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**RESEARCH PAPER**

## Bodies Set in Assigned Positions: Dis/Embodiment and Placial Subjectivity in Don DeLillo's *Zero K*

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**ABSTRACT**

This article examines placial thinking in Don DeLillo's *Zero K*, arguing that Jeffrey Lockhart's insistence on embodiment is grounded in his understanding of subjectivity as fundamentally implaced. In *Zero K*, the Convergence facility promises a disembodied "pure self" through cryopreservation. While critics read Jeffrey's resistance as existential humanism, the deeper philosophical logic of his stance remains underexplored. Through close textual analysis informed by Edward Casey's exploration of place, the study interprets Jeffrey's worldview as grounded in implacement. Drawing on phenomenological accounts of body-place relations, it examines his spatial metaphors, temporal orientation, and embodied relationality. The analysis demonstrates that Jeffrey's subjectivity emerges from lived situatedness within spatiotemporal coordinates. His memories, perceptions, and identity depend on bodily extension in place. The study positions Jeffrey's narrative as a sustained defense of material implacement against the abstraction of disembodied subjectivity. It asks how embodiment enables place, and how place, in turn, enables subjectivity.

**KEYWORDS** Zero K, Delillo, Place, Subjectivity, Embodiment, Disembodiment

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**Introduction**

The self is the primary mode through which modern Western societies understand being-in-the-world. At its most basic level, the self is the persistent experience of "I". It is understood as the unique experience of being oneself. Nick Mansfield (2000) describes it as our "ideas and experience of being a particular someone at a particular time and place" (p. 4). It is the subjective awareness that unites memory, experience, being-in-the-world, and self-recognition. What makes "me" the person I am? What does it mean to be the same person from one moment to the next? How do I recognize myself across time, contexts, and relationships? This sense of "I" is the core of how one experiences the world, as well as how one is recognized in it.

In Don DeLillo's *Zero K*, the question of what it means to be a self is dramatized through the tension between two conflicting visions: one that insists the body is inseparable from the experience of subjectivity, and another that seeks to separate subjectivity from the body. The former is represented by the protagonist Jeffrey who witnesses his stepmother Artis, and eventually his father Ross, undergo cryopreservation at a facility called the Convergence. The Convergence facility represents a body-transcendental ideal of subjectivity which sees the body as unnecessary and an active hindrance to the realization

of the ultimate “pure self” (DeLillo, 2017, p. 68). This entails a fundamental reconstitution of the self, attempted through cryopreservation.

Cryopreservation is a process whereby bodies are preserved via cooling at very low temperatures, in hopes of resuscitation at a future time. The most common method of cryopreservation entails rapidly cooling the body immediately after death to just above 0 °C. Cryoprotectant chemicals are then injected into the body to prevent cell damage. Then, the body is submerged in liquid Nitrogen at -196 °C to preserve it. Currently, thousands of cryopreserved patients are enrolled in facilities around the world, including Alcor Life Extension Foundation, KrioRus, the Cryonics Institute, and Oregon Cryonics (Swan, 2019, p. 2). The cryogenic process is a widely debated topic for its technical feasibility as well as its medical, legal, ethical, philosophical implications.

Jefferey’s philosophical resistance to the cryogenic ambitions of the Convergence facility shapes the novel’s central tension. DeLillo portrays his stepmother Artis’ preserved body suspended in the cryogenic chamber. Meanwhile, her consciousness carries on in a disembodied state as she reflects on her condition. Jeffrey responds to her disembodied state with a profound sense of unease and resistance, declaring it a “metaphysical crime” (DeLillo, 2017, p. 114). He expresses opposition to the values of Convergence facility, fueled by dread at the notion of subjectivity detached from the body. Instead, he emphasizes an essential identity and personhood that cannot survive without the unifying role played by the body.

Jefferey’s resistance is often read as an existential reaction to the perceived loss of humanity, as critics tend to agree that *Zero K* affirms embodiment as central to identity. Yet, the philosophical tension between embodied and disembodied being raises a more specific and unasked question: What compels Jeffrey to perceive himself as a fundamentally embodied subject? How does he understand the relationship between the body and sense of self? What philosophical assumptions underlie his insistence on the body as essential to subjectivity? Most importantly, what does it mean to him to be a subject?

This study seeks to address that critical gap by arguing that Jeffrey’s view of embodied subjectivity stems from a placial understanding of subjectivity. It contends that Jefferey’s sense of self is grounded in situatedness in a particular place within the spatiotemporal framework, and it is through the body that place becomes perceptibly inhabited. This means that his sense of spatiality and temporality is conceived as particularized and experienced through the body’s presence in a specific place. This understanding of embodied subjectivity is demonstrated through Jefferey’s persistent spatial and temporal metaphors, phenomenological attentiveness to the body’s perceptions, sense of body’s centrality, and emphasis on embodied intersubjective relationality. These factors reveal a lived-body logic: a sense that being is always situated bodily, and always mediated through the conditions of experience.

