

# **And Be but Cryonically Extant: Don DeLillo and Sir Thomas**

**Browne**

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**Abstract**

This paper argues that Don DeLillo's 2016 novel *Zero K* uses a debt to Sir Thomas Browne to stage a scalar approach to literature in the Anthropocene. *Zero K* uses its intertextual relationship to Browne's *Urne-Buriall* to subject not only itself but the institution of literature per se to a kind of radical reduction or minimisation, cancelling out both against the scale of geological time. DeLillo's novel can be seen as echoing the process of 'agitation' Brent Nelson finds in *Urne-Buriall*, pulling the reader back and forth between the time of the novel and geological time; in so doing, it responds to questions foregrounded by – among others – Timothy Clark and Timothy Morton about the anthropocentric limits of the novel in the Anthropocene. The present article pursues three aspects of *Zero K* to make this argument: Jeffrey Lockhart's compulsion to find meaning in moments (which echoes the attention of Clark and Morton to Wordsworth's 'spots of time'); Jeffrey's sense of Artis Martineau speaking a 'shadow language,' which works to withdraw certainty from the present; and a literary fascination with immortality (continuing Browne's insistence on the transience of monuments). The paper concludes with a brief coda on periodisation and pedagogy.

**Keywords**

Don DeLillo; Thomas Browne; Ecocriticism; *Zero K*; Geological time; Anthropocene

That which the sun compoundeth, and fire analyseth, *Cryogenesis* transmuteth. All plots tend to move lifeward.

Whether they were the Capsules of men or women or children, no authentick decision from ancient custome in distinct places of buriall. Although not improbably conjectured, that the double Sepulture, or burying place of Abraham, had in it such intention. Confirmable also: a form of assisted suicide. Simple *old-fashioned* fanaticism.

Great Persons affected great Monuments. Private wealth management, dynasty trusts, emerging markets. And the fair and largest Pods contained no vulgar ashes, which makes that disparity in those which time discovereth among us. Serious money. The heart of a new metropolis, making our last bed like our first; nor much unlike the Urnes of our nativity, when we lay in the nether part of the Earth, a consciousness that blends with the environment, and inward vault of our Microcosme.

Time which antiquates antiquities, and hath an art to make dust of all things, hath yet spared these *ahistorical* humans, upright in their capsules. In a future we hope to be known by open and visible conservatories, when to be unknown was the means of their continuation and obscurity their protection: from cyber attack, terrorism, the wild surges of weather. They departed a languishing corps, with desires of reunion.

We whose generations are ordained in this setting part of time, are providentially taken off from similes, metaphors, analogies. And being necessitated to eye the remaining particle of futurity, are naturally constituted unto thoughts of the next world, and cannot excusably decline the consideration of that duration, which maketh Pyramids pillars of snow,

and all that's past a moment. Enclosed in plastic, watching a drop of water. The moment is there to be forgotten.

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### I. Great persons affected great monuments

Can we read DeLillo's *Zero K* (2016) without reading Sir Thomas Browne? The Sir Thomas Browne of the seventeenth century, indeed? For such he is – we are told so by Ben-Ezra, one of a number of cryptic, riddling figures who beguile and vex Jeffrey Lockhart at the Convergence (and who are perhaps themselves acting out a series of beguiling and vexing death-themed art installations). Ben-Ezra quotes a sentence from Browne's *Hydriotaphia, or Urne-Buriall* (1658):

He thought for a moment.

“It is heaviest stone that melancholy can throw at a man to tell him that he is at the end of his nature, or that there is no further state to come.”

I waited.

‘Seventeenth century,’ he said. ‘Sir Thomas Browne.’

I waited some more. But that was all. He left it up to me to reckon our progress since then.<sup>1</sup>

The exchange is ludicrous, of course – portentous, inscrutable Ben-Ezra! But I am definitely reading Sir Thomas Browne. In fact, I am reading more Thomas Browne than just these words – *Zero K* analyseth, compoundeth, transmuteth *Urne-Buriall*. *Urne-Buriall* incites *Zero K*'s engagement with art, immortality, literature, and the (buried) environment. The fact that Artis is an archaeologist, and hence a Browne-like figure in the text; the fascination with what is left below the earth (‘the deep discovery of the Subterranean world,’ ‘the subterrane is where

the advanced model realises itself' (*UB* 97, *ZK* 238)); the question of what may come back after interment (*ZK* 10, *UB* 108); the moment as a pinprick against other timescales (*ZK* 34, *UB* 134); and the way 'that which the sun compoundeth' is the subject of the final chapter of the book, Jeff Lockhart's moment of epiphany as the sun sets over Manhattan (*ZK* 273-4, *UB* 120) – all of these things striate Browne across *Zero K*.

This is not simply a matter, though, of tracing the links between the two texts. The relationship between them is itself embedded in a more profound rhetorical strategy, whereby Browne's 'heaviest stone' is itself part of a concept series clustered around non-human timescales. The 'heaviest stone' is thrown not just towards a man, but towards other kinds of stone: meteor strikes, geological formations and geological time, and (with a distinct sense of the absurd) 'earth art' and 'rock sculpture' (*ZK* 10, 215). At stake here is the idea that ecocriticism – because *Zero K* is a text concerned with environment and survival, environments of survival, survival of environments – means 'the need to think on several scales at once, as well as how the need to think on several scales at once may entail conflicts and contradictions,' as Timothy Clark puts it.<sup>2</sup> Behind this idea, and other recent trends in ecocriticism, is Timothy Morton's idea of climate change as a hyperobject, something that is 'massively distributed in time and space relative to humans, and which def[ies] overview and resist[s] understanding.'<sup>3</sup> Climate change as hyperobject is, precisely, something that spurs us to try and think on non-human and potentially conflicting scales, and this is one of the artistic problems *Zero K* cracks open.

