
Kirby, Peter Wynn (ed.) 2009. *Boundless Worlds: An Anthropological Approach to Movement*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books. 242 pp. Hb.: \$80.00 / £50.00. ISBN: 9781845455385.

Boundless Worlds takes the anthropology of movement as a point of entry for interrogating Eurocentric accounts of space in social scientific thought. The charge ‘against space’ is laid out in several of the volume’s chapters, most explicitly in Peter Wynn Kirby’s introduction and Tim Ingold’s polemical thought-piece ‘Against Space’, with which the introduction is productively paired.

The argument that these opening chapters develop consists of two broad claims. The first is that whilst space has garnered increasing interest within social research, it is nonetheless often used in unconsidered or ethnocentric ways in anthropological analysis: treated as a static backdrop for ethnographic action rather than as the outcome of social practice, i.e., a passive concept rather than active. The second, stronger, claim is that ‘space’ in its Euro-American conceptualisation (as graphable, traceable and conquerable) has been integral to projects of domination and encroachment into less powerful societies to the extent that ‘it has become difficult to countenance the use of this term [space] without severely undermining research objectives’ (p. 3). This claim is not simply that we need to be aware of other spatial repertoires, or to develop a more nuanced or subtle account of the social and political production of space, but rather, more radically, that we need to abandon ‘space’ altogether as a category of analysis. This claim is suggested, though somewhat ambivalently, in Kirby’s introduction, but is worked out most fully in Ingold’s chapter, which characterises space as the outcome of a ‘logical inversion’ (one of several that the chapter interrogates) in which the pathways along which life is lived are turned ‘into boundaries within which it is enclosed’ (p. 29). Space is thus a redundant term for Ingold (‘abstract and rarefied’ is his characterisation) because it fails to capture the lived, practiced nature of our social environments. ‘Of all the terms we use to describe the world we inhabit,’ space is ‘the most abstract, the most empty, the most detached from the realities of life and experience’ (ibid.). Instead, Ingold advocates attention to the ways that paths are produced and followed: to ‘wayfaring’ as ‘our most fundamental mode of being in the world’ (p. 38). Places, rather than appearing as static points, figure in this conception as the nodal points of intersecting paths, allowing for a more attentive and nuanced rendering of other peoples’ environments and their relations with them.

These two opening theoretical essays are followed by eight ethnographic chapters. The first group are united by a concern to interrogate the relationship between space, movement (or limits to movement) and state power. They examine, in turn, the gradual introduction of a new ‘territorialising’ conception of space on the mid-18th century Anglo-Gurkha frontier (Bernardo Michael); the deeply physical, embodied practice of ‘patrolling’ the occupied territories for Israeli soldiers during the first Intifada and the subsequent spatialisation of fear for those who returned to Palestine in peace-time (Richard Clarke); and the spatial imaginaries that underpin Tibetan-Buddhist rituals of world peace-making (Martin Mills).

This is followed by two essays which, in very different sites, draw on indigenous spatial ontologies to question Euro-American readings of Melanesian Island and Duxa Mongolian landscapes. Carlos Mondragon's subtle ethnography of the Torres Islands in North Vanuatu demonstrates how islanders conceive of their 'place' as existing within extended patterns of kinship and exchange – an 'oceanic socio-scape', in which 'no single island is ever conceived as a self-contained entity' (p. 123). By exploring the way in which both kinship *and* particular island places are spoken of in terms of growth and layering, Mondragon develops a theoretisation of space and movement 'informed by Austronesian principles' – that is, to think *with* his informants' spatial referents to question assumptions of 'insularity' in regard to the Torres socio-scape.

Drawing on a rich ethnography in the taiga of northern Mongolia, Pedersen contrasts the 'nomadic landscape' of his reindeer-breeding Duxa informants with the 'sedentary landscape' characteristic of settled agricultural zones. Pedersen shows how the Duxa herders conceive of their landscape as 'boundless', in which even the mountains that ring the valley are conceived more as 'points' than as an edge. This landscape is experienced by the Duxa as limitless, but not homogenous or empty. Rather, it is filled with sites that 'anchor' the herders to ancestral places, and filled with practices (such as the highly ritualised process of packing and unpacking camp, or the bodily practices of circling sacred cairns, *ovoo*), which serve to emplace those who are settling there or passing through, and to render new places 'home'. Like Mondragon, the anthropological project here is not merely to present a nomadic 'reading' of the landscape, but to use this to prompt us to think differently about the way in which nomadic and sedentary spatial practices intersect (such as in the heart of metropolitan London).