## Literature Review

The critical reception of *Zero K* has largely revolved around the novel’s exploration of embodiment, mortality, and the implications of posthuman technology. The body has been widely recognized as central to the novel, with critics repeatedly emphasizing how Jefferey confronts the loss of embodied identity in the face of technological disembodiment. However, while many critics identify embodiment as thematically significant, they fail to explore the structural logic behind Jefferey’s beliefs.

Some critics frame *Zero K* within posthumanist discourse. Adele Nel (2021) claims the novel presents “a new conceptualization of the human” (1) while Isabelle Wentworth argues that DeLillo explores the “limits of the human” (p. 5). Stefan Herbrechter (2020) similarly suggests that the novel represents a call to “return to the real” (21). These critics highlight Jeffrey’s skepticism of converging digital technologies and their disembodied potential. For these scholars, *Zero K* dramatizes the tension between emerging posthuman futures and a humanist investment in embodied identity.

Others have also read Jeffrey as a character rooted in humanist frameworks. Tony Tulathimutte (2016) describes him as an “Enlightenment humanist” who clings to ideals of rational, self-knowing individual. This reading rests on Jeffrey’s quest for clarity and his belief in embodiment as essential to human identity. Adele Nel and Laura Tanner both emphasize embodiment as essential to subjectivity: Nel (2021) claims the body is a precondition for human identity (p. 3). A similar notion is detected by Tanner (2019) in DeLillo’s *The Body Artist*, who describes the novel as preoccupied with “embodied loss” and the “unresolved presence – and absence – of the body” (p. 153). In this line of criticism, embodiment is treated as a natural, stabilizing foundation for the self.

Other critics take psychological approaches. Barrett (2018), for example, interprets DeLillo’s work through Freud’s theory of the uncanny. For her, the cryopreserved bodies, especially Artis’s, have an uncanny effect. In contrast, Jeffrey’s realism as grounded in “the detritus of daily existence” and “and urges readers to “recreate the world, not by deep-freezing but by seeing...our estrangement from ourselves and others” (p. 107). Eric Cofer (2018) approaches the novel from a relational standpoint. He emphasizes that, in *Zero K*, embodiment proves necessary for the “formation and preservation of identity”, which is “always-already relational” (p. 9). Similarly, Slađana Stamenković (2018) draws on Baudrillard to suggest that the body in *Zero K* becomes “a copy without an original” (p. 205). It is a simulacrum that is manipulated and violated under the promise of posthuman salvation. Yet, for Stamenković, this does not negate the body’s importance. Rather, it underscores how even when reduced to a corrupted site, the body remains central to the constitution of identity and meaning.

Together, these critics agree that *Zero K* foregrounds the body as vital to selfhood. Jeffrey is positioned as someone who views the self as grounded in the body, in contrast to Ross and the Convergence’s understanding of the body as an object for control. However, this review in the scholarship marks a significant gap. While embodiment has been addressed thematically, its structuring role in producing place and enabling subjectivity has gone unexamined. There has been little attention to the fact that Jeffrey articulates a specific worldview in which identity emerges through bodily *implacement*. The present article addresses this gap by proposing placial thinking as the primary framework for analyzing subjectivity that foregrounds the body as the condition of selfhood. It draws on Jeffrey’s own language to show how DeLillo constructs a self that is inseparable from body, and hence, from place. In *Zero K*, what is at stake is not the body per se, but the experience of being implaced i.e., a spatiotemporal orientation that sustains personhood.

## Material and Methods

This article carries out a textual analysis of Don DeLillo’s *Zero K* through the theoretical lens of placial thinking, as developed by Edward Casey in *The Fate of Place* (1997). It seeks to examine how Jeffrey Lockhart’s insistence on embodiment arises from his deeper commitment to being implaced i.e., to understanding subjectivity as grounded in spatio-temporal location. Casey argues that place has long been subordinated in Western philosophy by space and time. This transformation also meant that place was taken for

granted. Casey insists on the primacy of place against this reduction, stating: “To be at all – to exist in any way – is to be somewhere, and to be somewhere is to be in some kind of place”. Yet, he writes, modern thought rarely reflects on this “primal fact” (Casey, 1997, p. ix). Place is so foundational that its necessity becomes invisible. Except in moments of disorientation or loss, we fail to question it.