'[H]ow to present a complex global issue in an effective and coherent literary work?' Clark wonders.<sup>4</sup> For DeLillo, several strategies come into play: they include the extension of the human timescale to that of the geological, or of the hyperobject; using Browne to sound out the scalar limits not of a single work of fiction, but of the institution of literature itself; and they include, at various points, the refusal of coherence itself.<sup>5</sup> The present essay analyses

these three approaches, using as a point of departure the sense of scale Clark sees as essential – as urgent – in the Anthropocene reading. This scale reading attempts to reckon with the fact that climate change – as a hyperobject – can never be seen: one can see the exhaust from a car, or the plume from a factory chimney, but these things are not the same as seeing climate change, which is too ‘massively distributed’ for human perception. For Clark, this means that even laudable attempts to reckon with climate change in fiction often collapse into ‘intellectual miniaturisation,’ reducing the ‘intractable challenges of the Anthropocene’ to the scale of human lifespans, which is to say, the typical timescale of fiction and criticism.<sup>6</sup>

DeLillo, though, seems to understand these limits, the limits of ‘sensuous images, or plot of human actions, characters and motive.’<sup>7</sup> Instead of depicting ecological breakdown or climate catastrophe, DeLillo includes a representation, a video montage, of extreme weather events, in which images of a tornado and its aftermath – ‘the dead arrayed on ravaged floor boards in front yards – give way to those of a ‘mile-wide storm’s advent, people trying to escape, hyperreally, one woman on a bicycle recalling ‘a scene in an old silent movie, she is Buster Keaton in nitwit innocence’ (ZK 36). ‘Here was our climate enfolding us,’ thinks Jeffrey. That it appears as a representation tells us that *Zero K* will attempt something different – the novel includes in itself, as a kind of counterpoint or echo, this instance of climate emergency on the scale of ‘sensuous images.’

It is difficult, says Clark, ‘to imagine what a novel’s interior monologue would look like if one tried to present it over a geological time scale.’<sup>8</sup> And yet, *Zero K* does attempt this ‘nonsensical impossibility’ with Artis’s monologue – or, at least, *Zero K* tells us it is doing so (or pretends it is doing so). At the level of plot, the novel is about the possibility of extending human lifespans over geological timescales, with the caveat that whoever emerges from the capsules may no longer have a consciousness we would recognise as human. Even this plot, I think, is similar to the ironic climate catastrophe counterpoint I mention above. The novel’s

ecocritical force is elsewhere, namely its use of Browne to extend the scale experience of reading. This takes the form of a kind of uncanny agitation, whereby the novel continually seems to contract or reduce itself, to imagine itself as something nullified by the scale of geological time. At a symbolic level, its own ‘plot of human actions, characters and motive’ shrinks and vanishes. And by enmeshing itself in a relationship with Browne’s text, it synecdochally applies this vanishing to the entire institution of literature: the ecocritical drive of this is, as Clark says, the ‘reorientation of the sense of time and periodisation as fundamental modes of human categorisation and conception.’<sup>9</sup>

The present essay attempts to work through DeLillo’s (and Browne’s) reorientation through miniaturisation in the following ways. Part II begins to adumbrate *Zero K*’s vanishing point strategy by looking at its fascination with moments that defy meaning, and the ‘shadow language’ spoken by Artis. Both textual effects begin to enact a sense of the novel as fragile and evanescent, as *not*. This analysis is extended in Part III, where the verb ‘to tell’ – the novel’s unit of narration – also begins to warp and fragment. These two effects recall what Brent Nelson calls Browne’s ‘agitation’ of the reader; a third agitation is considered in Part IV, in which the *technē* of ‘late style’ come to evince, via the work of Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, a kind of kinship with stone. Part V picks up an earlier discussion from Clark, about novelistic closure, and argues that Jeffrey’s experience in the final chapter may not be as epiphanic as it seems.

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## II. Pillars of snow

*Zero K*’s stones and asteroids open up the scale of geological – and cosmic – time, ‘reducing,’ as Jeffrey Jerome Cohen puts it, ‘the human to its vanishing point.’<sup>10</sup> The novel advances two strategies for thinking of itself as such a vanishing point, and, indeed,

vanishing. One of these concerns a kind of ‘shadow language,’ a way of speaking attributed to Artis but also marking the text as a whole (which we will discuss shortly); the other is its fascination with moments, and a kind of metaphysical failure to find meaning in moments.

The idea of a charged moment (an epiphany, a vision) is something that Clark considers: he looks, for example, at the way Anthropocene avant-gardes and accounts of art – such as Morton’s – favour narrative disruption (‘heightened episodes that interrupt the would-be narrative continuity of purposive perception, such as the quasi-traumatic breakdowns of normal perceptual categories that William Wordsworth labelled ‘spots of time’).<sup>11</sup> These approaches to moments as ‘spots of time’ – irruptive or transcendent – preserve the moment, attest to its significance; but bemused, listless Jeffrey Lockhart is no Wordsworth, and *Zero K* seems to be interested in something else, in de-signifying or obliterating its moments.

The idea that a moment contains a meaning occurs when Jeffrey recollects his mother using paper napkins instead of serviettes:

I didn’t think of the untouched paper napkin as a marginal matter. This was the unseeable texture of a life except that I was seeing it. This is who she was. And as I came to know who she was, seeing it with every visit, my sense of attentiveness deepened. I tended to overinterpret what I saw, yes, but I saw it often and could not help thinking that these small moments were far more telling than they might appear to be, although I wasn’t sure what they told, the paper napkin, the kitchen utensils in the cabinet drawer ... (ZK 104).

This feels very much like a spot of time. But at the Convergence, the time of the moment is contrasted with that of geology, which will bring about a change in Jeffrey’s perspective. The novel begins reckoning with the timescales of the moment and the cosmic during the discussion between Ross and Jeffrey about the number of seconds a life might contain:



*Seconds*, he said. Start counting. Your life in seconds. Think of the age of the earth, the geologic eras, oceans appearing and disappearing. Think of the age of the galaxy, the age of the universe. All those billions of years. And us, you and me. We die in a flash (ZK 34).

The same juxtaposition of scales occurs when Jeffrey's speculation about the inner life of Ben-Ezra ('Not even a minute is imaginable' (ZK 126)) is set against both the scale of 'planetary woe' and the extraction of humans from human time, the whole point of the *Convergence* ("We're getting ahead of ourselves. This is where we want to be" (ZK 126-7)).

Jeffrey leaves the *Convergence*, returns to New York. Here, after the conversations about time, the urge to imbue a moment with meaning – as with the memory of the napkins – has left him:

The driver slipped into the bus lane, temporarily gaining position, advantage dominance and he gestured backwards to the boy as he spoke, three lights ahead all green – Pashto, Urdu, Afghani – and I told Emma that we were riding in a taxicab with a driver who enters the bus lane illegally and drives at madman speeds with one hand on the wheel while he half-looks over his shoulder and converses with a passenger in a far-flung language. What does this mean? (ZK 170-71).

Jeffrey answers his own question, with bathos: "It means this is just another day." It is as though the concept of the charged moment, the spot of time, empties out as the novel progresses, as though to progress through the text is to absorb the scale of time reckoned with by both Browne and the *Convergence*, so that by this point, the metaphysical question ('What does it mean?') can be asked, but no meaningful answer can come.

