of living, breathing aesthetic. Exploring the relationship between art and loss, this minimalist, yet performative novel deploys art as a means of estrangement whereby the artist confronts, but, in the very process, inevitably objectifies, the other within as a mirror image of his or her own (im)mortality. (pp. 200-201)

DeLillo turns his focus to the connection between art and humans on an individual basis via Lauren's work of art in *The Body Artist* from the various issues of American society which indicate a collective basis. The novel provides art that is set around a traumatized individual who has lost a loved one in *The Body Artist*. The narrative technique of the novel is based on the representation of the concept of time. In the novel, the concept of time is undermined through multiple tools such as the tape recorder Lauren constantly listens to and, also a live stream of a high-way in Kotka, Finland, which she watches repetitively during her body performance. The importance of the concept of time in the novel is presented in the very first sentence of the novel: "Time seems to pass" (DeLillo, 2001, p.7). Time does not pass as it is

supposed to be. Time has a problem with passing in *The Body Artist*. Referring to the first sentence, Peter Boxall (2012) argues that “the entire novel, its uncanny depiction of the out-of-joint time suffered by a woman living on her own in a remote farmhouse after the death of her husband unrolls from this unreadable sentence” (p.691). It can be stated that the sentence implies the impossibility of the flow time in order. Lauren’s perception of time becomes unsettling and split after being traumatized by her husband’s unexpected suicide.

In a further discussion, Chiara Patrizi (2015) states that “it is the invisible but resistant wall that separates Lauren from the rest of the world. Because Lauren’s personal flow of time has somehow deviated from its established course, it is as if she were also physically unreachable” (p.241) and she experiences a “wilderness of time” (p.245). Thus, Patrizi (2015) notes that unruly time will isolate Lauren from everything because of her traumatic experience. Therefore, time is untamed and unsettling for Lauren. Hence, there is going to be a detachment from linear time due to Lauren’s recent loss.

Lauren and Rey are having breakfast in the novel's opening scene, but they are unaware that it will be their last one. This scene foreshadows Rey’s suicide indicating that it is their “final morning that they were here at the same time” (DeLillo, 2001, p.7). Besides, there is the bluebird scene that refers to Lauren’s looming loss – Rey’s death- and trauma that “[t]his scene, [...] serves as a placeholder for the originary moment that DeLillo does not write and that Lauren cannot symbolize – Rey’s suicide” (Griffin, 2008, p.13). The scene is described in the novel as follows:

When birds look into houses, what impossible worlds they see. Think. What a shedding of every knowable surface and process. She wanted to believe the bird was seeing her, a woman with a teacup in her hand, never minding the holding back of day and night, the apparition of a space set off from time... She was alert to the clarity of the moment but knew it was ending already. She felt it in the blue jay. (DeLillo, 2001, p.22)

Lauren’s encounter with the bluebird is one of the signals referring to her looming trauma –losing her husband which she cannot express in words. Besides, the scene indicates Lauren’s loss of sense of time after Rey’s suicide. From the beginning of the novel, a slow-motion sense of time is provided. When she is preparing the breakfast, the odd sense of time is implied through Lauren’s artistic moves when she “reaches in for the milk” or “every time she had to bend and reach into lower parts of refrigerator she let out a groan, that resembled a life lament” (DeLillo, 2001, p.9). She might be grieving for Rey's upcoming death unconsciously or Rey’s suicide has already taken place and she is presenting to the reader

her art performance simultaneously. She “reaches for the soya”, and “leans forward” (DeLillo, 2001, p.14). Observing the emphasis on her body movements it can be said that Lauren’s stage art has already started because DeLillo chooses verbs such as “reach”, “bend”, “groan”, and, “lean” to describe Lauren’s artistic moves in detail by providing them in the present simple tense. Due to these artistic movements, it can be said that time and body cannot be contemplated separately because they function together as can also be deduced from the title of Lauren’s upcoming stage art which is called *Body Time*. Thus, the title of her art gives the readers a strong clue about the major subjects of the novel which are the “notion of body” and “the concept of time.” According to Erik Falk (2006), “the movements and transformations of the body are used as a way to measure time, thereby turning it into a curiously de-personalized instrument whose registered changes project a time that is not otherwise experienced” (p.158). In other words, art, in *The Body Artist*, stands as a consequence of body and time intertwining together owing to the representation of Lauren’s bodily movements. In this sense, Lauren turns her traumatic experience into art by adapting her body to personify three characters during *Body Time*: the Japanese woman who is watering some flowers, and then, a businesswoman who is waiting for a taxi, and finally Rey via the phantasmic figure she calls Mr.Tuttle.

After this final morning Lauren and Rey share together, time becomes fragmented for the rest of her days that they even “moved so slowly they ached” (DeLillo, 2001, p.32). Similar to Boxall’s suggestion, Robertson (2017) argues that “the novel presents a break in regular, mundane routine that comes on the heels of Rey’s death, and seems to destabilise the sense of order contained in the minute detail in which that routine is described” (p.18). Similarly, Philipp Wolf (2022) suggests that Rey’s suicide, “disrupts the *taedium vitae* of sequential linear temporality” (p. 60). In other words, the novel seems to be divided into two, before and after Rey’s death, because his sudden death damages the temporal sense of time in the novel.

Likewise, it can be argued that the novel attempts to subvert the conventional sense of time. As such, Lauren’s comment proves the former suggestion as follows: “How does it happen that Thursday seems like Friday? We are out of city. We’re off the calendar. Friday shouldn’t have an identity here” (DeLillo, 2001, p.21). She finds herself in an ambiguous sense of time, which alludes to her subsequent loss; her husband’s suicide comes out as a traumatic incident later in the novel. After the loss of her husband, “she woke early every morning and this was the worst time, the first murderous instant of lying in bed and

remembering something and knowing in the flow of the same breath what it was” (DeLillo, 2001, p.36). Her desperate state can be explained by LaCapra’s definition of lacking something that one has had before. According to LaCapra’s suggestion (1999), “lack nonetheless indicates a felt need or a deficiency; it refers to something that ought to be there but is missing” (p.703). It can be stated that what is missing in Lauren’s life is her husband. However, Rey is not the only one whom Lauren has lost but her mother who died when she was nine years old. While Rey and Lauren are having breakfast at the beginning of the novel, they are chatting about some things that seem insignificant in the first place. For instance, Micheal Naas (2008) points out her realization of a hair strand in her mouth (DeLillo, 2001, p.11) as:

an involuntary body memory that brings back not one’s own childhood past but the unknown lives of others, that causes Lauren Hartke, the body artist, to ask herself in effect, ‘Whose body is this anyway?’ The rest of the opening breakfast conversation between Lauren and Rey is thus haunted by this trace of a wayward, unidentified body in the house. (p. 95)

Thus, the hair strand in Lauren's mouth which she mentions to Rey a few times, might be referring to the death of Lauren’s mother because she is not able to identify where this unknown hair comes from. The hair as an image, makes a reference to the memory of the death of Lauren's mother who died. The death of her mother is an unexpected event Lauren has experienced so it is not possible for her to grasp it at the time it occurred. It can be deduced that the hair stands as a haunting image for Lauren.

Lucy Bond and Stef Craps claim that; “traumatic symptoms mark the belated psychical registration of a past experience [...] that did not necessarily appear significant until it was unexpectedly recalled by a later event” (2019, p.25). Thus, Lauren's loss of her mother can be regarded as the first event that is not comprehended until the second event (Rey's suicide) occurs. Although the death of Lauren's mother is the first traumatic event, it is narrated on the very last page of the novel. Caruth also discusses that trauma may come out as belatedness (1996, p.6). Due to these two traumatic events, Lauren's actions turn out to be belated throughout the novel. Accordingly, Lauren’s loss of a love object is also explained from the perspective of Lacanian trauma theory by Sylvia Mieszkowski (2007) which claims that losing Rey leads Lauren to revisit the first love object, which is her mother:

So Rey’s death covers up another death. The experience of loss caused by his suicide calls back a previous, possibly even greater loss that was also sudden, unexpected, and which rendered Lauren powerless too...Rey too is nothing but yet another substitute for Lauren’s first object of desire, namely her mother. (pp. 129-130, 134)

Both Lauren's mother and Rey are two love objects of Lauren. Having lost the two, Lauren attempts to mourn her mother and Rey at the same time. However, as the first event could be registered after the occurrence of the second event, she is not aware of her trauma in the first place. Besides, Richard White (2015) suggests that

our own self is the product of others, and so losing the other is to lose a sense of who we are. This is why when someone we love dies, we feel lost and cast adrift; and we experience a sense of abandonment because we have lost a part of ourselves. (p.182)

Following White's suggestion, it can be deduced that one exists around others or identifies his/her existence with others. When one loses a loved one, he/she tends to feel sensationally lost. And then, they want to stick to the past memory of the loved one while they mourn. In the novel, Lauren starts to detach herself both physically and mentally from the outer world whilst she is experiencing the mourning process of having lost the other half, first, the mother and then, the husband. As mentioned before, the death of her mother is narrated on the very last page of the novel which shows that the narrative of the novel is also belated. Because the narrative itself is belated, past, present, and future are represented simultaneously. Even though Rey's death hovers over the narrative right from the beginning of the novel, the readers also learn it belatedly from the newspaper as follows:

Rey Robles, who directed two world-renowned movies of the late 1970s, was found dead Sunday morning in the Manhattan apartment of his first wife, the fashion consultant Isabel Corrales. The cause of death was a self-inflicted gunshot wound, according to police who were called to the scene. (DeLillo, 2001, p.27)

The announcement of his death is given directly at the beginning of the second chapter immediately after the breakfast scene. Besides, there is always the feeling of something missing or being missed in the novel as though Lauren is about to grasp it but unable to do so. For instance, while Lauren and Rey are having breakfast "a voice reported the weather but she missed it. She didn't know it was the weather until it was gone" (DeLillo, 2001, p.24). Furthermore, referring to the breakfast scene in the first chapter, Cornel Bonca (2002) also states that "the couple mumble to one another, forget gotten up from the table to retrieve from the refrigerator, then get it, then sit down, only to rise a moment later" (p.61). Thus, there is a belated realization of the events happening in the novel. Therefore, the tardy realization of the events throughout the novel refers to the aspect of trauma which is itself belated. Hence, the following lines demonstrate that Lauren lives in the past, present and future:

“Being here has come to me. I am with the moment, I will leave the moment. Chair, table, wall, hall, all for the moment, in the moment. It has come to me. Here and near. From the moment I am gone, am left, am leaving. I will leave the moment from the moment”. (DeLillo, 2001, p.74)

Another example of belatedness in the novel is when Lauren “ran water from the tap and seemed to notice. It was the first time she’d ever noticed this [...] or maybe it hadn’t happened before, or she’d noticed and forgotten” (DeLillo, 2001, p.8). In this scene of the novel, Lauren realizes the water’s running after it has happened and she cannot make sure whether it had happened before or not. Furthermore, Lauren drops a paperclip and grasps the occasion tardily as follows:

But once you know you’ve dropped something, you hear it hit the floor, belatedly. The sound makes its way through an immense web of distances. You hear the thing fall and know what it is at the same time, more or less, and it’s a paperclip. You know this from the sound it makes when it hits the floor and from the retrieved memory of the drop itself, the thing falling from your hand or slipping off the edge of the page to which it was clipped... Now that you know you dropped it, you remember how it happened, or half remember, or sort of see it maybe, or something else. (DeLillo, 2001, p.89)

Thus, if the paperclip is associated with Rey's shocking death at that point, its falling is an implied allusion to Lauren's horrific loss, of which she is unaware at the time but becomes aware of or recalls later. Besides, it becomes a memory to recall later on. Therefore, belated events show that there is a time-lapse in the novel. In that sense, Lauren’s delayed awareness of some everyday usuals is one of the examples of the belatedness of the traumatic experience itself. In other words, Lauren cannot thoroughly experience her traumatic past in the first place but only afterward. Similarly, Thomas Griffin (2008) comments upon the pattern of belatedness in *The Body Artist* as follows:

Though impossible to know the first time through, Rey’s suicide is already accomplished. It is not something that waits on the horizon or in a future the characters have yet to reach. Because the story is told retroactively, knowledge of the traumatic moment arrives belatedly. (p.9)

In other words, even though flow is a feature of time, it is lost in the novel because it is closely associated with Lauren's traumatic past. Robertson (2017) also sums up Lauren’s recent state after the traumatic loss by commenting that “the normal passage of time has been disrupted by the shock effects of the trauma that wounds Lauren’s mind” (p.19). Since Lauren has become mentally traumatized, she has also separated herself from temporal time. It can be stated that her traumatic loss has led her to disassociate from linear time. As Blum states “the traumatized person lives in the three worlds of before, during, and after the trauma and/or traumatic loss” (2003, p.415). It is obvious that time sense has been interrupted by a

traumatic event which has caused Lauren not to be able to distinguish the flow in time. Similarly, even the description of the position of Lauren's body during her stage art demonstrates that it has lost the perception of time as "everything flows backward from the pelvis. Place palms on soles, matching hands to feet" (DeLillo, 2001, p. 92). As a consequence, her aforementioned upside-down artistic move demonstrates that not only her mind but her body has lost its conventional flow of time as well because she bends her body backward. In a similar vein, Robertson (2017) also comments on "the missing watch" (DeLillo, 2001, p.73) on Lauren's watch arm that she used to check, as "the displacement of time that occurs in trauma" (p.31).

Time and trauma have an affinitive relationship that undermines the natural order of time. For instance, she tries to read a book but she cannot focus on it as her mind has been isolated from whatever she used to do before Rey's suicide. Therefore, another thing she always does is listen to the weather report, yet she gives it up in the aftermath of Rey's death. She is so disjoined from everything that "she nearly collapsed- not the major breakdown of every function but a small helpless sinking toward the ground, a kind of forgetting how to stand" (DeLillo, 2001, p.33). Lauren's inability to continue her daily routines after her loss is also an indication of the loss of the sense of time. Lauren's disengagement from her daily habits emphasizes how grief might create the feeling of time denying to pass. It "is a disruption in the usually integrated functions of consciousness, memory, identity or perception of the environment" and also "splitting off experience from our feelings about that experience" (Bloom, 1999, p.7). In other words, as she has been detached from the outer world, Lauren's loss of temporal time comes out as a result of her traumatized mind. As a consequence, it can be deduced that because of traumatic loss, Lauren starts to experience dissolution from everything.

