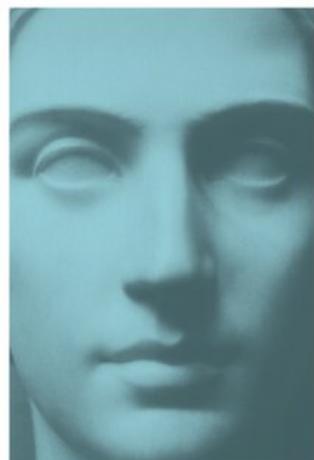


**DON DELILLO**

**ZERO K**



EINAUDI

## **Zero K**

*Don DeLillo , Federica Aceto (Translator)*

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# Zero K

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## **Zero K** Don DeLillo , Federica Aceto (Translator)

Il padre di Jeffrey Lockhart, Ross, è un magnate della finanza sulla sessantina, con una moglie più giovane, Artis Martineau, gravemente malata. Ross è il principale investitore di Convergence, una startup tecnologica con una futuristica sede ultrasegreta nel deserto del Kazakistan. Attraverso le ricerche biomediche e le nuove tecnologie informatiche, a Convergence vogliono conservare i corpi fino al giorno in cui la medicina potrà guarire ogni malattia. Se ne occupa una speciale unità chiamata Zero K a cui hanno deciso di affidarsi Ross e Artis. Così Jeff si riunisce con il padre e la moglie per quello che sembra un addio - o forse un arrivederci. Jeff è turbato: non capisce se a suo padre è stato fatto il lavaggio del cervello dagli uomini di Zero K (un gruppo che ha non poco in comune con una setta religiosa) oppure se la sua è la scelta consapevole di un uomo tanto ricco e potente da decidere di possedere anche la morte. Ma questa è anche l'ultima occasione per ristabilire un rapporto con il padre... "Zero K" è una riflessione vertiginosa sulla morte e sul tempo: sullo scontro - che nella nostra epoca ha assunto nuovi, violentissimi sviluppi - tra scienza e religione per il controllo della vita umana. Una guerra il cui campo di battaglia è l'assoluto. Allo stesso tempo "Zero K" è un delicato concerto da camera, intimo e riflessivo, sui sentimenti di un figlio di fronte all'estrema decisione di un padre.

## **Zero K Details**

Date : Published October 11th 2016 by Einaudi (first published March 3rd 2016)

ISBN : 9788806232528

Author : Don DeLillo , Federica Aceto (Translator)

Format : Hardcover 248 pages

Genre : Fiction, Science Fiction, Novels, Literary Fiction, Abandoned, Fantasy

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## From Reader Review Zero K for online ebook

### Marie says

"Everyone wants to own the end of the world." Thus, opens this newest novel by Don DeLillo and these are the words of the protagonist's father, Ross Lockhart, who becomes obsessed with cryogenics when his wife becomes ill. The novel begins with the narrator traveling to the Convergence, located somewhere in Russia, so that his step-mother can be frozen, so that she might return many years later. At Convergence, there is no sense of time or even identity. People there are cut off from the rest of the world. Jeffrey Lockhart's room where he stays is referred to as his "introversion box." It forces one to wonder what creates a human identity. Is it something deep within oneself or is it one's associations with other people and the world. Formless meals are eaten in isolation. Mannequins are a continuing theme and ubiquitous decoration at Convergence. The films showings scenes of horror and death, pointing to an inevitable apocalypse are the only other break from the quiet and solitude at Convergence.

The cryogenic process itself is brutal. The bodies are decapitated, organs removed, and they are kept in pods. The body expected to return would be void of memories, identity, even perhaps, gender. They seemingly become mannequins.

When Jeffrey leaves Convergence and returns to NYC, there is dramatic contrast of noise, people, lights, and action. Jeffrey, in his early 30s, is struggling with his identity. He is jobless, seemingly insecure in his romantic relationship, and he is rejecting living in association with his father. He is constantly wanting the name things. He is constantly counting. These attributes make him seem like he is watching and evaluating the world around him, but not fully living within it.

This is my first Don DeLillo book in over 20 years, since reading Libra which I loved. Don DeLillo is obviously a brilliant mind, but the darkness and foreboding of this novel was a bit much for me to truly love this novel. It is a novel that depresses the reader, especially as you get only feelings of emptiness or numbness from the characters portrayed. However, it is brilliantly written and leaves much to discuss.

For discussion questions, please visit <http://www.book-chatter.com/?p=375>.

Thanks to netgalley and Scribner publishing for an ARC of this book in exchange for an honest review.

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### Ellie says

A book about words, about names and the act of naming. A book about death that is also very much about its opposite, life. A narrator, obsessed with naming everyone who crosses his path. His discovery that his father, who walked out one night while the son was doing his math homework (leaving him with the words sine cosine tangent as a mantra and with an interest in numbers that is second only to his obsession with names) changed his name.

In Don DeLillo's new novel, Zero K, Ross Lockhart (and the assumed name has, I assume, special meaning in view of his obsession with money-again, numbers-and the abandonment of his first family) is a powerful and wealthy man whose second wife, Artis, is dying. The book begins with father and son and wife travelling to some desert land in which is housed a cryogenic facility. Artis will be frozen until her condition can be

cured. Eternal life is being created for all-well, all who can afford it.

The facility is a strange, impersonal zone with screens that show various images, including those of burning men, those monks who protested by setting themselves on fire. It is a book obsessed with words, about a man obsessed with names, and it is punctuated with images, images that the narrator searches for meaning. Back at home, in New York City, he is struck by the image of a woman who he believes, or creates a story of, who represents some movement for peace or protest.

