CHAPTER 1

Towards a Practical Cosmopolitanism

Abstract Claiming the airport as an exemplar of contemporary global space and the incessant logics of movement seen to be at the heart of globalisation, the introductory chapter asks what is it to move in the airport space? What is the choreography of the airport? Reviewing debates on critical cosmopolitanism, and the corporeal and spatial turns, this chapter argues for the need to further embodied analysis of global movement through a kind of kinaesthetic ethnography, which puts the wealth of thinking about moving bodies in space from dance studies into dialogue with mobility studies. Such an approach, the chapter argues, can lead us to important knowledge about the ongoing tensions between sameness and difference, national and transnational, self and other, as experienced in the transit spaces of global mobility—a practice of cosmopolitanism.

Keywords Cosmopolitanism • Airport • Kinaesthetic ethnography • Choreography

In May of 2006 a short article appeared in the Dance section of The New York Times. It concerned the soon-to-begin renovation of Terminal 5 at John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK), site of the iconic 1962 Trans World Airlines (TWA) Flight Centre designed by modernist architect Eero Saarinen. Closed for business soon after TWA’s demise in 1994, Saarinen’s terminal had been heritage listed, but its future uncertain, for
close to a decade. Now occupied by budget carrier JetBlue Airways, the terminal was to undergo a revival of sorts, aligning its super-cool retro-futurist styling with the new super-cool airline on the block, JetBlue. Saarinen’s swooping, bird-like concrete structure is symbolic of the glamorous Jet Age of travel, and is well loved by architectural critics. The article caught my eye, however, because it interviewed two performance makers involved with the project: the theatre designer/architect David Rockwell whose architectural firm Rockwell Group was contracted to work on the interior design, and the choreographer Jerry Mitchell whom Rockwell had worked with on several Broadway productions including Hairspray in 2002 and a 2000 revival of The Rocky Horror Picture Show.

That a choreographer should be employed on the design of an airport terminal really shouldn’t seem incongruous. What it says is that this place, built above all for movement, requires an expert on moving. Rockwell Group’s emphasis is on applying a cross-disciplinary approach to creating “immersive environments” (Rockwell Group 2010), and in the The Times article Rockwell explained, “we began with the idea of using movement to personalize the experience and deal with the emotions of travel” (in Green 2006). Rockwell and Mitchell’s involvement in the design of the new Terminal 5 highlights that movement in this kind of space is more than a mathematical problem of getting from A to B; rather, the quality and shape, speed, and contrapuntal rhythm of movements made by people and objects, individually and en masse, deserve attention.

This observation, so far, goes not much further than that of urbanists such as Jane Jacobs, who famously described the pedestrian movement on her Greenwich Village street as a “sidewalk ballet” (Jacobs 1992) or the architect and urban designer Jan Gehl, who in Life Between Buildings (2006) argues for a humanised approach to architecture and who has since pioneered a methodology of studying cities by tracking how people move in the spaces between buildings. From the Situationists and Walter Benjamin, to Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau, we have developed an understanding of social spaces such as city streets as in dialogue with, constituting and constituted by, our movements through them. The airport terminal is another such public space, but it also participates in a global movement or transportation system. The airport has become emblematic of the extreme mobility—in quantity and pace—of twenty-first century life. The network of airports spread across the globe makes it seem like nowhere (given economic and political access) is more than a day away, and time-condensed, animated visualisations mapping the
planet’s collective commercial flights draw a picture of the Earth’s surface as a teeming web of transportations. This feeling, as Bharucha (2000) is careful to point out, typifies the First World, metropolitan bias of global cosmopolitanism. In reality globalisation is highly uneven; many of the world’s people do not have freedom of movement at such high-speed or in terms of distance travelled, and many of the world’s places remain remote and unreachable even for those with economic and political privilege. And yet global airports present exemplary in-between spaces.

It has become almost unremarkable that the airport symbolises contemporary globalisation on cultural and economic levels, and is linked to a related elite cosmopolitanism. Yet its very boundedness, heavily entrenching state borders, while also performing a “nowhere/anywhere” cosmopolitanism, points to the need for a more critical assessment of cosmopolitanism at work here beyond the luxury-brand shopping mall or classed airport lounge. In fact, having moved from the late-twentieth century’s era of rampant globalisation into one in which the boundaries of nation are being evermore heavily asserted, it is important that we take a detailed look at the complexities of attachment to and enactment of place that manifests in the cosmopolises we have built.

