

Technoimmortality: Dehumanization in The Pursuit of Immortality in Don Delillo's "Zero K"

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Abstract

In his novel "Zero K", Don DeLillo, one of the most well-regarded American writers, discusses the topic of advanced technology being used to overcome human mortality. The pursuit of immortality leads to the dehumanization of the human subjects, ultimately depriving them of arguably life's most crucial experience that is death. To present this problem, the novel descends into the depths of The Convergence, a cutting-edge cryogenic facility, where Jeffrey Lockhart's mother Artis will be put into a cryopreservation chamber to await the time where technology will be advanced enough to revive her. Although, its purpose is grim, the complex is the bastion of technological optimism where death is to be conquered. It is the place in which death is not an inevitable end, but a mere passing state of being. The Convergence complex is a space of contemplation; designed solely to make a person focus their thoughts on their mortality through the use of minimalist aesthetics, screens with disaster videos emerging from the walls and disturbing artworks. The human subject is stripped of many fundamental stimuli, before ultimately being put into a cryopreservation chamber, where they experience an existence between life and death. This state proves to be destructive to the mind, as it cannot cope with a disembodied state and isolation. The mind loses itself in a constant stream of thought, condemned to ask questions to itself until there finally comes a time it can be brought back to life, or is put to death.

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