It is a strangely bloodless novel, despite its preoccupation with bodies. As the narrator and his girlfriend and his son (who has been speaking Pashti with their cabdriver) visit a rock in a museum, the narrator remarks that he feels as though all the color has been sucked from their body as they ascend the steps and they are now black and white people, almost cartoon drawn, in a colorless world. Looking at a rock that reminds the narrator of a quote by Heidegger, “It is but it does not exist.”

On the other hand, it is a novel filled with images of terror and bloodshed, references to bombings, terrorism, and mass panic of various kinds. In the face of such intense feelings, the characters are numb.

“You are about to be postmarked Zero K.” Zero K is the temperature the people are frozen at (although apparently this is metaphorical: the temperature never actually reaches that level). The narrator seems frozen, attempting to become alive and warm through names and careful observation of a life he can barely participate in. In his rejection of his father’s wealth, he is as obsessed as his father with money (the not-having) and numbers.

The mania for naming seems to be a defense against the overwhelming presence of anonymous crowds and random, impersonal terror.

This is a work that begs (as is usually the case with DeLillo) to be explained and interpreted. The constant references, for example, to naming and language push the reader to recognize that something more than simple narration or characterization is present.

I found the references tantalizing and evocative, as I find all of DeLillo’s writing. He demands to be read with the intellect, But even when I don’t understand his themes, I am drawn into their web.

Zero K is a fascinating read. It’s a book about death that yields ultimately to a book about life. A book about words that is also about something that goes beyond words. A sad yet beautiful book. I loved it.

I am grateful to NetGalley and Scribner Publishing for providing me with an advance copy of this book in exchange for an honest review. And of course to Don DeLillo for creating this work of art.

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### **Seemita says**

*[Originally appeared here (with edits): <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/li...>]*

The battle to outlive life and peek into the world beyond it has been an area of great fascination. From ages, this unknown, unattainable stage has drawn the attention of thinkers and the results have spanned the entire continuum of credibility and flimsiness.

**Zero K** fits somewhere on this scale.

The novel follows Jeffrey Lockhart, who is invited by his wealthy father, Ross Lockhart, to witness the final days of his ailing wife, Artis, at an isolated compound, in a remotest corner of Russia. But the compound isn't any ordinary brick and mortar structure; it is a highly advanced, scientifically augmented laboratory where living men and women surrender their bodies to be preserved in cryogenic pods and whereupon, a series of radical and cutting-edge innovative methods are applied to them with an objective to bring them to life in much more robust, transcendent and resilient human forms. The amount of time this transformation might take? No one quite tells me that. Jeffrey, after seeing Artis slip into the other world, returns to his daily humdrum at New York and continues living a normal life, albeit with occasional flashes from his Russian detour, until one day, it is Ross' turn to embrace the pod and he is summoned again. The amount of time that has lapsed between the two trips? Two years.

As a premise, this book held promise. The composition of the controlled environment within which passionate, eclectic ideas collided and thrived was deftly done. While I ain't sure how DeLillo goes about his novels since this was my first of his', I found traces of diligent ground work here that added to a certain veracity of such an experiment. I also found a veritable sincerity in the painstakingly long and patient narrative barrels deployed by him to connect to those, uninitiated in the scientific realms. But as most of these explanations happened as long conversations or pep talks to the lab inhabitants, it quickly turned tedious and tryingly commonplace. This excess ended up robbing off the empathy that I might have showered on Artis, Ross or Jeffrey for their sacrifices, separation and longing to reunite, which runs as a key theme underneath the more visible props.

I found it interesting to view the work as an approach to securing love. Ross' firm assertion of investing in the biomedical experiment as a means to extend his time with Artis (beyond her mortal body) is in stark contrast to Jeffrey's detached yet sincere stand towards Emma. While Ross believes in the permanence of a physical form (and a feral reluctance to renounce it) as essentials to the perpetuation of a love story, Jeffrey, as easily, embraces emotional intimacy as the chief criterion to achieve the same objective. Who is to say whose love holds the most resplendent flames?

This book, in subtle undertones, asked questions on life, love and death and the extent to which we are willing to travel to find their answers. But perhaps, the binding rigmarole of present day impaled the lofty enterprise of future halo.

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### **Violet wells says**

I've read all DeLillo's novels except his first, *Americana*. I've read *Underworld* three times and would make the claim that it's the best novel written by a currently living novelist. When he's inspired his prose is as searing, insightful and exciting as it gets. Unfortunately he's probably had his golden age – *White Noise*, *Libra*, *Mao II* and *Underworld* are his four masterpieces, written between 1985 and 1997, and pretty much unrivalled by any other living writer as a brilliant sustained feat of exalted artistry. Quite simply DeLillo has helped me understand the nature of the world we live in. Since *Underworld* in 1997 he's, understandably, begun to wane. Most noticeably his prose has suffered a diminishment of its old searing clarity, its inspiration and vitality.

So, *Zero K*. In terms of theme and profundity this is probably his best book since *Underworld*; however the inspired prose still isn't quite there. (He's nearly eighty years old though and as such this is a phenomenal

achievement.)

On page one there's an example of how good he can be at enabling us to see the depth charges of an everyday modern gesture when he describes the wearing of sunglasses in a room as "bringing the night inside". I'm not even sure why that observation excites me so much. But it does. It reveals to me that not only has the world changed but gives me an insight into how it's changed. No one, for example, would wear sunglasses indoors in a DH Lawrence novel! Or there's this about airports (I hate flying!) – "Those blanked-out eternities at the airport. Getting there, waiting there, standing shoeless in long lines. Think about it. We take off our shoes and remove our metal objects and then enter a stall and raise our arms and get body-scanned and sprayed with radiation and reduced to nakedness on a screen somewhere and then how totally helpless we are all over again as we wait on the tarmac, belted in, our plane eighteenth in line, and it's all ordinary, it's routine, we make ourselves forget it." Unfortunately these eloquent insights into our changing world aren't anywhere near as frequent as in his best novels. Instead it's the novel as a whole that seeks to achieve this end. DeLillo always pivots his novels on the outer edge of where the world is headed which is why he is almost unanimously deemed our most prophetic novelist. And Zero K certainly maintains this prophetic stance.