The apotheosis of this scalar thinking is the novel's penultimate chapter: here, the narrative strategy refuses narrative, the ordering of experience, and devolves into a kind of compilation, the recording of discrete moments with no overt aims of linking or ordering them

or making them significant. They are de-charged, unheightened; not spots of time; maybe merely spots or times. It is a way of making ‘all that’s past a moment’ – a way of cancelling narrative development and bleeding plot out of these episodes, crunching novel-time down to something less than a moment, the infinitesimal scale it might occupy from the perspective of God, or a hyperobject. As Browne has it:

To extend our memories by Monuments, whose death we dayly pray for, and whose duration we cannot hope, without injury to our expectations in the advent of the last day, were a contradiction to our beliefs. We whose generations are ordained in this setting part of time, are providentially taken off from such imaginations. And, being necessitated to eye the remaining particle of futurity, are naturally constituted unto thoughts of the next world, and cannot excusably decline the consideration of that duration, which maketh Pyramids pillars of snow, and all that’s past a moment (*UB* 134).

It is as though *Zero K* is now seeing itself from space, and the idea of moments that contain meanings – itself a kind of coherence – vanishes, as the eye of the text moves further and further from the surface of the earth, and the text de-coheres. It seeks to annul or nullify itself, to render itself imperceptible, a *nothing*, as viewed from a cosmic or geological perspective it surely is. But because DeLillo’s text includes Browne’s and draws from it, it includes *Urne-Buriall* in this movement of annihilation, making all of literature from the seventeenth century onwards a moment, and then nothing.

This could be seen as one answer to the problem of narrative closure that Clark detects in Barbara Kingsolver’s *Flight Behaviour*: troubled by the neat closure of the novel, its transition back into the anthropocentric timescales of the traditional novel, he asks if ‘the major question raised by Kingsolver’s novel’ is whether

the limits of readers' engagement being encountered merely those of now dated cultural and artistic conventions capable of change and reinvention? Or does the challenge of representing major ecological issues mean acknowledging the limits of the human capacity for engagement beyond certain scales in space or time, and beyond the spheres of immediate identification or empathy? This limit could be inexorable ...<sup>12</sup>

The decohering of the penultimate chapter might be one of the answers that Clark is looking for. The final chapter of *Zero K* seems to contain a much more conventional epiphany, and we will consider this in more detail in Part V, below.

'The primary subject of [*Urne-Buriall*],' says Brent Nelson, 'is the reader.'<sup>13</sup> *Urne-Buriall* 'thematizes competing notions of reading,' 'agitating and wearying the reader with vain attempts at deriving meaning from these dead remains.'<sup>14</sup> This is perhaps a kind of apotheosis of the way early modern sonnets would both activate and recoil from the classical immortality of poetry *topos*. Shakespeare's sonnets, for example, repeatedly promise immortality for both the 'lovely boy' and the writer himself, but, as Amanda Watson says, 'The doubts that repeatedly plague the speaker, even as he argues for poetry's immortalizing power, indicate how profoundly the sonnets are haunted by forgetting.'<sup>15</sup> As an instance of the way 'writing preserves but can also be lost,' she cites the second, 'anxious,' quatrain of Sonnet 121:

So should my papers, yellowed with their age  
 Be scorned, by old men of less truth than tongue  
 And your true rights be termed a poet's rage  
 And stretched meter of an antique song.<sup>16</sup>

This profound uneasiness – the will to immortality that checks and questions itself – is something Thomas Greene sees as typifying Renaissance humanism’s engagement with its classical heritage. It persists in the fear that humanism would ‘sow no new seed, make no new design’ and that for nothing, therefore, does humanism ‘reach out into chaos, oblivion, mystery, the alien, the subterranean, the dead, even the demonic.’<sup>17</sup> So a writer such as Edmund Spenser, fascinated by classical forms, pursues (in Anne Lake Prescott’s words) ‘earthly glory, by noble service to Cleopolis,’ but also fears ‘the pride that defies the gods above and ignores the ruinous undermining of the foundations below.’<sup>18</sup>

For Nelson, this simultaneous fascination and recoil is a matter of what Browne wants to do with his treatment of the urns – it may look like an archaeological reconstruction, the text repeatedly refuses this genre, and the resultant agitating and wearying of the reader is aimed at inculcating a new kind of consciousness, creating an awareness of the miniscule temporal against the vast eternal. If *Zero K* answers some of Clark’s concerns, it is through a similar performative – immersing the reader in the traditional machinery of the novel, whilst deploying that machinery to cancel itself out. But, of course, it cannot do this literally – the reader still holds the book, and so is subject also to an agitation, as the scales of geological time open up, and then shrink back down to the size of the artefact the reader has picked off the shelf, possibly with some expectation of enjoyment.

### **III. Tell truth scarce forty years**

We have been speaking so far about one of the novel’s scale disorientation strategies, and come now to a second. Artis, we are told, speaks ‘a kind of shadow language’ (*ZK* 18). Artis is not Jeffrey – or DeLillo – but this is nonetheless a cue to think of much of the text’s language as shadowy, failing to signify or signifying in halting, difficult ways; and this, in turn, becomes the second way the text tries to cancel itself out against the scale of geological time. In some cases, as Peter Boxall observes, the novel’s language is an ‘edging towards bare

tautology,’ as when Jeffrey tells us that ‘the bed was bedlike, the chair was a chair’ (ZK 20).<sup>19</sup> In other cases it is a matter of what we are being told, or what Jeffrey is being told. David Cowart stresses the role Jeffrey plays as narrator – for Cowart, Jeffrey is ‘the storyteller-artist who recognises in language the instrument essential to his calling’; he ‘presents himself as guileless ... As storyteller, however, he is hardly disinterested.’<sup>20</sup> It is the idea of narration as *telling* that interests me here.

It is in telling that the timescales of *Zero K* affect language the most, make it a shadow language, conjuring meanings only to render them fragile or impossible. So meanings collapse, decohere, drift, as though the novel were depicting itself from a world after the Convergence (that time after metaphors and similes (ZK 130)), or from the Bruniquel cave. From these perspectives the novel is *not* – and so it attempts to depict itself as not, obliterating itself. And as a novel is told, is narrated, this self-annulling works through the verb *to tell*. The verb to tell, instead of telling, tells of a metaphysical perplexity that makes sense if the novel is *not*: so in the food unit, Jeffrey muses, ‘The food I was chewing told me it could conceivably be meat’ (ZK 86).<sup>21</sup> One of the most striking episodes of metaphysical perplexity comes in the gallery-like room Jeffrey visits with Ross, when it is unclear whether it is ‘a site or an idea for a site’:

I looked at Ross, who was staring past me toward a far corner of the room. It took me a moment, everything here took me a moment. Then I saw what he saw, a figure seated on the floor near the junction of the two walls. Small human figure, motionless, seeping gradually into my level of awareness I had to tell myself I was not somewhere else trying to visualise what I was actually seeing, here and now, in solid form (ZK 148).