In *The Body Artist*, the concept of time is not only subverted by Lauren's changing everyday life after Rey but also by her discovery of a man, Mr. Tuttle, living in the house after Rey's death. Mr. Tuttle is a product of her imagination. He is physically described as "smallish, fine-bodied, sandy-haired, roused from deep sleep or medicated maybe" (DeLillo 2001, p.41). Keskinen (2006) states that "Lauren may be interpreted as suffering from a post-traumatic stress disorder and the very existence of Mr. Tuttle may be a hallucination, a figment of her own imagination" (p. 96) that he is "a fabrication of her post-traumatic mind, an entity who does exist in the fictional world but who is paranormal in nature" (p. 105) and haunts Lauren throughout the novel.

Additionally, Laura Di Prete (2003) argues that “DeLillo’s narrative imagines trauma as necessarily bound to the emergence of a “foreign body” a phantom-like figure in full flesh that makes the workings of traumatic memory accessible” (p.138). Thus, Di Prete alludes to Mr. Tuttle's unexpected arrival as a sign of Lauren's latent psychological trauma. That Lauren hears “the noises in the walls” (DeLillo, 2001, p.18) which she mentions during their breakfast with Rey is one of the implications pointing to Mr.Tuttle's existence in the house. Trying to understand the sudden appearance of Mr. Tuttle, Lauren asks him if he knows Rey and since when he has been living in the house. He says something that Lauren does not understand, and he replies “It is not able” (DeLillo, 2001, p. 43). She constantly tries to communicate with this man, but he insistently repeats whatever she says to him. Mr. Tuttle is echoing Lauren when she says “Talk to me,” and he answers, “Talk to me” (DeLillo, 2001, p.46). Lauren insists, “Say some words”, he replies “Say some words” (DeLillo, 2001, p.55) over again. In other words, Mr.Tuttle’s presence is one of the elements that undermines the linear time as is observed. He is not able to speak properly; there is no linearity in tenses in the language Mr.Tuttle speaks: “Then when it comes to me.” “What?” “A thing of the most. Days yes year” (DeLillo, 2001, p.81). It can be stated that the conversation between them does not develop into a meaning, and it does not signify a continuity just like time does not. As a consequence, Mr. Tuttle is also out of temporal time, and it is implied that he is like an automaton rather than a human being. When Lauren disguises into Mr.Tuttle on the stage, he is described as follows:

[t]he last of her bodies, the naked man, is stripped of recognizable language and culture. He moves in a curious manner, as if in a dark room, only more slowly and gesturally. He wants to tell us something. His voice is audible, intermittently, on tape, and Hartke lip-syncs the words. (DeLillo, 2001, p.107)

What is not understandable or indistinct is Lauren’s trauma as the readers are provided with it owing to Mr.Tuttle’s unsettling and incomprehensible speech. Mr.Tuttle is one of the representatives of Lauren's traumatized psyche. This characteristic of Mr.Tuttle enlightens the feature of trauma that is unspeakable or inexpressible in words (Blum, 2003, p.422). It can also be said that Mr. Tuttle not only is the embodiment of Lauren’s traumatic past but he functions as a medium for Lauren’s art. Hence, Cowart (2003) states that

He vanishes in part because he has fulfilled his function as *hétéroclite* muse: after his departure Lauren creates and performs the work of art that apparently gestates during the visitation. Mr. Tuttle, that is, becomes an enabler of the highly original narrative embodied in the work that Lauren, stimulated by him, eventually shapes. But first she must overcome her own resistance to the idea of a narrative sans past, present, and future. (p.204)

When Mr.Tuttle disappears toward the end of the novel, it can be deduced that he has completed his function – helping Lauren to put trauma into art as a way of demonstration. Including Mr.Tuttle in her artwork and carrying him everywhere in a tape recorder, makes Lauren show her traumatic past on the stage. Mieszkowski (2007) defines Mr.Tuttle as “the construction that allows Lauren to have what she needs for psychic stability: Rey’s presence in absence” (pp. 128-9). Referring to the ultimate duty of Mr.Tuttle, Boxall (2006) affirms that

Mr.Tuttle is a figure who allows her to tune herself to the disjointed time of mourning, to conceive of it and live in it. It is a struggle to tune her body to the time of mourning, to enter into Mr. Tuttle’s continuum, where past, present and future are distinctions that have not yet been devised, and where time is laid out in its bare, empty completion. (pp. 219-220)

Accordingly, one could argue that as well as Mr.Tuttle is the outcome of Rey’s absence, he is a companion to Lauren who guides her to build a connection with her traumatic experience. After Rey's death, Lauren sits and aimlessly watches cars passing on a highway in Kotka, Finland for long hours. Besides, Lauren even begins to believe that Mr.Tuttle has just come out of the screen on which she is watching. According to Bartczak (2011), Kotka represents “non-time” and “the past, ” “the present,” and “the future overlap” (p.120). The Kotka live stream signifies the disorder in the flow of time, as well. Thus, the road is “a symbol of the continuum of which time is made up...[t]he road literally becomes the flow of time” (p.120). It creates its own flow of time. Thus, the live stream of Kotka displays that life goes on elsewhere.

However, the Kotka live video is described as “unoccurring” (DeLillo, 2001, p.77) by Lauren that it resembles to her dull days after Rey's death. Although Kotka has its own flow of time, it has stopped for Lauren. Trauma time is not in sync with usual time and space perceptions. It can be deduced that Kotka live-stream video is a medium that both indicates Lauren’s trauma by subverting the traditional time sense and functions as an escape from facing her own reality. In other words, Lauren seems to replace real time around her with Kotka time in order to escape her recent traumatic experience because “the plan was to organize time until she could live again” (DeLillo, 2001, p.37). It can be stated that technological devices such as the live video from Kotka which constantly plays in the background in the novel subvert temporal time flow around Lauren. Apart from the video stream, the former conversations between Rey and Lauren recorded on the tape recorder which she constantly listens to, demonstrate her detachment from linear time.

Upon the repetitiveness of some of Lauren's actions, Chiara Patrizi (2015) states that “everything has already happened and yet everything still happens, it keeps happening over and over again, like the words pronounced months before and now spoken again, reproduced mechanically by the human tape-recorder that is Mr. Tuttle” (p.245). Lauren assumes that she is talking to Mr. Tuttle while she is listening to the tape recorder. However, she later comes to the realization that the dialogues recorded on the tape machine passed between Lauren and her husband before. Thus, Mr.Tuttle can also be regarded as a technological tool that helps Lauren communicate with her dead husband Rey. Keskinen (2006) states that

The media in *The Body Artist* are indeed haunted in the sense that they supernaturally provide Lauren with a live connection to the (at least potentially) dead or nonliving. The emergence of Mr. Tuttle reinforces the mediumistic quality of Lauren’s media use. (p.101)

Keskinen comments upon the function of the media in *The Body Artist* arguing that Lauren connects to Rey via the media and the ghost of Rey -Mr.Tuttle- who has assisted Lauren to overcome her trauma and disappeared toward the end of the novel. The existence of Mr. Tuttle in the novel can be defined by the tape recorder that Lauren carries to the stage with her. The voice on the tape recorder is robotic and repeats itself throughout the novel, and Lauren mimics Rey’s voice by altering it. Therefore, the media draw an unreliable image of the novel. Likewise, referring to the function of technological devices in the novel Bartczak (2011) states that

In *The Body Artist* the technological operation is an inspiration: if human voice can be so broken down, divided, analyzed and recreated, so can identity be broken down and recreated—a helpful realization for the artists whose routine is impersonation. Lauren’s slipping into other identities involves an alteration in the experience of time: from a one-way narrative to a non-narrative feel of time. (p. 123)

It can be deduced that the conversations on the tape recorder are split and do not offer wholeness in the same way as Lauren’s changing bodies during the stage art. Keskinen (2006) also states that Mr.Tuttle “functions as a living tape recorder, as a recording and reproducing apparatus. In this sense, as we consider Mr.Tuttle as a ghost, he is nothing but [...] this machinic quality of his spectral mind is articulated as automatic repetition of recorded voices. His mind is [...] a tape machine in the body of a ghost” (p. 110). Therefore, her continuous playing of the recordings shows that the tape recorder is a tool that demonstrates her continuous attachment to Rey. It could be put forward that although Mr.Tuttle is the embodiment of Rey as a ghost, the connection and conversations between

Lauren and Mr. Tuttle are directly related to reality which is her traumatic past. Caruth (1995) puts forward that trauma is “intimately bound up with a question of truth” (p.5) and adds that

For the survivor of trauma, then, the truth of the event may reside not only in its brutal facts, but also in the way that their occurrence defies simple comprehension. The flashback or traumatic reenactment conveys, that is, both the truth of an event, and the truth of its incomprehensibility. (Caruth, 1995, p.153)

In the light of Caruth’s previously mentioned arguments, it is possible to state that trauma is closely related to the real event that has taken place. However, it is discussed that how trauma is perceived by the traumatized and in what form it returns to the traumatized later on demonstrates inadequacy. The way Lauren perceives these recordings is faulty because she thinks that she communicates with Mr. Tuttle as if he were answering her back. Additionally, Lauren even makes a call to an institution in order to inform them about Mr. Tuttle as if he were a real person. This also shows that Lauren is unable to distinguish between the real and the unreal which is the result of her traumatized mind. For Caruthian trauma, Joshua Pederson (2014) states that “trauma forces the self into hiding, and while the sensory manifold keeps “recording” sights, sounds, smells, and feelings, the brain fails to work them through” (p.335). Lauren is not able to identify the recordings on the tape machine, the hair in her mouth, and the sounds in the house mentioned before. As a consequence, it can be said that she is unaware of these signs of trauma as it is inaccessible to the mind in the first place.

While dealing with her traumatic experience, Lauren not only experiences time out of linearity but also becomes estranged from her body, so she starts to work out, doing breathing exercises and stretching for her upcoming stage art Body Time. Upon the relationship between trauma time and body, Pederson (2014), referring to Caruth, notes that “time may feel as if it’s slowing down. Spaces may loom. The world may feel unreal, or the victim may slip outside his or her own body” (p.339). Therefore, by losing the perception of real-time after Rey’s death, Lauren starts to get away from her own body and it “felt different to her in ways she did not understand. Tight, framed, she didn’t know exactly. Slightly foreign and unfamiliar” (DeLillo, 2001, p. 33).

During her workouts, Lauren pushes her body hard, because “she wanted it to hurt” (DeLillo, 2001, p.84). Robertson (2017) states that Lauren’s actions while getting ready for the artwork are “demanding and almost masochist” (pp. 27-28). Consequently, it can be discussed that during her workouts for the stage art, she punishes herself in a way: “Over the days she worked her body hard. She wax-stripped hair from her armpits and legs. She had

an acid exfoliating cream, hard-core, prescribed after she stripped the hair she rubbed” (DeLillo, 2001, pp.57, 84). As a consequence, she constantly forces herself while preparing for her artwork because she seeks to return to the old days before Rey's suicide.

Bartczak states that Lauren “puts together stage acts that are a mixture of pantomime, happening, multimedia installation, strenuous physical exercise including yoga positions, but also uncanny body change entailing self-mutilation, depigmentation, and changing the texture of skin” (2011, p.116). Lauren alters her body multiple times as it becomes integrated with artistic moves and an unusual body image. Lauren tries to hold on to Rey’s memory which “enters her eyes” (DeLillo, 2001, p. 108) during the stage art by expressing her agony through her body. According to Cornel Bonca (2002), Lauren “uses all the aspects of her body as aesthetic tools, the way a painter would use paint, canvas, brushes - Lauren's first inclination in the days following Rey's death is to reconnect with her body” (p. 63). She puts her artistic ability into the process in order to mourn after her husband and to recognize her body anew. As she mourns after Rey throughout the novel, she cannot detach herself from him and she is imprisoned in a repetitive cycle of re-living her memories with him. Richard White (2015) narrates as follows:

Freud reads mourning as a process of abandonment which is entirely self-oriented. This means that we can preserve our connection to the one that we have loved and lost through introjection or identification with him. The other is gone but we hang on to our relationship by internalizing it within ourselves. (pp.180-181)

Trauma victims feel attached to their loss because they are not able to depart from past memories. It could be argued that Lauren mourns Rey through her memories with him. According to Harold P. Blum (2003), “with time and the progress of mourning, the survivor gradually accepts the reality of a life without the deceased, while identifying with the lost object and maintaining the internal relationship to the lost object” (p. 419). Lauren starts to experience the mourning phase of the traumatic event and she attempts to reconstruct her bond with Rey. Lauren is firmly attached to Rey in terms of her current psychic state. She also associates her physicality with the loss of her husband by expressing her pain through body art. According to Robertson (2017), Lauren is defined by her body as she is a body artist, and her body helps her to realize what she has lost recently, so her body is one of the major aspects that Lauren has, in order to overcome her traumatic experience (pp. 28-9).

Lauren’s desire to detach from her own body by “disappearing from all her former venues of aspect and bearing and to become a blankness, a body slate erased of every past resemblance” (DeLillo, 2001, p.84) can be explained by Caruth’s (1995) approach.

According to her, “the traumatized, we might say, carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess” (p.5). In Lauren’s case, her striving to erase her ‘former venues’ and ‘become a blankness’ is an effort in terms of getting away from her traumatic experience which she carries without realizing. Furthermore, her quest of putting behind all ‘past resemblance’ demonstrates that her grief is expected to be worked through owing to her body which stands as a medium to unveil trauma in the novel. Similarly, Seeburger (2016) discusses that “Because trauma changes everything, whatever we do to try to forget it ends up just confirming yet again that nothing will ever be the same again” (p.170). Upon changing her body and attempting to remove the unwanted past experiences during her performance, Lauren never remains the same. Upon the arbitrariness of Lauren’s body, Longmuir suggests (2007) that her body is “not a natural entity but always enacted” and “this art absolutely rejects the notion of the body as singular or fixed” (pp. 538, 540). During her stage art, her body is always in the process, of switching. Her art is unsteady just like her body. By doing so, “Lauren thus scours her house and her body not in order to rid them of all foreign bodies but to allow them to be inhabited and infiltrated by such foreign bodies” (Naas, 2008, p.102). In the light of the previous discussions, as Lauren tends to remove her former body, she embraces external bodies throughout her art.

Keskinen (2006) states that Lauren’s “bodily mimicking creates such a strong effect that it resembles not only metamorphosis but veritable incarnation” (p.112). A former friend of Lauren, Marielle Chapman comments upon Lauren’s unstable body that it

jumps into another level, flails out of control, whipping and spinning appallingly. Hartke makes her body do things I’ve only seen in animated cartoons. It is a seizure that apparently flies the man out of one reality and into another...[i]n the past she has inhabited the bodies of adolescents, pentecostal preachers, a one-hundred-and-twenty-year-old woman and most memorably, a pregnant man. (DeLillo, 2001, pp. 108, 109)

Hence, her body is not only changing but it embodies different kinds of bodies during her art. Consequently, this refers to how unpredictable Lauren's body is in *Body Time*. In this regard, it can be suggested that her unstable, pretentious body is dominated by an unexpected incident- her husband's suicide - which leads her to experience unfamiliar bodies during her three-hour stage performance.