To some extent he returns to one of the themes of White Noise – a husband and wife who can't bear the thought of surviving each other's death. He also returns to the central character of Cosmopolis - the global financier. The mission in Zero K is to survive death, the ultimate act of hubris. Because a central theme of this novel is man's ever growing hubris and the irreversible damage this is causing our cultural, financial and physical environment. This hubris is personified by Ross Lockhart, an example of a new cultural phenomenon, an individual who is richer and arguably more powerful than most entire countries, a master of the universe billionaire who owns islands and huge land masses. The novel is about Convergence, the project funded by Lockhart, intent on preserving life through cryonic freezing. Bodies are stored in pods in the hope that advancing technology will soon allow organs to be refreshed with embryonic stem cells and "nanobots." Brain receptors will be re-fed the memories acquired over a lifetime.

Lockhart's son, Jeffrey plays a similar role in relation to his father as Nick Caraway plays in relation to Gatsby – he, ironically, is the past viewing and questioning his father's idealistic romantic vision of the future. He, like Nick not morally flawless himself, is providing a more grounded, humble moral perspective of what actually is going on here. In some ways this is a 21st century version of Gatsby, a new technological dramatisation of the American dream.

For me, Zero K doesn't quite reach the heights of DeLillo's finest achievements but is still an important work by, in my opinion, the greatest living American novelist.

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### Ron Charles says

Don DeLillo is thinking about death.

Admittedly, that's not breaking news. DeLillo has been thinking about death — his, ours, America's — over the whole span of his extraordinary career. But now, at 79, the author of such modern classics as "White

"Noise" and "Underworld" has produced his most funereal novel.

"Zero K," a slim, grim nightmare in print, opens with a trip halfway around the world. The narrator, a young man named Jeffrey Lockhart, has been summoned to the Convergence, a compound in the desert near the capital of Kyrgyzstan. There he's greeted by his powerful father, "a man shaped by money," who has poured his billions into creating a secret facility that's part laboratory, part mausoleum — "science awash in irrepressible fantasy." Designed to keep human bodies frozen in cryonic suspension for millennia, the Convergence is the most ambitious life-after-death scheme since the pharaohs built the pyramids.

Jeffrey has arrived just in time to speak with his sick. . . .

*To read the rest of this review, go to The Washington Post:*

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/entert...>

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### **Elyse says**

I'm a Don DeLillo newbie!

The very first line of the book grabs your attention.

"Everyone wants to own the end of the world"....

I wonder .. am I the only one who took a break -( after just one sentence)-  
to locate the group "Tears For Fears" ...on their iPhone?....To sing along to "Everybody  
Wants to Rule the World"? -- sing & dance a little? I'm sure the talented Don DeLillo wouldn't have cared if  
an old favorite song got me in the mood for his book. :)

Jeffrey went through great lengths of travel - thousands of miles - before arriving at a cryogenic compound to be join his father, Ross Lockhart, and his stepmother, Artis, who is dying. His father arranged the travel plans. Jeffrey blindly took the adventure - but really didn't know what he'd be walking into.

Since Jeffrey is the narrator, we are invited into his mind, moods, opinions, questions he has about his father-mother - step mother- his personal interpretations- his descriptions- and questions about death. His dad walked out when he was 13....and he has no idea why he left his mother.

Even when Jeffrey is angry - we see his sweetness - I imagined Jeffrey with a  
forgiveness-card in his back pocket - always on hand when needed.

Jeffrey asked Artis if she thought about the type of world she might be returning to.

She didn't. Memories were part of her thoughts, (water drops in the shower),

Artis was aware that she was in a transitional place - with people coming and going. I never got the feeling that anyone was interested in any afterlife

Value our present life is what stood out as the powerful message.

Funny scenes with mannequins! Quite visual!

Since I'm no longer a DeLillo virgin.. I'm looking forward to reading "White Noise" next, which I've already purchased!

Thank You Scribner Publishing, Netgalley, and Don DeLillo

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## Jan Rice says

Last week for my birthday I went to hear the variously reconstituted 1960s-era Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, not because I was particularly attached to them or any of their songs but more on an impulse, and while listening I found I was coming to some conclusion about how to review Don DeLillo's *Zero K*, which I had just finished.

I don't relate easily to Don DeLillo's books, and this one was no exception. The main character, Jeffrey Lockhart, comes across bloodless and lost in anomie. Other adjectives that come to mind are cold, vacillating, weak, uncommitted, hopeless, helpless--adrift on a sea not of his own making. So I guess it's no wonder I have trouble relating to him. There is a sense of foreboding, angst, paralysis.

At the rock show I didn't feel a communion with other aging hippies or the music, but I did remember something. In recent years I've been writing about the discovery that the vaunted American myth of equality and belonging is a sham--somewhat in the sense of Ta-Nehisi Coates (although without his blessing since I'm not a member of his in-group). What I remembered was "the '60s" and that during the '60s I did feel I belonged: that I was in the right place at the right time. It was home.

The '60s were a time of danger and risk as well as opportunity, but I think if Jeffrey Lockhart, the *Zero K* protagonist, had come up in the '60s, he wouldn't have been quite so rootless. Nor would Ta-Nehisi Coates have been quite so enraged and indignant.

What I'm doing with *Zero K*, then, is eisegesis, reading into it, more than exegesis, reading out of it.