This book takes the airport as the focus of its study, as a site, event, and above all, a practice of global movement. Its key interest is in the kinaesthetics of such a practice, what I refer to as the choreography of global space. In this site of emblematic movement, I ask, what is it to move in this space? Recalling my disorienting journeys through Hawai‘i, in a haze of motion sickness, what is it to feel out of place, and even out of body in a space like this? And therefore, what can a study of the choreography of this space tell us about being in and of a world that understands its fluid, changing, kinaesthetic self? “While airports are most often mobilised as symbols of globalisation and transnational identity, they also illustrate the politics of mobility at the scale of the body” (Cresswell 2012, 358). Taking the airport and movement as more than metaphor, as material and affective experiences that we apprehend bodily, I argue that it is difficult to bypass the politics of such mobility; that is, it is through studying corporeal practice that we might get to a politics of mobility.

Choreography is a key term here. I look beyond metaphor towards embodied movement analyses that draw heavily upon somatic and spatial knowledge of gravity, weight, proprioceptive sense, body shape, and other “tools” employed by dance.
The mobilities literature is a touchstone, but I seek to ameliorate a lack of scholarship that puts ideas about practiced movement (movement as practised) from a field of movement experts (dancers) into dialogue with those developed through research on transit, migration, diasporic experience, and similar from mobilities studies, and aligned work within human geography, sociology, cultural studies, and anthropology in the wake of the new mobilities paradigm, and discursive spatial and corporeal “turns” of the late-twentieth century.

WORLD ON THE MOVE

Over the last twenty-plus years, those of us working in the humanities and social sciences have undergone major shifts in the way we think about culture and cultural interaction. This is thanks in large part to the postcolonial critique—to our changing understanding of centre–periphery relationships—and to the spatial turn—the renewed interest in the roles of space and place from human geography and many other disciplines. The classical conception of culture honed by traditional anthropology sought to define identity through differentiation from others, and correspondingly, to map this differentiated group onto a specific place (Papastergiadis 2000, 49). This view of culture is inherently problematic, however, as unmoving and unchallenged conceptions of place map so neatly on to fixed notions of culture. Marc Augé writes:

One of the major concerns of ethnology has been to delineate signifying space in the world, societies identified with cultures conceived as complete wholes: universes of meaning, of which the individuals and groups inside them are just an expression, defining themselves in terms of the same criteria, the same values and the same interpretation procedures. (1995, 33)

Borders themselves, however, are neither fixed nor natural. Rather, they are socially and politically constructed: the assumed homogeneity and internal sameness of bounded groups, or even bounded bodies, is on unsettled ground. A cartography of borders simply calls attention to the crossings, linkages and border-dwellings that have always constituted unstable and ever-changing worlds. Augé continues in the same line of thinking, “for a start, it works well—or rather, it has worked well: land has been cultivated, nature domesticated, reproduction of the generations ensured; in this sense the gods of the soil have looked after it well” (46);
but then, “it is also a semi-fantasy because, although nobody doubts the reality of the place held in common and the powers that threaten it or protect it, nobody is unaware—nobody has ever been unaware—of the reality of other groups” (46–47).

Within a sense of perpetual movement and reforming groups of people, contemporary globalisation poses nothing wholly new, although it proposes accelerated rates and frequencies of cultural transition. The old routes of trade, colonisation and settlement have morphed into criss-crossing jet streams of multinational corporate capital, global leisure tourism, and large-scale relocation of people due to political conflict and environmental devastation. Relatively slow border crossings by boat, train, or foot still occur of course, but these modes have largely been outstripped by growth in and the profile of air travel; for example, the high profile of asylum seeker arrivals by boat in Australia and southern Europe masks the far greater number that arrive by plane.\(^3\) Ironically space travel has only recently gone commercial, with suborbital flights posing a viable money-maker for the new space tourism industry, just as concern over peak oil suggests that the days of jet plane travel are limited. Virtual journeys through the nerve centres of the internet and other telecommunications channels are conducted in their trillions each day as people attend meetings via Skype halfway around the globe, capital is moved from one account to another, and virtual worlds are constructed and traversed by our avatars.