Apart from Lauren’s abnormal body, it can be claimed that she not only changes her body but also her sex as she imitates Rey. Mariella Chapman assumes that “she is equipped

with male genitals” (DeLillo, 2001, p.109). In terms of her physical transformation, Longmuir (2007) suggests that Lauren’s body does not represent the idealized Western female body, but just the opposite - not the beauty but ugliness (p.540). In other words, Lauren’s body is culturally unfamiliar which is not accepted in the patriarchal Western culture. Considering the subjectivity of her body, it may be argued that in the aftermath of a traumatic event, the body of the trauma subject is unsettling and does not fit into the description of traditional body image. Longmuir (2007) also suggests that

In many ways, Lauren's art form follows traditional cultural structures. She presents a female spectacle for the male gaze, for example, while her use of her body confirms the pairing of the mind and body along the masculine-feminine axis. But Lauren also carefully subverts all these norms. (p. 539)

Referring to Longmuir’s previous argument, it can be stated that Lauren’s attempt to break the boundaries between the sexes undermines the conventional body image. Furthermore, it can be said that her unusual bodies which she disguises during her performance are meant to represent the trauma that she has been through recently. However, Lauren’s expression of her trauma is related to her various constructed disguises.

Besides, Lauren alters her voice as well as body during the performance. Referring to Lauren’s changing voice during *Body Time*, Rebecca Harding (2018) suggests that “voice is divorced from a speaking subject, and the supposed unity of the body-image is undone” (p.73). Therefore, the notion of body is once again subverted because of the unusual alterations of Lauren’s voice and her body. The function of the body is arbitrary in the novel so it is not stable. Besides, while she changes constantly, she also experiences split identities. Accordingly, Kontolouis and Kitis (2011) discuss Lauren’s state of inconsistency as follows:

It is this overlapping of subjectivities that causes Lauren pain for her husband’s suicide for she is forced to relive the life she lived with him, but which also liberates her by allowing her to be less herself and thus more impervious to pain. When she loses part of herself with Rey gone, her only recourse to action is to relinquish any claim to any subjectivity at all by appropriating those of others. (p. 4-5)

Lauren’s split bodies and identities have a dual meaning as they both lead her to feel pain and indicate an attempt to come to terms with it at the same time. In a similar discussion, Mikko Keskinen (2006) also states that Lauren’s body is subjective: Lauren “diets, systematically works out, and goes through meticulous cleansing procedures to shape or, rather, to immaterialize and impersonalize, the very subjective materiality of her body” (p. 39). Unable to recognize her body, Lauren feels estranged from herself because the notion of self is damaged. It can be suggested that Lauren is at odds with her own body throughout

the novel so she experiences different bodies during her artwork while she struggles to find her 'self' in her own body again. Consequently, both her body and her identity can be regarded as tottering concepts in the novel. In a related discussion, Bartzcak (2011) argues that

Lauren is not the owner of her body: she becomes an embodied self. In her case, the body becomes an active agent, a residue of the potentiality for assuming different roles; here the body is a living matrix enabling the shifts between identities and a closer experience of temporality. (pp. 123)

As Lauren disguises herself in different bodies during the artwork, her "self" becomes torn apart and she becomes "less and less" (DeLillo, 2001, p.117). Her situation demonstrates that she is losing her 'self' more and more. Bartzcak (2011) continues the previous discussion as follows:

Lauren, a woman who can lose her identity and become other persons, paradoxically regains her own self through the mourning process: the loss of her personality, the experience of participating in slightly deranged, mind-altering sessions with Mr. Tuttle, gives her back her own self. (p.125)

As Lauren changes her body during her artwork, she detaches from the notion of self. However, due to this detachment, she encounters it through connecting with Mr. Tuttle who "is a memory of the space Lauren and Rey co-created in the house" (Bartzcak, 2011, p.123). In a similar vein, upon the discussion of self, Balaev states that "traumatic experience produces a "temporal gap" and a dissolution of the self" (2008, p.150). Referring to the previous statements, it could be deduced that Lauren not only gets rid of her own body but also her identity falls apart due to trauma. Similarly, Seeburger (2016) suggests that "Trauma shatters that totality, and opens "the Same" to "the Other"—an "Other" (p. 172). Consequently, Lauren's self has become scattered because of her changing bodies during the artwork which indicates the outcome of a traumatized psyche.

According to Harding (2018), "the body is both communicative and troubling; bodily processes and symptoms are viewed as expressions of the psyche" (p.66). In other words, Lauren's all of bodily aspects react to her traumatic experience through art which she has been working hard for. Toward the end of the novel, when Mr. Tuttle disappears, "she was left to wander the halls, missing him" (DeLillo, 2001, p.96). She looks everywhere to find him but he is gone. It is possible to comment that she loses her connection with her dead husband Rey. As soon as Mr. Tuttle's disappears, it is announced via newspaper column that her stage art starts. "Mr. Tuttle vanishes because he has fulfilled a specific function, I suspect it to be one of healing rather than one of inspiration [...] one of healing through inspiration

to produce art as a way of working through” (Mieszkowski, 2007, p.132). One of the features of Mr. Tuttle is helping Lauren overcome her traumatic past so when he disappears from the novel, it means that Lauren’s trauma starts to heal.

Lauren’s artwork is shaped by her being a body artist that she thoroughly represents her loss via her body and art. Her artwork *Body Time* indicates that body and time work together and “Lauren needs to renew herself, the two places she must travel through if she wants to live again: two places that end up being one” (Patrizi, 2015, p. 241). It can be stated that Lauren must revisit her two traumatic losses in order to work them through. For Caruth (1995),

traumatic memories are the unassimilated scraps of overwhelming experiences, which need to be integrated with existing mental schemes, and be transformed into narrative language. It appears that, in order for this to occur successfully, the traumatized person has to return to the memory often in order to complete it. (p.176)

According to Caruth’s argument, it can be stated that Lauren must unfold her trauma which she does by producing artwork on the stage, and must relive her two tragic losses, in an attempt to complete the mourning phase of trauma. All in all, in the name of entering the normal flow of time, of becoming whole in her body once again, and finally, in terms of finding herself a “self”, she has to come to terms with her two traumatic experiences.

In *The Body Artist*, art also plays an important role in dealing with trauma. Lauren’s traumatic experience has led her to produce artwork. As a consequence, Lauren sticks to her artwork in order to demonstrate her agony and mourning for Rey. Processing her body for *Body Time* is a process of healing for her. Accordingly, Kontoulis and Kitis (2011) point out the relationship between Lauren’s body and art stating that “Lauren’s body is both the medium and the subject of her art. It epitomizes the persistent inseparability of art and life, of life through art, an art physically located in the body” (p.16). Her body is described as “She knelt, body upright and rigid, legs at hip-distance, head back arms back, pelvis pushed forward” (DeLillo, 2001, p.92).

According to her artistic moves, it could be suggested that Lauren’s body is for art, as she is the body artist and, therefore, is the core feature of her body, producing art. Thomas Griffin (2008) notes that her performance helps her refresh herself and resume living:

In order to escape the loop of unbearable loss, Lauren attempts to do what is impossible anywhere but in art: namely, to straddle the line between life and death, to fashion a “still life that’s living.” This is dramatized in *Body Time* when she performs loss itself. (p. 30)

Lauren attempts to get through her trauma by expressing it via art. She is longing to be alive again. As mentioned, art is her way of narrating the traumatic experience. Lothe notes that “whether orally or visually or by writing [...] narrative is a resource also with a view to the uphill task of coming to terms with and living with, a traumatic memory” (Lothe, 2020, p.160). It can be stated that narrating trauma is the ultimate way of expressing it. Art speaks instead of words. Consequently, in Lauren’s case art functions as the best way of unfolding her trauma.

Toward the end of *The Body Artist*, Lauren’s upcoming stage art is announced with the title ‘BODY ART IN EXTREMIS: SLOW, SPARE AND PAINFUL’ by Mariella Chapman. The following sentences give a piece of information about Lauren’s art: “The piece, [...], sneaked into town for three nights, unadvertised except by word of mouth” (DeLillo, 2001, p.104). The title of the chapter gives us strong evidence that Lauren’s “extremis” art is going to be “slow”, “spare” and, “painful”. It can be deduced that the four adjectives defining her artwork refer to Lauren’s recent trauma and how the time concept is likely to be subverted once again as it does not pass as it is supposed to do. Seeburger (2016) in *The Trauma of Philosophy* points out the excessiveness of trauma that “the event altogether exceeds the capacities of those to whom it happens to “assimilate” it by somehow giving it “meaning” in the ongoing context of their lives” (p.168). Referring to Seeburger’s discussion, it can be said that even the title of the article indicating Lauren’s trauma displays how it is unbearable, agonizing, and unpleasant.

Not only the title of the artwork but also Lauren’s body outgoes its capacity which, again, refers to the aspect of trauma being in an extreme state: “the poses she assumed and held for prolonged periods, the gyrate exaggerations, the snake shapes and flower bends, the prayerful spans of systematic breathing, a life lived as sheer respiration” (DeLillo, 2001, p.57). Her physical appearance is described in extreme words by Mariella Chapman: “She has transformed herself shockingly for this event” and she looks “wasted, colorless, bloodless and ageless, bug-eyed, her hair looks terroristic” (DeLillo, 2001, p.103). In other words, whatever change she makes for the art performance, she encounters the extremeness of her recent traumatic experience. Robertson points out the association between the announcement of Lauren’s art and Rey’s death as follows:

The relationship between the two articles is strengthened by the way in which they deal with their subjects. The first deals with the death of Rey, but it does not show this death; and the second deals with the artwork, but again does not show the artwork, but reports it, [...] presented like a Greek tragedy (2017, p.34).

Both the death of Rey and Lauren's art are reported; these two events are not narrated in the first place but only shown. In other words, this is also the way how Lauren displays her art not by putting it into words but by demonstrating it via her artistic body. Robertson (2017) provides kind of a different argument that Lauren does not show her trauma but what she demonstrates is "the missing of trauma, the lacuna that it engenders" through Mr. Tuttle. Therefore, she attempts "to turn her appearance into the nearest possible representation of an absence" and not her mind but her body is conscious of the truth of the traumatic experience that she has lost a loved one" (Robertson, 2017, pp.17, 30, 41). Similarly, Robertson also mentions the reason why Lauren wants to unleash her traumatic experience as follows:

she hopes to re-experience the trauma that she missed, that she was not able to experience, because it happened too soon, and this time to do it at the right time. The repetitive performance, which is only ever reported and never seen directly by the reader, enacts the trauma by not representing the trauma, and in this way brings catharsis of a sort, helping Lauren to deal with the death of Rey, the disappearance of Mr. Tuttle, and her sudden aloneness. (2017, p.33)

Lauren is not able to know the trauma in the first place and she tends to experience it later. In fact, confronting her trauma begins after the withdrawal of Mr. Tuttle. Besides, her art is repetitious. During the artwork, she changes herself into a Japanese woman who is watering her flowers and, then, to a young woman carrying a briefcase who is checking the time and trying to hail a taxi, finally to a naked man (her ex-husband Rey) via Mr. Tuttle. She imitates these people many times during Body Time which shows, as Robertson (2017) states, this businesswoman is one of the companions representing the repetitiveness of trauma as she constantly checks out the time (p.36). Lauren states in her interview with Mariella Chapman: "I know there are people who think the piece was too slow and repetitious, I guess, and uneventful. But it's probably too eventful. I put too much into it" (DeLillo, 2001, p.106). It can be stated that because of her repetitive art, it seems like nothing much happens during Lauren's artwork. However, what is shown on the stage is a good amount of agony that is demonstrated by Lauren's body art. As a consequence, the repetitiveness of her artwork leads Lauren to face the traumatic experience multiple times while it makes her enter the healing process. Similarly, Wolf (2022) argues that

Lauren's "Body Time" was repeatedly staged, yet the (subjective) event is singular and without closure, and thus, other than Freud's grief work, never really completed or finished. The dead, due to the paradoxical ontology of death, are absent and likewise present, not only in psychological terms. (p.69)

As a consequence, what the readers read is the agony that Lauren experiences after the traumatic incident. In other words, Lauren surely goes back to the original event many times yet it is not narrated clearly. Although it is not narrated directly to the audience, she is traumatized by Rey's death and it is only shown via different kinds of agents such as body, time, and art by scrutinizing not the event itself but its effects on the trauma survivor and, how the event itself makes the survivor traumatized. Lauren states, while Mariella Chapman is interviewing her: "I don't know if the piece went where I wanted it to go...Some of it is still inside my head, reshaping itself" (DeLillo, 2001, p.104). Lauren's statements support Wolf's former suggestion that she has not fully worked through her traumatic past as it is still processing, and transforming even after her performance on the stage.

Lauren's art on the stage takes almost three hours, as Mariella Chapman reports in the novel. Her art is described as "obscure, slow, difficult, and sometimes agonizing" (DeLillo, 2001, p.109). Upon Lauren's stage art which reflects her grief, Thomas Griffin (2008) states that Lauren's performance is an outcome of her traumatic experience which cannot be known in the first place, and it repeats itself during her body art *Body Time* (p.25). In other words, as she is a body artist, her body demonstrates her dreadful traumatic experience owing to art. Additionally, Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger (2016) points out to the position of art in trauma by suggesting a new term 'transport-station' as follows:

The place of art is for me the transport-station of trauma: a transport-station that, more than a place, is rather a space that allows for certain occasions of occurrence and of encounter, [...]by way of experiencing with an object or process of creation. The transport is expected in this station, and it is possible, but the transport-station does not promise that passage of remnants of trauma will actually take place in it; it only supplies the space for this occasion. (p.151)

Drawing from Ettinger's argument of 'transport-station', it might be stated that Lauren's 'transport-station' is her art on the stage which accompanies her to express trauma. It is a mental state to show the trauma rather than a physical or a material substance. However, Lauren exhibits it physically by disguising and altering her body as well. Ettinger (2016) argues that "transport-station" is a chance to show the trauma but it is not assured that it is going to be fulfilled thoroughly (p.151). Drawing from the previous argument, for Lauren's case, it can be deduced that it cannot be guaranteed that whether Lauren has worked her trauma through. This elusiveness leads to the pattern of trauma that is permanently in process even if it is not shown or told directly. As Blum states (2003), "registration of traumatic experience has both verbal and nonverbal elements, the latter reflected in sensory, affective, motor, acting-out, and somatic phenomena" (p.416). Accordingly, it can be deduced that

Lauren represents her traumatic experience through her art using her bodily functions. Because what is being represented is Lauren's aching traumatic past "Hartke clearly wanted her audience to feel time go by, viscerally, even painfully" (DeLillo, 2001, p.104).