Several years before, I'd been interested in the subject of resurrection. I can't remember exactly why or what my interest was. But more recently (spring of 2016) I read this review/essay (which thankfully is not locked), and that's what made me want to take another stab at DeLillo.

But the current twist is that I finished it just after reading *A Canticle for Leibowitz* so from that angle I'm seeing as sanctuary this suspended animation in an isolated and subterranean institution (the Convergence) that's being dangled before potential takers. Potential sanctuary, that is, and for potential takers with deep pockets.

The prospective customer is repetitively bombarded with scenes of disaster and violence. In our world such scenes are always there for the filming, of course, but there seems to be something more at work here, something creepy, for the projected scenarios start linking up to our viewer Jeffrey's life in ways beyond the purely coincidental. I did not find myself feeling good about the deep-freeze proprietors and their kind of persuasion. That is, I suspected they didn't have their customers' best interests at heart.

Will Jeffrey take the bait? I was anxious for him but simultaneously aware his life was an anemic argument for why not; his life was no defense against the pressure on him even as the book ended.

The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band played Symphony Hall, which is more conducive to the comfort of aging youth

revolutionaries than an outdoor venue. When the show was over we wended our way down the steps and through the various parking levels where, lo and behold, mural-sized photos adorned the stairwell walls at each level. But unlike the wall screens in DeLillo's fictional underworld, these were sans disaster. Instead they portrayed the geometric rows of an orchestra or a spread of outdoor cafe tables.

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### **Tom LA says**

Pretentiousness has always been the sense that I got from reading snippets of DeLillo's novels. I had the impression that his success was propelled by the same (wrong) reasons why american academia looks down at John Grisham and Stephen King, both seen as too "pop" to be welcomed in the golden temple of literary art, and often dismissed as tripe, while in reality they both very often offer much more interesting plot and development when compared to contemporary literary authors like DeLillo.

However, the marvelous cover sang at me like a mermaid from the bookstore shelf, and I bought it. I tried to be open-minded and it kind of paid off, because I did enjoy the book - although only in small parts.

In this novel, in a not-too-distant future that could very well be our present, a guy travels to a cryogenics facility in Central Asia to meet his billionaire father who is preparing his terminally ill wife, the guy's stepmother, for her futuristic cryogenic transformation. A myriad of thoughts about death and existence ensue. That's about it, as far as a plot goes.

Oddly enough, what I took away from this novel is not the novel itself, but rather some beautiful sentences and paragraphs.

Those seem to be the real focus of DeLillo, rather than the novel as a whole.

Examples :

"The thinness of contemporary life. I can poke my finger through it".

"I wanted to hear what he had described, the oceanic sound of people living and thinking and talking, billions, everywhere, waiting for trains, marching to war, licking food off their fingers. Or simply being who they are. The world hum"

"I could call her Zina. Or Zara. The way the capital letter Z dominates a word or name"

In fact, don't make mistakes, the novel as a whole is pretty bad. Every time a contemporary "literary" author steps into the science-fiction arena, he seems to be totally unaware of the thousands of stories that have already been written about the same exact concept, and often taken to a more satisfying development.

Not to be petty, but here are 21 examples of much more interesting stories about the same concept explored by Zero K:

<http://best-sci-fi-books.com/21-best-...>

Another perfect example of this clash of sub-cultures is Cormac McCarthy's "The road", another non-interesting re-writing of one million previous science fiction stories about the same concept, only with the "literary" attention to each word, sentence, paragraph, blah blah blah "look how fantastic I am with words!"

yeah yeah we're looking, we're looking and we're yawning while we're looking.

However, as I mentioned, I think there is something to like and to enjoy about DeLillo's work, and about this book.

The real stars here are the small segments, the brief literary inventions, the author's obsession with words, mirrored by the main character's obsession, the sentences that make you stop for a second and ponder.

In fact, this is the first book that I listened to as an audio-book (great job, Thomas Sadoski. I liked your work in Newsroom as well) without being able to shift to a 1.50 or 1.25 reading speed. Either you take your time in reading this stuff, or you can just as well throw the book away.

So, there is this slow attention to the single sentence. And the novel seems to be nothing but the vehicle to deliver these little creations. As if - here's a cake. It's a mediocre cake, but the cherries on it are some of the very best cherries you can get!

The narration is often completely erratic, as if you were listening to one of those drunks who stop their train of thought abruptly to shout out something else entirely, and then maybe reattach the thread later on.

How does DeLillo do this? He said in an interview: "It happens in ways that are very hard to describe because they're not so easy to understand. I'm not sure how a sentence or a paragraph extends itself. I can't say it's automatic, but it all seems to happen in a kind of intuitive way. And I've become much more conscious of letters forming on a page, letters and words. And correspondences, not only the way they sound but visual correspondences between letters in a word, or from word to word. It's a little mysterious. It's as though a single printed page has not only a responsibility to meaning, but also to one's visual sense".

If you accept the rules of this quirky game, you might as well enjoy his style.

To the question: "Do you identify with these individuals? (the characters)", he answered: "I really don't. I can't talk about characters outside the frame of the fiction. I identify with the words on the page. I identify with the paragraphs."

And right here I should insert a "Munch's scream" emoji, because this makes me scream. But yeah, as weird and presumptuous as it sounds, that's exactly how he writes.

According to the literary critic Frank Lentricchia, DeLillo's novels are "cultural anatomies of what make us unhappy", while Joyce Carol Oates has hailed him as "a man of frightening perception". And yet what fans regard as eerie and insightful, many others have dismissed as chilly and contrived. I find all these comments to be true, both the positive and the negative.

In summary, Zero K is both sharp and opaque. Great sharp inventions and intuitions in moments, sentences, paragraphs. Opaque whenever it goes off on meaningless tangents that seem to exist purely as page fillers - a lot of them.