At the crossroads of this frantic mobility, virtual and material, is the airport: a transit space on the global stage. This thirdspace is one in which many of us encounter some of the key features of inter- or transculturalism.\(^4\) While the airport space retains pretensions to the jet-set age of early aviation, more and more it is the scene of a range of journeys: temporary and permanent emigrations and daily commutes of the international labour market to name just a few; and all the while global pandemics and terrorism exert surveillance constrictions on the stateless refugee and transnational elite, First and Third World passenger alike.

Where sociologies a few years ago might have invoked a chaotic picture of global travel in which flight paths circle and cross through major nodes in the contemporary migration network—much like maps advertising an airline’s routes in the back of in-flight magazines—this dizzying swirl was meant to merely stand in for the rapidity and quantity of journeys in the era of globalisation. More recently, what political sociologist Mark Salter has called the “twin stars” of globalisation and the war on terror have
brought about considerable resurgence of critical scholarship on the subject of airports. Long the domain of aviation law and safety, or terminal logistics and management, there is a growing literature from within humanities and the social sciences concerned with airports as, for example, political sites of surveillance and control (Salter 2008; Hall 2011, 2015), as complex global networks and “flow machines” (Fuller and Harley 2004), as modulators of affect (Ady 2007, 2008a, b, 2009), and as settings for a new “aeromobility habitus” or a new widespread “will to fly” (Cwerner 2009). As well, the lingering nostalgia for a lost glamour in air travel makes for appealing cultural histories such as Alastair Gordon’s Naked Airport (2004), with its documentation of the changing characters of air travel and the development of airport buildings from the muddy airfield to today’s “pterodactyl of glass and steel” (28). Working well beyond the airport as metaphor for empty transnational privilege or as metonym for exotic faraway places, this body of research complements a broader critical scholarship on cosmopolitanism and globalisation.

While Augé defines non-places like the airport against what he calls anthropological place, I argue that close study of movement in the airport actually disturbs this binary rubric through which the cultural practice of place/space is understood, thereby challenging both the negative casting of mobility by the proponents of fixed place and also the utopic untethering of place by those extolling the freedoms of mobility. Airports are not simply empty of the ideals of meaning and attachment, but rather place and non-place’s separate logics operate in circumstances that are not mutually exclusive. Hence, for example, the formation of subjectivities such as “third culture kids” (TCKs), a subculture of people who grew up in two or more cultures under highly mobile (generally expatriate rather than migratory) conditions, who might feel resonantly “at home” in the airport.\(^5\) The distinction between place and space is often a valuation between a place of meaningful dwelling and the spatial void, and this binary comparison extends to spaces of mobility or non-places. For Augé, the “distinction between places and non-places derives from the opposition between place and space” (1995, 79). “Place, as defined here,” he argues, “is place in the established and symbolized sense, anthropological place” (81). Augé’s influential book examines airports, along with other increasingly common, late-capitalist spaces such as supermarkets, motorways, and ATMs. Together, these are delineated by Augé as places formed by the logic of transport, transit and commerce, and through relations of solitary contractuality (94).
Augé’s book begins with a short scene in which a fictional character, Pierre Dupont, performs the role of an Everyman in the spaces of supermodernity. He withdraws money from an ATM before joining light traffic on the A11 auto route. He is on the way to the airport where he parks (row J, underground level 2), checks in his allotted twenty kilos, passes through passport control before doing some duty-free shopping, and finally boards: “Waiting for take-off, while newspapers were being distributed, he glanced through the company’s in-flight magazine and ran his finger along the imagined route of the journey: Heraklion, Larnaca, Beirut, Dhahran, Dubai, Bombay, Bangkok … more than nine thousand kilometres in the blink of an eye”; Dupont perused the duty-free list, “and read with a certain smugness the advantages conferred by the ‘business class’ in which he was travelling thanks to the intelligent generosity of his firm.” Enjoying his fancy “Espace 2000” seat and the advertisements in a magazine, he settles into the flight (3–4).