To recover the significance of place, Casey traces a philosophical lineage that begins with Aristotle, who made “where” one of the ten categories of substance and treated place seriously in his *Physics*. This lineage stretches through Heidegger, who rethinks being as being-in-place (*Dasein*), and Irigaray, who reactivates Aristotle’s spatial logic to propose an ethics of sexual difference (p. ix). These thinkers resist the abstraction of modern spatiality by insisting on the grounding function of place.

From this genealogy, Casey develops a powerful account of the relationship between body and place. He revisits Descartes, who defines space in terms of extension and treats bodies as occupying volume (p. 153). Yet, he struggles to define place as anything more than position within this extended field. In contrast, Kant sees the body as central to spatial orientation: it gives directionality to perception in the form of “right” and “left,” “up” and “down,” “before” and “after” (p. 205). For Kant, sensible things must occupy particular places (p. 204), and the human body is what grounds the differentiation of space into knowable regions. Casey builds on this by emphasizing that there can be no being-in-place without concrete embodiment.

Merleau-Ponty is also emphasized by Casey, as further radicalizing the connection between body and place. Merleau-Ponty claims that we do not simply occupy places. We know and create them through the body (p. 228). Casey, thus, emphasizes lived places as sites of intimacy, porous boundaries, and customary bodily action (p. 233). Drawing from this trajectory, the article interprets Jeffrey’s worldview as organized by a placial structure of selfhood, in which the body makes existence possible. In sum, this article treats place as an a priori structure of existence, and employs textual analysis to uncover how *Zero K* dramatizes its destabilization.

## Results and Discussion

In *Zero K*, the search for an embodied essence of subjectivity unfolds as Jeffrey’s stepmother Artis Martineau and father Ross Lockhart undergo cryopreservation at the Convergence facility. Cryopreservation is the practice of freezing the body at a very low temperature, with the intent of restoring the preserved individual with all their consciousness intact (Swan, 2019, p. 2). Jeffrey expresses opposition to the values of Convergence facility, fueled by dread at the notion of subjectivity detached from the body. As the narrative proceeds, he poses critical questions regarding the sanctity of the subject upon being disembodied. He asks whether, after cryopreservation, “the body [would be] the same body, or an enhanced body, but what about the mind? Is consciousness unaltered? Are you the same person?” (DeLillo, 2017, p. 48). This question reveals Jeffrey’s belief in the intrinsic connection between the body, consciousness, and personhood.

The connection between personhood and body is further emphasized when Jeffrey asks, “When does the person become the body?” (DeLillo, 2017, p. 139). This question is his attempt to pinpoint a definitive point in an individual’s life when identity becomes one with the body. Yet, this is a rhetorical question implying that no such moment can be located. The self does not become the body later in life. It is always already constituted through the body, suggesting that he believes the person and the body are inseparable. Jeffrey goes on to ask whether cryopreservation would cause the “individual [to]

disappear?" (DeLillo, 2017, p. 236). His interchangeable use of "person" and "individual" coalesces into a single entity: the subject. His concerns about the disembodied state revolve around the complete loss of subjectivity. Eventually he characterizes the disembodiment intrinsic to cryopreservation as a "metaphysical crime" (DeLillo, 2017, p. 114). This marks his rejection of any conception of subjectivity that exists independently of the body.

The philosophical tension between embodied and disembodied being raises critical questions: What compels Jeffrey to perceive himself as fundamentally embodied subjects? How does he understand the relationship between the body and his sense of self? Most importantly, what does it mean to him to be a subject i.e. his "ideas and experience of being a particular someone at a particular time and place" (Mansfield, 2000, p. 4). *Zero K* offers candid insight into Jeffrey's experience of being a subject: lived through sensory and physical interactions with the world. This section explores his description of the lived experience underlying subjectivity, constituting him as a subject who knows.

Jeffrey's fundamental lived experience of subjectivity is rooted in his sense of being situated or localized in time and space. This forms the foundation of his awareness of lived subjectivity. This lived experience is evident in his perspectival narration. For instance, when reflecting on the fundamental humanity of those undergoing cryopreservation at Convergence, Jeffrey articulates his view of their existence as "the fact of containment, alignment, bodies set in assigned positions" (DeLillo, 2017, p. 146). This perspective reveals Jeffrey's notion of the self as contained and localized in a spatial framework. It reflects a perception of being anchored to a specific location. This implies that his sense of subjectivity is tied to a fixed spatial point; a position. Furthermore, it is the body which provides the foundation of this location and containment.

The containment and localization that Jeffrey imagines reflect his orientation within a spatial framework. This instance of understanding subjectivity through spatial localization echoes a primordial line of thought from Aristotle's concept of *pou* (where) (Casey, 1997, p. 125). This continues in Heidegger's claim that Dasein is essentially spatial (p. 102). For Jeffrey, where is more than a geographical question. It is a fundamental condition of subjectivity itself, deeply ingrained and reflective of a prominent trend in Western thought.

