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Eros and Postmodern Nihilism: A Psychoanalytical Reading of Don Delillo's *Zero K* 2016

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Dedication

**This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, who encouraged me to strive for
excellence.**

My brother and sister.

My relatives.

All my friends.

Acknowledgement

I allocate allah for all the benefits he has given me.

I would like to thank Miss nouioua wafa for her guidance and feedback that made this work as impeccable as possible, without forgetting her human qualities and patience.

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Furthermore, I would like to express my thanks to all those who participated directly or indirectly in carrying out this work.

Abstract

This dissertation examines the relationship between nihilism and postmodernism through a psychoanalytical reading of Don DeLillo's *Zero k*, and is divided into three chapters.

Beginning with Insights of postmodern literature, Theories about nihilism, dystopian fiction, and the relationship between them. Also, it will provide a psychoanalysis study that aims at bringing together the theories used and the historical context of the novel dealt with. In addition, it will attempt through the use of Freud's theory of drive life EROS that is the life instinct innate in all humans and the desire to create life and favors productivity and construction. Lyotard ,Baudrillard and Vattimo's theories will be mentioned as well.

Moreover, it will explain the idea of the postmodernism theory through discussing a prior study made on the relationship between the nihilism and postmodernism that touches on almost all concepts of life from principles to lifestyles, from art to literature.

Key words : Postmodernism , Nihilism , Psychoanalysis , EROS.

Resumé

Cette dissertation examine la relation entre nihilisme et postmodernisme à travers une lecture psychanalytique du *Zéro k* de Don DeLillo, et se divise en trois chapitres. En commençant par Aperçus de la littérature postmoderne, Théories sur le nihilisme, la fiction dystopique, Et les aspects communs entre eux. Aussi, Il fournira une étude psychanalytique qui vise à rapprocher les théories utilisées et le contexte historique du roman traité. En outre, il tentera à travers l'utilisation de la théorie freudienne de la vie pulsionnelle EROS qui est l'instinct de vie inné chez tous les humains et le désir de créer la vie et favorise la productivité et la construction. Les théories de Baudrillard et Vattimo seront également mentionnées. De plus, il expliquera l'idée de la théorie du postmodernisme en discutant d'une étude préalable faite sur la relation entre le nihilisme et le postmodernisme qui touche à presque tous les concepts de la vie, des principes aux modes de vie, de l'art à la littérature.

Mots clés : Postmodernisme, Nihilisme, Psychanalyse, EROS, Fiction dystopique.

ملخص

تتناول هذه المذكرة العلاقة بين العدمية وما بعد الحداثة من خلال قراءة تحليلية نفسية لـ *Don delillo's Zero k* ، وتنقسم إلى ثلاثة فصول. بداية من رؤى أدب ما بعد الحداثة ، نظريات حول العدمية ، خيال بئس ، والجوانب المشتركة بينهما. كما سيوفر دراسة التحليل النفسي التي تهدف إلى الجمع بين النظريات المستخدمة والسياق التاريخي للرواية التي تم تناولها. بالإضافة إلى ذلك ، ستحاول من خلال استخدام نظرية فرويد لحياة المحرك EROS التي هي غريزة الحياة الفطرية لدى جميع البشر والرغبة في خلق الحياة وتفضل الإنتاجية والبناء. كما سيتم ذكر نظريات بودريلارد وفاتيمو. علاوة على ذلك ، سوف يشرح فكرة نظرية ما بعد الحداثة من خلال مناقشة دراسة سابقة أجريت حول العلاقة بين العدمية وما بعد الحداثة التي تمس جميع مفاهيم الحياة تقريباً من المبادئ إلى أنماط الحياة ومن الفن إلى الأدب.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ما بعد الحداثة ، العدمية ، التحليل النفسي ، إيروس ، الخيال البئس.

List of Abbreviations

AI: Artificial Intelligence .

OCD : Obsession Compulsive Disorder.

SF: Science Fiction.

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General Introduction

General Introduction

Right after the end of World War II, The term postmodernism appeared; It is a philosophical movement that joined our lifestyles while the current world was ruled by industrialization, market-orientated capitalist economies, democracy. Especially in the context of the Cold War and the spread of nuclear weapons, Life became more complicated, less certain. The acceleration of cultural and technological changes that the twentieth century has witnessed seems to have left many people confused, unsure about their place in the world and the meaning of their lives. Hence, the philosophy of postmodernism has adopted the undermining and questioning philosophy of nihilism, the belief that nothing in the world has a real existence, that is relied to intertextuality and disorder .Consequently, this new-found connection between postmodernism and nihilism destabilized the outdated definition of the postmodern.

Similarly to postmodernism, Dystopia has been also explained in lots of researches .Which is an imagined state or society in which there is great suffering or injustice, typically one that is totalitarian or post-apocalyptic¹. Since the phrase is related to the belief of badness . The time period may be very frequently related to fictional works (movies, books, plays) and other works . In which its definition is narrowed however, ironically, it becomes more complicated.The time period dystopia changed into coined most effective within side the nineteenth century, the idea of dystopian society was already tempered with many centuries ago. the reality that dystopian literature changed into fashioned step by step in place of all at once desires to be taken into consideration. It changed into already being slowly grown lengthy earlier than Mills' definition out of numerous works – namely, the factors of dystopia might be determined in a few utopian works (main to ambiguous interpretations of them) and now no longer much less regularly in social satires.

¹ According to oxford dictionary Post- Apocalyptic is denoting or relating to the time following a nuclear war or other catastrophic event.

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Literary dystopia has been perceived in lots of special approaches at some stage in the twentieth century. The changing (despite the fact that perpetually tense) political state of affairs within side the international propelled well-known writers in special periods (Orwell, London, Huxley...etc.) to create those heterogeneous targeted works of fiction.

Modern science fiction came of age in the 1950s, and it was in America that the genre broke most exuberantly free from convention. Moving beyond the pulp magazines, science fiction writers stretched their imaginations at novel length, ushering in an era of stylistic experiment and freewheeling speculation that responded in wildly inventive ways to the challenges and perplexities of an era of global threat and rapid technological change.

In Delillo's *Zero K*, demise as a problem descends upon the narrator's billionaire father Ross Lockhart in the wake of his 2nd spouse contracting a terminal disease. He married this lady after leaving behind his son Jeffrey and his mother without a good deal of thought or a glance backward; even as collecting what might be his large fortune with the aid of using growing software that predicts the inventory market. It is informed from the factor of view of Jeffrey and opens with him arriving at a facility this is placed within side the center of nowhere at a big group this is underground to take part in his stepmother's (she is defined as an adorable woman and Jeffrey has extra affection for her than he has for his father) coaching to be preserved at a completely low temperature (the method is to freeze her organs to close to *Zero K* however now no longer quite. It is only a connection with the book title) till generation and superior medication can discover a remedy to her condition, at which factor she may be awakened and restored to health.

This study will investigate two different extreme opinions that are explored in the novel which are , Nihilism and anti-nihilism . While seeking immortality is the main theme, the reader will find nihilism as the -theme. Even when it is not mentioned in a straightforward way, it is implied through the expanse of the story. The fragility of human beings comes from

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their mortality. While some people would rebel against this fate and seek -through technology-an immortal existence, others would accept their inevitable demise and instead of seeking a way to live forever or to live many lives in different dimensions, they question if even one life has a meaning.

This study aims to highlight the relationship between nihilism and postmodernism using Delillo's *Zero K* and Freud's *Eros : The Drive of Life*. Future studies can benefit from it and apply it in other works of literature whether dystopian or utopian. One can go beyond that and apply Freud's *Thanatos* that in some situations has the same propulsive effect as the *Eros* , using this study as a resource.

Nietzsche defined nihilism as the radical repudiation of value, meaning and desirability that can be manifested in many thoughts such as existential, moral, political...etc.

As of late, postmodernism became widely accepted as a nihilistic state of society; however Nietzsche's theory of nihilism and its relation to postmodernism is rarely explored in depth. Gianni Vattimo, an Italian contemporary philosopher was one of the first to shed light on the relation between the two. Furthermore, in her 2002 *Nihilism and the Postmodern in Vattimo's Nietzsche*, Woodward further explores the connection between nihilism and postmodernism while taking in account how the latter transformed the former. In another study done by Slocombe (2003) entitled "Postmodern Nihilism: Theory and Literature", the relation between nihilism and the sublime is investigated. According to the author, postmodernism is a by-product of both even when it is characterized as either one of the two. While the previous studies focused mainly on the relation between nihilism and postmodernism, Douglas Kellner's study (1988) entitled "Postmodernism as Social Theory: Some Challenges and Problems" was more about the manifestation of postmodernism that is born from nihilism in society, especially in field such as literature, architecture and television.

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As for Freud's Eros and Thanatos theory (in this research proposal we are more concerned about the Eros), many studies has been done. Gerber (2019) in his work "Eros and Thanatos: Freud's two fundamental drives" gave an in-depth explanation for the two drives that battle for domination in the human mind. Teresa de Lauretis also gave a simplified explanation of the Freudian theory in her work "Basic Instincts: An Illustrated Guide to Freud's Theory of Drives" (2008) focusing not only on the theory itself but also its influence on the film industry. All these studies are fundamental in understanding the connection between nihilism and postmodernism as well as the theory of The Drive of Life that will be crucial in this study. And so, they will be explored deeply in the research process.

This research paper will employ a set of different approaches and methods , Humanistic approach and mainly psychoanalytical. The humanistic approach is employed essentially to portray the clash between the good nature of the narrator's original identity and the bad nature of his alternate identity, namely, his alter ego. Additionally , The psychoanalytical approach will help to investigate the protagonist's psyche focusing on his obsession of immortality . Furthermore, it helps to study the development of his personal identity both naturally and under the influence of mental of another factors . Moreover, this paper will adopt descriptive, analytical, and exploratory methods in an attempt to describe the topic's addressed variables, explore them within the novel, analyze them, and eventually give explanations to the topic's problematic. With the use of Freud's theory of Eros The Drive of Life, other works in fiction that focus on nihilism. In addition to that, the contextualization of postmodern nihilism as well as exploring the portrayal of technology in the novel through the characters' reactions.

The present work is divided into three chapters; the first chapter will discuss The theoretical framework of postmodern nihilism , By providing the definition of each concept and the relation between them .Moreover, it will provide a study that aims at bringing together the theories used and the historical context of the novel dealt with. In addition, it will attempt

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through the use of Freud's theory of drive life EROS that is the life instinct innate in all humans and the desire to create life and favors productivity and construction. François Lyotard , Jean Baudrillard and Gianni Vattimo's theories will be mentioned as well.

As for the second chapter, a synopsis is given about the novel as well as the effects of technology that DeLillo focuses on in many of his works. The Eros and the obsession with immortality are the other two other themes this work will explore to offer a detailed study of *Zero K* in a psychoanalysis way.