High up in the sky, in an anthropological fiction, we are treated to a brief but thickly described passage of international air travel. For Augé this episode serves to capture a new type of space and mode of being in contemporary life: the non-places of supermodernity, “where the habitué of supermarkets, slot machines and credit cards communicates wordlessly, through gestures, with an abstract, unmediated commerce; a world thus surrendered to solitary individuality […]” (78). Hence, we see Pierre Dupont in breezy easiness, floating between consumer opportunities and in a bubble of self-containment.

Overall this book revisits Marc Augé’s twenty-year-old binary, but argues that global airports operate in a more negotiated middle ground. Using the concept of thirdspace as outlined by cultural theorist Homi Bhabha, and as developed later by geographer Edward Soja, I instead argue that there is a more complex, contested negotiation going on between old ideas of place and the spaces of globalisation and transit at the airport. Thirdspace as discussed by both Bhabha and Soja designates a non-fixed zone in which intercultural formations might come into being, but it is also designed as a critical apparatus, a way of thinking via Bhabha’s “and/also” or “thirling-as-othering” in order to restructure binary oppositions, or in Bhabha’s words, “elude the politics of polarity” (1994, 56). How this critical mode of thinking might live up to or map onto physical space as well as embodied cultural practice is one of the things I take up in the next and following chapters. The mutual entanglement of matter and meaning—of mattering—is one of the crucial methodological and
theoretical imperatives here. More than only a heuristic, my study tests the limits of place, non-place, thirddspace rubrics by reinstating the visceral body to accounts of the lived experience of air travel. Is it really all breezy easiness, as Pierre Dupont would have us believe?

The “umbilical cord” that exists between air travel and the global, John Urry suggests, is nowhere more evident than through the very scale of the air travel industry and the monumental scale of airports themselves (2009, 30).6 The hub airports that lie along major international transit points are so large that they cease to be buildings and take on city-like proportions. They operate as global cities in “a geography of strategic places at the global scale” (Sassen 2002, 161). They are networked to other global city-airports more than to other places within their immediate locality (see also Sassen 2001). But as much as they participate in the globalising flows circulating quite literally in the vertical airspace above our heads, they betray in their procedures the inescapable relation between the national and the cosmopolitan implicit in contemporary formations of globalisation.

As I write, the high-profile resurgence of nationalist movements in so much of the West (the USA, UK and France to name a few) has come as a surprise to some. As Helen Gilbert and Jacqueline Lo point out, however, these two theoretical and political projects should be understood as working together dialogically rather than antithetically (2009, 8). Moving away from an association of cosmopolitanism with elite transnational mobility, authors such as Gilbert and Lo participate in establishing a more critical discourse that does not over-valorise the possibilities for cultural flows and exchange, and remains wary of “populist postmodern theory” that poses that everyone is on the move and/or that we are all in some way tourists (Bharucha 2000, 7). Here Peng Cheah’s critique of blind faith in global cosmopolitanism remains particularly incisive:

If we recall that the nation is a mass-based imagined political community, it is unclear whether in the current interstate system, the so-called international public sphere or global civil society (names for mass-based global political communities) formed by transnational networks can achieve social redistribution on a global scale if it does not go through the institutional agency of the nation-state. (Cheah 1998, 37; original emphasis)

Rather, Gilbert and Lo point to acknowledgement of a range of different cosmopolitanisms (2009, 4–11), and others call for the term’s “pluralizing
and particularizing” (Robbins 1998, 3), or a new “discrepant” cosmopolitanism (Clifford 1998, 365).