The final three chapters take us to industrialised settings, where studies of 'everyday movement' (in urban Japan; in a Japanese multinational in France, and in northern Finland) are used to contest grand narratives of globalisation as characterised by dis-embodied 'flow'. In a fascinating study of contamination anxieties in metropolitan Japan, Wynn Kirby shows how experiences of toxic illness resulting from the installation of a new waste processing facility shaped experiences of urban space and altered patterns of movement through the city, the seemingly 'invisible' movement of toxic fumes bringing about very real and material shifts in navigations of the urban environment. Michael Sedgewick takes us to an archetypally 'globalised' space: the offices of a Japanese multinational in urban France, to illustrate how the 'flows' of knowledge and technologies that characterises the contemporary moment are in constituted through the daily work of navigating social and cultural difference and distance. Eeva Burglund completes the trio by showing the effort entailed in repositioning a 'remote' and forest-dependent economy as 'connected' to the global economy. Drawing on Doreen Massey's critique of accounts of globalisation that would treat it as 'a historical queue', she demonstrates the normative assessments that underlie many attempts at 'connecting' places, in which fixity is bad and flow is good. In northern Finland, repositioning (and re-marketing) the region's forest-based economy as a node in the 'knowledge economy' involves a great deal of social and political work. By studying this work ethnographically, Berglund shows how rhetorics of flow and connection can obscure, as in the Finnish case, 'a reality of control and constraint.' The book is

completed by a conclusion from Wynn Kirby and a visual appendix of ‘movement studies’ by artists Christine Gou and Tapio Snellman.

This is a rich, diverse and ethnographically engaging volume, with several memorable contributions (those by Mondragon, Pedersen and Clarke stand out for their ethnographic insight and depth of analysis). Ultimately, however, the volume is more successful as a loosely connected set of critiques of ‘static’, essentialising, or Euro-centric readings of space than it is in advancing the ‘anthropological approach to movement’ that the subtitle suggests. Several of the chapters address ‘movement’ only tangentially or metaphorically. Others question the tendency to reduce anthropological reflection upon movement to a study of ‘global flows’ or transnational migration, without really suggesting how the ethnography they present allows them to develop a different approach. Few of the contributors, moreover, engage with the rich strain of theorising within human geography which has precisely sought to look to ‘movements’ of various kinds (human, technological, geological etc.) to question static readings of space. For a volume explicitly committed to a cross-disciplinary conversation, this silence is disappointing, and means that the volume will have less appeal to students outside anthropology than it otherwise might.

The second weakness of the volume concerns the degree to which the chapters speak to each other and to the opening theoretical essays. Ingold’s chapter, in particular, sets down a theoretical challenge – to ‘abandon space’ (not just a particular Eurocentric *reading* of space; but against space-as-analytic) – that few of the ethnographic essays either address or refute. Indeed, what the ethnographic essays point to is precisely the value of attending ethnographically to diverse lived encounters with particular spaces and, in Pedersen’s case, productively contrasting this with particular, homely ‘places’. This points to a problem of composition: the reader is left with the feeling that the essays were written *without* the benefit of reading or engaging with the opening introductory chapters. However, it is also indicative of a broader theoretical dilemma that the volume alludes to but never fully addresses, i.e., space is a problematic, and over-used concept; one, that it may, as Kirby suggests in his introduction, be ‘guilty by association’ with an intellectual tradition that leads us away from sensitive engagement with other ways of being in and perceiving one’s environment. However, it is a term that may be easier to critique than to abandon. It is striking, indeed, that it is precisely those chapters that are the most ethnographically immersed that seem to bracket off the calls to ‘abandon space’ and show how the term can do rich and productive analytical work.

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