The opaque moment with the napkin, that we have already noticed, is also part of this schema: the ‘small moments’ that are ‘far more telling than they might appear to be, although I wasn’t sure what they told’ (ZK 104). And an echo here, too, of Artis’s words, that also contribute to

this perplexity of perception and narration: “the optic nerve is not telling the full truth” (*ZK* 45).<sup>22</sup>

Telling never tells. Telling manifests uncertainty, tautology and paradox. Telling, narration, tells nothing, falls apart, and in these moments the novel figures itself as a ruin and vanishes.

Another layer of this: the verb ‘tell’ appears six times (and ‘foretell’ once) in *Urne-Buriall*. Its significance for *Zero K*, and for Jeffrey the storyteller-narrator-antimetaphysician, is that all of these instances are connected with death. Death, for Browne, is told.

One of them we have already seen: allowing the word ‘tell’ to resonate in the voices of both Browne and Jeffrey Lockhart, it is the sentence Ben Ezra quotes: a man must be told by melancholy that he is at the end of his nature. Similarly, we learn that ‘Our Fathers finde their graves in our short memories and sadly tell us how we may be buried in our Survivors,’ and that ‘Grave-stones tell truth scarce forty years’ (*UB* 134).<sup>23</sup> But salvation and redemption are also a matter of being told. Following the passage quoted by Ben-Ezra, Browne continues:

But the superiour ingredient and obscured part of our selves, whereto all present felicities afford no resting contentment, will be able at last to tell us we are more than our present selves; and evacuate such hopes in the fruition of their own accomplishments (*UB* 131).

The verb ‘tell’ for Browne bifurcates, opens a fault line between the temporal and the eternal. That part of us that is ‘more than our present selves’ will experience the salvation of God. But eternal life is solely the province of the divine, of the ‘accomplishment’ of salvation. If we look more closely at the other instances of ‘tell’, we can see that what we are being told is impermanence, oblivion, the failure of monuments and memory:

Circles and right lines limit and close all bodies, and the mortal right-lined circle must conclude and shut up all. There is no antidote against the opium of time, which temporally considereth all things: our fathers find their graves in our short memories, and sadly tell us

how we may be buried in our survivors. Gravestones tell truth scarce forty years. Generations pass while some trees stand, and old families last not three oaks. To be read by bare inscriptions like many in Gruter, to hope for eternity by enigmatical epithets or first letters of our names, to be studied by antiquaries, who we were, and have new names given us like many of the mummies, are cold consolations unto the students of perpetuity, even by everlasting languages (*UB* 134).

This is part of a wider early modern cosmology: all of creation – including, now, the moon and the heavens beyond it – was the realm of the mutable, the impermanent. This is the context of Browne’s final use of the verb ‘tell’:

In vain do individuals hope for immortality, or any patent from oblivion, in preservations below the moon: Men have been deceived even in their flatteries above the Sun, and studied conceits to perpetuate their names in heaven. The various Cosmography of that part hath already varied the names of contrived constellations; *Nimrod* is lost in *Orion*, and *Osyris* in the Dogge-starre. While we look for incorruption in the heavens, we finde that they are but like the earth; Durable in their main bodies, alterable in their parts: whereof beside comets and new stars, perspectives begin to tell tales. And the spots that wander about the sun, with *Phaetons* favour, would make clear conviction.

These instances of the word ‘tell,’ connected with death and memory, sound the limits of knowledge for Browne, and of what one generation might transmit to another. As Philip Schwyzer comments, *Urne-Buriall* is ‘profoundly pessimistic, both about the possibility of memorialization and about the ability of the living to recover true and meaningful messages from the dead.’<sup>24</sup> Schwyzer unpicks the commemorative urge: ‘What I seek to extend into the future is some memory of my *self*, my self as I have known it,’ but ‘What the dead would wish to have remembered of themselves is never what the living wish to know.’<sup>25</sup>

For Browne, the enterprise is even more doomed: because the mortal self is evacuated or vanquished when it ascends into the eternal life of Christ. Browne, as we have seen, declares that we are ‘more than our present selves’ – and the part that eludes the heaviest stone of mortality is the more durable. The rest is air. Kevin Killeen argues that for Browne, ‘Perpetuity ... is unknowable, and even immortality, in its “handsome anticipation of Heaven,” involves the wholesale destruction of the self: “annihilation, extasis, exolution, liquefaction, transformation, the kisse of the spouse, gustation of God and ingression into the divine shadow”’ (*UB* 139).<sup>26</sup> Another correspondence with *Zero K* – because, as we have seen, whoever or whatever emerges from the pods will speak a different kind of language, and they will ‘reawaken to a new perception of the world.’ This, too, amounts to a ‘wholesale destruction of the self.’ But as Killeen goes on to say, Browne is setting the temporal against the eternal: just as *Zero K* works to annul itself, Browne’s texts ‘pursue their immense learning on the presumption that it is but a frippery in the longer scheme of divine time that exists beyond words and into which knowledge will tumble.’<sup>27</sup>

In other words, in both texts, the verb ‘tell’ is a site where telling tells nothing – for Browne, nothing can reliably be told into the future (the scale of the eternal against the temporal); for DeLillo, nothing in the future can be recovered from the past (all past events are a pinprick against the scales of geological and cosmic time). And in using Browne to make this case, DeLillo evokes not only the smallness of *Zero K*, but of the construct ‘literature’, as the relationship between the two texts becomes a synecdoche for literature as a whole. Morton argues for us still being Victorians, because of the proliferation of climate-altering technologies arising in the Victorian period.<sup>28</sup> In a similar way, we could think of *Zero K* satirically arguing that we are still Renaissance thinkers, pondering death and mutability beneath the moon, ignorant of the end of the Holocene, and that the styles and strategies, plots and preoccupations of reading that we inherited from the Holocene are



already archaic, striated with an uncanny nostalgia. Hence, then, another dimension of Nicholas Royle's formulation 'the outlandishness of all telling': 'outlandishness' being itself an early modern coinage, according to *OED*, roughly contemporary with Philemon Holland's English translation of Camden's *Britannia*, and because telling, when it tells, insists on those modes, tropes, figures and stories that connect us with the past but annihilate past and present at a stroke.<sup>29</sup>

Another aspect to this: DeLillo has been here before. *Zero K*'s fascination with telling – or not telling – recalls *End Zone*'s fascination with the 'untellable.'<sup>30</sup> In *End Zone*, the untellable comes to stand in for the failure of thought and language in the face of nuclear apocalypse.<sup>31</sup> But Anthropocene reading means that certain apocalyptic passages in *End Zone* acquire a new resonance, for example:

I stopped for a few seconds, watching the day burn out.