Jeffrey's spatial understanding of self is also deeply intertwined with his temporal experience. He perceives an internal sense of being situated in time. This is articulated by him as a "continuum" (DeLillo, 2017, p. 68) to describe their sense of temporality. The continuum represents a linearity consisting of past, present and future; moments rolling into each other and defining who they are. This essentially reflects the experience of a continuous tunnel through which they are propelled.

For Jeffrey, the past is an active and integral part of his current self. He feels the past as the moment just passed, one that is "impossible not to see and feel" (DeLillo, 2017, p. 15), suggesting its persistent presence in his consciousness. This continuity is further evidenced in his reflection: "I inhale the little drizzly details of the past and know who I am" (DeLillo, 2017, p. 109). Here, Jeffrey links his past experiences to his ongoing construction of self. This demonstrates that the past and its memory are important to his understanding of subjectivity. For him, the past is not inactive and still defines who he is in the present.

The persistence of past moments is possible through its connection with the present and future moments. This perception of temporal continuity is reflected in Jeffrey's understanding of the present moment in the following words:

It is a moment never to be thought of except when it's in the process of unfolding... It is only me. I don't think about it. I simply live within it and then leave it behind. Leave it behind except for now, in this particular place, where everything I've ever said and done and thought about is near to hand. (DeLillo, 2017, p. 20)

This description reveals Jeffrey's conception of distinct moments in time. The present is a distinct and immediate reality, the "now". It is also a continuation of past moments that were left behind, and a precursor to future ones. This future moment is also the currently present "now" in which Jeffrey exists and is articulating these thoughts. It is the future moment only with reference to the past moments he is reflecting upon. The present, in the technical sense, is a future moment that has become immediate, shaped by the accumulated experiences of the past. This interconnectedness reveals that the present is never isolated; it carries the weight of preceding as well as succeeding events.

Jeffrey's understanding of subjectivity is, thus, fundamentally rooted in his inner sense of localization within a spatio-temporal framework. For him, subjective experience emerges from spatial and temporal structures that are inseparable from the self. Space and time offer the locality within which his lived experience as a subject occurs. This raises the question: how is this experience of being situated in a spatio-temporal nexus related to embodiment? The answer lies in examining the placial framework in his understanding of subjectivity.

What is most pervasive in the idea of localization in spatio-temporal framework is the notion of being situated or being in place. Jeffrey's sense of self is situated in a concrete embodied location within a spatio-temporal network. This emphasis on *placial* thinking shifts the focus from generalized notions to the meaningful experience of specific places. For him, subjectivity is shaped by the immediate, embodied experience of occupying a particular place within spatial and temporal relations. Placial thinking, then, refers to the way place grounds his lived experience of temporality and spatiality.

Placial thinking is repeatedly presented in Jeffrey's descriptions of his inner sense of temporality and spatiality. His account of his sense of spatiality is also reflective of his placial thinking, articulated as: "bodies set in assigned positions" (DeLillo, 2017, p. 146). This assigned position is the place that serves the function of organizing his being within a broader spatial framework. Place can, thus, be categorized as the identity of the location or position of the subject within a spatial framework. This description further reveals that place requires the extension of the body. Jeffrey feels himself situated within a spatial framework as an extended body. This signifies that place is discovered or directly experienced by means of the body. This phenomenon can be understood as the body/place linkage, wherein the body and place are connected in a way that the body contains the place and vice versa.

Place is also evident in Jeffrey's conception of being situated within a particular point in spatialized time; a "now, in this particular place" (DeLillo, 2017, p. 20). The place in this conception is the present moment where Jeffrey is localized when uttering these words. The "particular place" he refers to is as much a temporal location as it is a spatial one. For Jeffrey, the present is as much a location, or a place, as it is a moment. Place is, thus, an anchoring point within the broader spatio-temporal framework that defines his subjectivity. His inner sense of alignment as a body within specific spatiotemporal locations *is* the experience of place. Subjectivity, then, is inherently situated, with the body serving as the primary medium through which individuals experience and interpret their location in a spatiotemporal framework.

Jeffrey's engagement with placial thinking becomes particularly pronounced in the very absence of place which further defining the concept. This lack of place unfolds during his time at the Convergence facility where he experiences a profound sense of dislocation. He repeatedly expresses his futile efforts to "establish secure placement" (DeLillo, 2017, p. 139) within the obscure and disorienting environment of the facility's lengthy halls and confined rooms. However, he is confronted with a persistent lack of placement.