For example, a “thin” cultural cosmopolitanism (Gilbert and Lo 2009, 9) is readily apparent in the global airport, where a good quantity of sameness amidst displays of worldly cultural difference creates what Paul Theroux calls the “home-plus” factor for an implicit Western traveller. This is the airport’s nowhere/anywhere modality, what Arjun Appadurai and Carol Breckenridge call the “disturbing commercial sameness” of cosmopolitan cultural forms (1998, 5). But in our actual journeys in airplanes, through airports—through the terminal, onto the plane, through customs and security checks, in the food hall, long waits in the gate lounge—our movements play a part in constituting more ambiguous and particular bodily experiences of global flow as well. One of the reasons the airport as physical and conceptual space presents as an interesting site of study is that a tangle of relations between nationalisms and cosmopolitanisms, interculturalisms, and transculturalisms is encountered again and again. Arriving in the international terminal at Sydney’s Kingsford Smith airport, we are forced to pass through a last-minute duty-free shopping centre just before customs. During busy early morning arrivals traffic, the line for passport control often backs up into the shopping area—an ideal model of the airport’s peddling of “commercial sameness” if ever there was, just as the state is most strongly enforcing the weight of its jurisdiction. At Vancouver International, on the other hand, we descend into border control by passing through two large Coast Salish carvings, employed as citation of place in a practice akin to the strategies of museum display. The carvings mark your “arrival,” but where you arrived is a complex of nation, First Nation, city, and nowhere—for let us remember, that until you pass through passport control, you have not really yet arrived in a geo-legal sense.

It is here, amongst the overlapping and multiple ideas of place/space, that we might discover a practical cosmopolitanism (or cosmopolitanism in bodily practice). As such, I revisit the possibilities of a critical cosmopolitanism by turning towards accounts of sensory corporeal experience. We have, as Rebecca Schneider (2015) has aptly pointed out, been amidst an accelerating “turn to turns” in the academy since the late 1960s (8fn1). And yet, despite work over several decades espousing the moving, fluid, changeable nature of places, identities, and cultures, the material and affective impact of the world’s fluxing kinaesthetics remains hard to pin down and talk about in real terms.
In the following chapters, I present excerpts from my field notes, collected over roughly ten years spent crossing borders, waiting for connections on purposely booked multi-leg journeys. I stayed in airport hotels, and boarding gate lounges. I went on a “tarmac tour” and visited the Qantas “heritage museum.” I boarded, took off, set down, and deplaned numerous times. I hung about in border control as long as I could without raising suspicion. I went to meet people at the airport, and I went to just watch people meeting people at the airport. I was checked in. I was scanned. I flew. I queued. I transferred. I waited. I fell asleep, I waited. I wrote. I recollected travel memories along an expanded timeline, augmenting my dedicated fieldwork with past experiences such as those that opened the book’s prologue. Together these notes form a kind of personal journey; one that represents my lifeworld as someone who is mixed-race, a dual national, a woman, an ex-dancer, a designer, and now an academic with First World mobility—a “third culture kid” of sorts: an Australian, an American, of Asian and Anglo descent, currently residing in Australia in the Asian century. My world is a potent representative of the legacy of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European colonialism still in effect through the world, of shifts in international relations towards the USA in the twentieth, and of the new globalising forces of capitalist trade that are pulling us all in realignment towards the Pacific rim of Asia, just as my near neighbours in the South Pacific begin to go under water. This is not to say that my lifeworld is in some way representative of everyone’s experience, far from it; but it is not in broad terms uncommon either. My field notes therefore attempt, in the tradition of radical empiricism, to capture deeply observed qualitative information on lived experience from within the world that constructs (and is constructed by) that experience. Through my fieldwork I visited airports in China, Japan, Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand/Aotearoa, Canada, the USA, the UK, and continental Europe; traversing hemispheres both North and South, East and West. This is in fact where the “Australia” and “Hawai’i” of my opening story could be located, if anywhere: somewhere between North and South, East and West. I would not call this book an ethnography per se, but it owes a debt to the methods and frameworks of ethnography, working from participant observation, towards field notes, and towards interpretation and meaning. My focus has been explicitly on movement experience, and therefore, if I could call the study’s methodology any one thing, I would call it a kind of kinaesthetic ethnography.
The increased virtual and physical mobility of social life through speed, scale and frequency, poses a real challenge to the idea of fieldwork as a practice of “intensive dwelling” or the “tent in the village” (Clifford 1997, 58). Indeed the idea of “field” itself as a bounded site in large part defined by virtue of its distance from an equally delineated “home” is called into question. Instead, fieldwork could be a “series of travel encounters” (2) or a “travel practice” (8), or as “no more than where the action is” (Hall 2009, 572; after Erving Goffman, original emphasis), potentially untying the site from a fixed and located ground. Methodological questions of place and time are also important epistemological ones for the project: unfixing “where” and “when” promotes my focus upon often non-centred, non-stable modes of subjectivity and lived experience that are produced in transnational and intercultural forums. Such a focus has emerged from my observations of the global airport and air travel, but it has also followed from my goal to take seriously the sensing body and particularly the movement-sensing body. That the global spaces of the airport compose contingent, slightly “off” or slightly “out,” ways of being in and with, is the major assertion of this book. From the scanning procedures of security, to the presentation of self and identity documents at the border, to the visceral effects of jet lag, and the interminable waiting in terminals, I am brought into a new relationship to myself, to my own potential for being different or new or, dare I say, being other. This is the kinaesthetic practice that is ultimately being examined here.