Providing a different point of view, Kontoluis and Kitis (2011) argue the function of art in *The Body Artist* as follows:

Art, then, enables Lauren to survive the exigencies of her life (her husband's suicide and the ensuing grief) that she cannot endure in her individuated, subjective existence as Lauren Hartke. [...] *The Body Artist* is a minimalist work of art. It is minimal in its plot, minimal in its linguistic resources, minimal in its expression. Its plot is hardly an ordinary one befitting an ordinary story, accommodating our expectations (p.2)

In other words, art has multiple functions in the novel, and it is a tool Lauren unconsciously uses to express her pain after Rey's death. She changes her body thrice during the artwork because of the fact that she has lost a loved one recently. As a result of this, the readers are provided with a plot that seems too limited rather than a flowing one in the novel. According to Wolf's suggestion, "she reenacts Rey's ennui or temporal vacuum preceding and ending in his suicide, without referring to Rey's act itself and its finality" (2022, p.68). Although Lauren does not seem to admit that it is about Rey's death, she states as follows:

"how simple it would be if I could say this is a piece that comes directly out of what happened to Rey. But I can't. Be nice if I could say this is the drama of men and women versus death. I want to say that but I can't. It's too small and secluded and complicated and I can't and I can't and I can't". (DeLillo, 2001, p.109)

She is haunted by her traumatic experience multiple times in the form of a ghost - Mr. Tuttle - during the artwork. Accordingly, Seeburger (2016) suggests that "in the heart of life one cannot escape death, nor can death, buried in its grave, escape a certain animation, a literal liveliness" (p.171). In relation to Seeburger's suggestion, it can be deduced that Lauren is not able to run away from Rey's death as it constantly haunts her. Lauren is not free from Rey's ghost in the novel.

Joshua Pederson (2014) points out that "speaking trauma pulls it from the realm of painful obscurity and hastens the process of rehabilitation" (p.338). In Lauren's case, trauma comes out as an artwork. It could be stated that Lauren, by displaying her artwork on the stage, enters the healing phase as she takes the trauma out of her. Griselda Pollock (2009) argues that trauma has two sides: present and absent. Trauma comes up as an opposition of representation, and it has to be set forth in order to achieve working through. Obviously, the presence of Lauren's trauma is closely related to absence of the deceased. Lauren needs to heal by demonstrating it (p.42). She attempts to display the absence of her husband by

benefiting from art as her company. In other words, art speaks instead of words; this is the way Lauren builds a connection between her trauma and the audience.

Additionally, Palvina Radia (2014) argues that “in body art (which became a part of 1960s and 1970s postmodern counter-culture and has continued in the new millennium in its installation art forms), the body itself becomes a text” (p. 200). In other words, Radia points out that the image of the body in art takes over the importance and puts itself into the center of art during the postmodern era. Therefore, drawing from Radia’s argument, it could be stated that Lauren’s body turns out to be the main focus of her art.

In a broader discussion, Bartzcak (2011) argues that “Lauren’s art is one of participating in the flow of her experience of the environment, by accepting the inessential nature of her self, which she reveals to be a fully embodied self” (p.124). Lauren’s body is dominated by external effects. As a result of this, her art is adrift with the body. Bartzcak (2011) adds that thanks to Mr.Tuttle’s emergence, “she is finding Rey’s self, as a “system”, inside her own: her memory, her language, and her body as a collection of habits” (p. 125). It can be claimed that Mr. Tuttle comes out as Rey who reserves Lauren’s body, language, and memories with Rey. As a consequence, it might be stated that he carries everything that connects Lauren to Rey’s memory.

To conclude, in *The Body Artist*, Don DeLillo portrays a mentally traumatized body artist who seeks to overcome her trauma through a stage performance. Lauren does this by using multiple tools such as her body and art. However, trauma is incomprehensible as soon as it occurs, and it is not registered in mind until the second traumatic event. Lauren is unaware of the trauma – that she lost her mother- in the first place. Consequently, she grips it only after the second traumatic event, which is Rey's suicide. Thus, intending to work her trauma through, she uses body art. In this sense, both her body and art represent her mourning. By using her body as a body artist, she displays multiple identities that in fact, she loses her identity after being traumatized. She disguises different identities during the artwork through which she demonstrates her agony on the stage. After the loss of Rey, she encounters Mr.Tuttle who is in the house, in the car, on the tape recorder, and on the stage that constantly haunts Lauren. Mr.Tuttle becomes one of the parties that help Lauren to get over her trauma throughout the novel. Besides, her bodily exercises and workouts for the stage art are outcomes of her traumatized mind. As Lauren is traumatized, time becomes fragmented like her identity. The overlapping time flow stands as one of the features of trauma that Lauren experiences insignificantly. She seems to come to terms with the absence

of Rey thanks to her body performance on the stage. All in all, everything closes up with art at the end of the narrative. As a consequence, because art has a healing power, it is the one that helps Lauren to enter the working-through phase of trauma.

4. DON DELILLO'S *ZERO K*

Throughout history, death has been perceived as an antagonist for human beings because it is inevitable and undefeatable. Many literary works have been produced to understand, overcome or deny death. Don DeLillo's *Zero K* is one of these works that mainly deals with the binary of death and immortality. In the novel, death is attempted to be defeated by the assembly of cryopreservation, which is the medical process of preserving the cells and the bodies in a frozen state, to provide immortality and health for its patients in the facility called the Convergence. *Zero K* is narrated by the 34-year-old protagonist Jeffrey Lockart who is asked to visit his stepmother, Artis, in the Convergence, who is expecting to have an afterlife by being cryopreserved. He learns that his father, Ross Lockart, is also planning to be cryopreserved with his wife. Jeffrey tries to cope with this situation while it is revealed that he is still suffering from his childhood traumas: the death of his mother, Madeliene, at an early age, and his father's leaving them behind while his mother was suffering from various kinds of illnesses. Throughout the novel, we read Jeffrey's childhood traumas in flashbacks and through his repetitively narrated memories. When Jeffrey visits Artis and Ross in the Convergence, he feels shocked by their determination to be transcended into another life through an innovative technology that he has not heard about before. The novel opens with Ross Lockhart's truly iconic sentence saying that "*Everybody wants to own the end of the world* " (DeLillo, 2016, p.3). The opening sentence gives a hint about the desire to be immortal and see the end of the world, which is the main purpose of Artis and Ross as well. Additionally, the title of the novel gives a lot of clues about cryopreservation because it "comes from the Kelvin scale of temperature measurement (0 K) and refers to "absolute zero," which equals -273.15° Celsius" (Glavanakova, 2017, p.96) and Zero K is also the pod where Artis is going to be cured. Because Ross wants to save Artis, who is on the edge of death due to her "several disabling illnesses" (DeLillo, 2016, p.8), and, therefore to live an immortal life with her, he invests in the Convergence located in the middle of a desert between Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.

The novel presents the inevitability of death and ways to overcome it through the hard-to-believe facility which has been created by technology. DeLillo notes that

Technology is our fate, our truth. It is what we mean when we call ourselves the only superpower on the planet. The materials and methods we devise make it possible for us to claim our future. We don't have to depend on God or the prophets or other astonishments. We are the astonishment. The miracle

is what we ourselves produce, the systems and networks that change the way we live and think.
(DeLillo, 2001)

By writing *Zero K*, DeLillo has manifested the human privilege of being able to shape one's own destiny by means of technological developments. Therefore, human beings do not need a superior entity in order to be saved because they are equivalent to a god who is actually supposed to save them. DeLillo comments on the contemporary novel stating that "The idea is that the novel, our contemporary novel, is able to contain the kind of implausibility that some people believe only belongs to reality. (Or to science fiction.)" (Boxall, 2018, p.164). By stating this, DeLillo implies that *Zero K* is one of the contemporary novels which displays truth in an unrealistic way. Similarly, Susana S. Martins (2005) suggests that "we develop a perspective on technology that co-exists with the millennial preoccupations and questions of the "natural" and the "artificial" (p.88). It can be stated that technology has brought new concerns into contemporary life regarding what is "natural" and "artificial". In *Zero K*, the readers witness the rivalry between natural death and artificial immortality supplied by technological advancements. Compared to his previous works, in *Zero K*, "DeLillo's concerns shift from a view of technology as an avoidance of death, to a view of technology as an avoidance of life" (Maffrey and Teo, 2018, p.3). Unlike DeLillo's earlier novels, *Zero K* demonstrates that technologies in the Convergence have nothing to do with taking the truth of death down but it offers an unresolvable life-death dilemma.

In *Zero K*, the act of resisting dying and offering cryogenic bodies with eternal, healthy life by utilizing technological means can be discussed in relation to the philosophy of transhumanism which mainly deals with the question of death and immortality, but also with other subjects starting "from issues of human nature, consciousness, through to issues of religion and ethics, to the area of the foundations of culture and science and philosophy itself" (Kyslan, 2019, p.71). In other words, transhumanism offers multiple subjects to cope with apart from promising an infinite life. In doing so, the novel challenges its readers to ponder on different representations of existence. For instance, the novel subverts the conventional meanings of life and death through the idea of creation by means of technology. The pursuit of immortal life is questioned from Jeffrey's existentialist perspective. The conventional meanings of body and identity are also questioned due to the creation of artificial bodies and the aftermath of the cryopreservation process. The pursuit of immortality raises ethical concerns. What DeLillo also questions is the loss of the

conventional sense of time and the possibility of the transcending into another life via technology which the grand narratives of religions promise.

On the other hand, the bodies expecting to be healed in *Convergence* are also represented as works of art and this is why the facility stands for an artwork in itself. Because the idea of transcending and being immortal signifies art's infinity, the art-like facility also stands for coping mechanisms to defeat death as an expected traumatic event. Therefore, the bodies regarded as art objects are aimed to conquer death through the immortality of art. Additionally, the novel can be read as a trauma narrative. DeLillo presents both individual and collective traumas in the novel. He depicts the individual trauma of the protagonist-narrator Jeffrey. As mentioned before, during his visit to the Convergence, he narrates his traumatic experiences of the loss of his mother and his abandonment by his father. Jeffrey constantly revisits these two traumatic events in flashbacks. First, he describes the death scene of his mother as follows:

When my mother died, at home, I was seated next to the bed and there was a friend of hers, a woman with a cane, standing in the doorway. That's how I would picture the moment, narrowed, now and always, to the woman in the bed, the woman in the doorway, the bed itself, the metal cane. (DeLillo, 2016, p.9)

Throughout the novel, his intrusive thoughts make the narration fragmented which is a demonstration of his traumatized psyche. After a few pages, he suddenly refers to the abandonment of his father stating that "He left when I was thirteen[...]When he left I decided to embrace the idea of being abandoned, or semi-abandoned. My mother and I understood and trusted each other" (DeLillo, 2016, p.14). Therefore, after Ross left Jeffrey, he was traumatized for the second time and he developed an intimate relationship with his sick mother. According to Laguarda-Bueno (2022), "These two traumatic events, which eventually prove to be closely connected, keep haunting Jeffrey until the very end of the book" (p.145). Similarly, Daniel Wilkins (2022) suggests that when Jeffrey sees his father on the cover of a magazine, he is "haunted by images of his absent father" (p.87). His father's pictures continually chase him like a ghost throughout the novel. Additionally, he recalls the things he did with his father in the past such as reading books, and sitting on the balcony which indicates Jeffrey's quest for an intimate relationship with his father. However, he is going to be abandoned by his father for another time because Ross Lockhart has agreed to be cryopreserved with his young wife, Artis. Likewise, Laguarda-Bueno (2022) comments on Jeffrey's situation that he is "trapped in the acting out stage, unable to move towards the

working through stage and, thus, to overcome his trauma” (p.152). Consequently, Jeffrey’s traumatized psyche is stuck in his past memories which restrain him from getting over his trauma. Due to his repetitive rememberings of these traumatic incidents, Jeffrey is not even close to working them through until the end of the novel. As such, his anxiety about losing his father once again leads Jeffrey to give a “negative response to the idea of life extension is directed toward his father in particular, a continuation of an old grievance” (Boxall, 2018, p.162). Therefore, he is threatened to be left behind by his father which refers to his unhealed past traumas that prevent him from coming to terms with his traumatized mind. Additionally, these are also evident in some of Jeffrey’s actions. For instance, when his father left, he was doing his math homework which made him obsessed with words and language because he “wrote...over and over: *sine cosine tangent*” (DeLillo, 2016, p.14). Therefore, he is obsessed with defining words and he keeps telling himself: “Define *person*,... Define *human*, define *animal*” (DeLillo, 2016, p103) which again shows that his damaged mind is captivated by his traumatic experiences. Jeffrey’s close relationship with words reminds Derridian semiotics that signifiers lead to endless signifieds (Derrida, 1981).

Accordingly, DeLillo’s playfulness in language is demonstrated through Jeffrey’s search for meaning in words that lead to a proliferation of meanings. Ashman (2019) similarly notes that “*Zero K* is saturated with moments where words fail to articulate the reality of things, where the metonymic and metaphorical flow of signifiers unravel into a boundless and incomprehensible swirl” (p.7). Likewise, Laguarda-Bueno (2022) argues that “The impossibility to trace his origins may be the reason why he has trouble defining his own identity and may, in turn, explain why he has an obsession with defining words and things” (p.150). His traumatized mind causes him to question who he is while constantly pushing him to define the origins of the words. As a consequence, Jeffrey’s effort to define words leads to meaninglessness in the end. In addition to his passion for locating the origin of the words, Jeffrey develops a limp after the abandonment of his father. Jeffrey makes a confession about the limp by saying “I didn’t care if it looked fake. I practiced at home... It was a limp set between quotation marks and I wasn’t sure whether it was intended to make me visible to others or just to myself” (DeLillo, 2016, pp.101-102). He ascribes a meaning to his fake limb that it was his “faith” and “was something to cling to, a circular way to recognize myself, step by step, as the person who was doing this” (DeLillo, 2016, p.103). Therefore, Jeffrey’s traumatized psyche can be traced through his existential dread, seeking for a meaning in life throughout the novel.