The final pages are absolutely spectacular. Maybe a philosophical statement from the author himself, who through the main character might be trying to say that he does not feel the need to follow a religion, as long as he can enjoy the spiritual experience of a boy's sense of wonder (I said "might be"! Who knows what Delillo is talking about at any time, if HE doesn't even know?)

If you don't mind trying a different and weird flavour every now and then, like marmite, dragon fruit or cajun squirrel, this author might be for you.

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## **Hadrian says**

*Everybody wants to own the end of the world.*

Don DeLillo is not an author you read for the plots, although there is a degree of suspense. You read him for the individual senses, for the gnarled meanings which only come from untangling his dense knotted paragraphs.

This book is a variation on a theme DeLillo has done before. If they seem familiar it is because they are more pervasive in American living, long after DeLillo first called attention to them some forty years previously. The setting is a subterranean facility somewhere in a post-Soviet dictatorship, a billionaire wants to freeze his dying wife (multiple sclerosis) after she dies. His son is there as an emotionally mute observer. The story moves between tragedy and farce - the world is collapsing outside, the rich man wants desperately to cling to the denial of death and taking control of destiny, and the facility is packed with hangers-on and prophets giving warped versions of TED talks.

This isn't just an excuse for a fancy prose style and meditation - DeLillo's tight narrative about the family drama takes up half the book, and when you hear the rich man say (view spoiler), you feel impacted. DeLillo understands the mysteries of the world and life, and his writing style only adds to the unfolding of such intellectual (moral? spiritual?) wandering. This is perhaps the best I've read of him since *White Noise*. It is a novel for today's unique - yet familiar -anxieties.

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## **Helene Jeppesen says**

I'm 1/3 into this book and I'm DNF'ing it. To be honest, I feel like this book is one long pretentious ramble on death and religion, and it's written in a fragmented language which I've never been a fan of. It's more of a meditation on life than it's an actual story, and I'm just not a fan...

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## **Marcello S says**

C'è sempre un qualcosa di antropologico in Delillo, una specie di nostalgia: Déi, totem, credenze. Le sue riflessioni su tecnologia, identità, senso della vita sono ormai un marchio di fabbrica. Qui si aggiunge l'idea rivoluzionaria del controllo sulla vita.

Per quanto mi riguarda è impossibile leggere il primo capitolo e non rimanere lì incollati. Il primo paragrafo ha una purezza formale invidiabile, oltre a contenere un mondo.

La parte migliore del libro è la distaccata umanità di Jeff, la voce narrante. Il finale del quinto capitolo apre la strada ai suoi ricordi e, in particolare, alla figura della madre, Madeline. *"Le case degli altri mi facevano paura. A volte, dopo la scuola, un amico mi convinceva ad andare a fare i compiti da lui. Rimanevo sconvolto nel vedere come vivevano le persone, gli altri, quelli che non erano me."*

Nella seconda parte compare Emma, la sua ragazza, con il figlio adottivo Stak. E giù altre pagine micidiali. Jeff e i suoi colloqui di lavoro. New York. Il potere (fallimentare) del denaro e la paura del caos.

*“Anche dopo aver spento i fornelli non faccio che controllare la cucina. Prima di tornare alle mie occupazioni, la sera mi assicuro che la porta sia chiusa a chiave, ma poi torno sempre in punta di piedi davanti alla porta, ispeziono la serratura, giro il pomello di qua e di là per verificare, confermare, saggiare la verità, prima di mettermi a letto. Quando è cominciato tutto questo?”*

Ha una quantità di chicche assurda. Il tema delle diverse lingue parlate nel libro (uzbeko, pashtu, russo, cinese) è una di queste.

*“Volevo leggere Gombrowicz in polacco. Non conoscevo una sola parola di polacco. Conoscevo solo il nome dello scrittore e continuavo a ripetermelo sia mentalmente che a voce. Witold Gombrowicz. Volevo leggerlo in originale. Questa espressione mi affascinava. Leggerlo in originale.”*

Non credo di avere capito tutto. Probabilmente dovrei rileggerlo.

Tra i corridoi labirintici e le stanze inaccessibili di Convergence si srotolano anche manciate di pagine un po' noiose. Guerre e catastrofi naturali in loop.

Il lato poi più strettamente fantascientifico è quello che mi ha interessato di meno. E probabilmente, a dirla tutta, non è all'altezza per originalità ed elaborazione dei temi.

Ma DeLillo rimane uno dei migliori e probabilmente sono d'accordo con chi definisce Zero K il suo miglior lavoro da Underworld.

Cupo, freddo, futuristico, certo. Ma anche umano e struggente.

Ricco di dettagli, di frasi evocative.

Decisamente appagante. [78/100]

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## **Bandit says**

This isn't the first time I'm trying DeLillo, but I don't know if I'd go back to him after this. Yes, empirically I understand, this is the sort of book that wins awards, it's dealing with heavy subjects (mortality, meaning of life, etc.), it's written in that specific language of structured beauty, it is the very edifice of eligibility for the famous lists and shelves, but...it is absolutely unenjoyable to read, profoundly unengaging, thoroughly unentertaining. The concept is interesting initially, but it gets buried under the ineffectual, somewhat repetitive in composition and sentiment ramblings, the characters utterly fail to compel or rouse basic interest. The book deals with alienation, but it didn't have to be alienating. Well written stylistically, but soulless, with about as much warmth and life to it as its subject of preservation. And, to stretch the pun, polarizing most likely, since I can absolutely envision readers to be as enamored by it as I wasn't. The best thing about it was its brevity, only a few hours and one turn of phrase, which I really liked and seem to have promptly forgotten. Thanks Netgalley.