Jeffrey's lack of placement in the Convergence facility is also explicitly represented through his frequent and deliberate use of the word "space" to denote his struggle to anchor himself within a coherent spatio-temporal framework. This is evidenced as Jeffrey is shown around the facility. He describes being led to "a space that became an abstract thing, a theoretical occurrence" (DeLillo, 2017, p. 138). Here, Jeffrey explicitly uses the term "space" to denote an implied lack of materiality. The Convergence facility functions as a placeless environment that strips away the familiar markers of material presence. This sense of abstraction unsettles Jeffrey and disrupts his ability to anchor himself within a coherent framework of being.

On another occasion, he feels himself "located in a space that was anonymous, no where or when, a tactic that matched every aspect of [his] experience [there]" (DeLillo, 2017, p. 142). The term "anonymous" highlights the undefined nature of the space within the Convergence facility. This space lacks the identity or specificity typically provided by the body/place linkage outside of the facility. Here, the space is abstract and disembodied and leads to an erosion of tangible place. Jeffrey's mention of "no where or when" is also significant in the elucidation of place. "Where" and "when" are markers of spatial and temporal situatedness. These markers are evidently absent within the anonymous space of the Convergence facility. The absence of these markers is what lends anonymity to the space of the Convergence facility.

The above description of Convergence facility elucidates the view of an abstract space and time by differentiating it from place. Place is not a mere "'modification' of space" (Casey, 1997, p. 10) used to determine distance only. Place, as opposed to an abstract and homogeneous notion of space or time, signifies the material location or position of a subject within a network of spatial and temporal relations. In *Zero K*, place is presented as a distinct and foundational category of Jeffrey's understanding of the human experience, discovered through bodily extension within a spatio-temporal framework. The body is a physical thing that extends in a particular place within spatio-temporal network.

The debate raises a plethora of questions: In what ways does the placial thinking evident in Jeffrey's accounts of situatedness explain embodiment and contribute to his emphasis on embodied subjectivity? How does he articulate his placial situatedness within spatial and temporal frameworks in a manner that makes embodiment necessary to constitute subjectivity? These questions can be addressed by an examination of the structural features of placial thinking that emerge in his account.

The features of placial thinking can be examined by drawing on the concepts of implacement and displacement. By implacement, I refer to the state of being grounded in a specific place relative to other locations. Displacement, on the other hand, captures the directional and relational movements through which the body navigates its place in both spatial and temporal frameworks. Together, these frameworks shed light on the features of placial thinking that underpin Jeffrey's sense of being an embodied subject in space and time.

The foremost feature of implacement found in Jeffrey's conception is the first-person, phenomenological experience of perception. There is an evident foregrounding of the biological body's perceptive capacity found within his narrative. These perceptions are perceived bodily as his placial grounding within a spatial framework. They are deeply associated with his immediate, lived experience of being-in-the-world. For Jeffrey, the body serves as the medium through which he engages with his environment, anchoring him in a specific place within a spatial network.

Jefferey, throughout his point-of-view, references the body's perceptive capacity experienced through smell, touch, sight etc. This becomes particularly evident when he expresses the body's placial centrality in phenomenological inquiries. This notion is presented as Jeffrey describes his perception of objects in a room:

There were only three pieces of furniture, two chairs and a low table, all depicted from several angles. I remained standing, turning my head and then my body to scan the mural. The fact of four plane surfaces being a likeness of themselves as well as background for three objects of spatial extent struck me as a subject worthy of some deep method of inquiry, phenomenology maybe. (DeLillo, 2017, p. 252)

In this instance, Jeffrey describes the act of scanning three spatially extended objects within a room, noting their angles and planar surfaces as they serve as backgrounds for one another. From a placially situated perspective, Jeffrey moves his head and body to engage in the act of sensing and perceiving the objects. This act of seeing reflects the perceptive capacity of the body, which is inherently tied to the body's presence in a specific position or place. In this moment, Jefferey reflects Merleau-Ponty's view that "the world is always a world-as-perceived, clothed with the flesh of my gaze" (Leder, 1999, p. 202). Jefferey's gaze from the body's central position provides access to the world.

Jeffrey's description of scanning a room firmly emphasizes the body as central in the act of perception. Thus, he also engages in the phenomenological thinking reflected in Husserl's (1999) conception that: "The Body is, in the first place, the medium of all perception; it is the organ of perception and is necessarily involved in all perception" (p. 12). This description suggests that, while the spatial extension of the body and surrounding objects gives rise to a general sense of spatiality for the subject, the act of perceiving objects is anchored in the body's placial rootedness within a spatial framework.