The third chapter explores the characters' developments and the transformative events they were subjected to. Our protagonist Jeffery is the best case study in this situation however he is not the only one. The main themes of the book affected each character differently and thus their reactions varied accordingly. A description is given to almost all of the characters about how they were in the beginning of the book and how irrevocably they were changed by the end of it as well. For a further understanding, the strong points made by the author such as faith, family and life and death, are also explored .

Chapter One:
A Theoretical Framework of Post-Modern Nihilism

Introduction:

Right after the Second World War, a new movement that was called postmodernism emerged that touches on almost all concepts of life from principles to lifestyles, from art to literature. The latter was significantly affected by postmodernism that for some period of time, scarcely any literary work escaped its influence and it was greatly noted in the dystopian fictional works. This led to including other philosophical concepts, such as nihilism in these literary works to accentuate further the effects of postmodernism on the human mind and way of thinking. In this chapter, a detailed study will be carried concerning the concept of postmodernism, its emergence in literature, especially dystopian fiction as well as the involvement of nihilism in all of that.

I. Insights on Postmodern Literature:

Postmodern authors and poets were as affected by this unprecedented lifestyle change and attendant damage as anyone else at the time. However, they knew how to express and channel through words in all forms of literature those feelings of disappointment, fragmentation and loss that everyone was feeling at the time. In doing so, they succeeded in portraying the healthy sense of frustration that people had to pay as a price for modernity. The setting and the atmosphere of the novel in general. postmodern authors in particular, for example, reflect in their prose the condition of the people of the postmodern era in the characters themselves and through the atmosphere prevailing in the setting of the plot. Hence, we find that these characters mostly suffer from an identity crisis. In addition, they are confused and burdened with unanswered questions about the meaning of their lives, the purpose of their existence, and who they really are. Ironically, these mixed ideas and emotions of the postmodern individual are conveyed by postmodern writers using mixed writing styles and techniques. In other words, authors use both text and context to convey meaning to the reader; That is, in addition to the plot, The use of these diverse and confusing writing styles

and techniques is presented as a metaphor for the fragmented state of the postmodern individual, whose psyche is also confused and chaotic.

II. Contextualization of Postmodern Nihilism:

II.1. The Theory of Postmodern:

Postmodernism is a highly contested theory of the contemporary. Moreover, as Fredric Jameson observes, the concept of postmodernism “is not merely contested, it is also internally conflicted and comradictory.” (194). This fact has led some commentators to suggest that the idea of the post modern itself is hopelessly incoherent. However, this "openness" of the concept, this lack of a settled and secure definition, can also be thought of as an advantage for the attempt to theories the "current situation.

The concept of the postmodern is sufficiently broad to encompass many contemporary trends in academic thought as well as society and the arts: it is a concept that captures diverse aspects of culture within the horizon of a general theory of the contemporary situation. More specifically for the purposes, it allows links to be made between various contemporary discussions of the problem of nihilism, and allows these philosophical discussions to be situated within a wider historical and cultural analysis. Lyotard. Baudrillard. and Vattimo all associate their thought with the analysis of the contemporary epoch as postmodern. and their theories of nihilism may be linked with the specificity of the contemporary situation through the general rubric of the postmodern. The idea of the postmodern thus provides a framework in which to conceptualize the recent transformations the discourse of nihilism has undergone, and to link these transformations with broader cultural trends.

II.2. The Philosophy of Nihilism:

Nihilism is a term that is employed in a variety of ways, often ambiguously, both in philosophy and in wider contexts. The root of the term "nihilism" is the Latin nihil, meaning "nothing"; it carries with it the obvious connotations of nothingness and negation, and has been employed in a wide variety of ways to indicate philosophies or ways of thought, belief, or practice that primarily negate or reduce to the point of leaving nothing of value.

Nihilism as a philosophical idea that was given its maximum definitive shape by Friedrich Nietzsche, for whom it is far he stated "the novel repudiation of value, that means and desirability"(7).Nihilistic concept has many associated manifestations: ontological, epistemological, existential, ethical and political. Extreme nihilism is regularly concept of as vulgar relativism in which no standards exist for deciding on one value, information claim, or direction of movement over another. This nihilistic debilitation is normally related to moods of despair, random destructiveness, and yearning for nothingness. In its maximum excessive existential shape, it is far a denial of existence itself due to its obvious meaninglessness. Suicide, for Nietzsche, is the "deed of nihilism" (143).

Nihilism is an existential and mental illness a person can experience, however it is also a symptom of society, and is commonly concept traditionally as an analysis of an illness in a society at a specific time in history. Nihilism is the illness, destruction and rot symptomatic of the decline of the West. Likewise, at the same time as postmodernism can be seen "a historically" as a trendy sort of idea bearing precise features, it is far regularly concept "traditionally", as a theoretical description of and reaction to the existing kingdom of the maximum technologically superior societies, called "post-modernity" The discourse of nihilism started in modernity, and, commonly speaking, in its "classical" formulations it is far an analysis of and reaction to precise illnesses of modernity.

Chapter 01 : A Theoretical Framework of Post-Modern Nihilism

The query of interpretation is pertinent here—Nietzsche is an ambiguous thinker, and his idea of nihilism is open to more than one interpretation and extrapolations. It is viable to examine Nietzsche in a modernist way. Likewise, it is miles more effective due to postmodern interpretations and extrapolations of his thoughts that they will appear fine to manage nihilism in post-modernity. The undertaking of delineating present day and postmodern nihilisms, then, is to a positive quantity the undertaking of delineating present day and postmodern interpretations of Nietzschean nihilism. Such an interpretation is undertaken via way of means of Italian logician Gianni Vattimo, who is one of the few theorists to raise an in-depth account of the relationship among nihilism and the postmodern. Vattimo's Nietzsche consequently stands as a beneficial discern of notion for figuring out the relationship among nihilism and the postmodern. While Vattimo's writings on Nietzsche are pretty clean and in little want of elucidation, what is favored to be finished on this observe is to make a contrast among his interpretation and what will be widely known as "modernist" interpretations of Nietzschean nihilism. This contrast will display the overall capabilities of the postmodern transformation of nihilism, display why postmodernism and post-modernity would possibly legitimately be known as nihilistic, and why this nihilism is probably affirmed, in place of denied, via way of means of postmodernists.

If nihilism is underlying the history of modernism, then constructing a history of nihilism may be a monumental task: it is, in effect, a historiographical exercise incorporating all of Western thought. However, and nihilism is not any completely different during this respect: one side argues that nihilism and therefore the history of modernity are basically entwined; the opposite argues that nihilism is merely a part of the history of modernity, just one thread

among several. The former argument is seen nowhere more clearly than in Martin Heidegger's philosophical project on the history of metaphysics²:

Nihilism is a historical movement, and not just any view or doctrine advocated by someone or other. [...] Nihilism, thought in its essence, is [...] the fundamental movement of the history of the West . It shows such great profundity that its unfolding can have nothing but world catastrophes as its consequence . Nihilism is the world-historical movement of the peoples of the earth who have been drawn into the power realm of the modern age.(62-63).

Heidegger argues that nihilism is implicit in thought itself and, as such, is irrevocably a history of modernity. It is a “ world-historical movement”. “ The fundamental movement of the history of the West” in which every action taken is part of the development of nihilism.

Such arguments illustrate the problem of nihilism, revealing not only that nihilism is a problem in relation to culture, but also that defining the term is difficult. Similar to all signifiers, nihilism has a number of associations that cannot be inferred directly from its etymology³.

II.3 Postmodern Nihilism:

Nihilism in post-modernity is a research of the nature of the matter of meaninglessness within the present time through the philosophical traditions of nihilism and postmodernism..

The Postmodern Condition proceeds from a “working hypothesis ... that the status of

² According to oxford dictionary Metaphysics is the branch of philosophy that deals with the first principles of things, including abstract concepts such as being, knowing, identity, time, and space.

³ According to oxford dictionary etymology is the source of a word, or the study of the source of specific words

Chapter 01 : A Theoretical Framework of Post-Modern Nihilism

knowledge is altered as societies enter what is known as the postindustrial age and cultures enter what is known as the postmodern age'' (3).

Modernity⁴ is typified with the aid of using the placing into exercise of the values of the Enlightenment challenge. Simplifying greatly, this challenge ambitions on the emancipation of humankind through the software of purpose to social exercise. Historically, this has intended the proliferation of technological know-how and generation through industrialization, the management of many elements of social life, and the software of politico-financial initiatives as numerous as Marxist communism and loose marketplace capitalism.

Post-modernity is usually a concept to be characterized with the aid of using the fragmentation of society into more than one, incommensurable types of life. This fragmentation manner that no single "metanarrative"⁵ (to apply Lyotard's widely known term) can provide an explanation for social fact as a whole, such as metanarratives of records that try and make experience of the modifications in society as a part of an over-arching tale approximately that which means of records. Despite the variations among diverse theories of post-modernity, Vattimo believed that "there may be a standard settlement as to which means of the very belief of post-modernity. If this belief has a mean at all, it must be defined in phrases of the quit of records'' (22). According to Vattimo, modernity is characterized with the aid of using the idea of development, an idea that rests upon a unilinear view of records. That is, if we posit a purpose—together with the Enlightenment⁶ purpose of emancipation—in the direction of which mankind can be stated to development, we see all of records on the

⁴ According to oxford dictionary Modernity means a modern way of thinking, working, etc.; contemporariness.

⁵ According to lexico.com, a metanarrative is an overarching account or interpretation of events and circumstances that provides a pattern or structure for people's beliefs and gives meaning to their experiences.

⁶ According to oxford dictionary Enlightenment is a European intellectual movement of the late 17th and 18th centuries emphasizing reason and individualism rather than tradition. It was heavily influenced by 17th-century philosophers such as Descartes, Locke, and Newton, and its prominent figures included Kant, Goethe, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Adam Smith.

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subject of this purpose. We have one best view of records, and this view is built as a line alongside which society actions thru time. In modernity, being "contemporary-day" or "new" is itself a value, as it is miles visible as overcoming and leaving at the back of the antique, transferring similarly alongside the road in the direction of the purpose.

According to Vattimo, modernity could have come to a quit whilst we're now no longer capable of view records as unilinear. This, he believes, has in truth occurred, and constitutes the arrival of post-modernity. For Vattimo, the famous postmodern topic of "the quit of records" manner the quit of unilinear records. So why has records ended? Vattimo recognized three large motives (Vattimo 1992). Firstly, within side the 19th and 20th centuries concept has uncovered unilinear records as ideological. That is a selectively biased view of records that sincerely serves the political functions of a confined organization of human beings on the cost of others.

Philosophers of records and historiographers alike have come to understand that the unilinear view of records which help contemporary-day development best represents the records of European man. There is more than one history which can be informed from more than one perspective, and to say one record as dominant or totalizing is to do unjust violence to the others. For example, the Western view of records because the development of purpose has been used to justify the colonization of nations in which supposedly much less rational (and consequently inferior) peoples have dwelt(7).