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## **Kevin Kelsey says**

*“What was it beyond a concentrated lesson in bewilderment?”*

This is my third DeLillo novel. I really enjoyed White Noise but thought the ending was a little fumbled, and

I think *Cosmopolis* is a masterpiece of sorts; a nearly perfect novel. I also have a rule for myself that I'm not allowed to have an opinion on a book if I haven't finished it. I had a real internal struggle maintaining that rule with *Zero K.*

Nearly every page – all the way up until around the 95% mark – I wanted to just cut my losses and bail, the book is just so heavy handed. There's no subtlety at play here. Now that I *have* finished it, I can say that I gave it that shot, and it's just not good. **This novel would never have been published if it were written pseudonymously, that's basically all you need to know.**

The handful of good parts are fantastic, but they are literally only a handful:

*"This was New York. Every living breathing genotype entered his cab at some point, day or night. And if this was an inflated notion, that was New York as well."*

*"We are born without choosing to be. Should we have to die in the same manner?"*

*"Half the world is redoing its kitchens, the other half is starving."*

*"No, no. I'm not ready for that. You're getting ahead of me. I'm doing my best to recognize the fact that you're my father. I'm not ready to be your son."*

*"It's only human to want to know more, and then more, and then more, but it's also true that what we don't know is what makes us human. And there's no end to not knowing."*

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## Ilse says

There is one who remembers the way to your door:

Life you may evade, but Death you shall not.

You shall not deny the Stranger.

—T. S. Eliot, Choruses From The Rock

In death we are all equal. Having to face that mortality and illness of their beloved ones is even beyond their control, as upon death all differences amongst people are erased, some of the high and mighty could consider this an inconvenient truth.

The Convergence, a cult-like movement based in a mysterious, sinister compound close to the border of Kyrgyzstan, half- sunken in the ground ‘a form of earth art, land art’, envisages to solve this outrage for the very well-to-do. Ending the *Danse Macabre*, defying the universality of death, preventing death taking all of us alike, by cryonic suspension.

Ross Lockheart, filthy rich, a ‘man made of money’ earned by analyzing the economic impact of natural disasters, acts as a Maecenas to this futuristic project. He invites his son Jeffrey to the compound to take leave from Artis, Ross’s second wife and Jeffrey’s stepmother, dying, delivering her body to be prepared for preservation, believing that in the future scientific progress of nanotechnology will resuscitate and restore her to full health, and finally resurrect her in a more sophisticated mind and body, for living in an evolved world of light and peace.

Jeffrey realizes that his father, not wanting to outlive Artis, searching to elope the loss and devastating grief, is determined to join Artis in death by prematurely stepping into the 'transformation process' still in good health, in the premise called 'Zero K' (a special unit for those willing to die before time, named after the absolute zero on the Kelvin scale), in order to live forever. Is his father blinded by science? Or is he deluded by arrogance and self-deception? Why does he get in touch with his son now, while he abandoned his first wife Madeline and son Jeffrey at 13? Skeptical to the whole endeavor, wryly describing his observations, the horror, the storage of bodies and removed organs in capsules and canopies, Jeffrey wanders through the lugubrious labyrinth of the compound, a spokesman for DeLillo's astute meditations on control of life and death ('Isn't death a blessing? What will poets write about?').

Although there is some humor in the absurdist *sérieux* of the people populating the compound, this dystopian and morbid tale is dark and unsettling. Written in a cinematic style, there is an apocalyptic feel to the novel, enhanced by the soundless display of film footage of gruesome natural disasters, war, violence, self-immolating monks and destruction on screens dropping down in the corridors of the compound, illustrating that the present world isn't worth living in anymore and the end is near anyway.

Assuming DeLillo would intensely focus on the troubled father-son relationship too, I largely missed evolution in or profound dissection of it. Apart from some scarce shared moments of vulnerability and intimacy in the relationships between stepmother, father and son, and emotions stirring observing the process of dehumanization, shaving and preparing the bodies before freezing them - the characters do not really come alive. Lust for life is strangely and chillingly absent.

However the story didn't particularly move me, DeLillo raises perturbing philosophical and ethical questions, leaving it up to the reader to answer them. A few times the renowned ending quote of *Brave New World* came to mind, 'I am claiming the right to be unhappy', which Jeffrey perhaps would flesh out as the right NOT to live forever. This slim novel was my first meeting with DeLillo, procrastinating *Underworld* forever, but as **Zero K** is considered to deal with most of DeLillo's trademark themes, it was a thought-provoking acquaintance, keeping me fascinated until the last sentence, nonetheless its horsing around with nanobots and the like.

Counterbalancing the grimness, DeLillo returns to Jeffrey's ordinary life in New York. There, a child revels in Manhattanhenge, enclosing gracefully a spark of luminosity and hope into this dark tale.

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I would like to thank NetGalley and Scribner for generously providing me with an advanced copy.

### **Nathan "N.R." Gaddis says**

No word out of place.

I'm a DeLillo Newbie, so don't take my word for it. This is only my seventh; and I've read little to no secondary, etc ; and nothing pre=White Noise. For the real word, you'll want to ask the DeLillo Fanatic, most competent to separate the Better from the Best, who's spent more than a European Vacation with him. The DeLillo Fanatic *knows*.

Also (ie, today's discussion=thesis), you'll note just from the blurbs that this, like last year's Ignored Book of

the Year, Book of Numbers, is science fiction. Also like Plus and The Gold Bug Variations. That is, fiction that's about science, about technology.

Obligatory criticism : The Heidegger was gratuitous. Or an opportunity was missed. Rather than being/existence he should've picked up something from The Question of Technology. Since it's right to the heart of the matter of the novel (so maybe he's playing it quietly) ; which the Schwartze Hefte are not at all even remotely part of anything.