The sun. The desert. The sky. The silence. The flat stones. The insects. The wind and the clouds. The moon. The stars. The west and east. The song, the colour, the smell of the earth.

Blast area. Fire area. Body-burn area.<sup>32</sup>

Gary Harkness, in the desert, conjures a vision of a world without humans, a world hideously desertified, scoured by nuclear fire. But for us, now, the passage registers also both the scale of geological time and the end zone of the climate crisis itself. Cowart, pursuing the idea of the untellable through Rilke, also finds an uncanny, Anthropocene resonance. Billy Mast has been memorising Rilke's ninth Duino Elegy, 'which contains hints of *End Zone*'s larger themes, notably the tension between what language can express and *lauter Unsägliches* ("wholly untellable things").<sup>33</sup> Cowart gives us the relevant passage from Rilke:

The wanderer on the mountain slopes does not bring a handful of earth to the valley, untellable earth, but only the pure word that blooms like a gentian on those upland meadows.<sup>34</sup>

It is earth – or the Earth – that is untellable. Not only the blasted, desertified Earth of a nuclear war, but the earth, the Earth, the planet itself, in its untellable timescales. But while *End Zone* leaves the bare earth of the desert as a terminal point, *Zero K* insists on trying to conjure those timescales, and even – as we shall see later – to seek what Jeffrey Jerome Cohen calls a kind of alliance with them.

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#### **IV. Bury with them things wherein they excelled**

Two species of agitation, then: subjecting the reader to scalar disorientations, and by imbricating Browne, implicating the entire category ‘literature.’ There is a third. This mode of agitation activates signature effects and the strange throes of Renaissance immortality dreams, but finds stone within them, the geological at the centre of literary thinking, of literature’s possibility.

Browne, says Schwyzer, was ‘drawn to what he could not maintain and to delight in what he knew he must deride’; he ‘would surely never have been drawn to the subject were he not himself a cherisher of memorials.’<sup>35</sup> This is another dimension of the agitating, wearying soliciting of the reader that Nelson sees *Urne-Buriall* performing. To repudiate fantasies of immortality, as Browne does, and to bring the reader to this point of repudiation, Browne must understand how seductive they are. DeLillo also works with the seductive nature of immortality fantasies, and wills the reader to take them seriously – as though to say, in a manner similar to Browne, one needs to be seduced by them in order to repudiate them. He does this in two ways in *Zero K*. The first is at the level of plot, through the depiction of an

attempt to survive on extra-human timescales, the timescales of hyperobjects; the second is to pursue, and then confound, Renaissance (or Holocene) fantasies of literary immortality, in a fashion comparable to Browne.

Survival at the timescale of the hyperobject: Both *Zero K* and *Urne-Buriall* are profoundly concerned with certain futures of humanity. For Browne, it is a matter of the urne vs the afterlife – mere vaingloriousness, for Browne, doomed, to clasp whatever belief confines you to urn, pyramid, sarcophagus in the hope of resurrection; but Browne and other Christians can expect salvation, the resurrection of the body, because ‘we are more than our present selves’ (*UB* 131). For DeLillo’s characters, it is a matter of believing in a species of resurrection, a matter of what emerges from the pods: ‘Advances will be made through the years. Parts of the body built or rebuilt. A reassembling atom by atom. I have every belief I will reawaken to a new perception of the world’ (*ZK* 47). Ross makes the correspondences with resurrection clear: it is ‘Faith-based technology.’ Ross’s remark about faith-based technology replays Browne’s entire text in miniature:

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 (*ZK* 9).

Thus Browne: all those other religions thought they had it made. But they were suckers, and now they are ashy suckers in urnes. *We* on the other hand ...

One reading of this might call it satire – *Zero K* contains too many nudges and winks, too great a sense of absurdity, for us to take seriously the ambitions of the Convergence. But DeLillo isn’t so sure. He says:

[The Convergence] is not described very thoroughly. That seemed the work of another writer with a different set of intentions. I felt no compulsion to dispel implausibility. The idea

is that the novel, our contemporary novel, is able to contain the kind of implausibility that some people believe only belongs to reality. (Or to science fiction.)

And then there is Jeff Lockhart, a kind of human implausibility meter. If he accepts what he sees and experiences, I could do the same, and maybe the reader as well.<sup>36</sup>

The second immortalising conceit raises the stakes here. If Jeffrey, or DeLillo, or a reader are able to take the desires of the Convergence seriously, it is because *Zero K* is already enacting them. This is perhaps what lies behind Royle's discussion of *Zero K*'s combination of 'novelistic writing and magical thinking.'<sup>37</sup> *Zero K* reconfigures literature as a form of 'faith-based technology' (perhaps it was never anything else). As Erik Cofer observes, 'the dialogue and idiosyncrasies in *Zero K* often suggest that DeLillo is engaging in an exercise of self-quotation—implicitly connecting the novel back to his corpus as a sort of intertextual nod.' He elaborates:

Jeffrey's onomastic compulsion gestures toward fixations for naming in previous DeLillo works, such as *Underworld*, in which Father Paulus has Nick Shay name the parts of his boots (540–41). The cinematic disaster sequences filtrating the screened walls of the Convergence headquarters invoke the cultural celebration of tragedy in *White Noise* via television; as Jack observes in that novel, "Every disaster made us wish for more, for something bigger, grander, more sweeping" (64). Reading very much like a spiritual successor to *White Noise*, *Zero K* features characters, such as Jeffrey's father Ross Lockhart and his wife Artis Martineau, who disavow death as life's logical, unavoidable denouement.<sup>38</sup>

"All plots tend to move deathward," observes Gladney in *White Noise*, a sentiment echoed in *Libra*.<sup>39</sup> And Jeffrey's 'onomastic compulsion' recalls not only *Underworld* but *The Names*, where we find a foreshadow of the move deathward, here a drift of language – naming – as much as plot: 'Only a death can complete the program. You know this. It goes

deep, this recognition. Beyond words.<sup>40</sup> Ross's 'dark glasses, nostalgically called KGBs' replay the shades that Gladney affects. And as Nathan Ashman points out, *Zero K*'s quotation from Augustine also appears in *Americana*.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, we might suggest that *Zero K*, with its expanded sense of scale, is a kind of ironic quotation of the scale invoked by an earlier DeLillo – the title *Americana* being 'a statement of [his] intention to use the whole picture, the whole culture.'<sup>42</sup>