It is also notable that, for Jeffrey, phenomenological inquiries entail that he describes his perceptions as deeply embedded in the physical extension of his body. In other words, his lived experience is not an intellectual, reflective, or abstract concept. He represents the idea that: "The question relevant to phenomenology (as constitutive philosophy) is not what objects are, real or possible, asserted or doubted (i.e., taken for granted), but how objects, as appearing, appear to consciousness" (Steinbock, 1999, p. 180). This emphasis on the perceptive experience of the world underscores the centrality of embodiment as the anchor through which consciousness engages with the world.

The pre-reflective, pre-thematized experience of phenomenological perception is expressed explicitly when Jefferey asserts immediate lived perceptions in the following words: "I didn't want interpretation. I wanted to see and feel what was here, even if I was unequal to the experience as it folded over me" (DeLillo, 2017, p. 133). This description points to a reliance on the body's perceptions for epistemological and ontological certainty. For Jeffrey, meaning does not arise from interpretation; the act of ascribing significance to signs, symbols, utterances etc. Rather, seeing and feeling, sensations and perceptions, serve

as the primary modes through which he engages with and understands his environment. In this way, he privileges the immediacy and authenticity of lived experience.

For Jeffrey, the status of the knowing subject arises from the direct, unmediated experience of being-in-the-world, rooted in his corporeal perceptions. This notion of being in the world reflects Merleau-Ponty's (1962) vision of phenomenology as "a philosophy for which the world is always 'already there' before reflection begins-as an inalienable presence; and all its efforts are concentrated upon reaching a direct and primitive contact with the world, and endowing that contact with a philosophical status" (p. vii). Jeffrey's understanding of existence, thus, is a "thrownness" into the world: pre-reflective, unthematized, unquestioned. The body's sensations and perceptions provide a direct connection to the environment with no mediation by lingual or intellectual structures.

This stance of centralizing the lived experiences of perceptions aligns with the placial framework proposed for Jeffrey in this study, which emphasizes the situated, lived experiences of the body in space and time. His understanding of embodied subjectivity prioritizes sensations and perceptions. These emerge through bodily implacement in a world experienced directly by the body. This description aligns with Jeffrey's placial thinking, wherein "everything is perceived from a unique position in existence" (Holquist, 1990, p. 21). Their phenomenological perception, thus, is also rooted in placiality.

The sense of implacement inherent in Jeffrey's phenomenological perception of the furniture in the room highlights another feature of placial thinking: relationality. For Jeffrey, being in a place is not a solitary experience but a relational one. This relationality manifests as a state of "separateness and simultaneity" (Holquist, 1990, p. 20), where his placial presence coexists with the furniture's placement in a shared spatial framework. In the rootedness of place, bodies find their identity in relation to one another. The relational model of place, characterized by separateness and simultaneity within a spatial framework, also encompasses the social and intersubjective nature of existence. Place is the site of intersubjective seeing and dialogic exchange between the Self and Other. The act of perception itself becomes an act of patterning the Self/Other relations. The "architectonics of perception" (Holquist, 1990, p. 35) is such that Jeffrey conceives of himself as situated relative to the Other, whose simultaneous presence is in a place he does not occupy.

Jeffrey expresses the dialogic architectonics as: "Soon my thoughts fell away from the still figure in the chair and then there he was, there we were, Ross and I, in miniaturized mindspace" (DeLillo, 2017, p. 13). This metaphorical space is a representation of the spatio-temporal framework where Jeffrey exists in relation to his father, seeing and defining him. Jeffrey and Ross are separate entities in this "mindspace". Ross is distinguished as the Other, perceived as someone sitting across from Jeffrey. Observable markers of difference are also noticed, for instance, Ross having "grown a beard" (DeLillo, 2017, p. 17) and Jeffrey being clean shaved (209). These differences in Ross's physical appearance serve as tangible signifiers of the Other who exists in relation to the Self.

Going by Jeffrey's description, places are most prominently relative to each other. They are what they are not, and are not what they are. The Self (the perceiver) and the Other (the perceived) exist as "relations between two coordinates ... each serving to differentiate the other" (Holquist, 1990, p. 26). Each entity's implacement defines the coordinates that are at play in this relational model, wherein one body is situated vis-a-vis another body. This relative positioning, or implacement, is how things are divided into categories of the Self and Other. The subject is never both together.

This discussion shows that Jeffrey's sense of being in place is contingent on the existence of the Other. Furthermore, his perception of his own Self is also contingent on his orientation towards the Other. This is most explicitly represented in Jeffrey's antagonistic relation with his father. He perceives this relationship as the most defining aspect of his identity as he deliberately strives to distinguish himself from his father. From the simple act of reading books that "helped tell [him] who [he] was, the son who spites his father by reading such books" (DeLillo, 2017, p. 26), to his attempt to "eventually build a life in opposition to [his] father's career in global finance" (DeLillo, 2017, p. 66), everything he does showcases his need to position himself in contrast to his father.