The ideology of these records has supported the subjugation, slavery, and genocide of "inferior" races. Secondly, the breakdown of an unilinear records has been because of sensible events. Significantly , those that consist of the quit of European imperialism and colonialism. The subjugated peoples have rebelled and insisted that their tales be informed, making us keenly conscious each that there are opportunity histories and that the ideology of

development is deeply implicated in intense injustices. Thirdly, for Vattimo the means of post-modernity is connected to the truth that we stay in a society of generalized communication, or mass media.

In competition to Adorno and Horkheimer's prediction that mass media might cause a completely homogenized society, Vattimo believes that "the maximum apparent impact of this media explosion has in truth been a fragmentation of our view of fact and a deepening of pluralism in society added approximately with the aid of using the proliferation of a mess of opportunity factors of view.." (18). More and extra subcultures are allowed to "have their say." History has ended now no longer best for the theoretical and sensible motives mentioned above, however due to the fact the mass media has made us privy to the untenability of a unilinear record, on the grounds that that records can best inform one tale in which there are numerous to be informed. Media and data generation have made human beings an increasing number of conscious that there are more than one history, now no longer simply one. In summary, then, for Vattimo, postmodernity is characterized with the aid of using the "quit of records" in societies of mass communication, instituting a technology of fragmentation, multiplicity, and pluralism.

II.4 Postmodern Nihilism From different Philosophical perspectives:

A lot of European philosophers such as Lyotard, Baudrillard and Vattimo contributed significantly to the theory of Nihilism, each by his own insight and his own perspective. For this reason, their philosophical perceptions of this dilemma are of a great importance to the topic and are to be employed in examining the novel.

II.4.1. Jean-François Lyotard:

Nihilism is at the center of Jean-François , although this theme is rarely the subject of commentary. It appears as an explicit concern in his late works on Andre Malraux, and as a theme in his "middle" works surrounding *The Postmodern Condition* and *The Different*.

Lyotard's most sustained treatment of the problem of nihilism occurs, however, in his early "libidinal" philosophy, developed in *Libidinal Economy* and various essays from the same period. Lyotard develops an account of what he calls in one essay "neo-nihilism," a development of Nierzschean themes through the theoretical frameworks of Freudian psychoanalysis, post-Marxian policies, semiotics, and srucruralism. Lyotard's libidinal philosophy is less well known than his later work on the postmodern and the differend and has been less well received. Even Lyorard himself repudiated *Libidinal Economy*, calling it ' my evil book', the book of evilness that everyone writing and thinking is tempted to do ... a piece of shamelessness, immodesty, and provocation. .

Lyotard's key criticism of this work is that it ignores the issue of justice, a central concern in his later thought. While the set of problems concerning justice and the set of problems concerning nihilism may overlap, however. they are separate sets. Despite Lyotard's retrospective condemnation, then, his libidinal philosophy may be approached as a legitimate and powerful treatment of the problems associated with nihilism. Recently, Lyorard scholar James Williams has called for a re-evaluation of *Libidinal Economys* Following William's lead. In this work, Lyotard reformulates the inquiry into the problem of nihilism while beginning to develop new modes of thought that he later terms postmodern, rejecting dominant themes of modern philosophy and experimenting with new theoretical directions.

II.4.2. Jean Baudrillard:

Jean Baudrillard is an original and controversial thinker of which he frequently associated with both post-modernity and nihilism. Like Lyotard, Baudrillard develops an analysis of nihilism in new, post-structuralist terms, in synchrony with a theory of the contemporary situation as postmodern. Baudrillard's relationship to nihilism is a problematic one, since his own position is frequently characterized as nihilistic. Typically, Baudrillard is portrayed as a thinker who has abandoned all effective criteria for critical analysis and judgment, and whose own theory simply reflects the hopelessness and uncertainty that he sees in the current state of society. "If it is nihilistic to be obsessed by the mode of disappearance, and no longer by the mode of production, then I am a nihilist"(160,162) .

Baudrillard has attention-grabbing views on the character of genre nihilism. In *Simulacra and Simulation*, he begins his discussion on the precession of simulacra by describing what he calls the "simulacra of divinity". He points out that "divinity that animates nature will ne'er be represented"(62). The thought of God embodied inside spiritual icons and icon could be an advanced system of human belief, within which the visible is meant to evoke the religious all-being, the divine-referential. Nevertheless once God state and presence can solely be felt through these icons, it becomes probable that the existence of God is questioned, if the simulacra of divinity becomes the sole visible image of God' s presence.

Baudrillard points to the notion that once icons become the substitute for "the pure associated intelligible plan of God". (4), the simulacra becomes almighty within the conscience of human kind. The state of the simulacra creates a school of thought stance on religion, within which the conscience toys with the notion that "deep down God ne'er existed, that only the simulacra existed, even that God himself was never something however his own simulacrum" (4). The weight of the system, the terribly lack of an objective truth or universal

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ground for knowledge, then points to nihilism, that Baudrillard describes intimately with regard to genre theory of nihilism, within the final chapter of *Simulacra and Simulation*. Within the chapter titled "On Nihilism," Baudrillard takes a significant stance in his regards to God's existence, and therefore the existence of any authentic which means in life. Some would possibly afflict him and suppose he is viewing life from an extremely elevated and inhuman stance. It is interesting, but to seem at his argument as he defines the postmodern nihilism in terms of the abundance of simulacra in modern times.

Baudrillard discusses nihilism in terms of "transparency" or "irresolution of the system." By this he implies that God is non-existent, that the simulacra that preceded today's nihilism was a mirrored image of the absence of any true God, at constant time as reflective the ubiquity of the simulacra of God.

This new nihilism, that he describes as existing not through destruction, however through simulation, lacks the aesthetic and political dimensions of the previous types of school of thought, specifically that of Romanticism and Surrealism. It "no longer borrows from either the extermination of appearances, nor from conclusion the embers of meaning, nor from the last nuances of associate apocalypse" (160). Baudrillard stress on political and aesthetic neutrality within the new nihilism emphasizes the absence of God, the absence of which means, and so the immobility or "inertia" (as he terms it) of humankind's want to believe God. The overwhelming presence of simulacra, of regularly showing and disappearing media images, supersaturate the conscience with sensual meaning that by its mere physicality is devoid of any divine spirituality. Baudrillard points to the current "destruction of meaning through simulation, hyper simulation, hypertelie," (161) and is fast to make a decision that he himself could be a new nihilist, who, force into inertia by image-overdose, will solely grasp the absence of the God behind the images. Within the world of regularly factory-made images, it's comprehensible however this nihilism places such large stress on the

disappearance, the impermanent nature of our visual world. Internet culture, that could be a medium of image and virtuality, embraces simulacra, and borders as well, on school of thought views. God might not exist behind the simulacra, and therefore, if you do not feel it, perhaps God is absent, a creation of the human want to feel less isolated from the world. Then comes the self-projected indifference, and maybe loneliness of the nihilist, which if embraced, will be empowering and become independent from any divine entity, the individual will kind his or her own reality, independent of God or the laws of God, a self-created fantasy within which the participant becomes his or her own God, and creator.

Baudrillard states that there are alternatives to his belief in nihilism wherever he takes the stance that divine simulacra makes the absence of a profound reality, and in his final chapter where he states: "There isn't any additional hope for which means. And while not a doubt this is often an honest thing: meaning is mortal" (164), we tend to see where his motivations exist regards to why he chooses this technique of belief. Baudrillard aims for immortality, and therefore, the absence of hope or meaning ("meaning is mortal"), points out however the social scientist himself buys into the illness of the planet, the world of regularly disappearing and fragmented truths. However within the quote above, symbols will still mirror profound realities; it all could be a matter of choice. perhaps this is often simply primitive, but it is still believed that our lives are powerfully connected to those of different human beings, that there is such an issue referred to as spirituality, regardless of how random, or seldom, this sense is translated in our daily existence.

II.4.3. Gianni Vattimo's:

Vattimo is one of the few thinkers to deal explicitly and extensively with the connection between postmodernism and nihilism, and he develops this connection as a central point for understanding the current situation of thought and culture. Like Lyotard and Baudrillard,

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Vattimo develops his analysis of nihilism in new theoretical terms, but through a far more direct engagement with Nietzsche, Heidegger, and the history of the discourse of nihilism. The most unique contribution Vattimo makes to the discourse of nihilism consists in *a positive reevaluation* of nihilism; in his thought, nihilism is no longer posed as a problem that must be solved but as a solution to the problems of modernity, which becomes possible as we enter post-modernity. For this philosopher, the nihilism characteristic of post-modernity must not be thought of as "a hellish negation of all that is human," but as our only chance for social emancipation.

It is the primary rivalry of Vattimo's book *The End of Modernity* that the numerous theories of postmodernism best advantage readability and rigor whilst located on the subject of the philosophies of Nietzsche and Heidegger, specially the nihilistic components in their idea (Vattimo 1988).

Vattimo gives an interpretation of Nietzschean nihilism which each illuminates postmodernism and is illuminated with the aid of using postmodernism, and which elaborates the relationship among nihilism and the postmodern.

What distinguishes Nietzsche's from McDowell's is solely a more explicit awareness of the always social, and thus authoritarian, character of Bildung and of tradition." (43).

We may say, then, that Vattimo gives us with a postmodern Nietzschean nihilism. If we evaluate the "traditional" or "modernist" interpretation of Nietzschean nihilism (mentioned in segment one above) with Vattimo's principle of post-modernity, the critical factors of distinction end up evident. That is, we will see why modernist nihilism does now no longer appear to be relevant to post-modernity.

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Vattimo posits the start of genre in philosopher's work (Vattimo 1988, 164-5), associated his interpretation of Nietzschean nihilism is supposed to use to post-modernity within the finish of Modernity, Vattimo brings out the postmodern components of Nietzsche's thoughts through an analysis of his views on history; these views contribute to a philosophy which is suitable for the postmodern age within which history has ended. In *Human, All-Too-Human* Nietzsche problematizes the construct of "overcoming," the terribly concept which has been such an integral a part of the modernist interpretation of his theory of nihilism. Nietzsche worries with the degeneration of modernity, and how this cultural unwell could be cured. Overcoming modernity, however, cannot be a viable solution modernism itself is outlined in terms of constant overcoming; that is, creation of the new that overcomes the previous.

In "On Truth and consist an unmoral Sense" Nietzsche presents what are taken as truths as metaphors (Nietzsche 1979). We tend to not apprehend things in themselves as they honestly are, however through a series of metaphorisations—from content to sense-data, to mental image, to word, to mediation during a cultural sphere of meaning, and back to relevance the thing. Every transformation will solely be known as a troupe of what it transforms.

There's no connection to an origin or foundation here, just metaphorical transformations. In this way, truths are seen to be errors, or rather the results of processes of erring. Per Vattimo, philosopher exposes reality as a "tissue of erring," displacing the modernist privileging of truth and origin. This displacement permits a focalization of attention aloof from an origin as supply of truth to the proximity of the errors by that we tend to live. For Nietzsche, this move is basically a life-affirming one. He writes:

the nearest reality, that that is around North American nation associated
within us, very little by little starts to show color and sweetness and enigma
and a wealth of that means – things which earlier men ne'er unreal of' (44).