Why this exercise in self-quotation? While Cofer sees it as a development of style – into something post-postmodern – I think we can also see it as a kind of textual or metatextual cryonics. It is a version of the agitation in which Browne implicates a reader – because here, the implication is in the summation or consignation often called 'late style,' that gathering of motifs that seals a body of work, and pulls the reader into a potentially unwilling compact of the work's future transmission. The reader, agitated by the novel's scalar play, is acted on again by the gathering of motifs, and is compelled back once more to the transient time of the object, the novel itself, and at the same time is entrusted, perversely, with the novel's future. The agitation takes the form of imagining the future, but on a scale dictated by a certain concept of literary history.

One effect of this summation is to bring into focus the hidden name Nicholas Satterswaite, the birth name of Ross Lockhart. The hidden name recalls other Nicks: Nicholas Branch, from *Libra*, and Nick Shay, from *Underworld*. On the one hand, there is an emphatic contrast – the secret histories witnessed or written by Branch and Shay, and the departure from history of the former Satterswaite, as promised by the Convergence. But there is something else here too, the sheer force of repetition, the constant circling back to the syllable, the vocable, 'Nick.' For J. Hillis Miller, glossing Derrida, the secrecy of such a repetition is irreducible and insoluble:

Literature eternally keeps its secrets, and the secret is an essential feature of literature. If the secret tells us something essential about literature, literature on the other hand tells us something essential about the secret. It tells us that the true secret, if there is such a thing, is not hidden somewhere, in some place from which it might in principle be wrested, recovered, uncovered. A true secret is all on the surface. This superficiality cannot by any hermeneutic procedures, material or linguistic, be gone behind. A literary text (and any text may be taken as literary) says what it says. It cannot be forced to say more than it says.<sup>43</sup>

Another way of putting it might be to say that the irreducibility of the repetition of Nick means it becomes a kind of signature effect – a tic in the text, beginning to resemble a thing, something you stumble against, demanding and rebutting interpretation, inviting interpretation while mocking the invitation. Something not terribly far removed from the word-thing of the writer's own name: such a signature is precisely, as Derrida says, 'what I cannot appropriate, cannot make my own.'<sup>44</sup>

These questions of interpretation – which seem to limit us to the timescales of literary history, to the duration of literature and literary afterlives – are also questions of stone. Hillis Miller, as he broaches the idea of the secret, makes it explicit: when he tells us of the eternity for which literature keeps its secrets, it is in contrast to the mountain which gives its secrets up. 'Literature is not like a mountain,' he says, 'whose mineral secrets may be exposed.'<sup>45</sup> And for Derrida, the word-thing of the signature is also lithic: the 'stony monumentalisation of the name,' the name of the writer in the text become a 'stony object'.<sup>46</sup>

One way of looking at this would be through the rigorously anti-humanist lens of Claire Colebrook and to argue that this is one of the ways the environment becomes visible to us only inasmuch as it is available for use, be that plunder or metaphor. We 'know' the environment only to the extent that 'it is possible for thought to bracket reality.'<sup>47</sup> It is also

possible, however, to see this stony gathering of motifs, secrets and signature effects as part of an ongoing dialogue with stone, and the timescales of stone.

The failure to reckon with the environment as environment – a kind of de-environing – is satirised in *Zero K* when Jeffrey, Emma and Stak visit the gallery and are presented with an ‘interior rock sculpture’ (ZK 214). This description by the gallery is preposterous, hilarious, even, a failure of imagination that is almost a kind of terror, as though any object sufficiently compelling or fascinating must be called a sculpture, or inhabit the anthropocentric category of art. But something else is going on here. While Jeffrey and Emma watch, Stak approaches the rock:

Stak wasted no time, striding directly to the object, which was taller than he was, and finding everything he needed to look at, all the irregularities of surface, the projections and indentations that belong to a rock, a boulder in this case, general shape somewhat rounded, maybe six feet across at its broadest point. ... Stak talked to the rock. He told it that we were looking at it. He referred to us as three members of the species *H. sapiens*. He said that the rock would outlive us all, probably outlive the species itself (ZK 215-6).

Stak, like Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, sees ‘the lithic in the creaturely and the lively in the stone.’<sup>48</sup>

He doesn’t cringe before the rock’s endurance, or its unknowability; he seeks from it ‘alliance, continuity and mutual participation over elemental solitariness and human exceptionalism.’<sup>49</sup> It is a way of being alive to the sense that telling ‘a story with stone is intensely to inhabit that preposition *with*, to move from solitary individuations to ecosystems’:

Humans walk upright over the earth because the mineral long ago infiltrated animal life to become a partner in mobility. Vertebral bone is the architect of motion, the stone around which the flesh arranges itself to slither, run, swim, fly. Had the organic not craved durable calcium as shield and conveyor, numerous types of sedimentary rock would never have

arrived. A common mode of petrogenesis (creation of stone) unfolds when tiny ocean dwellers settle in their mortuary billions to the subsea muck. Limestone is a thick cemetery of mineral that had become animal now become rock again.<sup>50</sup>

One way of filtering this through *Zero K* is with the observation that this ‘alliance’ is exactly what the category ‘rock art’ refuses – the anthropocentric category insists on stone’s inertness and remoteness. It is intelligible only insofar as it is available to categories. Stak’s dialogue with the stone restores the ‘alliance’ Cohen describes, and through this, the novel attempts to ‘think and reckon with stone,’ ‘a way of thinking that contests ... diminishing objects for uses.’<sup>51</sup>

This approach would unravel Hillis Miller’s opposition between the mountain’s mere mineral secret and the true secret of literature. Stressing alliance over use, it means that the stony monumentalisation, the word-thing, call us back to stone, to the secrets we share with stone. To insist on literature’s pull back to stone, to the environment – to insist that literature pulls back to these things even when it seems to encourage thinking on the anthropocentric scales of literary history, reminds us, as Royle says, that ‘if an environment *environs*, it does not merely environ the human.’<sup>52</sup> Or, to put it another way: if love can be thought of as beginning with texts – something Peggy Kamuf has argued – then the love of texts must be indissociable from the love of stone.<sup>53</sup>

## **V. That which the sun compoundeth**

There’s a case to be made that *Zero K* should simply have ended with its penultimate chapter, in which narrative per se is abandoned – this is a chapter without development as we usually understand it, replacing the narrative mode with a compiling one: the only thing that makes sense from the timescales conjured by the Convergence, from whose perspective narrative is



invisible, imperceptible. The only way to think about Jeffrey's story and that of the Convergence is to compile and chronicle, abandon narrative development.