And so but, it came to me at an opportune time. Very pleased.

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### **Lyn says**

Weird book.

Don DeLillo has long been on my radar. His 1997 novel Underworld is on several lists as being one of the greatest books ever. But it is 800 some odd pages. Many readers will say, 800, so what, I've read plenty of books that big. Well, yes, I have too, but let's do some math. I'm 47 this year. Let's suppose I live another 30 years and that's a big IF, and I can read 100 books each year for the rest of my life. That's another 3,000 books. That's a lot of books. But it is a drop in the bucket of all the books out there, and no matter how hard I try, there are a vast multitude of books I'll never get to, many I would no doubt like a lot.

So.

That Malthusian recognition of the scarcity of time and the overwhelming plethora of good books makes me seriously consider taking on big ass books since they are taking up space on the ever decreasing and certainly and irrevocably finite list of books.

OK, so back to Zero K, and trust me I have not been wandering around aimlessly, DeLillo is asking these kind of questions, but in a broad scale, he's painting on a big canvas. What is life? Is it quantity? Is that what matters most, is more life the goal, are we all in a great race to see who can rack up the most years, months, weeks, days, hours and minutes? Is a long life the best life? Does death, or a good death, mean anything by itself?

What about relationships? Fathers and sons and mothers and lovers and job interviews. What about eternal life?

What if we can undergo a procedure that would allow us to see many, many more sunrises and sunsets, and maybe read a hell of a lot more books if you're in to that sort of thing?

DeLillo describes, in his introspective kooky way, a billionaire whose wife is dying and he takes her to a cult like place in Central Asia to answer just those kind of questions. The protagonist and narrator asks his father, the billionaire, hasn't this question been asked before? To which said rich guy answers, yes but it is a question now ready to be answered.

And so it goes.

The setting and themes reminding me, curiously, of Robert Silverberg's 1976 novel *Shadrach in the Furnace* and a little more cryptically, because of the quasi religious nature of the clinic cult, of his 1971 novel *The Book of Skulls*.

DeLillo's style of writing is thoughtful and meandering and endearing in its way and I was intrigued and enjoyed some of this book. Other parts left me scratching my head and wondering what in the hell he was talking about. Reading DeLillo was like talking to an eccentric college professor at a party; obviously extraordinarily intelligent and interesting, but also three sheets to the wind and running off in wild, seemingly unintelligible tangents.

Not anywhere closer to spending 800 pages with him.

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## Cody says

(Disclaimer: this is likely the least objective review of this book as you'll find. I'm a DeLillo apologist, for which I make no, um, apologies.)

(Disclaimer the Second: there's an awful lot of dopey shit in *Zero K*; sci fi-isms that really aren't up my alley. Per disclaimer the First (see above), I was willing to overlook the cryogenics, the stray robot, etc. Like I said, something about that superfox DeLillo and his bedroom eyes just makes me a happy podperson.)

The problem with knocking it out of the park is that someone has to go get the damn ball if you want to keep playing. Thus, after *Underworld* DeLillo had two options: try and top that achievement, which was the logical summation of his career up to that point (Big Sweeping Epic), or head assfast in the opposite direction. He chose the second option. For me, a lot of it didn't work. I have a lot of fondness for *Point Omega*, but the rest of the work either left me cold or, in one spectacular instance, embarrassed (the shitstorm that is *Cosmopolis*, recommended only to those looking for kindling with which to start a fire).

So with not a small amount of cautious optimism, I looked forward to *Zero K*. I am pleased to report back from the interzone that Don is back, if in noticeably smaller form. All of his hallmarks are present and accounted for: terrorism, fear, paranoia, paranoiac terroristic fear, blahdy blah. But what the book is primarily concerned with, and why I enjoyed it so, is its callback to *The Names* and that minor masterpiece's obsession with language. Here, DeLillo really sets to exhuming words, phrases, etymology, and the power we assign to language—and, in turn, the power that it exerts over us in response—to the point of obsessive giddiness (the giddiness being my own).

There's another parallel current running through the novel: death (not a spoiler as that's what the book is about). I couldn't put it out of my mind reading it that this is the work of a man who will be 80 in November, and *Zero K*'s many forms of death (and its possible abeyance) read like the man, also an author, coming to terms with his own mortality. Call it DeLillo's public form of Working Shit Out; the important thing is that it mostly hits the target. The fact that DeLillo—who could be raking in that sweet AARP cashola and enjoying his 'Twilight Years' (sitting, reading *Twilight*)—is still asking The Big Questions and attempting to figure out what the fuck *this* (I'm swinging my arms around me in dramatic gesture) all means is laudable. It is a credit to his commitment to vision and reserve as a human being. Ignore the star doors and podpeople and dig the fact that, underneath the space-snazzle, DeLillo is still with us and unafraid to look Death in the face

with unflinching honesty and fucking dignity. That's a sight more than I'm ready to do. You?

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## Darwin8u says

*"I'd never felt more human than I did when my mother lay in bed, dying."*

*"This was not the not the frailty of a man who is said to be 'only human,' subject to weakness or vulnerability. This was a wave of sadness and loss that made me understand that I was a man expanded by grief."*

? Don DeLillo, Zero K

I first jumped into DeLillo's unique, hypnotic prose when I read Mao II. His words swelled for me like a sacred mantra. There were other writers before that seduced me, that blew me away with their measured writing, or their erratic narration, but DeLillo was something else. His prose is poetic, weird, haunting, searing. Images grow and then dematerialize. He hints at the future, creates a fabric of tension, and pulls back. Each of his books seems to push towards a vision of our end. He looks at the refuse of civilization, the excesses of capitalism, "the end zone of ancient time". He is a dark worm, pushing through the dirt and the grime and the dark caverns created by our existential rot.