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In distinction to the modernist interpretations, which posit a strictly affirmative state that's achieved once the overcoming of nihilism, Vattimo presents philosopher as stopping, in some sense, with accomplished nihilism, and not positing an overcoming of nihilism on the far side it.

The question of relativism in philosopher's philosophy (and in postmodernism) is extremely complicated and a radical discussion is on the far side the scope of this essay. However, it is wanted to stipulate the response Vattimo's Nietzsche provides to the accusation of the despair of falsity so as to point (at least one reason) why postmodernists need not repent their nihilism, however rather might affirm it. Nietzsche raises and answers the question of nihilism and untruth as follows:

A question seems to weigh down our tongues, and yet not wants to be uttered: whether one *is capable* of consciously remaining in untruth, or , if one *had* to do so , whether death would not be preferable?....

All human life is sunk deep in untruth.....

If this is true, is there only one way of thought left, with despair as a personal end and a philosophy of destruction as a theoretical end? I believe that a man's *temperament* determines the aftereffect of knowledge; although the aftereffect described above is possible in some natures, I could just as well imagine a different one... (7-36).

For Nietzsche, the "overcoming" of nihilism consists in *taking a different attitude* towards the nihilistic interpretation of the world itself. While we may, in a sense be stuck with a complete nihilism, this nihilism is not one of despair and life-negation, but of joyous affirmation. Nietzsche claims that once we have given up the desire to think solely in terms of foundations

and grounded truths, we may see the value that lies in untruth—for *life itself* is a tapestry of errors, a tissue of erring, and a wealth of unfounded interpretations. Vattimo, using Nietzsche's term philosophy of morning' to refer to complete nihilism, writes, 'the content of the philosophy of morning is nothing other than the very estrangement of metaphysics, but seen from a different point of view, that of the man of good temperament, who possesses a firm, mild, and, at bottom, cheerful soul. (171).

The philosophy of morning, for Vattimo's Nietzsche, is the process of thinking through complete nihilism with an *affirmative* attitude. This, for Vattimo, is all that nihilism in postmodernity can be.

The ability to affirm rather than deny life in the face of foundationlessness, untruth and erring, however, depends upon temperament. One requires a strong and cheerful temperament in order to appreciate complete nihilism rather than fall into despair. This response does not answer the epistemological problems of relativism, but merely the common assumption that such relativism inevitably leads to despair. It is a common move for Nietzsche to take philosophical problems usually only posed in terms of abstract rationality and to reinterpret them in extra-rational terms such as health, digestion, emotion, psychology. We may see his recourse to temperament in responding to nihilism as just such a move. Furthermore, we may see such moves as enabled by the critique of rationality characteristic of Nietzsche's work and also of postmodernism generally. Broadly speaking, critics who accuse postmodernism of nihilism tend to phrase their problems and demand answers in terms restricted to abstract rationality, disallowing recourse to extra-rational terms. Vattimo's Nietzschean nihilism insists upon such terms, as do some other postmodern philosophies, and it is often this extra-rational element that allows postmodernists to affirm nihilism rather than feel debilitated by it.

III. Dystopian Fiction:

III.1.Dystopia :

The word dystopia was used for the first time by Jhon Stuart Mills in 1868 in his political speech on the state of Ireland, where he used the word in contrast with the term utopia⁷. In that speech, Mills severely criticizes the government's policy on Irish property stating that "What is commonly called Utopian is something too good to be practicable; but what they [the government] appear to favour is too bad to be practicable." (88) . By merely coining the word to contrast what had been thus far called Utopia, he delimited its basic concept. On the basis of this speech, the Oxford English Dictionary describes dystopia as "an imaginary place or condition in which everything is as bad as possible." "dystopia, n." OED Online (Oxford University Press, March 2016) . It will be argued that despite the fairly long development of dystopian literature, the definition of the term does not necessarily need to be more complex than the one proposed by this entry.

As dystopia is defined as being the reverse of utopia, the latter term must be elaborated on prior to attempting to define the former. Utopia is a fictional village created by Thomas More in his eponymous book. It represents his concept of an ideal society. More thus created the framework for future "utopian" novels.

III.2.The post-modernist Dystopia:

Dystopia could be a literary term that is the other of utopia. In Greek, utopia means that no place, and in Latin it means a decent place. It is the perfect world, the perfect and therefore the dream world that each national desires. However, the dystopian world is that the exact opposite of the utopian world. It is a world wherever you will be able to notice destruction, poverty, sorrows, anxiety, surveillance, propaganda, psychosis underneath the rule of a

⁷ According to oxford dictionary Utopia an imagined place or state of things in which everything is perfect.

totalitarian government. Postmodernism, on the other hand, is a literary movement and an amount of time in history. In addition, after we say genre world we mean a world that is increased and developed by technology. The innovation of technology aimed toward fulfilling a much better future (utopian society) for folks. The dream was achieved, however it costs the foremost pure issue in human lives that is that the loss of sense of humanity. The government became greedy and predatory, it reshaped the dystopian society underneath the duvet of a utopian one; i.e., with the unfold of science and technology people became obsessed with science which was the very important part in dominant their lives. Folks were brainwashed (eating drugs), their actions were limited, and that they were surveilled by propagandas and cameras. Loyalty to the government was one sacred thing. Indeed, the genre world could be a dystopian one. Once there is technology, there is destruction which what was witnessed in these days' news concerning wars, from the environmental disasters that were created by humanity attributable to technology, to wars.

III.3. Dystopia in Fiction:

Various definitions of dystopia associated with works of fiction are offered. Lyman Tower Sargent defines dystopia in literature as “a non-existent society defined in giant element and commonly placed in time and area that the writer meant a contemporaneous reader to view as substantially worse than the society wherein the reader lived.” (15). Sargent’s definition generally summarizes the fundamentals of what has been taken into consideration dystopian within side the paintings of literature at some point of the history. It, indeed, has to painting fictional, social status quo that gave the impression to be substantially worse from the angle of the reader - in addition terrifying, unrealistic and preposterous to what Mills noticed within side the land coverage he turned into criticizing. However, the quantity of element wherein authors of dystopian novels describe the societies has various from one novel to another.

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Gottlieb in *Dystopian fiction east and west* attempts to define “the Western model of dystopia” (7) , more punctually, stating that “The writer offers militant criticism of specific aberrations in our own, present social-political system by pointing out their potentially monstrous consequences in the future.”(13)This definition in essence refutes (or more precisely distorts) the basic idea based purely on contrast with utopia.. Although maximum of the western dystopian paintings of twentieth century is extensively appeared as prophetic, a few counterexamples may be located, in particular in famous works of present day fiction. For instance, the Batman’s world – Gotham City – replete with crime and corrupted police isn't always perceived as sporting any premonition and is as a substitute created for thrill, pleasure and amusement. Another instance may be located within side the Matrix Trilogy – the machine, even though arguably primarily based totally on the worry of AI, is simply too unbelievable to be prophetic. For this reason, kinds of dystopia ought to be outstanding between – prophetic and non-prophetic.

IV. Science Fiction: (abbreviation **SF** or **sci-fi**)

It is a form of fiction that deals principally with the impact of actual or imagined science upon society or individuals. The term *science fiction* was popularized, if not invented, in the 1920s by one of the genre’s principal advocates.

IV.1.Post-Apocalyptic:

Apocalyptic literature has existed for millennia. Major western religions ranging from Christianity, Islam, and Judaism contain multiple tales of a civilization or locale reaching its end.

Post-apocalyptic fiction is a sub-genre of science fiction. It is characterized by different settings .It must be one where the future is explored and the end of the world has already

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taken place and characters are trying to survive and start a new life . The end of the world event that occurred can be anything from war, to plague, to natural or manmade disasters.

Conclusion:

It is clear from all that is mentioned above that the human mind was greatly altered by the end of the Second World War which led to the creation of the postmodern lifestyle. It is also clear that postmodernism touched on all aspects of the human life to the point where a whole literature genre was influenced by it.

Life became more complicated less certain. The acceleration of cultural and technological changes that the twentieth century has witnessed seems to have left many people confused, unsure about their place in the world and the meaning of their lives. Due to that Friedrich Nietzsche and various thinkers following him have attempted to think these problems in a rigorous philosophical manner , using the term "nihilism" to refer to the decline of Western civilization and the difficulty of living a meaningful life in the horizon of this decline.

This chapter ,contains a detailed explanation of the concepts mentioned above and the connection between them .Also it touches the theories of Lyotard , Baudrillard and vattimo ,That has a link with postmodern nihilism, Furthermore ,Dystopian fiction was explained as well.

Chapter Two :

Exploring the Portrayal of Technology and Eros in *Zero K*

Introduction:

With seventeen acclaimed novels, Don Delillo became one of the most celebrated authors of this generation. The diversity of his work that ranges from sports to Cold War, from politics to the dawn of the digital age brought him widespread recognition. *Zero K* is one of his latest novels. It was chosen to be studied in this work because it embodies the postmodern culture and it highlights dystopia life as well as the philosophy of nihilism. In this chapter a detailed synopsis is given about the novel that contains an outline of the plot , Also the effects of technology that Delillo focuses on in many of his works will be mentioned in details , As well as the relationship between religion , nihilism and technology. Freud's theory EROS and the obsession with immortality are other themes this work will explore to offer a detailed study of *Zero K*.

I. A Synopsis about *Zero K*:

The science fiction novel *Zero K* by Don Delillo opens with the protagonist Jeffrey Lockhart who is traveling to a remote diploma-accomplice facility in order to say his farewell to his father's second wife, Artis. Here, Jeffrey learns that the purpose of the facility, called the Convergence, is to freeze terminally unwell human beings, using a way known as *Zero K*, simply so they will be thawed in the destiny while, presumably, their health situations may be cured. While Artis is being geared up for her deep freeze, Jeffrey learns that a hospice is determined within the facility in which a monk speaks to them concerning their death. He also finds a wall-mounted monitor that shows him images of natural disasters and other destructive things.

His father, Ross Lockhart (of whom Jeffrey tells the reader isn't his actual name) tells Jeffrey that he has complete assurance in the process. During this initial visit to the Convergence, we learn that Ross has been investing large amounts of money in the project.

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Later, while Jeffrey is target-searching for an area with an examine slot, he witnesses a meeting of individuals (along with his father, Ross). This assembly discusses the dystopian destiny that the directors are expecting and the manners in which the Convergence will facilitate in keeping humanity and mend the accidents of the apocalypse. Nevertheless, at this point, Jeffrey still has troubles with the undertaking and his father.

Jeffrey's case record is shared with readers. His father left as soon as he turned thirteen, and his mother eventually died. It is also implicitly revealed that his mom, Madeline, had some sort of an intellectual illness that Jeffrey also appears to have. For this reason it seems that Jeffrey has durable disdain for his father; the disdain is so effective that it exists on the pinnacle of the radical.