In this way, ending with the penultimate chapter would answer Clark's disquiet over the end of Kingsolver's *Flight Behaviour*. As we have seen, the neat closure of the novel, and its collapse back to anthropocentric timescales, troubles Clark, who wonders if the 'challenge of representing major ecological issues mean acknowledging the limits of the human capacity for engagement beyond certain scales in space or time.'<sup>54</sup> The penultimate chapter, breaking down narrative, stages *Zero K*'s own cancelling out of itself, to project itself as nothing, as it has been trying to do throughout. Does the final chapter, then, with its conventional epiphany (expressed in what to me sounds like the least DeLillian sentences DeLillo ever wrote: 'I didn't need heaven's light. I had the boy's cries of wonder' (ZK 274)), not backtrack on this? Is this not the kind of closure that Clark is concerned by?

We have been discussing the way Browne's agitation device is deployed in *Zero K* by catapulting the reader back and forth across human and non-human, literary and geological, scales of time. The switch from the penultimate chapter's refusal of narrative – the novel's final move to annihilate itself, or see itself from the scale of geological time – to the final chapter's epiphany is the end point of this. Ending with the penultimate chapter would be a way of answering Clark but only on the scale of this single novel, *Zero K*. The final chapter mimes and satirises epiphany in a way that resembles Kingsolver's, and in this way stands in for epiphanic conclusions in general – in other words, just as the text has been doing with Browne, it implicates the institution of literature more generally, and demands that we apply this scalar agitation to other texts, other novels.

Jeffrey's earlier depiction of the boy – possibly 'impaired in some way' – undercuts his confidence in the epiphany. It is marked by the reappearance of the shadow language, the word 'tell.' 'I told myself,' says Jeffrey, 'that the boy was not seeing the sky collapse upon us

but was finding the purest astonishment in the intimate touch of earth and sun' (ZK 274). The epiphany is only possible if Jeffrey wills himself to reject an alternative, painful possibility: 'I hated to think that [the boy] was impaired in some way, macrocephalic, mentally deficient, but these howls of awe were far more suitable than words,' he says (ZK 274). It renders unsatisfactory and anti-climactic a movement that looks – like Kingsolver's conclusion – 'novelistic' and, precisely, climactic.

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Such the sun compoundeth, and fire analyseth. When I began working on these remarks, I was wondering what would happen if Thomas Browne could read Don DeLillo, and, by extension, if it was possible to call literature a hyperobject (I still don't know). There are some pedagogical questions here too, perhaps, related to (for example) Eric Hayot's dissatisfaction with periods as a way of organising courses (modules, degrees, thinking, criticism) around periods. He argues for imagining 'periods as they might look from some moment other than the present.'<sup>55</sup> This is not far from Clark, who, as we have seen, says that a variety of texts may be 'read, newly estranged, as products of the late Holocene':

Imagine the current canon of literature being read in some future urban wasteland, genuinely akin, say, to the fictional dystopias of the Los Angeles of Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982) or Neill Blomkamp's *Elysium* (2013), an Earth with no forests and in which no animal larger than a dog exists outside of factory farms or wildlife parks.<sup>56</sup>

Clark's work would turn Hayot's quest for a different kind of periodisation into a demand, and we see a version such reperiodising might look like in Cohen's book, which figures the medieval alongside the geological. Periods and periodicity, then, are a problem, but maybe a productive one: they could actually be the raw matter out of which a different kind of scalar criticism and pedagogy might arise. Such a pedagogy would gesture continually outwards

towards stone, towards asteroids, towards urnes and interment, into time geological and cosmic.

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<sup>1</sup> Don DeLillo, *Zero K* (London: Picador, 2016), p. 131. All further references are to this edition. Cf. also Sir Thomas Browne, *Hydriotaphia, or Urne-Buriall* (1658), in *Religio Medici and Urne-Buriall*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt and Ramie Targoff (New York: New York Review Books, 2012), p. 131. All further references are to this edition.

<sup>2</sup> Timothy Clark, *The Value of Ecocriticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2019), p. 42. Ecocriticism now, Clark continues, ‘is often pioneering a reorientation of the sense of time and periodisation as fundamental modes of human categorisation and conception: what does it mean, for example, to find Housman’s “Loveliest of trees”, Shakespeare’s plays, Homer’s *Odyssey* or the *Mahabharata* as texts that now read, newly estranged, as products of the late Holocene, the geological epoch arguably now ended or eroded, with its fading assumptions of the regular periodicity of familiar seasons as providing a sense of background order and unregarded reliability for human affairs?’

<sup>3</sup> Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis MN: Minnesota UP, 2013), p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Clark, *Value of Ecocriticism*, p. 38.

<sup>5</sup> The geological scale – and subterranean location of the Convergence – evoke for Nicholas Royle images of the Bruniquel Cave, published in *Nature*: photographs ‘taken deep in a cave and far from any daylight, of annular constructions made by Neanderthals from snapped-off stalagmites approximately 175,000 years ago. There is something chilling and inconceivable about these images of subterranean building, and a sense that Zero K taps into this uncanny ancientness’ (Nicholas Royle, ‘Afterword: On the Veer’ in Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Lowell Duckert (eds), *Veer Ecology: A Companion for Environmental Thinking* (Minneapolis MN: Minnesota UP, 2017), p. 473).

Perhaps one of the ‘chilling’ aspects of this a kind of anticipated archaeology – just as Artis is a Browne-like figure in the text, Zero K wryly encourages us to think of the Convergence as a place that might one day fail, become a haunt for archaeologists and antiquarians, that faith in the faith-based technology was misplaced after all. What will it look like, 175,000 years after the entrances of Artis and Ross into the veer? To be reduced to a moment, dwarfed by inhuman timescales, is to understand time as did Browne’s near-contemporary, the historian William Camden: antiquity ‘hath a certain resemblance with eternity’ (William Camden, *Britain, or A chorographical description of the most flourishing kingdomes, England, Scotland, and Ireland, and the ilands adioyning, out of the depth of antiquitie beautified with*

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*mappes of the severall shires of England: written first in Latine by William Camden Clarenceux K. of A. Translated newly into English by Philemon Holland Doctour in Physick: finally, revised, amended, and enlarged with sundry additions by the said author.* London: 1610. Unpaginated).