Apart from Jeffrey's traumatic experience, the collective trauma can be traced through the facility due to the aim of transcending human beings to create them from scratch with cryogenics technologies. It can be deduced that the philosophy of transhumanism can be a medium causing trauma on a collective basis. An emphasis on Artis' and Ross' demand for being immortal may refer to a collective trauma of death to overcome by the assembly of cryopreservation processed in the Convergence. Consequently, even though we are reading a story of an individual trauma on the surface through Jeffrey, the Convergence becomes a representation of a collective trauma of death that aims to escape death via transhumanist ideas. Apart from these, DeLillo refers to two traumatic events in history via the titles of the two chapters in the novel that affected certain people on a collective basis. The first part is entitled 'In the Time of Chelyabinsk' and the second part is 'In the Time of Konstantinovka'. The first title "refers to the explosion of a meteor that came dangerously close to earth on 15 February 2013" and the latter refers to the city Konstantinovka "located in the Donetsk region of southeastern Ukraine, which was captured by pro-Russian separatists in April 2014 in the aftermath of the Ukraine Revolution" (Glavanakova, 2017, p. 93).

While Jeffrey is witnessing the unpredictable journey of Artis in the Convergence as she hopes to be cured thanks to technology, in the pod named Zero K, the readers travel through the Convergence from Jeffrey's perspective. Jeffrey encounters war videos streaming on the walls of the facility, unmoving bodies like mannequins placed in the corridors, and endless doors opening somewhere else he does not know. The novel unveils that "Catastrophe is our bedtime story" (DeLillo, 2016, p.66). Therefore, referring to the apocalyptic scenarios such as wars, floods, disasters, and terrorism streaming on the walls of the Convergence, Laura Barrett (2018) states that they are "images of trauma[...]offering its own screened footage of tragedies, the Convergence maintains a sense of uncanny disorientation and insecurity through the intersection of reality and artifice" (p.110). In other words, the Convergence offers various issues such as death-life dilemma, reality, ambiguity, suspicion, and therefore, trauma which Laguarta-Bueno (2022) also defines as "a classical dystopia" (p.136). Similarly, Stamenkovic (2018) suggests that the novel presents "global terror" by showing the disastrous footage mentioned above and the idea of creating a facility like the Convergence.

Besides, "For DeLillo images are the indispensable key to a contemporary understanding of the human condition in general" (Schneck, 2007, p. 104). Thus, DeLillo, while criticizing the media culture by providing the calamities, also unveils that it is

impossible to think of contemporary culture without visual media as they are complementary to each other. From a different yet related perspective, in his interview with Peter Boxall (2018), DeLillo also comments on the Convergence as “a refuge from environmental disasters” (p.163) unlike Bueno’s definition of dystopia, as follows:

The empty hallways become visual realities, more or less instantaneously, rather than preconceived settings[...]The halls and doors in this novel, and Jeff’s room, assumed a kind of cinematic reality from one moment to the next as I thought and as I wrote – and the screenings (Jeff always a one-man audience) tended to emphasize this visual approach...The Convergence may be an attempt to reshape the terms of plausibility in the current narrative[...] I can imagine the Convergence as a possible model for future inhabitation of the planet. (Boxall, pp.161,163-164)

Therefore, the Convergence is a place that might be a reflection of a future life or a mirror to a possible one for human beings to inhabit. Additionally, the facility might also be a tool that connects this unprecedented life in the Convergence with realities around the world by providing videos of wars, disasters, etc. Referring to DeLillo’s 1985 novel *White Noise*, S. Susana Martins (2005) points out the effects of technology on human life that it is a tool that “manipulates or simulation that diminishes “the real” (p. 94). Hence, what is real is unlikely to be distinguished because those catastrophic videos in *Zero K* may be illusions that restrain Jeffrey from seeing realities in the Convergence. In a similar vein, Lewin and Ward (2018) also discuss that

DeLillo insists on the newly exploratory ways of seeing that it has enabled. In the ‘double vision’ it provides, we find new means of conceptualizing the interior and the exterior simultaneously – and in this he echoes the central tenets of Lacanian film theory, in which the screen becomes the mirror, a way for us to see the fragmented self as a whole. (p.5)

Accordingly, the duality of the real and the artificial can be traced through the screens in the Convergence which offer realities in the world, as mentioned, wars and any kind of natural disasters. The Convergence philologists attempt to create a language that “will be free of the ambiguities of metaphor and double meaning[...]approximates mathematics” (Wilkins, 2022, p.90) which reminds of Jeffrey’s obsession with the math formula “sine, cosine, tangent” and his quest for meaning. Therefore, this language is supposed to eliminate doubts and elusiveness for human beings and aims to “enable us to express things we can’t express now, see things we can’t see now, see ourselves and others in ways that unite us, broaden every possibility” (DeLillo, 2016, p. 33). As a consequence, the Convergence language seems to refer to transhumanist ideals which are to diminish all boundaries in human mortal life just as technology provides in the novel.

When Jeffrey pays a visit to Artis and sees her for the first time, he finds her asleep in the suite in the Convergence that Ross and Artis have been living in. The readers are provided with Jeffrey's further opinions on Artis as she is "the one whose mind and failing body would soon begin to drift, on schedule, into the void" (DeLillo, 2016, p.3). Upon seeing Artis for the first time in the Convergence, Jeffrey feels "disoriented" (DeLillo, 2016, p.8) because he believes that she is being killed by the Convergence as there is no guarantee whether she is going to be rescued from her fatal illnesses. Jeffrey presents two different stances that he is both an outcast and an insider of the novel. He is an outcast because he does not belong to the Convergence and does not approve of the Convergence ideals and that is the reason why he feels disorientation. Therefore, he looks at the Convergence from a distance although he is wandering about it. By contrast, he is an insider because he is the narrator and relating what is happening in the facility. Jeffrey and Artis chat for a while whispering, because of "the circumstances or the environment itself, the long hushed hallways, the sense of enclosure and isolation" (DeLillo, 2016, p.16) Jeffrey states. Isolated in the Convergence, Artis is aware of her situation states that: "It's a sense of closing down, coming to an end" (DeLillo, 2016, p.16). She admits that she has accepted ending her life. By contrast, she also believes that she is dying "temporarily" (DeLillo, 2016, p.17). It can be deduced that she affirms the idea of transcendence to another, eternal life after a short dying period. DeLillo makes the readers question the cryogenics not only through Jeffrey but also through the Monk whom Jeffrey encounters and listens to in the Convergence. Therefore, Laguarta – Bueno (2022) suggests that some characters in the novel stand for "spokesmen" "spokeswomen" that makes others beware of what the Convergence aims. They warn other characters and the readers about cryonics and its possible results such as wars and disasters. These characters also refer to the setting as a gateway from outer world. Their oppositional voices echo throughout the novel in order to degrade the Convergence ideals (p.135). The Monk is one of the characters whom Laguarta-Bueno refers to because he is an insider. He unveils the truth and looming threats of the Convergence technologies. For instance, he refers to the Convergence patients in his monologue "They die here. They come here to die. This is their operational role" (DeLillo, 2016, p.96). In other words, people register in the Convergence to die and it is a role to be performed. Likewise, prophetic Stenmark brothers in the novel state that "Death is a cultural artifact, not a strict determination of what is humanly inevitable" (DeLillo, 2016, p.71). In other words, death is a man-made thing therefore it is not impossible to overcome. As a consequence, death is constructed in the

Convergence. As a consequence, the Convergence, as a reflection of transhumanism in the novel, aims to overcome this man-made death by rejecting it as an ultimate truth.

In a further discussion, Enteghar and Guendouzi (2021), referring to one of the Stenmark twins who are also prophetic characters like the Monk in the novel, state that “Stenmark associates terrorism with brutal death and his discourse increases fear of the experience of “demise” because of terrorist acts. He pushes people to abhor death beyond limits and encourages them to confront its inescapability” (p.47). Therefore, the Stenmark reveals that death will find you eventually because of terrorism. In doing so, he causes fear and anxiety. From the transhumanist perspective which “advocates extensive research and significant funding to cure all physical diseases and mental illnesses, increase life expectancy, and improve the quality of life for all human beings” (Lee, 2019, p.316), it can be said that Artis seeks returning to life thanks to the treatments in the Convergence, therefore, she surrenders her life to technology embracing the transhumanist purposes. Consequently, Artis is one of the subjects that is supposed to be cured in the Convergence. Thus, Artis states that

“I will become a clinical specimen. Advances will be made through the years. Parts of the body replaced or rebuilt. Note the documentary tone. I’ve talked to people here. A reassembling, atom by atom. I have every belief that I will reawaken to a new perception of the world”. (DeLillo, 2016, p.47)

She has full faith and belief in scientific measurements in the Convergence and she expects to have a brand-new life by the time she wakes up in the future. She anticipates waking up in her next life so Artis is “between the absence and presence,[...]in bardo, an intermediate or a transitional or liminal state between death and rebirth” (Nel, 2021, p.4). During the elusiveness in her transitional period, Artis is experiencing “a sense of bodylessness and boundlessness that emphasizes her location between binaries of existence and nonexistence...” (Ashman, 2019, p.307). Thus, Artis seems to dissociate from her body which signifies the departure from her spiritual existence. Therefore, the limits between her body and ontological existence have become vague. Since Artis’ quest of transition serves the transhumanist purpose, which is the transcendence of the body and enhancement of life, some questions arise concerning the concepts of body and identity.

Drawing from the previous discussion, Jeffrey’s father Ross, in his short monologue, confesses that “We’re not talking about spiritual life everlasting. This is the body. The body will be frozen. Cryonic suspension” (DeLillo, 2016, p.8). Hence, it can be overtly deduced that the Convergence intends to revitalize the body as a material entity. However, cryogenic

beings are not intended to be enhanced morally or spiritually. The Convergence seems to embrace the main purpose of transhumanism. In doing so, the facility does not promise to preserve the identities of those who are supposed to be transcended. Besides, the philosophy of transhumanism challenges the other core elements of being human, as well. Upon this, Benjamin Ross (2020) states that

what is “human” in humanity are these three limitations – mortality, ignorance, and suffering – precisely because the human condition is defined by the inability to indefinitely put off an encounter with each. In this sense, these qualities which define the structure of the human being are that which is being negated in the transhumanist quest for posthumanity. (p.11)

In other words, transhumanism challenges the main aspects of being human by providing contrary goals such as immortality, super-intelligence, and illness-free life with eternal health. Since the Convergence can be regarded as the representation of the philosophy of transhumanism in *Zero K*, it attempts to subvert the conventional meaning of being human with the aim of constructing post-human beings. This is what the novel is continuously questioning through Jeffrey’s narration. He asks Artis some existential questions about being the same person if she wakes up in the future:

“The same body, yes, or an enhanced body, but what about the mind?... Are you the same person? You die as someone with a certain name and with all the history and memory and mystery gathered in that person and that name. But do you wake up with all of that intact?”. (DeLillo, 2016, p.48)

Jeffrey’s inquiries indicate the possible life that Artis might have after she is cryopreserved. Therefore, by asking these questions, he wants to trace not only how the body is going to be, but also the mind, intelligence, and identity in Artis’ future body. Therefore, what transhumanists aim is to create “beings with vastly greater capacities than present human beings have” and “to enhance our memory and other intellectual faculties, to refine our emotional experiences and increase our subjective sense of well-being, and generally to achieve a greater degree of control of our lives” (Bostrom, 2001, pp.1-2). While Artis is preparing to be cryopreserved, Ross, ironically, informs Artis that “In time you will re-encounter yourself. Memory, identity, self, on another level... You will have a phantom life within the braincase. Floating thought... Like a newborn machine” (DeLillo, 2016, p.238). All in all, it can be stated that transhumanism not only seeks to enhance the human mind but also aims to transcend the feelings of human beings. Thus, the Convergence seeks to give its patients an upgraded self, identity, and mind. However, passing through into another dimension, she is supposed to have a “phantom” life which refers to a kind of one in which

she has departed from whatever she has possessed. As a result, she is supposed to become a machine-like being. Therefore, the question arises whether the person is going to carry the same feelings and identity as well as the former ones they possessed.

In a broader discussion, as Max More (2013) puts forward “Transhumanism shares some postmodernist values, such as a need for change, reevaluating knowledge, recognition of multiple identities, and opposition to sharp classifications of what humans and humanity ought to be” (p.1). As such, transhumanism seems to destroy what the human race has carried until this time, especially the traditional concepts of body and identity which are also ruined in *Zero K*. In a similar vein, Slava Stamenkovic (2018) comments on the destruction of the body and identity duo in *Zero K* as follows:

the body suffers severe manipulation, corruption, and violation, while proving to be a crucial element of one’s identity. Corruption of the body here does not occur only in the form of death, but also in the form of violating the body...What is left is but a shell which carries almost no mark of individuality...In this sense, the program of body preservation can be interpreted as a form of suicide, a conscious choice of death. (pp. 204, 206-207)

Regarding Stamenkovic’s discussion, it is evident that the body is an entity that should carry the identity in itself. However, cryogenic processes in the novel tend to destroy this body-identity duo. The authentic body image is ruined not because of death but because of preservation. Accordingly, cryopreserved bodies are debased in the sense that they are unlikely to hold identity within themselves. It can be stated that agreeing on a death by cryogenics refers to a different kind of suicide. Besides, the body image is dominated by an external power which is cryopreservation. It can be deduced that transhumanist ideals do not embrace the conventional concept of self which is also demonstrated in Artis’ case. In fact, Artis’s body appears to be becoming one of them and she is going to be left only with flesh, lacking an identity.

Additionally, Artis even makes a confession stating that “I feel artificially myself. I’m someone who’s supposed to be me” (DeLillo, 2016, p.52). The terms ‘artificially’ and ‘myself’ in Artis’ statement give two contrasting ideas because the former refers to something man-made or fake while the latter points out an authentic entity: the self. Apart from this, Jeffrey learns from his mother that Ross Lockhart is a fake name Ross had been planning to get himself for a long time to become closer “to self-realization” and “It would motivate him to work harder, think more clearly, begin to see himself differently[...]he would become the man he’d only glimpsed when *Ross Lockhart* was a series of alphabetic

strokes on a sheet of paper” (DeLillo, 2016, p.81). Therefore, not only Artis but also Ross is about to lose his identity. Glavanakova (2017) argues that Ross obtaining a new name “is a familiar gesture of the American as the self-made man” which reminds Fitzgerald’s famous character changing his name to Jay Gatsby from Jimmy Gatz (p.105). Thus, Ross Lockhart, a self-made billionaire, has created an identity himself by changing his name. Similarly, Laguarda-Bueno (2022) suggests that

Rather than trying to cope with his problems, Ross considers throughout the novel undergoing cryopreservation with the hope of being reawakened in the future to enjoy eternal life with Artis. The Convergence’s technologies promise to offer Ross, therefore, a way of escaping his existential angst (p.153).