This opposition is an active process of self-definition that is informed by Jeffrey's vision of Ross. His actions and sense of identity are contingent on Ross as the Other; a reference point. This relational reference point determines Jeffrey's decision to avoid pursuing a career path aligned with his father's. He articulates this reasoning by stating: "This job would make me the Son. My father's name would haunt every step I took, every word I spoke" (DeLillo, 2017, p. 165). This highlights the intersubjective nature of Jeffrey's subjectivity, where the Self is neither isolated nor self-contained. It is in a dialogic relation that emerges through an orientation towards the Other.

The idea of dialogic subjectivity reinforces Jeffrey's placial thinking within a spatial framework. Place is needed to position the Self in relation to the Other. The Self is oriented towards the Other through their separate but simultaneous positions in a spatio-temporal network. Such a positioning is not offered by an absolute, homogenous space-time nexus. Places then are not mere subdivisions of a homogenous space, serving as a measurement of distance between coexisting things. They are lived places functioning as "loci of intimacy and particularity, endowed with porous boundaries and open orientations" (Casey, 1997, p. 233). By extension, the subjects within those places are relational and dynamic.

The intersubjective implacement of Self and Other in a relation of separation and simultaneity highlights the centrality of the body. The differentiation of Self from the Other requires corporeal extension in a particular place. The embodiment inherent in a relational dynamic is exemplified when Jeffrey observes Artis waking up and notes: "She came back to this moment, this room, she had to place me, re-situate me, Jeffrey, son of, seated across from her" (DeLillo, 2017, p. 18). This single sentence encapsulates three critical concepts discussed thus far: the subject's implacement, intersubjective dialogic subjectivity, and the necessity of embodiment in the constitution of subjectivity.

First, Jeffrey articulates the act of Artis recognizing him as her placing him. Second, he describes himself as "Jeffrey, son of". This reinforces his self-image as The Son in relation to the parent, the Other. Thirdly, both these are aided by Jeffrey's physical presence in a chair across from Artis. This implies that things must have a material presence in place for the relational process to occur. Without embodiment, there would be no web of relational dependence of things on each other.

The above-mentioned idea reflects the fundamentally embodied processes through which identity and subjectivity are situated and defined. As articulated by scholars such as James Cresswell and Cor Baerveldt (2011), "the self is social at an embodied plane in which inter-subjective exchange is anchored" (p. 264). In other words, the intersubjective nature of subjectivity manifests at an embodied plane. Corporeality is entwined with sociality to form subjectivity. The experiential livedness of life into which the Self finds itself thrown manifests only in relation to an embodied Other.

Just as the subject perceives the Other from its unique place in space and time, it is also perceived by the Other. Although the subject cannot perceive itself from its unique position in place, it is aware of the Other's "surplus of seeing" (Holquist, 1990, p. 36). This awareness brings about an outsidership, wherein a finalized image of the Self as embodied is perceived. This is the "Körper" aspect of the experience of embodiment.

The notion of outsidership is articulated by Jeffrey when he describes Artis's gaze: "She made me see myself, briefly, as the person who was standing here being looked at. fairly tall man with thick webbed hair, prehistoric hair. This was all I could borrow from the deep probe maintained by the woman in the chair" (DeLillo, 2017, p. 45). In this moment, the Other's act of seeing and perceiving is making Jeffrey see himself in all his embodied state along with all the bodily markers that signify his presence within space and time. The Other's gaze helps "the self achieve the outsidership it needs to perceive itself" (Holquist, 1990, p. 35). In other words, Jeffrey is joining together what he sees in Artis's probing gaze and what Artis is seeing to author a unified version of their joint existence. By mentioning the physical markers of height and hair, Jeffrey emphasizes the centrality of the body in self-perception. It signifies that, for Jeffrey, subjectivity cannot be constituted without embodiment as "Leibkörper" (Wehrle, pp. 500): the body that perceives the body and the body which is perceived.

Jeffrey's deeply rooted sense of place also sets the stage for an exploration of displacement. This displacement emerges in Jeffrey's narrative as: "an idea of motion that was also a change of position or place" (DeLillo, 2017, p. 138). If displacement is defined by the body's situatedness and continuity within a specific point in a spatial framework, then displacement is the directional and relational movement from one point to another.