<sup>6</sup> Timothy Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge: The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 79, 77.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>9</sup> Clark, *Value of Ecocriticism*, p. 42.

<sup>10</sup> Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Stone: An Ecology of the Inhuman* (Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota UP, 2015), p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge*, pp. 53, 187; Morton, *Hyperobjects*, p. 51.

<sup>12</sup> Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge*, pp. 181-2.

Clark elaborates:

A constitutive, unavoidable element of any representation, evaluation or literary reading is to presuppose or project a certain scale in space and time for its issues. A certain scale must make up the fundamental structure of any imaginable experience, or of any model of the world. Broadly speaking, it would be difficult to describe the development of a geological feature on a time scale of hours, or even of a decade, while it is conversely difficult to imagine what a novel's interior monologue would look like if one tried to present it over a geological time scale (pp. 73-74).

<sup>13</sup> Brent Nelson, 'Curious Readers and Meditative Form in Thomas Browne's *Urne-Buriall*' in Richard Todd and Kathryn Murphy (eds), *A Man Very Well Studyed: New Contexts for Thomas Browne* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), p. 109.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 110-111.

<sup>15</sup> Amanda Watson, 'Competing Forms of Memory' in Michael C. Schoenfeldt (ed.), *A Companion to Shakespeare's Sonnets* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), p. 355.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Thomas M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1982), pp. 241, 235.

<sup>18</sup> Anne Lake Prescott, *French Poets and the English Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1978), p. 43.

<sup>19</sup> Peter Boxall, 'Interview: The Edge of the Future: A Discussion with Don DeLillo' in Katherine Da Cunha Lewin and Kiron Ward (eds), *Don DeLillo: Contemporary Critical Perspectives* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), Kindle ed., loc. 3517.

<sup>20</sup> David Cowart, 'Don DeLillo's *Zero K* and the Dream of Cryonic Election' in Da Cunha Lewin and Ward, *Don DeLillo*, loc. 3336, 3357-3369.

<sup>21</sup> So much of the text is gripped by instances like this of a kind of exorbitant, uncanny hedging, a language in which meaning is constantly jeopardised or withdrawn. So when Ross tells Jeffrey that he intends to accompany Artis into Zero K, Jeffrey wonders, 'Did I know what he meant, instantly, reading it in his face, and then did I instantly pretend to be confused?' (ZK 110.)

<sup>22</sup> Artis continues to be preoccupied with the inscrutability of telling too: "I tried to tell him what I'd seen ..." (ZK 45); "I'm so eager I can't tell you ..." (ZK 53).

<sup>23</sup> The other instances that relate telling to death are connected with the speech of spirits: 'The departed spirits know things past and to come, yet are ignorant of things present. *Agamemnon*

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foretels what should happen unto *Ulysses*, yet ignorantly enquires what is become of his own Son. The Ghosts are afraid of swords in *Homer*, yet *Sybilla* tels *Aeneas* in *Virgil*, the thin habit of spirits was beyond the force of weapons' (*UB* 128-9).

<sup>24</sup> Philip Schwyzer, *Archaeologies of English Renaissance Literature* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007), p. 184.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 185-6.

<sup>26</sup> Kevin Killeen, 'The Apophatic *Garden of Cyrus*: Thomas Browne's Fleeting God,' *Studies in Philology* 114: 4 (2017), p. 767.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> See Timothy Morton, 'Victorian Hyperobjects,' *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 36: 5 (2014).

<sup>29</sup> Nicholas Royle, 'Even the Title: On the State of Narrative Theory Today,' *Narrative* 22: 1 (2014), p. 10. Royle also hazards here another concept of the moment, the 'nanoment.'

<sup>30</sup> Don DeLillo, *End Zone* (New York: Penguin, 1986), p. 64 & passim.

<sup>31</sup> See David Cowart, *Don DeLillo: the Physics of Language* (revised edition; Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2003), p. 28.

<sup>32</sup> *End Zone*, pp. 89-90.

<sup>33</sup> Cowart, *Physics of Language*, p. 26.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Schwyzer, *Archaeologies of English Renaissance Literature*, p. 181.

<sup>36</sup> Boxall, 'Interview: The Edge of the Future' in Da Cunha Lewin and Ward, *Don DeLillo*, loc. 3591.

<sup>37</sup> Royle, 'On the Veer,' p. 472.

<sup>38</sup> Erik Cofer, 'Owning the End of the World: *Zero K* and DeLillo's Post-Postmodern Mutation,' *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 59: 4 (2018), pp. 459-60.

<sup>39</sup> Don DeLillo, *White Noise* (London: Picador, 1986), p. 26; Don DeLillo, *Libra* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989), pp. 221, 363.

<sup>40</sup> Don DeLillo, *The Names* (London: Picador, 2011), p. 351.

<sup>41</sup> Nathan Ashman, "'Death Itself Shall Be Deathless": Transrationalism and Eternal Death in Don DeLillo's *Zero K*,' *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 60: 3 (2019), p. 308.

<sup>42</sup> Don DeLillo, 'The Art of Fiction,' *Paris Review* 128 (1993). Accessed electronically.

<https://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/1887/don-delillo-the-art-of-fiction-no-135-don-delillo>

<sup>43</sup> J. Hillis Miller, 'Derrida's Topographies,' *South Atlantic Review* 59: 1 (1994), p. 17.

<sup>44</sup> Jacques Derrida and Maurizio Ferraris, *A Taste for The Secret* trans. Giacomo Donis, ed. Giacomo Donis and David Webb (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), p. 85. See also Jacques Derrida, *Signsponge* trans. Richard Rand (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

<sup>45</sup> Hillis Miller, 'Derrida's Topographies,' p. 17.

<sup>46</sup> Derrida, *Signsponge*, pp. 26, 56.

<sup>47</sup> Claire Colebrook, 'Not Symbiosis, Not Now,' *Oxford Literary Review* 34: 2 (2012), p. 197.

<sup>48</sup> Cohen, *Stone*, p. 20.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12, 20

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 9.

<sup>52</sup> Nicholas Royle, *Veering: A Theory of Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. 3.

<sup>53</sup> Peggy Kamuf, 'Deconstruction and Love' in Nicholas Royle (ed), *Deconstructions: A User's Guide* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), pp. 151-170.

<sup>54</sup> Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge*, p.182

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<sup>55</sup> Eric Hayot, 'Against Periodisation, or On Institutional Time,' *New Literary History* 42: 4 (2011), p. 747.

<sup>56</sup> Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge*, p. 195.