In other words, instead of confronting the truth of death, Ross chases after a new identity or self by trusting the Convergence promises. Besides his quest of transcending into a new body and identity, Ross’ invented name is a demonstration of his not having an authentic identity. Therefore, he experiences an identity crisis while he expects to be transcended and to be saved from his existential pain. In a similar vein, “Ross harbours a fear of life, rather than death” (Maffrey and Teo, 2018, p.20). In doing so, Ross abandons his current life which makes him afraid of living it because it is a mortal one, unlike the life the Convergence is supposed to give him. It can be stated that Artis and Ross both have lost their authentic self and have been given a false one: Artis by agreeing to be cryopreserved, Ross by changing his name and deciding to go with Artis. Jeffrey refers to Ross’ situation after he decides to join Artis in the Convergence: “The pod would be his final shrine of entitlement” (DeLillo, 2016, p.117) where would be his end of life. Wilkins (2022) also suggests that Ross Lockhart “reaches the actual omega point of death” (p.85) which is the finality of life that he currently lives and approves to be transcended into another as a result of the cryogenics technologies. Providing a similar discussion with Stamenkovic, Enteghar, and Guendouzi (2021) also argue that

the choice of cryogenic preservation over death equals a choice of a fake self over an individuated authentic one...Ross and Artis lose the freedom of “being” when they adopt the proposal of technological suspension unquestionably. After they become frozen bodies, they lose all authentic control over their future existence and subjectivity. (p. 48)

Sacrificing themselves to technological transformation leads both Ross and Artis to lose their original identities and selves that they should possess. In so doing, they have not become free because they have become the victims of the Convergence. In a further discussion,

Laguarta-Beuno (2022) suggests a contradiction about the idea of transcending life in the novel that “the solution the novel offers lies in using cryonics not to escape death—as one might expect—but to escape life itself” (p.124). In other words, the Convergence offers death intending to reach a new life by asking the cryogenic bodies to end the life they are already living in.

As a consequence, the Convergence patients including Artis and Ross intended to be immortal as a result of cryopreservation, instead, they have died in vain as the Stenmark twins also reveal “it will only get you killed” (DeLillo, 2016, p.245). Therefore, the Convergence tends to offer deathless death (DeLillo, 2016, p.243) to its patients. By choosing eternal death over a mortal life, Artis and others in the Convergence “find only an incomplete, disembodied and disconnected existence” (Casteluber and Fernandes, 2021, p.529). Hence, unable to identify her existence, it can be deduced that Artis dwells in the constructed body and carries a constructed self. In a similar vein, Enteghar and Guendouzi (2021) both suggest that

DeLillo’s *Zero K* reflects on the posthuman technology as a realm of manipulation, illusion and concealment of primordial truth; offering a radical refutation of it as a source of alienation from essence, death, and, thus, meaningful existence...The novel’s treatment of death, time and technology teaches us that scientific denial of death threatens to make of man a shallow carcass suffering in the abyss of meaninglessness; affirming that the posthuman dream of a utopian future for humanity unravels as a nightmarish loss of authentic life, human essence and existential worth. (p.54)

All in all, the novel dissolves that technology in the Convergence is a tool that tries to fool the truth of death, identity, and other essentials of being a human. The Convergence makes its patients to undergo a great deal of agony and pain by refusing the truth of death and dragging them into unprecedented life. Besides, the chapter titled ARTIS MARTINEAU in the novel is both narrated from Artis’ point of view which transmits her own perspective closely to the reader and the protagonist Jeffrey. According to Barrett (2018), this chapter “heightens the duality that so many DeLillo characters feel” (p.112) because there is a shift between Artis’ and the narrator’s voice in the chapter. Graley Herren points out this chapter as “Artis Martineau is a metafictional prisoner of “ARTIS MARTINEAU,” an urn buried inside of Zero K” (Herren, 2015, p.221). Drawing from the previous discussion, it can be deduced that the pod named Zero K is some kind of a tomb where Artis is locked up or trapped.

In the aforementioned chapter, DeLillo, by providing Artis' inner voice, makes the readers witness – either intentionally or not - her existential questions concerning the self, identity, and body while she is attempting to grasp who and where she is as follows: “But am I who I was.” “I think I am someone. There is someone here and I feel it in me or with me” “I am trying to be someone” “Is this my body” (DeLillo, 2016, pp.157,159). Therefore, she looks for a self and strives to identify who she is. Even though she primarily thinks that she is the same person as she was before, she then begins to accept that she is someone else. As Shelat notes, “she is also between ignorance and truth. She waits for an understanding, for a coherent first person sense of self...” (2017, p.42). In other words, she longs for a meaning while she speaks to herself. In addition, she also questions whether she dwells in the same body that she did previously. As a consequence, she feels alienated from everything she possessed before. Therefore, the other voice, which belongs to the narrator Jeffrey, observes Artis out from a distance stating that “*she is able to say what she feels and she is also the person who stands outside the feelings*” (DeLillo, 2016, p.158). She speaks as if her emotions have been taken away from her. Thus, Artis seems not to bear any kind of emotions as an individual who is in the making to be transcended. “*She is the residue, all that is left of an identity*” (DeLillo, 2016, p.160). In other words, Artis becomes a representation of the remnants of an identity, but not carrying one. Consequently, “Artis has abandoned herself to the project only to be ill with loneliness, isolation and ennui in the capsule” (Enteghar & Guendouzi, 2021, p.53). In a broader discussion, Shelat (2017) points out the unusual tone of the chapter as follows:

The disjointed and obscure language, with its fusion of first and third person and disavowal of punctuation rules, models an end of rational thought and written language, thus enforcing Artis' posthuman subjectivity while being humanist in its deconstructed language. (p.43)

Therefore, Artis' distorted usage of language mainly refers to her shattered self and mode of existence while indicating her mind's departure from sanity. Likewise, not only Artis but also the mannequins in the halls of the Convergence bear identities. Therefore, they are represented as lifeless and motionless as if they were dead. Jeffrey declares the state of the mannequins as he walks through the hallways of the Convergence as follows:

I saw that it was a mannequin, naked, hairless, without facial features, and it was reddish brown, maybe russet or simply rust. There were breasts, it had breasts, and I stopped to study the figure, a molded plastic version of the human body, a jointed model of a woman. The stillness of the figure, the empty face, the empty hallway, the figure at night, a dummy, in fear, drawing away. (DeLillo, 2016, p.24)

As a consequence, the mannequins do not convey authentic identities, as well as Artis and Ross. Because of the blankness in their looks and appearances, they present hollowness in terms of not carrying conventional human bodies. Jeffrey gives more details about the mannequins as they are “naked...heads horribly twisted, bare skulls...men and women stripped of identity” (DeLillo, 2016, p.134). In other words, they acquire terrifying bodies that are scary and seem like synthetic beings or robot-like entities created at the Convergence. “The disruption of the boundaries between humans and mannequins is a chilly reminder that with the loss of control over technology people irrevocably lose their humanity” (Enteghar& Guendouzi, 2021, p.51). All in all, no sparkle of liveliness can be traced through Artis’ and the mannequin’s bodies due to the eradication of the boundaries. Likewise, the descriptions of the bodies in the novel do not hint at the accustomed body image. As a consequence, the body-identity duality is corrupted once again due to the mannequin bodies as they seem to sustain inauthentic identities.

In a further discussion, Stamenkovic (2021) argues that “concerning the relation to life, the body is the space that one inhabits, a house or a temple for the Self” (p. 206). Thus, the body is referred to as a house that is special to an individual. Therefore, it is metaphorically pointed out that the body is private to each individual. The body regarded as a temple signifies a sublime entity a person inhabits. However, the Convergence destroys these conventional meanings of the body. The narrator states “Die a human, be reborn an isometric drone” (ZK, p.147). Consequently, Artis’ and others’ bodies will be recreated as archetypes that do not assemble any genuineness. As a consequence, “it is only Jeff who remains human in any capacity of the word, embracing the sufferings, pleasures, and limits of his human condition” (Casteluber & Fernandes, 2021, p.530).

Max More (2013) states that for the majority of transhumanists, having a self initially refers to material possessions rather than signifying a sentimental one as follows:

[T]hey believe that our thinking, and feeling selves are essentially physical processes[...]The high level of interest in philosophy and neuroscience among transhumanists has led to a wide acknowledgment that the simple Cartesian view of the mind or self as a unitary, indivisible, and transparent entity is unsupportable. (p.7)

More refers to Descartes’ definition of the self which signifies totality and its inseparability from the body. Therefore, it is implied that transhumanist principles subvert the conventional meaning of self by violating the boundaries as a result of technological transcendence. Besides, along with existential questions regarding the status of the body and identity concept in the novel, some ethical questions arise:

DeLillo ultimately leads readers to question the ethics of suspending our present lives—leaving behind our present embodied existence, our more intimate relationships, and our problems and responsibilities—with the uncertain hope of being brought back to life in the future to enjoy eternal life, with or without our loved ones. (Bueno, 2022, p.140)

Accordingly, due to the creation of cryogenic bodies, our existence and our relation to life are both shattered. Therefore, because of the abandonment of the moral values of being human such as possessing a self and free will, they tend to lose their conventional meanings. Escaping to confront the issues and responsibilities and giving up on the beloved ones results in giving up on life itself. Besides, the hope cryogenic bodies carry within themselves leads to the question of ethics because of the ambiguity of the results. The narrator points out the whole process that Artis is supposed to encounter: “She would die, chemically prompted, in a subzero vault, in a highly precise medical procedure guided by mass delusion, by superstition and arrogance and self-deception” (DeLillo, 2016, p.50). As a consequence, it is shown that Jeffrey is skeptical about cryopreservation. After all, he does not believe in the Convergence because he finds it deceitful and groundless. Jeffrey seems skeptical about the idea of waking up in the future, unlike Artis and his father, Ross. Glavanakova (2017) provides several questions about the process which bring up further questions about the issue of ethics in the novel as follows:

The text remains ambiguous as to the role of the overdesigned space of the Convergence: does it serve to comfort or to deceive the patients? To comfort those who have come to die by attempting to remove them from the practicality of the process, the technicalities of which are purposefully chiseled out of the novel by DeLillo? Alternatively, is it one of the strategies used to market death? When seen from the perspective of the narrator, most of the things he witnesses seem to be part of an elaborately staged performance meant to convince the spectator—Jeff and perhaps the reader—that this is a feasible and money-making idea. (p.98)

Jeffrey’s following statement about the process held in the Convergence that “it seems very businesslike” (DeLillo, 2016, p.29) is likely to complement Glavanakova’s skeptical questions above. Therefore, in the Convergence, death might be sold by commercialization, and it seems like it attempts to persuade its patients to buy it. Jeffrey perceives the process like a stage performance that highlights its arbitrariness and implausibility. Jeffrey refers to his father’s quest of transcendence by stating: “Live the billionaire's myth of immortality” (DeLillo, 2016, p.117). Immortality which the Convergence attempts to sell remains a myth because the results have not been provided yet. The criticism also addresses the rich who are the only ones that can afford immortality by paying a fortune to access it. As a consequence,

the idea of selling death is likely to cover realities and remains like an illusion which makes the Convergence subvert ethics. In a similar discussion of the ethics of technology, Bostrom (2001) argues that “While future technological capabilities carry immense potential for beneficial deployments, they also could be misused to cause enormous harm, ranging all the way to the extreme possibility of intelligent life becoming extinct” (p.2). Accordingly, while transhumanism provides advanced developments, it is also a threat to human beings in terms of losing human intelligence. Cowart (2018) also notes that

the Convergence invites acceptance as the cutting edge of science that strives to extend and enhance life, but it is also the latest in ark thinking, deliverance for a privileged few, all others suffering the more or less apocalyptic convulsions depicted on its video screens. (p.146)

In other words, although the facility seems to offer groundbreaking developments in technology, it remains insensitive to the catastrophes shown on the screens mentioned before, that the unprivileged, and the ordinary must confront eventually. Therefore, the facility itself provides an unethical stance. Similarly, the novel carries the discussion into a further dimension through Artis’ following statement regarding the effects of technology as follows:

“The loss of autonomy. The sense of being virtualized. The devices you use, the ones you carry everywhere, room to room, minute to minute, inescapably. Do you ever feel unfleshed? All the coded impulses you depend on to guide you. All the sensors in the room that are watching you, listening to you, tracking your habits, measuring your capabilities...Is there something make you uneasy?...Do you feel steeped in some horrific digital panic that’s everywhere and nowhere?” (DeLillo, 2016, p.239)

Thus, her thought-provoking sentences mainly refer to the features of the convergence, where the patients lose control of their lives, or that they are made of numbers, with every action traced and every human aspect shaped, and, consequently, make you feel distressed or insecure. All in all, cryogenic preservation undermines the moral values of humans especially authenticity in terms of self and identity which leads to ethical questions that are left without answers.

Regarding the concept of the body and eternity relationship in the novel Stamenkovic (2021) argues that “the body is something DeLillo’s characters seek to surpass, one way or the other...they all seek life beyond their bodies” (p.207). In this regard, overcoming death through immortal bodies and searching for life to outlive their bodies are likely to anticipate the afterlife as a concept. Likewise, Max More (2013) suggests that transhumanism manifests the Enlightenment ideals which seek “more intelligence, and effectiveness, an open-ended lifespan” (p.5). Thus, transhumanism expects what religion asks human beings

to have. The Convergence in the novel is supposed to present a “faith-based technology” and “life after death” (DeLillo, 2016, p.8). In this sense, the Convergence is an imaginary place that features several concepts of the afterlife and religion. In a similar perspective, Benjamin Ross (2020) argues that “Prophetic statements speculating on the bodies of future humans have a long history drawn from myth, religion, and scientific speculation” (p.7). The idea of seeking for immortal body and life dates back to historical backgrounds like myths and religions. The perception of religion has shifted. Although it refers to the old religions, it is perceived differently by transhumanists. In the novel, the technology is likened to a new religion that refers to the “unspiritual life of contemporary America” (Glavanakova, p.96). Therefore, technology becomes an ultimate power to hold on as a result of the destruction of old values and beliefs. Samuelson (2018) also unveils the relationship between transhumanism and religion in terms of defining death as a concept as follows:

In the premodern world, the reality of death was accepted and experienced as part of the course of life, and the transcendence of mortality (i.e. the finality of death) was constituted a religious belief and a philosophical practice. Transhumanism technologizes beliefs in the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the dead, and it makes you feel that human beings now possess the technological power to realize both of these beliefs. (pp. 216-217).