Later, Ross tells his son that for him to be with Artis, he must use *Zero K* technology. Jeffrey's immediate reaction is shock and disbelief and so he argues with Ross about the absurdity of his decision. Soon after, Jeffrey meets Ben-Ezra in the facility's garden, who proceeds to advise Jeffrey to get Ross to change his mind. However, Ross does not need Jeffrey's intervention and changes his mind without his help.

Later on, Jeffrey is shown to an area called the veer, where he sees three pods with people inside of them. He learns that these individuals are referred to as "the heralds", because they have no life-threatening conditions, but are heralding in the new world.

Eventually, Artis is frozen, and the narrative briefly shifts from Jeffrey's perspective to hers revealing that she can still think while she is in the pod.

Part II of the novel opens with Jeffrey being interviewed for a job by Ross' boss who he mentioned in the first part of the book. He is able to obtain the job but ends up rejecting it out of principle. We meet Jeffrey's girlfriend and her adopted son Stak, who was adopted by her ex-husband in the Ukraine. We learn that Stak focuses on numbers and bets on terrorist attacks. Soon after, Jeffrey meets again with Ross, and Ross explains once again that he will

be frozen after all. Jeffrey agrees to travel with him to the Convergence facility. Before they leave Jeffrey is interviewed for a job as an ethics specialist at a college. Jeffrey travels to the Convergence facility and learns that some of the artwork around the facility actually consists of human corpses and witnesses the large number of frozen individuals in pods. Ross is finally frozen and Jeffrey returns home alone. He then accepts the offer for the job as an ethics specialist and witnesses the sun aligning with the city street layout.

II. Exploring the Portrayal of Technology in *Zero K*:

In Delillo's science fictions, modern technologies are not just simple objects in everyday life of his characters. They are able to shape the consciousness of each human. Telephones, nuclear bombs, computers, television sets and modern appliances present a psychological phenomenon which provides the possibilities for actions, what more, it influences the perception of each human being. That is why Don Delillo is one of the major writers of post-apocalyptic genre.

II.1.The Effects of Technology in *Zero K*:

Death and technology have been convergent concerns in Delillo's fiction for decades. "That's the whole point of technology," says a character in 1984's *White Noise*. "On the one hand, it whets the appetite for immortality. Threatened by the other with universal extinction. Technology is lust away from nature."(42) Delillo's previous novel, 2010's *Omega Point*, took its title from the idea of Omega Point, French paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's theory of the eventual merging of humans and technology.

The Kyrgyz terrain is, as skeptic Jeffery puts it, "on the very edge of plausibility," and is the desert outpost of a futuristic quasi-cult called Convergence. For all their sci-fi weirdness, the group echoes the ideas of true Silicon Valley immortals like Peter Thiel and Ray Kurzweil, diviners of the technological singularity: they offer their wealthy benefactors a

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glimpse of eternal life, a chance, mortality to surpass Applied Science and Applied Capitalism. "The pod would be his final shrine of entitlement."(135). Jeffery muses after a bitter argument with Ross. The reason for this bitter confrontation is that Ross, unable to cope with the loss of Artis, has decided to go ahead and discontinue a premium service of immortality that Convergence offers to its preferred clients. Jeffery sees this as the latest in a string of parental abdications: their relationship has been overshadowed by Ross's abandonment, decades earlier, of him and his mother. If all of this makes *Zero K* sound like a family melodrama set against the backdrop of a techno-millennial cult (a man's love! a father's betrayal! a billionaire's desperate quest for immortality!), be reminded that this is a Don DeLillo novel, and so these passionate novel interests are little more than backdrop to backdrop, a means of populating the stage, enlivening the subject.

DeLillo's backdrop foreground often occurs on a fairly literal level: there are distinct interludes in which Jeffery wanders the halls of the Kyrgyz facility, staring at a series of giant screens showing stylized silent films of disasters: floods, tornadoes , self-immolated monks , terrorist atrocities."They stuffed me with the latest stuff," as Jeffery puts it. As always, DeLillo takes a clinical interest in the film's unsettling drama of disaster. (In *Underworld*, Zapruder's footage of JFK's assassination becomes a projection of the own consciousness as death stalks it: "a raw living image of the mind's own technology, the kind of death plan running in the mind... a model of the Nights we're intimate with our own deaths." For DeLillo, all technologies are technologies of death on some level).

His artistic career has taken him further thematically into the limits of speculative abstraction and stylistically into a kind of poetics of cultural exhaustion. His concerns about slowing down narrative time and the story's progression towards an unspeakable apocalyptic event have become more pronounced with each new work. In that sense, the writer seems to

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resemble more and more is Samuel Beckett. *Zero K* bears unmistakable traces of Beckett's late style Delillo's increasingly scarce humor, in sentences that seem to contain their own negation. For example, Jeffery's description of the view of the landscape from his father's bedroom window on the premises: "Sky pale and bare, day fading in the west, if it were the west, if it were the sky."(134) .This is the kind of heaven, dead or nearly dead, that Clove sees in *Endgame* and the kind of description he would give.

In the novel's short and confusing middle section, Delillo provides Artis's immediate consciousness, the telegraphic flickering of her brain in its purgatory-like limbo between life and death. "Time. I feel it all over me. But I don't know what it is. What I understand comes out of nowhere. I don't know what I understand until I say it."(180). Here she seems to be losing all sense of time and existence. She seems to be there but not quite. "I almost know some things . I think I'm going to know things, but then it doesn't happen."(181).

Delillo's fiction has featured some irreducibly odd and indelibly characters. But what sticks in their minds the most is the language Delillo bestows on them, the uniqueness of the voice. In *Zero K*, as in most of his more recent work, Delillo's characters often feel less like fully realized human beings and more like conduits for the various concerns and ideas at work in the narrative. Though often uncomfortable and detracting from the sense of immersion in a convincingly made-up fictional world, this sense of incomplete fulfillment seems structural to the book's goals: for its depiction of a life of overwhelming technological connection, where people exist apart from one another and themselves. "I feel artificially myself,"(59), says Artis on the eve of her cryonic suspension. "I am someone , who's supposed to be me."(59)

The novel is permeated by a loss of meaning, liberation from everything - people, places, objects - from their former meaning. Jeffery has long been in the habit, he tells us, of forcing

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himself to define certain everyday terms, a gesture of desperate clinging to meaning. For example, Jacques Derrida reduced to dead nonsense:

Once, when they were still married, my father called my mother a fishwife.

This may have been a joke but it sent me to the dictionary to look up the word.

Coarse woman, a shrew. I had to look up shrew. A scold, a nag, from Old

English for shrewmouse. I had to look up shrewmouse. The book sent me back to shrew, sense 1. A small insectivorous mammal. I had to look up insectivorous.

The book said it meant feeding on insects, from Latin insectus, for insect,

plus Latin vora, for vorous. I had to look up vorous.(29).

There is a character that comes out of nowhere towards the end of *Zero K* and never appears again, a leader of the Convergence who walks into a room full of people about to be preserved. She's hardly a character really, but rather a voice sent to deliver a monologue to the soon-disembodied Acolytes of Convergence.

Delillo, who turns 85 this year, is extraordinarily insightful about how our pervasive technologies have permeated and removed our lives:

Those of you who will return to the surface. Haven't you felt it? 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. All the linked data designed to incorporate you into the megadata. Is there something that makes you uneasy? Do you think about the technovirus, all systems

down, global implosion? Or is it more personal? Do you feel steeped in some horrific digital panic that's everywhere and nowhere?(172)

It is true that technology brought the world to us but at the same time destroyed our lifestyles and way of thinking , The humans became so dependent when it comes to technology , They use it almost in everything , It did not stop here but it went further , Humans started to use technology to extend their lives . What push peoples to be obsessed with immortality and doing insane things just to attend their obsession.

Delillo's gaze on contemporary culture retains its unsettling intimacy, even as his writing has become more detached in affect. Reading him, the impression is of viewing the world from a great distance through an extremely powerful lens: Everything is remote but revealed with uncanny clarity.

II.2.Religion,Nihilism and Technology:

Through philosophical lenses, nihilism and religion exist on opposite ends of the spectrum. While nihilism firmly maintains the ideology of the meaningless of life and its principles, most religions believe that life has one single purpose which gives it a higher and a noble meaning. That purpose is to work for not a better life but rather an afterlife. Religious people are never nihilists and nihilists are never religious on the ground that their most basic belief is to refuse the ideology of the other.

Religion also refuses one aspect of technological research and goals which is immortality. Scientists seek to lengthen people's lifespan to the point where some might even consider immortality.

In *Zero K*, Delillo highlights these three ideologies and how they clash and sometimes meet. Religion and nihilism refuse immortality. Technology and nihilism refuse the afterlife. Religion and technology have purposes however different. His characters represent the three

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perspectives. Jeffery, Ross and the monk represent nihilism, technology and religion respectively.

While he didn't outright declare his nihilism, Jeffery's attitude throughout the life-changing events of the book is nihilistic through and through. At some point in the early chapters of the book when Jeffery talks of his teenage years, he mentions his disinterest in everything even at a young age and how he tried to gain some meaning in things and in people. He then brushes it off as a feeble attempt saying "Was I playing a trick on Holy Mother Church? Or was I simply attempting to thrust myself into meaningful sight?". In later chapters, this perspective did not change nor falter. Until the very end, Jeffery fails to find a purpose to life.

On the other hand, Ross along with the scientists are eager for life. They want to reach immortality in whatever way. Ross invests millions if not billions in the *Zero K* project for the possibility of a forever. Even when he falters for a while when faced with the possibility of a life without his wife and consider freezing himself, he backtracks and chooses life for the time being. He devotes his wealth and life for a technology that will grant him immortality, he equates it with God and religion saying "Faith-based technology. That's what it is. Another god. Not so different, it turns out, from some of the earlier ones. Except that it's real, it's true, it delivers." Here, Ross ridicules religions because to him, technology is solid, firm and *real*. As for the third and last theme of the book, religion is represented by the monk. Jeffery meets him on his second morning in the facility and is instantly intrigued by him or at least as much as intrigued Jeffery can get. The Monk appears to be a calming presence compared to the intensity of the other characters. He is spiritual but also grounded. His role is simply to soothe those who are on the verge of being frozen. Even when the whole investors and scientists appear to ignore religion, they thought the presence of a monk is necessary enough in the last

moments of a person's life to bring one to the Convergence. People are comforted by the idea of religion even if they do not completely believe in it.

The presence of the Monk was a relief for people who are about to be frozen but the same time it is contradictory, simply because most of the religions do not support the idea of immortality, on the contrary, religions support the idea of the afterlife.

Delillo managed to infuse these three perspectives into one book without outweighing one over the other. The reader is left to choose the ideology they most believe in through the lenses of his characters.

III. The Drive Life Theory 'EROS':

The so-referred to as lifestyles pressure, or Eros, encompasses all of the impulses and behaviors that encourage our survival, without renouncing satisfaction and including to our feeling of well-being. according to Freud :

I may now add that civilization is a process in the service of Eros, whose purpose is to combine single human individuals, and after that families, then races, peoples and nations, into one great unity, the unity of mankind. (43).