He is obsessed over words, descriptions, names. He is a prose prophet for a technological age. He doesn't always hit it out of the park (dare I call those Pafkos?). Many of his more recent books: Cosmopolis, Point Omega, The Body Artist didn't seem to live up to the expectations created by Mao II, White Noise, Libra, Underworld. His five novels from the Names (1982) to Underworld (1997) seem only equaled by Philip Roth's series of five novels from Operation Shylock: A Confession (1993) to The Human Stain (2000).

The last couple books DeLillo delivered seemed to be experimentations, theories, unfinished paintings that hint at the ground DeLillo loves (technology, paranoia, death, history, humanity, religion). With this novel, DeLillo seems to have perhaps not jumped up to his highest shelf. (See MII, WN, L, U), but close. This is a book that belongs next to Falling Man, End Zone, Americana\*, the Names\*.

I don't want to give too much of the book away, but as I read this unsettling novel, I kept on thinking of modern-day technology pharaohs. My brother and I were having a conversation the other day about how the life of a millionaire and a billionaire isn't that different. There is just so many things you can literally buy. Even when they are buying expensive shirts and pants the styles and cuts for those worth \$100M and those worth \$100B aren't going to be THAT different. Yes, the billionaire might own an Island instead of just a home, but ultimately, the billionaire can't live in more than one home at a time. The millionaire might be able to buy \$4000 pants when you and I can only, rationally, expect to buy pants in the \$40 - \$140 range. However, the Billionaire isn't able to just add a couple zeros to the millionaire's pants. There is no market for \$40,000 pants. So, the average \$B\$ lives about like the average \$M\$, except in a couple small ways.

Death, or the desire to escape death, may be one of those places where only those with significant, GDP-sized capital, can tread. Thus those with wealth that involves 9+zeros become the modern-day pharaohs of

death. They are the only ones with the capacity to fight against the dying of the light with money, medicine, and technology. Money absolutely has become their god, and perhaps in 10, 15, or 20 years their GOD might actually deliver them from death. Instead of pyramids of stone, we might see pyramids of stainless steel and ice. Frozen mummies surrounded by bytes instead of jewelry and gold, these modern-day pharaohs may one-day-soon be waited on by high-priests with PhDs in computers science; the ceremonies and rituals of religion will be replaced with a transhumanist incantations and rites.

But when our modern-day pharaohs side-step death, what does that exactly mean as far as life? That is the territory of DeLillo. Listen to his prose prayers, and prepare yourself for salvation, death, and perhaps even eternal life.

\* I'm going here by reputation not experience since I have yet to read these two.

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### **Angela M says**

This started out feeling really creepy to me and I wasn't enjoying it. Now that I've finished reading it, I'm finding it hard to stop thinking about it. About one third of the way through I thought about setting it aside but I changed my mind (at least a couple of times) and decided that I had to give it a chance. This was by DeLillo after all, and because he has so eloquently spoken to me in past novels and caused me to think about the things that happened in my lifetime - the impact of technology, the assassination of a president, 9/11. I continued because I knew there would probably be something provocative, something profound, and there was . But I had a hard time connecting with the characters until close to the end .

Jeffrey Lockhart, from whose perspective the story is told goes on a long journey at the request of his father Ross , to a place called The Convergence. It's an eerily stark place but yet the halls are lined with various pastel blue painted doors and another with mud colored doors and and naked mannequins in various places. This is where his father's wife, Artis will commit herself to death and seek a cryogenic solution to a time when her health can be restored by future medical discoveries . Theres's a cult like aura to this place and Jeffrey, while curious and trying desperately to understand it all, is repulsed by it all - especially at his father's suggestion that although a healthy man in his sixties, he is considering the same fate for himself to be together with his wife .

Jeffrey roams the halls and screens appear with horrifying visuals of natural disasters, floods , fires , tornadoes and monks setting themselves on fire, acts of terrorism. While it is blatantly obvious that DeLillo wants us to take note of these things happening in the world at large , I was also impacted by what happened in Jeffrey's life. Abandoned at 13 by his billionaire father, obsessed with naming people and things, I felt no emotional connection to Jeffrey . That changed for me when he returns from The Convergence and we see his relationship with a woman , named Emma and her son. It is this relationship that brings the broader happenings in the world down to the personal level.

I was not sure how to rate this book . My first inclination is to give it 3 stars - meaning I liked it , didn't love it because I really didn't enjoy reading a lot of it . In the end , I have to move it up 4 stars after considering what DeLillo portrays here about death and life , and and even though horrifying, I won't forget the minute I connected emotionally to Jeffrey Lockhart.

Thanks to Scribner , NetGalley and Edelweiss.

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### **Scott Firestone says**

This was my first DeLillo book, and it might be my last. He was never really on my radar, but the premise of Zero K sounded intriguing: A young man's incredibly wealthy father and stepmother decide to put their bodies into a sort of stasis until medical technology reaches a point where they can live new lives again. I thought it might be a meditation on fathers and sons coming together to work through their pasts. Instead, it's just a mess.

The story is slow, plodding, and seemingly pointless--and it goes in directions that work against the narrative rather than for it. It sets itself up as asking "important" philosophical questions. But the questions don't seem that important--and neither do the answers. According to the description this book is setting the horrors of the world (terrorism, fires, conflict) against the beauty of life, but I didn't see that. I must have missed the beauty amid the estranged and distant father, the weird compound where this procedure takes place, and the way the book tries desperately to get me to believe the narrator and his step-mother are reconciling, but that's just not convincing.

The writing is good. "[This] is the song-and-dance version of what happens to self-made men. They unmake themselves." That's GOOD. Unfortunately, Zero K is like a beautiful pool of water, but one that's so shallow it can't support any life.

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