Wow! What an anthology! As I open the book and start reading Dance Spaces: Practices of Movement edited by Susanne Ravn and Leena Rouhiainen, I am immersed into the space — or rather, spaces — that my meeting with the book produces. The book makes me dwell — spacefully — in a vibrat- ing spot between my embodied dance practice and thinking and knowing about dance. It is easy to think of the body as alpha and omega in dance as movement practice. The central contribution of this book is, instead, a decentralisation of the body as the most important, separate entity in dance. The authors, in what could be called a post-mod- ern and post-humanist way, push the body slightly out of central focus and bjar it with spatial lay- ers. Dance becomes complex and ever-changing movement practices that both produce and are produced by a space that is intensive more than extensive and even more so through movement. The red thread though the anthology is the un- derstanding that space is not a static entity that serves as a backdrop for our actions, but instead a dynamic phenomenon that we both live in and live, form and are in-formed by as moving and re- lating bodies. As the authors in their articles take me through different spatial layers connected to a wide spectrum of movement practices, the book happens to me, no matter what.

CONNECTIONS ACROSS SUB-SECTIONS

After the introduction, the ten articles of the an- thology are divided into four sub-sections, some- thing that is probably done in order to make the book more accessible. The naming of the different sections is not easy, though, and they seem some- how contradictory to the complexity of dance as spatial movement practices that the book seeks to discuss. The naming of the sub-chapters seems to lead my understanding into a direction that the actual reading of the articles under that section resists. Susanne Ravn’s “Interacting Spaces in Argentinian Tango”, for example, does not need to become compromised under the sub-section “Space and dance genres”, as it contributes with philosophical perspectives on how dance unfolds as interaction and insights about embodied competencies as well. Ravn’s discussion of how the process of interaction in Argentinian tango is pro- duced through processual bodies acting through pre-accelerations and relational intervals in move- ment is also highly interesting in relation to danc- ers dancing together in other genres. For me, the book makes the most meaning when I ignore the naming of the sub-sections and allow the articles to speak to me across the categories they are put into.

EXTENSIVE AND INTENSIVE SPACE

Sarah Rubidge’s “On choreographic space” is the perfect opening article for the anthology. It serves as the key to the spatial landscape(s) that the rest of the book both builds on and connects to. The chapter is most certainly about “choreographic space”, but also more generally on space, and on how space is produced in and through movement. Rubidge introduces a dialogue about extensive and intensive space with geographers like Doreen Massey and Nigel Thrift, social theorists like Henri Lefebvre, philosophers like Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari and Brian Massumi and dance scholars such as Valerie Briginshaw. Rubidge explains Extensive space as the space inherited from Descartes, a space that is static, divisible, mea- surable and external to us. Intensive space, on the other hand, is in flux, its contours malleable, it is multidimensional rather than metric, and it is experienced kinaesthetically rather than optically. All the rest of the articles in the anthology demon- strate, build on and develop the thoughts of space as intensive space, and especially Massey, Massumi and Deleuze and Guattari are used in several of the articles. The fact that the same (or at least cor- responding) theoretical background is used and treated through different movement examples in the different articles binds the anthology together and turns it into a solid theoretical contribution to the on-going discussion about space within the human sciences.

A WORLD THAT ENVELOPES US

I find all the articles in the anthology interesting and I learn from all of them. Having said that, I find that they, in various degrees, manage to open up the spatial aspects of the practices they are demonstrating. Hanna Järvinen’s article “Danc- ing back to Arcady — On Representations of Early Twentieth-Century Modern dance” and Paula Kramer’s “Dancing in Nature Space — Attending to Materials” are two articles that manage to open their different themes into truly spatial discussions. Through studies of photographs taken to represent modern dance ca. 1900-1930, and in discussion with philosopher Michel de Certeau, Järvinen shows that almost none of the photographs she has studied represent modern dance as actual snapshots of dancers in movement. Instead, they are carefully composed photographs to represent particular aesthetic and/or ideological values. The space of the dance images is not to document, but to symbolize the, at that time, contemporary ped- agogy and ideology that genders dance as female and represents it as healthy and joyful exercise that can cure the ills of modernisation and even serve eugenic aims. Paula Kramer in her article, again, extends widely into a political space with a clear ecological standpoint as she discusses prac- tice-as-research engaged with outdoor dance. She defines nature space in dialogue with dance and performance artist Bettina Maina as “... always in relationship to space being alive and happen- ing”. The thoughtful contribution of Kramer is that she gives the human body a decentralised po- sition along with the loss of control within the en- vironment. Instead, dance as movement practice in nature space, is described as one of adaptation, intervention, co-existence, resistance and play.