Every character has skilled a second of unprecedented inspiration, as though they have been touched with the aid of using a magic wand. They felt so encouraged that the sector unexpectedly has become too small for them, and that they desired to head all out for his or her dreams with enthusiasm and courage. These are instances that completely describe what we recognize because the lifestyles pressure. This pressure fills oneself with ardor and power and is a manner of resolving tensions. However, opposite to what is believed, it is not continually of an erotic or sexual nature. So what precisely is the Life Drive? To start to

apprehend what the lifestyles pressure is, we want to comprehend the complete idea of “pressure”.

This idea stems from Freud’s character theory, which shows that we act to remedy the tensions we experience inside. According to this theory, the pressure is the beginning of all intellectual pastimes and it consists:

- **Source:** The organ that gives birth to this drive.
- **Force:** That which motivates you to take action.
- **Goal:** The satisfaction of the excitation.
- **Object:** The source of the satisfaction.

The life drive is an impulse that generates each activation and excitation on a bodily level. Its goal is to preserve our survival. Moreover, it’s a dynamic force that goes in search of pleasure, departure to at least one side the items that don’t produce this pleasure in us. It involves the fore once we activate mechanisms to cut back our tension. It received the name “Eros” as a result of analysis has perpetually been about to mythology. In fact, it is a theme that brain doctor was impassioned about thanks to this, it has been common to use metaphors or analogies that check with sure stories or options of mythology so as to elucidate the theory. This may greatly facilitate to create an additional understanding.

Psychoanalysis associates life drive with the Eros, the legendary God of sexual attraction, love, and fertility. Eros is gift in each one of us. It intervenes within the relationship we have with ourselves, with others, and with nature. Likewise, it also manifests itself within the means we tend to interact, guarantee our survival. In addition to our basic physiological activities, among which we will notice sex, the life drive is additionally gift in dreams, creativity, eroticism⁸, and love.

⁸ According to oxford dictionary , Eroticism is the quality or character of being erotic.

III.1. Examining Eros in the *Zero K* :

In Don DeLillo's novel *Zero K*, the words have been separated from their meaning. The title refers to the *zero Kelvin* temperature, better known as absolute zero. But in the story, *Zero K* is an elite level of cryogenics, and even the scientists who work there admit it's not really part of the process. Our protagonist Jeffery, in his thirties, does not know people as much as he observes and defines them. "I called them the Stenmark twins. They were the Stenmark twins," he decides on a pair of futuristic artists without knowing their real names. But even then its designation is unclear; they are, he concludes, "Jan and Lars or Nils and Sven". As a teenager, Jeffery challenged himself to define a word by looking it up in the dictionary: fishmonger to shrew to shrew to insectivore to wolverine. He has not given up on this and his attempts to find definitions result in words and more words, while the real object remains inaccessible. This gap between word and thing, signifier and signified, suits DeLillo, one of the masters of postmodern literature.

This leads us back to «*Zero K*» in the desert landscape again. This time however, near Kyrgyzstan with our protagonist Jeffery's billionaire father, Ross Lockhart. There is his diluted language, his struggle with ideas. But does the book have the sharpness, the uneasiness of a cultural pebble of his most important work? Does DeLillo's ideological knife have something to cut this time? Finally, accept death. Ross takes Jeffery to an isolated desert complex where techno-futurists and Fortunes have developed a secret cryonics facility. They call what they have foreseen the Convergence: it is like the vivid "singularity" in Menting and human computer technologies merge, but with the bonus of reasoning life beyond death and frozen corpses, or maybe not quite dead. Jeffery can not decide whether the authors are philosophers or scientists or cult leaders, conceptual artists or street vendors. They are often heard or overheard as they explain the future that canned techno utopians will awaken to after the impending ecological and social collapse. This future is only accessible to the super rich

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and of course to those who believe in it. It could be the work of true visionaries, but it could also be the encounter between the Egyptian pyramids and Silicon Valley, dead well preserved pending an afterlife that never comes.

It's clear why Jeffery is there: his father wants him by his side when his critically ill stepmother Artis dies, which a skeptical Jeffery simply considers death. But Artis believes. "I'm going to be a clinical specimen," she tells him. "Progress is made over the years. Body part replaced or rebuilt .Note the documentary tone. I've spoken to people here. A reassembly, atom by atom. I firmly believe that I will awaken to a new perception of the world." Such are the concerns of the novel: what does death mean, the hopes or concealment of the futurists, their analysis of our present on the brink of catastrophe, the reflections of the faith and the hereafter. Convergence proponents are promised not only life after death, but also eternal human life (albeit enhanced by nanobots). "Forever," says Artis in awe. If Jeffery doesn't believe her, that doesn't mean the reader will lack empathy for her " This was transcendence, the promise of a lyric intensity outside the measure of normal experience."(53) , he thinks. And who wouldn't want a loved one to die to believe that transcendent immortality awaits? This isn't the only time Jeffery has witnessed the death of one of his parents; first it was his mother. He returned from college to sit by her bedside in a sorrowful and melancholic scene. Her illness and death meant nothing to Jeffery's father, who abandoned the family years ago and became a billionaire. Delillo contrasts the two scenarios: Lockhart invests millions, perhaps billions, in the Convergence to save the life of his young wife, given that he has forgotten or pretends to have forgotten Jeffery's mother's name. Jeffery has nothing against Artis, in fact his scenes with her contain some of the lightest human encounters in the book, but the grudge between son and father goes unspoken.

Jeffery's disbelief in the cryonics project should have guided the plot, but the philosophies of arrogant and chaotic creators remain unconvincing; it's too easy to side with Jeffery.

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Instead, it's the mess between father and son, over the cryonics project on the surface, but in reality so much more, that drives the novel forward. Like his wife, Ross is a believer and Jeffery cannot vouch for his faith. "My father had grown a beard that surprised me," he notes. Was it the beard that grew on a man who wanted to enter a new dimension of faith!

The final day of Artis doesn't come on time, so Jeffery explores the complex, walks the halls, stumbles upon one Garden, follows and observes the meeting where he assigns names to the twins. He sometimes encounters a secular monk in the deserted cafeteria who talks about death and devotion, and serves as a sort of Charon to those preparing for their cryogenic crossing. The mostly underground installation is minimalist to the point of satirizing minimalism, or so to take it. He walks through the hallways and knows that the closed doors contain nothing that the hallways themselves are conceptual works of art. As if triggered by his presence, the screens drop down from the ceiling and show videos of scenes that start out woody and pleasant but grow more and more apocalyptic as his time there progresses.

Some of the videos are similar to the Dutch artist Aernout Mik's which contains military scenes in the staging and newsreel images. Those familiar with contemporary art will recognize the references.

There are also references to literary figures such as Czech writer Bohumil Hrabal. But for the most part this intertextuality is an intersection, not of meaning, as might be expected, but of distance to it. Cultural references are not mentioned in the text: instead of simply saying, 'Busby Berkeley Musical' describes Delillo "in an elaborate way choreographed dance routines from Hollywood musicals of many decades, synchronized dancers in the manner of an army in March". It is the decontextualized, foreign particular seen by a man who has just fallen to the ground. Which brings us back to alienation. When words are in a disjunction of what they mean, what does that mean for a project like a novel whose building blocks are

based on words? This has been the challenge of a certain group of novelists since deconstructivist ideas reached the United States.

When approached by Delillo in "The Names," his efforts to use language to explore language felt like a surgeon attempting to operate on his own. Now he has a lighter grip and approaches ideas with wry humor. And perhaps the loss of the signifier for the signifier gives the novel its own totemic power. In decades it will not only be readable by extraterrestrials, but also by people who are not subject to our cultural mess. Maybe that is Delillo's plan: in a century, to be read by the techno-futurists of the Convergence, or simply by human descendants.

VI. The Obsession with Immortality :

Delillo's work is deemed to be a faith-based technology of controlled immortality which we refer to as Convergence. According to the prosperous converging people, their revival will make them able to see the unseen, express the unexpressed and using a sophisticated language. Convergence was Artis' choice and Jeff was Lockhart's option for her path.

How odd is this science assumption! Yet, it is even odd since Jeff has adopted the idea of hovering around the world seeking a gathering of a dispersed family that consists of an uncaring father and an absent mother. Hence, we might say that *Zero K* is a mixture of Jeff's struggle to come to terms with his past with a topic that has always been the source of Delillo's interest, which is a set of philosophical debates about the fear of ageing to death. In an intellect related and touching novel, Delillo has put himself into a maze by trying to link up these two topics.

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As in several of Delillo's works, this novel carries a lyrical meditation on consciousness by the Artis dying process. The writer has conducted works related to disastrous events like the day John F Kennedy was murdered and 9/11 event.

He called the first part as "In The Time of Chelyabinsk" connecting to natural disasters. On 2013 half of February a massive meteor explosion has occurred abruptly above the skies of the west-central Russian city Chelyabinsk harming more than a thousand people, and stirring the risk of wars and invasions. Talking to the dying about the end and reassuring them of "the continuing, the awakening" was the job of the hospice worker, The purple cloaked monk who met Jeff one day at the food unit, who also was a member of a millennial sect that had prayed for "the year, the day, the moment" of termination and had an extreme felicity of the meteor.

For a new future doctors and convergent have a philosophical and religious job to make. As Artis believes "I will be reborn into a deeper and truer reality. Lines of brilliant light, every material thing in its fullness, a holy object."(52).

As well as many institution officials and monks own precious perspectives:

We want to stretch the boundaries of what it means to be human—stretch
and then surpass. We want to do whatever we are capable of doing in order
to alter human thought and bend the energies of civilisation.(80)

A pious man who wears skullcap named Ben Ezra sermonizes "a radical level of self-renewal" out of cryogenics, a sarcastic hint to Robert Browning's dramatic monologue

said: "Grow old along with me! , The best is yet to be come."(210) ageing is not considered a good choice when there is *Zero K*.

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Jeff was strongly trying to neglect these death messages, while the facility's spaces that are deprived of positive human qualities had hold him off, and he has yen for those unthinking and significant daily habits of New York:

Things people do, ordinarily, forgettably, things that breathe just under the surface of what we acknowledge having in common. I want these gestures, these moments to have meaning, check the wallet, check the keys, something that draws us together, implicitly, lock and relock the front door, inspect the burners on the stove for dwindling blue flame or seeping gas. These are the soporifics of normalcy, my days in middling drift. (238).

He debates himself philosophically with attacking its clichés.

Zero K dabblers will not find a better and deeper reality as he presumes, instead “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.” (56). He does not view “peace, comfort and dignity” in cryogenic suspension, but only “a person under the hand of others.” “Is it outright murder?” he wonders. “Is it a metaphysical crime that needs to be analysed by philosophers? As he ultimately says to his father, ‘I think you’ve been brainwashed. You are a victim of the surroundings. You’re a member of a cult.’”(132).

Convergence looks like it is more a devotion than a religion or a philosophy related vision and DeLillo is in between its explanation or satirisation. When Jeff goes to see the “Veer” the place in which the bodies are stored, it is somehow of a creepy museum, “long columns of men and women in frozen suspension,”(292), undressed and bald mannequins who look like the House of Faces in *Game of Thrones*. On their way to death, Ross and Artis sound like a Little Father Time in *Jude the Obscure*, a messenger to “coming universal wish not to live.”