The importance Jeffrey grants to embodied displacement becomes very evident during his time at the Convergence facility. When enclosed within its "aesthetic of seclusion and concealment" (DeLillo, 2017, p. 73), Jeffrey attempts to establish a sense of orientation by mentally retracing the trajectory of his physical displacement from Boston to New York, then London, Gatwick, Zurich, Minsk in Belarus, and finally southeast to Chelyabinsk, where the facility is located. The experience of seclusion and concealment suggests a state of stillness. This very stillness is what Jeffrey appears to try and counteract through recollections of "the long journey from [his] body memory" (DeLillo, 2017, p. 231). This act signifies his reliance on embodied movement to navigate the disorienting environment. Furthermore, he again emphasized the role of the body in carrying the memory of the journey.

It is important to note that Jeffrey recalls his journey in a sequential, point-to-point manner. By doing so, he reconstructs a spatial and temporal framework to orient himself in the Convergence facility. The structured progression of embodied movement from one city to the next restores a sense of linearity and continuity. Each location functions as both a spatial and temporal marker. It essentially offers him an internalized map that grounds his subjective experience. In this way, Jeffrey's memory of movement is a means of reaffirming his embodied presence within space and time.

Jeffrey's conception of displacement as a means of establishing a being-in-the-world is further explained when he contemplates the world outside the facility in the following words: "I was thinking about the free play of step-by-step and word-for-word that we experience up there, out there, walking and talking under the sky, swabbing on suntan lotion and conceiving children and watching ourselves age in the bathroom mirror" (DeLillo, 2017, p. 247). This "free play of step-by-step and word-for-word" signifies

walking and talking. These are forms of embodied action and movement performed by a subject within the world that connects him to it.

In the process of being-in-the-world, the subject performs actions like conceiving and aging. These actions are structured temporally. Moreover, the awareness of objects around Jeffrey as he performs these actions situates him spatially. Here, Jeffrey seems to be reflecting Merleau-Ponty's (1962) idea of the bodily experience of movement which "provides us with a way of access to the world and the object" (p. 156). In other words, displacement represents actions within the world that situate the subject spatially and temporally. Displacement is, thus, as much temporal as it is spatial, encapsulated in the acts of conceiving children and aging. These mundane, embodied acts contrast sharply with the stillness and detachment imposed by the Convergence facility, suggesting that it is through the motion of everyday life that the subject maintains an existential relation with being-in-the-world. It is fundamentally activity and transition understood temporally and spatially. Jeffrey's conception of bodily displacement as being-in-the-world is further reiterated when he takes his girlfriend's son to a museum. Along the way, he notes all the landmarks they go past, including "Broad Street", "the Money Museum, the Police Museum, the old stone buildings on Pine Street". He also notices the movement of others around him; "a skateboarder sailing past at the end of the street", a woman "talking to herself and walking back and forth, barefoot, five steps east, five steps west" (DeLillo, 2017, p. 179). The act of noticing his own and other's movement, particularly in the aftermath of staying at the Convergence, highlights Jeffrey's insistence on the fundamental embodied acts that place a subject within the material world.

Jeffrey's engagement with movement on the street becomes more meaningful as they reach the museum and Jeffrey's attention is caught by a rock. In this moment, Jeffrey involuntarily utters: "Rocks are, but they do not exist" (DeLillo, 2017, p. 213). This reference to Martin Heidegger serves to draw a distinction between being and existing. Rocks, though present in a material sense, lack the capacity for displacement, transformation, directionality and relationality. They do not experience the world through movement like Jeffrey and other people on the street, nor do they make sense of their being within a spatial-temporal framework. In contrast, Jeffrey characterizes human existence by constant motion. He emphasizes the step-by-step navigation of space and the unfolding of time through action and perception. Displacement is unique to the human subject's engagement with the world and affirms Jeffrey's lived experience.

## Conclusion

This article has explored why Jeffrey Lockhart in *Zero K* conceives of his subjectivity as essentially embodied. It argues that this notion arises from his placial view of experiential livedness. For Jeffrey, embodiment is grounded in his lived experience of situatedness in a particular place within a spatiotemporal framework. His embodiment matters because it is the condition of extension in place, which, in turn, sustains identity. Through Jeffrey, DeLillo constructs a character whose entire worldview is oriented towards the body's capacity to inhabit place. By reinterpreting Jeffrey's stance through the lens of placial thinking, this article has aimed to move beyond existing readings of *Zero K* that treat embodiment as a sentimental element. Instead, it has argued that *Zero K* stages a deeper philosophical question: Why does Jeffrey insist on embodiment? What philosophical and experiential logic underlies his resistance to disembodiment? Jeffrey's answer lies within his lived experience of situatedness within the placial coordinates of here and now. It is through this spatio-temporal logic of place that Jeffrey understands himself, and through which the novel compels its readers to consider the inescapable connection between body, place, and being.

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