SPACE UNFOLDS AS INTERACTION

Leena Rouhiainen’s “From Body Psychotherapy to Performative Installation Environment: A Collaborating Performer’s Point of View”, Diane Oatley’s “The Wound that Never Heals: Flamenco Dance as Transformation in Liminal Space” and Char-lotte Svendler Nielsen’s “The Lived Space of Artistic Primary School Education: The Significance of Embodiment and Vulnerability” are also examples of highly interesting articles in the anthology that really dig into the dimensions of spatiality in connection to movement practices.

Rouhiainen discusses the dramaturgy of the performer, and drawing from body-psychothera- py, she links kinaesthetic knowledge rendered by the lived body as an encounter between the sub- ject, others and the environment. She refers to them together as emplacement (which I compare to Kramer’s decentralisation of the human body in nature space), and points to how in many current dance performances, the focal concern in body psychotherapy is the actuality of the situa- tion and allowing what is emergent in it to take form. Through Oatley’s article, I understand more about Flamenco, as I come to understand this dance practice as a liminal space. In dialogue with anthropologist Victor Turner, Oatley defines the
liminal space of flamenco as a bertwist-and-be-tween condition involving seclusion from the everyday scene, as well as a state of wishing, de-siring and yearning. Srendler Nielsen is a wonder-ful writer on hermetic phenomenological ap-proaches to pedagogical research in dialogue with the theory of Max van Manen. In her article in the anthropology she digs into the lived experiences of a teacher, and shows how the teacher, through her embodied attention and vulnerability, opens up for an artistic-educational space in her classroom.

SPACE AND OTHER INTERESTING THEMES

I also find Leena Hammargren’s “Spaces of Encoun-ter: Dancing Democracy in the Nordic Region”, Camilla Damkjær’s “On the Representation of Space” and Shantel Ehrenberg’s “A Contemporary Dance’s Kinaesthetic Experiences with Dancing Self-images” most interesting and I learn from reading them. Nevertheless, I find them less en-tangled with the questions of space. Other themes seem to stand in the foreground in these three arti-cles. Hammargren’s article is a sharp investiga-tion of dance, democracy and Nordic cultures (using Swedish, Norwegian and Danish examples). The connections to space are more suggested than clearly written out and Hammargren connects to theory about space in only a minor way com-pared to the way the other articles do. Instead, she leans more to theories about cultural policy and politics. Damkjær’s article manages to leave the floor, climbing up into the circus discipline of the vertical rope, and to give exciting sensations of the “space up there” as a set of interweaving aesthetic tensions activated by the human body in the rope. Still, as a whole, the article seems to be more about the art of making sense of the meeting between practice and text in a lecture-performance per-formed on the rope – while not making the article less interesting because of that. Ehrenberg’s article indicates that the writer is in the midst of learn-ing about research methodologies, as the first third of the article deals with methodological concerns.

When she comes to her own investigation, Ehren-berg still shares insightful thoughts about dancers’ multidimensional and multi-sensational experiences in practice. She digs into the question of what can be understood as “external and internal space” in certain cases of becoming, and being, a dancer.

As I turn the last page of this anthology, I am con-vinced that this book is of interest for any body that is, like me, in a constant liminal space of wishing and yearning to understand more about movement practices, dance, body and space. The anthropology ties these concepts together, making them less of entities that can be discussed sepa-rately from each other, and more like pulsars in a dynamic web that stretches dance through philo-sophical, political, historical, pedagogical and environmental connections. The authors of this anthology represent some of the finest writers in the field of dance. I cannot help but feel proud of the discoveries and articulations these dance prac-titioners, researchers and artists have made as they have seen “through” the dancing body, and blurred it with the spatial layers that the body-in-move-ment interweave with. With the book Dance Spaces: Practices of Movement the authors contribute to a dance specific, wider artistic and more general exploration and debate about what space actually is within the human sciences (and, I dare to add, also the debates about space-time that go on within in the natural sciences).

Go ahead and immerse yourself in this book; it will be well-spent space-time!

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

4 Ibid.
12 Kramer refers to email correspondence with Bettina Miana in this paper.