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“The Convergence seems more like a cult than a profound philosophical vision or religion, and Delillo vacillates between explaining it and satirising it”

Throughout this narrative there is a whole scattered story about what occurred with Jeff after Lockhart left him and his mother. In fact, in a February issue of the *New Yorker*, this story has been studied and titled “Sine, Cosine, Tangent,” as a hint to the trigonometry that Jeff is dealing with when his father leaves, but also Delillo’s classic three terms that suggest father, mother and son. It is considered as a moving and a beautiful about Jeff’s way of adjusting to his father absence and his insane obsession with naming and defining things. His mother taught him “ordinary moments make the life,” and he considers his moments and memories as a source of humanity.

Sadly, this narrative would have been more efficient as a short story instead of a novel. While the connection that link Jeff with his father and theme of *Zero K* is equivocal. Besides, we might say that Jeff is not the person who speaks about the beauty of living. He has opted a boring job and he is way far from emotions or even involving in particular fields. Yet, the first part is of a remarkable length and accessibility than the second one, since Delillo tends to have both stories combine. It is titled In the Times of “Konstantinovka” to refer to an Ukrainian city where there was some fighting. As in the second part. Jeff comes back to the compound where Artis has eventually submitted to *Zero K*, and Ross is thinking of joining her even though he enjoys a good health. In the long hall on the screen Jeff watches troops and tanks invading “abandoned urban district” in Ukraine, taking the life of a young man who fights for freedom, a young man he knows as the adopted Ukrainian son of his former lover in the US.

Both last chapters of the book bring back Jeff to New York. He is having nightmares regrets and loses that he tries to deal with. He started observing and being alert to a man

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kneeling on the pavement, “bowing toward Mecca” and begging. Yet he is still keeping his isolation alive in his office, and him questioning himself is everything but not dramatic.

This book has a brilliant ending with a fascinating view that calls back the author’s vision of “a kind of radiance in dailiness,” sometimes terrifying, but sometimes “holy and sacred” (He said this in an interview with Rolling Stone in 1988). On a New Yorkan bus Jeff was, when a boy observes the sun sparkling between the buildings. A phenomenon we refer to as “Manhattanhenge”, one other two days a year when the “sun’s rays align with the local street grid.” Jeff takes that convergence as a hint” I went back to my seat and faced forward. I didn’t need heaven’s light. I had the boy’s cries of wonder.”

In order to cure our scepticism and intimidation, Delillo does not convince us of cure, but this optimism is a gift that welcomes us in this strong deep book.

Conclusion:

It is no wonder then, that Delillo’s *Zero K* is an acclaimed book. The themes of technology, immortality and the drive of life he so cleverly explored are some of the most interesting themes in our days. The parallelism between the dystopian fiction of Delillo and what is currently happening in the world is too captivating and too fascinating to not have us thinking about the future of the world and the roles technology will undoubtedly play. It is, in a way, prophetic. This chapter tackles the effects of technology on humans , Besides to their obsession of immortality that has been an issue of nowadays , The monk’s presence represents the importance of the religion , and how it affects people positively . If anything, *Zero K* shed light on the fine line between dystopia and utopia that the human race is teetering

In his literary work, Don Delillo discovers the interaction between human characters and their technological environment. Delillo's characters find expression through the material

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forms of the technologies they fetishize, but these material forms simultaneously capture and limit the nature of the kind of transcendence they are able to offer. Technology appears to Delillo's characters as a kind of human dream, which in turn, influences the kind of dreams and desires they have, and thus also the ones they realize in a technological form. They exist in an interaction between technology and self-definition or self-deception. The diversity of modes that is illustrated in DeLillo's fictions is supplemented by the technologically mediated confluence of his characters and the field of cultural objects in which they appear

Chapter Three :
Exploring Postmodern Nihilism in Don Delillo's *Zero K*

Introduction:

For us to truly grasp the themes of *Zero K*, we must explore the characters' developments and the event's channel they were subjected to. Our protagonist Jeffery is the best case study in this case. Moreover, he is not the only one. The main themes of the book affected each character differently and thus their reactions varied accordingly. In this chapter, a detailed description is given to almost all of the characters about how they were in the beginning of the book and how irrevocably they were changed by the end of it. For a further understanding, the strong points made by the author such as faith, family and life and death, are also explored.

I. The Projection of nihilistic Behavior Through Characters:

I.1. Jeffery's nihilism:

If it was attempted to describe Jeffery's attitude or sum up his outlook on life, it would be easily done by saying he is simply and plainly a nihilist. Even though he did not outright declare his nihilistic tendencies, it was apparent in so many scenes, dialogues and monologues for it to be overlooked. Jeffery is impartial and detached from everyone and everything around him. Events and life-altering matters seem to go through him without affecting him or provoking any strong reactions from him. It seems to the reader that nothing and no one tethers Jeffery or spikes enough emotions and expectations in him. In his own words, he said that he never felt more human than when his mother died. However, we do witness some fleeting emotions and curiosities from him when reading *Zero K*, no matter how little and brief they are. From his fondness to his stepmother Artis, to the skepticism he so clearly declared of his father's motives and to the sympathy he felt to the boy he saw dying. However, these emotions and reactions were never strong enough to induce him to take actions. He let Artis go with few warm words, he expressed his opposition to his father

freezing himself but he never stopped him and his sympathy for the sick boy lasted as long as he was within eyesight. Even in his personal life, his career and his relationship with Emma, his girlfriend, Jeffery showed very little to no passion at all. He never thrived for more nor did he seek a grander lifestyle. In fact, he admitted that he felt that life has no meaning and that he, in his teenage years, attempted to give it one but it seems that ultimately he failed to do so. In short, Jeffery is a spectator in his own life. Expecting nothing from it and doing nothing for it. He lets life take its courses however they are and accepts them knowing in his heart that it all has no meaning whatsoever.

I.2. Ross's anti-nihilism :

In a stark contrast to his son, Ross seems intensely and irrevocably in love with life if his pursuit of immortality is anything to go by. In the beginning of the book, its opening line to be more specific, Ross tells Jeffery that everyone wants to own the end of the world. In a way, this sets the mood not only for the whole book but it also explains Ross's character at the start of the story. It appears that Ross wants it all. The present and the future. The wealth, the fame, the health and love. A man with his bright mind would come to realize that one life is in no way enough to have it all and fulfill his greed to *live*. And that is exactly what Ross realized. Jeffery mentions how Ross lectured him on how short the human life span is and how he should take advantage of each and every second he lives. Essentially this is the reason for why he invested millions and probably billions in the convergence.

Immortality is his endgame because it prevents or at least delays his end, allowing him to live more, experience more and thrive more. His persistent need for that became even greater when his second wife Artis fell ill (he never really cared for his first wife therefore it was fueled even more by the love he has for Artis). However, and shockingly to Jeffery and the reader alike, Ross decides to freeze himself once Artis does claiming that he cannot go on

with life without her. It is clear that this decision is so out of character because Jeffery states every selfish motive he can think of to explain his father's resolve. Jeffery knows how attached Ross is to life and how he values it more than anything else (it is even implied that Ross cared less about his son and more about a good life leading to Ross leaving his teenage son and choosing a better and more stable life). Nevertheless, Ross's change of mind and heart does not, in any way, suggest that he lost interest in life or meaning in it. If anything, it proves that he ardently believes in the Convergence to the point where he is willing to risk his current life, one without the woman he loves, for a chance for one in the future that he eventually will share with her when a cure is found to her illness. It can be argued however, that his decision is, as Jeffery guessed, purely and entirely selfish under the cover of love. After all, a man with so much to live for does not risk it all for anything without a certain gain in the long run.

II.3. Other Character's Behavior:

Madeline is Ross' first wife and Jeffrey's mother, who, by the start of the novel is dead. Through what Jeffery tells us and describes her, she seemed to have some sort of mental condition (possibly OCD, Bi-polar disorder, or some psychosis). Her actions seemed loving to Jeffrey but very violent towards Ross. In one instance, she stabs Ross with a large steak knife. When Ross leaves, she is quite cross with him and makes this known to Jeffrey.

The monk is an unnamed monk that Jeffrey meets in the Convergence facility. When they first meet, the monk is quite confident about the good he is doing in his job of speaking to those in the hospice area of the facility. But by the end of the novel, his outlook and resolve changed. He is broken and unmotivated; the reason for this is unknown. It should be noted that he spoke to the hospice patients about not the transition that the Convergence claims to provide but about the end.

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The Stenmarks are twin brothers who are administrators/artists at the Convergence facility. They created the art that is displayed in the entirety of the facility, including the mannequins and the skulls. Their outlook on the world is a very grim one and they claim that wars will eventually bring humanity to the point where those within *Zero K* can be reborn to help the planet, provided that cures for many of the frozen people's ills are found.

Emma is Jeffrey's girlfriend for the majority of the novel; however she is mentioned only in the second half of the book. Before the novel begins, she married and gained a son, Stak, whom her husband adopted in the Ukraine. She is fond of and quite concerned with what Stak thinks of her. At the end of the novel, she chooses to stay with her ex-husband instead of returning to the city to be with Jeffrey.

Stak is Emma's Ukrainian adopted son. He seems to have a sort of mental disorder which motivates him to memorize seemingly arbitrary things like the temperatures of certain cities of the world. He becomes disillusioned, joins a militia group, and dies in combat.

Szabo is a man of unknown nationality that Jeffrey sees in the meeting room in the Convergence. He predicts a cybernetic future, where humans will be combined with robots.

Ben-Ezra is the man that Jeffrey meets in the garden of the Convergence facility. He is similar to the Stenmark twins in the fact that they both believe that planetary woes will damage society, and that those frozen in *Zero K* will be thawed. He also states that isolation is a way to reduce the severity of these woes.

II. Elaborating The Post-Apocalyptic genre in *Zero K*:

In *Zero K* language is examined against the effort of the human mind to create meaning, while the background of an apocalyptic world serves as a testing ground for multiple themes –

including love, abandonment, dysfunctional family dynamics, and the fight for human immortality. The central character of the novel, Jeff Lockhart, is the adult son of global financier and billionaire Ross Lockhart, who has flown Jeff out to “The Convergence”, a remote and secret compound on the edge of Russia, where people come to die and then be reborn. Ross – a primary investor in this new technology, which promises scientific rejuvenation of old and ill bodies post-death, and secure body storage through cryonic freezing – has invited Jeff to farewell Artis, Ross’s younger wife, as she prepares for her journey into death and restoration. Surrounded by apocalyptic warnings . Jeff is confronted with more than the question over whether we should be able to control our own death, and engineer our own immortality. Here, at the edge of the world as he knows it, Jeff is confronted with his life-long struggle for definition – his quest to name something in its purest essence in order to truly understand it, and to have some kind of power over it.