Accordingly, transhumanist beliefs might replace religion and subvert the meaning of death and immortality. In so doing, transhumanism pursues altering the former perception of the afterlife from a religious belief to a technologically created one by employing cryopreservation. This is how the conventional concept of religion and the afterlife are both subverted in the Convergence. Reaching to the Convergence, as is described by Ross Lockhart is some kind of pilgrimage which he states as follows: “This place may have not been intended as the new Jerusalem but people made long journeys to find a form of higher being here...” (DeLillo, 2016, p.43). When the Convergence is analyzed in a historical context, it resembles the idea of reaching the holy place at the end of the pilgrimage and finding a new mode of existence by living infinitely. The quest of reaching the Convergence could be explained through Kant’s theory of the sublime in which he “emphasizes that it is not the object itself that is sublime; instead, the feeling is created in the mind of the observer” (Pawlak, 2022, p.67). The hope the Convergence patients carry to reach the facility might be a reference to the sublime. Therefore, the Convergence might be a place where people seek to find divinity or spiritual enhancement by devoting themselves to the idea of a transcendental entity. Mariya Dimitrova Nikolova (2019) points out the relationships of Ross-Jeffrey, the Stenmark twins, and the Monk as follows:

Father and son join two brothers, the Stenmarks, who invent and safeguard the future, and with this reinforce the image of white men as creators, saviours and visionaries. A close reading lucidly explicates this three-fold assembly. On the one hand, the triad characterisation is strengthened by staging the father and the son alongside another man in story: the Monk. The three of them figure as the holy trinity and further establish the context for transcendence and rebirth. (p.95)

The characters mentioned above allude to the Christian doctrine of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These figures symbolize transcendence and rebirth in terms of the dominance of religious beliefs. Likewise, Stamenkovic (2021) also names the process of cryopreservation as “resurrection, rebirth and revival” (p.211). The critic refers to the belief of coming back to life after death which is relatable to the promise of all religions. As a consequence, the Convergence is a metaphor for afterlife. Additionally, this heavenly facility is the representation of a divine place created by technology where while people are traveling toward salvation, they sacrifice their identity, self, body, and natural features of human beings intending to have an endless life.

The facility stands for various concepts such as cryogenics, technological threats, religion, the concept of an afterlife, and, immortality. Apart from these, the Convergence is also a place where the linear time is lost: “The unanchored space and time of the centre becomes a reflection of the consequences of distorting death as boundary” (Ashman, 2019, p.10). Therefore, immortality not only signifies an infinite life but also the loss of conventional time sense. Daniel Wilkins (2022) states that “The sense of timelessness here seems to be accompanied by an end of one kind of contingency” (p.90). In other words, feeling the sense of time is ambiguous in the Convergence that it does not meet the conventional meaning. Therefore, time has no boundaries and it is endless if you are immortal. Hence, in *Zero K* timelessness is narrated through the conversation between Ross and Jeffrey reveals as follows: “There is no time. / Or time is so overwhelming that we don’t feel it pass in the same way. / You hide from it. / We defer to it” (DeLillo, 2016, p. 28). It is overtly stated that time sense is lost or flows unusually in the Convergence. Besides, time is something to be escaped from and an enemy to be hidden or postponed. Referring to Ross’s quest, Wilkins (2022) suggests that his aim is “to transcend time” (p.89) instead of saying goodbye to Artis. By quoting Heidegger’s argument, Enteghar and Guendouzi (2021) suggest that

the scientists at the center seek to contain the transitoriness of time and life. So, the Convergence reschedules time and aims at generating a human life outside its flow...Though the enterprise wants to “kill time” and prevent its passing, the later continues to flow because, as explains Heidegger, “time does not let itself be halted”.(2021, p.52)

Accordingly, the Convergence aims to captivate time by attempting to stop it and create a timeless life. However, Heidegger opposes to this idea. Time cannot be escaped or it is not possible to stop time because it will pass anyway in its own flow eventually. In a further discussion about time in the novel, Wilkins (2022) argues that “Zero K captures an eerie, alienating strangeness in the lives and experiences of its characters. It also features the notion that a retreat from time and space is a fool’s errand, doomed to fail” and *Zero K* offers “a setting in which nothing can be trusted, where the very fabric of time and space seem to have been altered” (Wilkins, 2022, pp.85, 88). Accordingly, the novel demonstrates that it is a challenge for its bizarre characters and the status of the protagonists who attempt to cheat time and it is nonsensical. The Convergence attempts to subvert the concept of time and space by changing their authentic meanings. Toward the end of the novel, Ross changes his mind to be cryopreserved and returns back to New York with Jeffrey. Therefore, “Return to the city is a return to the flow of time, and Jeff appears to take some glee in telling his father that their return places them ‘back in history’ (Wilkins, 2022, p.91). Now ‘days have names, and numbers’ and time flows and life continues outside of the Convergence where it stopped. Jeffrey even mentions the everyday chores such as shopping for groceries, hailing a cab, and visiting the museums in New York.

Zero K, as a work of literature, is described as “a strange hybrid of art and technology. Alongside the many examples of abstract art interspersed throughout *Zero K*, the novel becomes a piece of abstract art in itself” (Glavanakova, 2017, p.103). Accordingly, the text demonstrates itself as an artwork co-existing with technology as well as employs art throughout DeLillo’s narration. According to Vita-More (2013), “Bringing arts and design into the discussion of transhumanism reflects the idea of the human as transformative. Over time, the approach has been to augment, extend, modify, and enhance human communication, mobility, and experientiality” (p.24). Therefore, transhumanism assembles several features that are parallel to art such as modification, transcendence and transformation. According to Samuelson, “Transhumanism is an imaginary narrative about human destiny, and like all social imaginaries, the transhumanist portrayal tells us more about the present than about what will actually happen in the remote future” (2018, p.211). Therefore, transhumanism consists of a cluster of ideas that credit art in the sense of imagining and creating artworks. In doing so, this experimental art stance resembles the idea of art in the Convergence. Likewise, the Convergence in the novel is also described as “art in itself, nowhere else but here” (DeLillo, 2016, p.74). Thus, the Convergence represents unique art that can only be employed there. The art’s relation to immortality is overtly given

in the novel. Therefore, Ashman (2019) refers to Nathaniel Rich's argument that "this concept of eternal life may signify "artistic immortality" rather than biological" (p.308). The facility offers immortality through art, not assembling an organic one.

By contrast, the facility is "a bizarre art project" (Glavanakova, 2017, p.98) that "It was art that accompanies last things, simple, dream-like and delirious. You're dead, it said" (DeLillo, 2016, p.119) Jeffrey states. Therefore, art in *Zero K* is closely related to the end of life, and death, and beyond that it is unbelievable and fictitious. Adele Nel (2021) asks the following questions about the artistic facility and art in it: "Is this visionary art that aestheticizes death? Is death a metaphor for art, or is art a metaphor for death? Is art in fact a metaphor for life?" (p. 8). She criticizes that through art if death is manifested, a reflection of life or death or death and art are intertwined. Besides being a "portmortem décor" (DeLillo, 2016, p.232) itself which means the concept of afterlife, the Convergence harbors art as a concept through its walls, and paintings in Ross's room, mannequins, and the bodies aimed to be created by technology. Cryogenic bodies which are supposed to be the outcome of transhumanist actions by assembling cryonics, display a close relationship with art. Thus, they are considered a new way of art in the novel. Rishani (2014) refers to the transhumanist perception of the body and art relationship as follows:

the body would no longer be a necessity and instead it is chosen to hold aesthetic value and meaning; bringing value to body by means of intentionality...Art creates a possible version of the future in accordance to the technological advances found in the present environment, yet taking it a step forward. (p. 18)

According to the aforementioned suggestion about the transhumanist body, it is likely to present artistic quality rather than functioning conventionally. It can be stated that the transhumanist body is given a meaning thanks to art. Adele Nel (2021) puts forward a related discussion that "the reference to the body 'as a model of creation' can be related to the classical representations of the human form as an ideal of beauty in art" (p.8). Therefore, cryogenic bodies are likely to convey aesthetic beauty. However, Nel (2021) provides a contrasting argument from Jeffrey's perspective as follows: "In contrast with the ideal beauty of the human figure, Jeffrey also becomes acquainted with destructive art and the extreme disfigurement of the body – art as confrontation and as spectacle and as alternative means of experience" (p.8). According to Nel's discussion, it can be said that art and artworks in the Convergence carry several postmodern elements since they are perceived "destructive". The art in the Convergence attempts to demolish the conventional idea of beauty by providing horrible images of the bodies. Ashman (2019) also defines Jeffrey "as the embodiment of a

postmodern contemporary reality devoid of any definition or substance, a “shapeless man” drifting through an equally shapeless world” (p.7). What makes Jeffrey a postmodern figure in the novel is his liminal position that he is not even close to understanding what is being made in the Convergence and he also feels puzzled about what is going to happen next. Nel (2021) provides further discussion about the art and Jeffrey’s astonishment all through the Convergence corridors as follows:

posthuman art is often more a way of looking at art than creating art, more what is expected of the viewer than what the artist offers up for view. It is a challenge and a dialogue. As narrator and focaliser, Jeffrey emphasises the act of looking throughout the novel: ‘I looked left and right and left again, testing one wall against the other. (p.6)

Therefore, as well as Jeffrey’s postmodern stance, art in the Convergence can be defined as posthuman art. While wandering about the Convergence, Jeffrey is unable to recognize a body if it belongs to a girl or a boy and he describes it as “a living breathing art form” (DeLillo, 2016, p. 149). All in all, by Jeffrey’s previous sentence, it can be deduced that it is like a new way of art. Jeffrey also refers to the bodies as they are “saturated with advanced preservatives, serving as mainstays in the art markets of the future” (DeLillo, 2016, P.232). Therefore, the artistic bodies seem like they were made to be sold in the future. Therefore, the Convergence aims to sell the bodies as well as immortality.

In a broader discussion, art regarding the body is described as “pure spectacle” and “a form of visionary art.[..]body art with broad implications” by the narrator (DeLillo, 2016, p. 256). Likewise, Ashman (2019) also states that the pods where the bodies preserved “augment and transmute into a different arrangement entirely, a spectacular installation of “body art” that reconfigures death into something transcendent and sacred” (p.309). According to Jeffrey’s narration, the Convergence is an art that is worth seeing and, therefore, demonstrates that the body is an art to be performed. In a further discussion of Graley Herren (2015), “Jeff employs fiction to reanimate the frozen Artis, imagining his way into her experience, assuming her perspective, and ventriloquizing her voice” (p.212). Thus, Jeffrey visualizes the future Artis and he enacts her probable situation in the aftermath of waking up in the pod. The perception of art differs among the protagonists in the novel. First of all, Artis states “The only thing that’s not ephemeral is the art” (DeLillo, 2016, p.51). Therefore, it is emphasized by Artis that art is immortal, not temporary. Ross’ words “*gesso on linen*” (DeLillo, 2016, pp.251, 268) are borrowed from “art lexicon” and “Art[...]is itself a kind of cryogenic suspension...- suggest that what crosses his mind on the cryonic

threshold is not personal immortality but the perpetuity of art” (Cowart, 2018, p. 147). As a consequence, his final words also indicate that art is permanent rather than his quest for immortality. In a further discussion, “Artis Martineau searches for an epiphany, thus conjoining the transcendence that art delivers and the transcendence that the technology of the Convergence guarantees” (Shelat, 2017, p.40). The reason why Artis surrenders herself to the Convergence scientists is that Artis considers art as salvation. She believes she will find peace and health thanks to the Convergence art. Therefore, Artis is the one whose future existence is likely to be defined by art when her body is considered as an artwork. Besides, Artis’ profession as an archeologist demonstrates that she is akin to art. Similarly, Laura Barrett (2018) argues that all the protagonists display distinct ways of relationships with art:

Jeff seems an unlikely artist figure. Indeed, we might assume that role belongs to Artis, whose dedication to art and artefacts is illustrated by her career as an archaeologist and her transformation of Ross’s environment from a sterile penthouse to an art-filled townhouse. As her name implies, however, she is less the artist than the art, which helps to explain why Jeff believes she belongs at the Convergence while his father does not. (p.122)

Unlike Artis, Jeffrey undertakes the “artistic figure”. Artis is neither the artist nor the art. Shelat argues that Jeffrey cannot identify with the Convergence and art there. He “abhors the new form of art...because he...uses art to define himself” (Shelat, 2017, p.45). Jeffrey is likely to reject art in the Convergence created by technology because it does not complement his perception of art. The art “threatens Jeffrey’s passion for art” (Shelat, 2017, p.45) so that he does not feel an attachment to the Convergence. “He uses art, language in particular, to decode the various situations he finds himself in and to find transcendence” (Shelat, 2017 p. 54). As mentioned above, his relationship with words and language makes Jeffrey feel his own kind of art to define himself. Jeffrey names the characters in the Convergence. Similarly, Cowart (2018) suggests,

The thematic prominence of names and naming reveals two complementary features here. First is the idea of the name as embryonic language; second is the gradual unveiling of the narrator, obsessed with names and naming, as the storyteller-artist who recognizes in language the instrument essential to his calling[...] Jeffrey’s name game is at once an important defence mechanism and a hint that he will transform experience, however bizarre, into narrative, give it artistic form. (pp.150, 152)

Naming is the beginning and the core of storytelling. As such, Jeffrey’s urge to name the people in the Convergence indicates an author-like stance. He perceives language as an art form. His obsession with names gives Jeffrey a first-hand experience in art. Besides, he

transmits the story in an artistic way of story-telling despite the horrors and ambiguity the Convergence offers.

Besides Artis' and Jeffrey's different perceptions of art, Ross picks out and buys the works of young artists, and garnishes the halls and the rooms of the Convergence with art thoroughly. Although Ross is highly interested in works of art, he remains the one who does not fit in the idea of the Convergence, according to Jeffrey. As for Ross' relation to art in the novel Shelat (2017) notes that he "functions as the bridge between art and technology[...]DeLillo heightens this connection between art and technology by blurring the lines between the two. Art and technology become interchangeable in the realm and shadow of the Convergence" (p. 35). In other words, Ross is fully devoted to the idea of transcending in the first place, and also his high interest in art explains the aforementioned relationship in the novel. It can be deduced that both art and technology feed each other owing to the creation of artificial bodies. As a consequence, the boundaries start to fade away or to blend in between the two as in the halls and the doors of the Convergence: "the halls were pure design, the doors simply one element in the overarching scheme" (DeLillo, 2016, p. 23).