II.1.Exploring Prominent Themes with Post-Apocalyptic Relevance :

II.1.1.Life and Death:

In the novel, the author uses the theme of life and death in order to put forth the idea that life and death are not absolutes. Ross tells Jeffery “you understand there’s something beyond the last breath. You understand this is only the preface to something larger, to what is next.”(33). He says this and does not mean the afterlife religions promise, but the possibility of another life in the future, something close to immortality. However, in order for *Zero K* to function and the Convergence to succeed, the individual who is being preserved must clinically die. People like the Convergence nurses and the Stenmark twins state that the mind is still active while the person is clinically deceased. We see this first hand in the chapter told from Artis Martineau’s perspective. According to the living characters, including the apparent

administrators at the Convergence, they state that Artis is basically dead. Ross himself does not deny it when Jeffery uses this expression. However, in the chapter we witness Artis' mind still thinking and trying to figure out what her current state is. The novel also touches on death's inverse, life.

In one of Ross and Jeffrey's first conversations, Ross gives Jeffrey a lecture about the very short period of time a person has to live and the very short period in which humans have inhabited Earth. He basically tells Jeffrey that he has to live his life, because he will not be around for long, in the grand scheme of things. But in a surprising turn of events, Ross does eventually change his mind about life and chooses to be frozen with Artis, and Jeffrey who has a nihilistic attitude throughout the book does somewhat accept Ross' attitude on life. However, we later learn that (as mentioned before), when it comes to *Zero K*, there are middle-grounds between life and death. *Zero K* makes use of that middle-ground in order to create the possibility that someone can be revived in the future.

However, the characters do seem to approach this idea as one of rebirth. Those who are frozen are naked and shaved, just as one would be when they are born. This muddies the approach to life and death and creates a paradox. If the Convergence regards rebirth, would that not mean that the person died in order to be reborn?

II.1.2.Faith:

As one of the main themes of the book, the author uses the theme of faith to demonstrate that faith has to do with more than just religion. Religious faith is used as a comparison to faith in science. This can be most obviously seen in the large amount of pilgrimage imagery used within the novel, especially and repeatedly by Ross saying "Faith-based technology.

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That's what it is. Another god. Not so different, it turns out. Except that it's real, it's true, it delivers.”(11).

Other characters such as the monk, Szabo, the woman at the meeting and the Stenmark twins make many references to pilgrimages when discussing the Convergence. The woman at the meeting makes direct reference to the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca. Essentially, she compares the city of Mecca to the Convergence facility. Just as many Muslims make the long and arduous trek to their religions holy city, the woman believes many will make the journey to the Convergence, just as the heralds did. However, it must be noted that the Convergence is not a religion in the exact sense. The Convergence has no god, holy book, or a specific rule set.

Those who trust in the Convergence are putting a massive amount of faith in the project and the future. There is no guarantee that the project will succeed or that the many diseases will be cured that will allow many of the frozen individuals to be thawed and cured. However, people like Artis, Ross, and the Stenmark twins are convinced that everything will go according to plan. This is similar to the religious notion that an afterlife exists and that believers will certainly ascend to it when they die. Many may say there is no proof of an afterlife just as there is no proof that the Convergence will succeed and that the future will occur in the way that those involved with the Convergence believe. This concept is apparent in Ross's discussions with Jeffery when the latter tells the reader

Ross had also made a reference to pilgrims. This place may not have been intended as the new Jerusalem but people made long journeys to find a form of higher being here, or at least a scientific process that will keep their body tissue from decomposing. (47)

While religious people seek an afterlife, those who believe in the Convergence want immortality.

II.1.3. The Future:

The author uses the idea of the future in order to portray the period in which someone is awoken from *Zero K* as a new world, quoting Artis on her sick-bed when talking to Jeffery saying “I have every belief that I will awaken to a new perception of the world.”(52). As stated before, many characters in *Zero K* theorize the nature of the distant future. In fact, it seems that part of the entire purpose of the Convergence is to ensure the success of the future and the continuation of the human race. It is implied that characters like Ben-Ezra and Szabo believe that many aspects of humanity will be destroyed thanks to planetary woes, wars, and natural disasters like famine or extremely inclement weather. They seem to believe that this fate is completely inevitable. If it was not, why focus on preventing the future dystopia of Earth? After all, preventing a disaster is easier than fixing whatever consequences it left. Instead they look towards the future as something to inherit after the disasters have occurred.

In short, many of the novel's characters strive for the future and only focus on aspects of the present that help them achieve their version of the future. For example, Ross wants his future to be with Artis and after spending a great amount of time thinking and rethinking, he decides to be frozen using *Zero K* in order to be with her when she is thawed. By doing this, Ross is completely neglecting his son once again and at a different stage of life, regardless of the rocky relationship they may have. His son is in the present and will most likely not be in the far future, or be frozen to ensure that he lives during that period. He completely abandons anything tying him to the present, like money, reputation, and his family in order to secure the

future that he envisions. The only characters that seem to have an attitude that is inverted to this are Jeffrey and Emma.

II.1.4.Mental Illness:

The author implies that some of the novel's characters suffer from some sort of mental illness (it is never stated outward), and through this, the author demonstrates that mental illness can have two sides, a destructive side and a functional one.

The destructive aspects of mental illness in the novel lie in the character of Madeline. It is heavily implied that Madeline suffered from sort of compulsion disorder (most likely OCD). The following is the technical definition of OCD: "unreasonable thoughts and fears (obsessions) that lead you to do repetitive behaviors (compulsions). It's also possible to have only obsessions or only compulsions and still have OCD" (MayoClinic). If we compare this to Madeline's behavior, a connection appears. Madeline seems compelled to organize the cutlery a certain way (the freshly washed at the bottom every single time) and must take all of the stickers off of pieces of fruit. It is also possible (implied but not definite) that her disorder had something to do with her assault of Ross which might explain why he was neither surprised nor did he dwell on the incident. This shows the destructive side of mental illness, as it both possibly destroys her as a person, but seems to destroy her family even more.

However, her son, Jeffrey shows the same types of symptoms but luckily does not show any destructive tendencies. Jeffrey's symptoms can be seen in his obsessive checking of the stove burners and door locks, and his compulsion to insert his keys and his handkerchief into his pocket in a certain way. Jeffrey does not let his compulsions to dictate his life. It does not seem to affect him much outside of his home and does not have any clearly negative effects

on others or on his relationships with them. Jeffrey is functional, unlike Madeline. Essentially, Delillo, in his novel, is showing the variety of ways mental illness can express itself.

II.1.5. Family:

Within the novel, there are two main family units which portray the idea that the dissolution of the traditional family unit can and will result in negative effects on the members of the family, but that it is not the only cause of these negative effects. Basically, troubled family units will cause damage whether they stay whole or not (divorce and separation may lessen these negative effects but cannot erase them completely). These two units are the Lockhart family (Jeffrey, Ross, Madeline, and Artis), and Emma's family (Emma, Stak, and Emma's ex-husband).

Stating that the Lockhart family is merely an unstable one is an understatement. Even before the family was broken up, there was a great amount of tension and violence within the household. In the novel, Ross informs Jeff that Madeline once stabbed him with a steak knife. Ross was not very alarmed by this and the couple seemed to move on from this incident quickly, which possibly alludes to the fact that this type of violent behavior was not necessarily uncommon or new. Jeffrey was not aware of this given his surprise when Ross tells him, but it clearly had negative effects on Madeline and Ross. When Jeffrey was thirteen, Ross left the family, causing Jeffrey extensive distress and a sense of abandonment that followed him years later. In short, if the family had stayed together, Ross and Madeline's situation would have worsened, nevertheless, the breaking up of the family negatively affected Jeffrey.

The same thing can be said about Emma's family. However, the reader is not told about the ultimate reason that her family broke up, we are only told that it broke up due to

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something happening between the couple (possibly travel). However, this break up could have possibly attributed to Stak's later behavior. A case can also be made for Stak's nonexistent family, but we are not told much about them either.

Conclusion:

The acceleration of cultural and technological changes that the twentieth century has witnessed seems to have left many people confused, unsure about their place in the world and the meaning of their lives. Dominant social institutions such as the religion and the traditional values associated with these institutions, which previously gave orientation to people's lives, seem to have been eroded by these changes. Furthermore, high rates of mentally ill people and suicide in the world's most "developed" nations, especially amongst the young, are sometimes taken to suggest that meaning today is more difficult to find than in previous generations.

By the end of the book, one cannot deny nor overlook the transformation Delillo's characters went through. When we exclude Jeffery (due to his nihilism) we find that the author's focus was on the human nature that seeks and works for immortality. We want to extend our lives in any possible way and we are selfishly and greedily willing to sacrifice others in our pursuit of immortality. Jeffery was probably the only exception in all of that because of his philosophical ideas, however even he can understand and accept the thrilling concept of a never ending life. However, the past life and the external factors has a great effects on the characters behaviors, Faith played a huge role on their decisions. The author uses the theme of faith to demonstrate that faith has to do with more than just religion. Religious faith is used as a comparison to faith in science. Also, life and death theme in order to put forth the idea that life and death are not absolutes.

General Conclusion

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Postmodernism might seem exclusive in its work, its emphasis on multiplicity and the decentered subject makes very uncomfortable reading for traditional theorists or philosophers. Postmodernism rejects western values and beliefs as only a small part of the human experience and it rejects such ideas, beliefs, culture and norms of the western. Integrity is fragmented apart into unharmonious narratives which lead to a shattering of identity and an overall breakdown of any idea of the self.

Don DeLillo's novel, *Zero K*, examine contemporary American life in their depictions of how technology converge in a capitalist society. In particular, DeLillo decries the rogue capitalist whose solipsism⁹ and greed appropriate humanity and its creations namely, art and technology as a means for personal gain. The rogue capitalist figure in the novel is Ross Lockhart connects technology and art in his treatment of them as capitalist commodities. Thus in his novels, DeLillo illuminates the idea that transcendence does not lie in the created phenomena of technology, but rather it lies in the prosaic qualities of life—the seemingly mundane aspects that comprise our lives.

The first chapter in this research tackles the theoretical framework of postmodern nihilism, starting with the insights of postmodernism literature and its characteristics moving to the contextualization of postmodern nihilism in which the definition of each (Postmodernism, Nihilism) were provided, And then the link between them, Including the theories related to them. Next, Dystopian fiction was explained as well as the postmodern dystopia.

The second chapter, Explored the portrayal of technology in *Zero k*, In which a synopsis of the novel was provided, Also the effects of technology, And how the American society is obsessed with it in their daily life, Moreover, The drive life theory EROS was explained using the character's behavior in the novel.

• ⁹ According to oxford dictionary Solipsism is the quality of being self-centred or selfish.

General Conclusion

Finally , The last chapter , concentrated on the psychoanalysis and the nihilistic reaction of the characters as individuals , Jeff's Nihilism and Ross's anti nihilism , Next , A detailed analysis of each characters was provided in order to extract the reasons behind each character's behaviors . Furthermore , The external factors was also mentioned because it has a huge impact on their behaviors.

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