David Cowart (2018) points out DeLillo's art from a broader point of view yet centering on the Convergence in *Zero K* as follows:

The density of ekphrasis and artistic allusion in *Zero K* is especially high, perhaps because art provides a natural corrective to or subversive context for immortalist pretension – the subject of this novel. humanity's challenge to mortality [...] DeLillo suggests that art, naturally resistant to illiberal, inhumane, and totalitarian ends, often undermines the ideology it nominally serves. Whether or not the Convergence artwork functions subversively, one can easily enough affirm the powerfully ironic undertow of DeLillo's own art. The author's irony serves truth, enables us to see reality behind its illusory veil, as the reader is reminded in an exchange between Jeffrey and his moribund stepmother, whose name, Artis, may be intended to recall or echo the familiar motto *ars gratia artis*, art for the sake of art. (pp.146-147-148)

Hence, art is a counternarrative to fate because it is a rebellion. Therefore, art harbors immortality in itself and therefore, a reaction to death. Likewise, for DeLillo, art generally subverts the dominant notions such as ideologies. Thus, the Convergence undermines the conventional perception of art as discussed before by creating posthuman art in itself. DeLillo effectively uses an ironic tone that helps the readers witness the truth. Besides these, Artis' name is a reference to the famous saying: 'art for the sake of art'. The motto reminds the core of the modernist movement in art which defends that art should be freed from old values. As a consequence, this is what the novel attempts by providing posthuman art, replacing old forms of art with the ones created via technology, undermining conventional

body image, erasing self, and constructing new identities. Likewise, one of the Stenmark twins Sven points out “classic works of art” such as “Russian novels, the films of Bergman, Kubrick, Kurosawa, Tarkovsky...In the capsule you dream of old lovers and listen to Bach, to Billie Holiday” (DeLillo, 2016, p.72). Therefore, conventional art remains a dream in the pod which displays a longing for an old kind of art. “While artworks still exist, they are changed—like the humans who enjoy or will enjoy them” (Shelat, 2017, p.45). Thus, it can be said that not only has the art been altered but also the art hunters and the way they consume art has been taken down.

In conclusion, advanced technologies alter our perception of binaries of life and death, real and artificial, authenticity and subjectivity of individuals. In this chapter, these binaries are discussed from a transhumanist way of interpretation. As *Zero K* offers a life-and-death puzzle through the Convergence, it also offers the ultimate trauma of death to be overcome. Therefore, trauma in the novel forces the protagonists to find a way of skipping death. As a consequence, technology is presented as the supreme way of erasing death for the protagonists. However, the application of cryopreservation has cost their life, body and identity rather than making the protagonists free from illnesses and immortality. The use of this technique of preserving bodies has made them lack human essence and given them a shattered self and an eternal death. The posthuman bodies waiting to be preserved present a postmodern stance as they do not suit conventional beauty standards.

Besides these, Artis and Ross, in particular, demonstrate existential crisis throughout the novel although they do not make a clear confession. Artis and Ross seem to embrace transhumanist purposes of the Convergence. The Convergence is like a threshold, presenting ambiguity and a phase of transition. Thus, the liminal space the patients inhabit displays their loss of authentic selves. The elusiveness of body preservation raises ethical questions that remain unanswered. After all, we only witness the process rather than the results. Unfortunately, the philosophy of transhumanism does not offer equivalent circumstances to everyone, therefore cryopreservation is only meant to cure the rich who can afford it. As a consequence, this selling immortality or death (which is also ambiguous) state of mind, makes the reader ask questions about the ethics of technology. The commercial purpose of transhumanist philosophy through cryogenics reminds us of the core of religion that promises eternal life in heaven. Besides, transcendence into eternal life also signifies the primary goals of religion. Therefore, the novel subverts the old perception of religion by surpassing it with technology which can be regarded as a new one in the novel.

As well as the subversion of authentic identity, the notion of body, religion, and the truth of death, the conventional sense of time is also undermined through the Convergence located in the middle of the desert. Therefore, the Convergence is represented in several different ways. Firstly, apart from its isolated location, the facility posits an unusual time perception by departing itself from the traditional flow of time. Destroying the time concept, and providing the footage from wars and disasters, it can be said that the facility is the representation of destructiveness. Secondly, the Convergence is like a shelter or a protection that one can hide from calamities and an escape from death, in fact, it is a salvation. Thus, assuring immortality, the Convergence stands for an artwork that is permanent and not dying. The architecture of the facility reserves art-like bodies. However creepy they are, the mannequins are the reflection of posthuman art. Besides, what the novel also unleashes is the clashing perceptions of art according to the three protagonists. For instance, Artis supposes that cryogenic art is the only way to eliminate her both physical and ontic awe. As for Ross Lockhart, he is the art consumer in the novel who gives up on being with Artis in her infinite life. The relationship between Jeffrey and art is rather different from Artis' and Ross'. Therefore, he does not have faith in the Convergence, so he does not appreciate the art in there. All in all, in *Zero K*, transhumanist way of art is expected to have a therapeutic effect on its followers. However, it only drives them into meaninglessness and eternal death.

5.CONCLUSION

Don DeLillo's *The Body Artist* and *Zero K* have been analyzed in the light of trauma theory and transhumanism by exploring the connections between art and trauma, death and life puzzle, and their relation to technology focusing on the concepts of body and identity, time-space and language. This thesis argues that the concept of death as a traumatic experience is attempted to be overcome by art which is approached in various ways in *The Body Artist* and *Zero K*. DeLillo reveals that death is challenged through art and technology as tools to find a solution to the protagonists' traumatic experiences in both novels. The individual traumas in both novels, have been thematically analyzed, as well. Both novels are formed in fragmented narrations and DeLillo provides disruptive events through flashbacks throughout the novels. It can be stated that the writer uses postmodern techniques in both novels.

Trauma is displayed in distinct ways in both novels. In *The Body Artist*, we are provided with individual trauma through the protagonist, Lauren after she loses her husband. Throughout the novel, we witness her grief, mourning, and working through phases of trauma. However, in *Zero K*, DeLillo provides two types of trauma: an individual and a collective one. As mentioned before, the narrator Jeffrey is traumatized by the loss of his mother and the abandonment of his father when he was a child. Therefore, he narrates these two traumatic incidents through disruptive flashbacks. Jeffrey is skeptical about trusting the Convergence's purposes, he disapproves of his father Ross Lockhart's quest to join Artis Martineau with the cryogenics technology. Ross is planning to abandon Jeffrey one more time by surrendering himself to technology. Fearing to be abandoned once again, Jeffrey narrates his traumatic experiences in a fragmented way of expression through disruptive flashbacks. Likewise, Jeffrey attempts to heal his trauma by bonding with his father Ross again. As for the collective trauma in the novel, the quest of Artis to be cryopreserved refers to a collective one because overcoming death has been the ultimate purpose of human beings in history. Therefore, Artis and the other patients in the Convergence are the reflections of this permanent aim. In other words, both novels deal with trauma and several ways to heal it.

The trauma of death in both novels leads protagonists to find salvation in art. Art functions as the sublime power as both novels display protagonists who use art to recover, by both transcending their bodies and assembling subjectivity in their identities. Besides, to demonstrate art, the novels provide settings for the artworks that are presented to the reader.

Therefore, in *The Body Artist*, the setting is mainly the rehearsal room and then, the stage where Lauren exhibits her stage art. Likewise, the setting in *Zero K* is the Convergence, a place regarded as an artwork and a shelter to some artworks itself. Besides, art, as a way of healing is served from different perspectives in both novels. Thus, in *The Body Artist*, the protagonist Lauren dedicates herself to her stage art called Body Time. In doing so, although trauma is inexpressible, she unveils her grief for her deceased husband Rey thanks to her stage art called Body Time. As mentioned before, her art piece gives agony to the spectators because it narrates Lauren's mourning. However, in *Zero K*, the truth of death is expected to be conquered by trusting cryogenics. Artis Martineau perceives the cryogenic processes held in the Convergence as a form of art, and, therefore, she surrenders her life to technology to be healed from her illnesses and live an immortal life. Unlike Artis, Jeffrey perceives art as an opposition to conventional art forms displayed in the Convergence. He does not appreciate posthuman art in the Convergence just as he disapproves the cryogenics as a way of healing. As discussed in previous chapters, art is the only way to recover in both novels although the ways it is assembled vary according to the protagonists.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, transhumanism aims to improve human beings concerning the notions of body and mind. Thus, both novels demonstrate transhumanist elements. The aim of immortality is built upon transhumanist ideals in *Zero K*. The ultimate aim of the Convergence setting is human enhancement in the novel. Likewise, Artis perceives the Convergence ideal as a way of transcendence that is likely to embrace transhumanist purposes. By contrast, transhumanism is not applied explicitly in *The Body Artist*. However, some transhumanist elements can be traced through Lauren's bodily process and art in *The Body Artist*. Lauren's training of her body to transcend herself is a reminiscent of transhumanism as a philosophy that focuses on alteration in the human body. As a consequence, the idea of immortality differs in both novels. In addition, the quest to become immortal through art leads to a subversion of the truth of death by eliminating the boundaries between the concepts of life and death. In *The Body Artist*, Lauren wants to diminish the boundaries between her dead husband and herself by listening to the tape recordings and through the uncanny man Mr. Tuttle's presence. Both aspects symbolize a bridge between Rey and Lauren. In *Zero K*, however, death itself is aimed to be knocked out via transhumanist ideals by eliminating the boundaries between life and death. Along with the quest for eradication of life and death concepts, both novels also aim to subvert the boundaries between time and space. Time is destroyed multiple times in both novels. *The*

Body Artist depicts this by exhibiting Lauren's attempt to communicate with her dead husband through Mr. Tuttle who can be regarded as an outcome of Lauren's traumatized psyche. In addition, Lauren's stage art *Body Time* is also a reference to her unusual experience of time which displays backwardness or a sense of unoccurring throughout the novel. Besides, the Kotka high-way streaming in the background on the stage which she watches in the dead of night, points out Lauren's escape from her own flow of time that captivates her in her traumatic experience. In *Zero K*, time is deconstructed at the Convergence located in the desert, isolated from everything. The Convergence setting posits a timelessness in the conventional sense and creates an unrealistic time sense which signifies a unique flow in itself. The screens of the Convergence showing wars and disasters around the world hypnotize Jeffrey as he cannot help looking at them. By doing so, the screens show the events happening outside of the Convergence setting and time. Apart from the screens, the pods where Artis and other patients wait to live in immortal bodies also indicate a distinct and elusive flow of time. At the end of the novel, time starts to flow for Jeffrey in its conventional way when he returns to New York with Ross. Similarly, when Lauren finishes her three-hour stage performance, she seems to live in linear time, as well. However, Artis remains stuck in the timeless pod Zero K. As a consequence, both novels subvert the limits of time-space. Besides, the destruction of conventional time sense also creates a sense of haziness between real and unreal in both novels. Therefore, in *The Body Artist*, while Lauren believes that Mr. Tuttle is the ghost of Rey, she detaches herself from reality just as she estranges from time sense. Therefore, these aspects cause incomprehensibility in what is real or not. Likewise, in *Zero K*, due to the screens streaming wars and any kind of calamities, Jeffrey is perplexed and unable to differentiate between the illusionary promises of the Convergence and the realities around the world out of the facility.

Art and body image in both novels is mainly examined through the protagonists Lauren and Artis. Lauren, by training her body for the stage art, subverts the traditional representation of body image as she tortures and alters it. Her unusual alteration in terms of the body seems to signify her mental trauma and the healing process. Likewise, in *Zero K*, Artis also expects her dying body to be healed by surrendering herself to cryogenics which she perceives as an immortal form of art. In both novels, the body is perceived as an entity to be transcended. While Lauren creates an art piece out of her trauma and adapts it into stage art, Artis waits for an external power, which is technology to achieve immortality in terms of having her body preserved. Both novels present body art. In *The Body Artist*, the

readers are provided with Lauren's art in which the body is the subject. In contrast, *Zero K* offers posthuman bodies in the making due to the assembly of cryogenics. In addition to these, both Lauren's and Artis' ways of using art as healing seem destructive and subversive. While Lauren deals with the process as a body artist, Artis trusts the Convergence scientists. As a consequence, the bodies of both protagonists are destroyed due to the painful processes. However, the results of their intentions to transcend differ from each other. As a consequence, while Lauren achieves to perform her art and is freed from her agony, Artis' bodily situation in the pod remains a mystery as the result of the preservation is left uncertain to the reader by the end of the novel.

During their healing processes, both Lauren and Artis, represent liminal positions as they are in the process to be transcended. Their transition phase causes both protagonists to demonstrate split identities. As for Lauren, her encounter with Mr. Tuttle leads her to experience a loss of identity multiple times because her traumatized mind believes this cryptic man is the ghost of Rey. The recordings on the tape recorder posit her unstable psyche as she thinks they belong to Mr. Tuttle. However, the readers learn that they are the former conversations between Lauren and Rey. Additionally, while she is training for her art performance, she disguises Rey by repeating his words on the tape recorder. Likewise, during her stage performance, she changes her body multiple times by imitating Rey, Mr. Tuttle, an old woman and a businesswoman. Consequently, she demonstrates multiple identities which estrange her from her authentic self. By the end of her art spectacle, she seems to have come to terms with her trauma, and she finds peace and an identity. As for Artis in *Zero K*, her bardo situation is specifically provided in the ARTIS MARTINEAU chapter. The aforementioned chapter is narrated through her inner voice by demonstrating her quest for defining who she is. By dedicating herself to the Convergence, she gives up on her identity because when she wakes up in the future she is going to be a robot-like being. Therefore, Lauren's tape recordings which she constantly listens to throughout the novel and imitates Mr. Tuttle, Rey, and others mentioned before, and Artis' inner voice echoing in the chapter and her questions to figure out who she is demonstrate both characters' identity crisis because they come from the inner uncanny. Therefore, both Artis and Lauren seek an identity through art. Unfortunately, unlike Lauren, Artis does not carry an identity or a self at the end. Additionally, Artis resembles the mannequins scattered in the corridors of the Convergence, as they do not hold identities either. Not only Artis and Lauren experience identity crises but also Rey, who has committed suicide in *The Body Artist*, and *Zero K*'s Ross Lockhart, who

has changed his name before becoming a billionaire, demonstrate that these two male characters have had problems in finding an identity.

The language in both novels also displays elusiveness just as the overlap in their identities. In *The Body Artist*, Lauren's conversations with Mr. Tuttle carry indistinct elements because the language he uses is freed from tenses and it is incomprehensible. *Zero K* manifests language through Jeffrey's obsession with words and their meanings. His language games and constant strive for defining words refer to his quest to find his origins and identity. Likewise, Artis' disruptive sentences in the ARTIS MARTINEAU chapter resemble Mr. Tuttle's obscure language that does not follow grammatical order. The use of unclear language in both novels refers to Lauren's and Jeffrey's traumatized psyches as a result of the loss of their loved ones.

To conclude, art is represented in several ways and means in *The Body Artist* and *Zero K* in order to heal trauma. Both novels depict that several elements like the unusual time, elusive language, identity crisis, and the destruction of the body image have contributed to the subjectivity of art and its representation. While Lauren's body art is a tool for recovery, Artis hopes that technology would transcend her body and free her from the illnesses she has suffered. The aim of transcending has made Lauren and Artis use art as a therapeutic power and a coping mechanism although the readers are not informed about the situation of Artis at the end of the novel.

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