My approach to studying the airport is also an outcome of my particular corporeal training: I started dance training at the age of three, spent six days a week in the studio by the age of ten, left performing to train as a set and costume designer in my teens, and now work as a designer primarily with dance artists and as an academic in performance studies. The disciplinary lens of performance and dance is something that is from the outset evident in my work, but the lifetime of somatic training of proprioceptive, temporal, spatial, sonic, and other bodily systems utilised in making and attending to movement in space and time also means that I am a certain kind of body in the world.

The bodies of knowledge available to us through only spectator-centred modes of studying embodied action and practice are limited. They either lead to particular kinds of knowledge and/or mean that we focus on particular aspects of experience or particular cultural products. This is (or should be) a crucial challenge for those of us who study performance, where our objects of study are most often live bodies doing
what they do in lived spaces. In terms of the study of performance, the spectator bias is dominant. It often places the researcher as a disembodied watcher sitting in the dark of the theatre or rehearsal room, focussed on the performance, a “show,” and cut off from the myriad of processes that shape what is being watched. I have previously argued that in terms of cultural performance in particular, the spectator approach tends to reify culturally identified performers into representations of fixed cultures, and within this paradigm it is difficult to account for non-representational practices such as contemporary dance (Shih Pearson 2012). Rather, I argue, it is through close attention to the perceptual experiences—joyful and difficult—involving embodied cultural or intercultural practice, through the body in practice, we will unavoidably get to a politics of cultural interaction.

The work done on sensory perception within ethnography (e.g. Feld and Basso 1996; Erlmann 2004; Csordas 1993, 1990; Pink 2009) alongside seminal work on the experience of the body in space from human geography (e.g. Tuan 1977; Cresswell 2012) highlights the fact that all kinds of knowledge is housed within the sensing body, and all kinds of cultural meaning is made through that body’s encounter with the social and natural world through embodied practice. We are all expert-bodies, of a kind. The theatre critic is an expert spectator. The crying toddler is an expert screamer. The performer is an expert practitioner. We could say that both the theatre critic and the performer are experts in performance, but they, like the toddler, quite obviously bring different bodies of knowledge to that act. Even if we were to put them in seats next to each other in the theatre, making both critic and performer spectators (the toddler would, of course, have to stay at home), their different bodily training means that they would see/experience different things and find different meanings from these experiences.

The methodology that I employ in this study of airports therefore draws upon the particular expertise that I have embodied: through training and personal history. I use my body as a tool of perception and meaning-making but am reminded of the “burden” anthropologist Michael Jackson posed in Paths Toward a Clearing (1989) to temper universalistic conclusions by not claiming ultimate “truth” of one’s own view or special status for one’s own experience (iv). Along with Jackson, I am not here arguing for a higher epistemological status for practice; but rather, the focus that I employ on embodied practice follows my interest in the embodied practice of cosmopolitanism.
Lived experience overflows the boundaries of any one concept, any one person, or any one society. As such, it brings us to a dialectical view of life which emphasizes the interplay rather than the identity of things, which denies any sure steadying to thought by placing it always within the precarious and destabilizing fields of history, biography, and time.[…] Lived experience accommodates our shifting sense of ourselves as subjects and as objects, as acting upon and being acted upon by the world, of living with and without certainty, of belonging and being estranged, yet resists arresting any one of these modes of experience in order to make it foundational to a theory of knowledge. Such an all-encompassing conception of experience avoids narrowing down the field of experience to either the subject or the object, theory or practice, the social or the individual, thought or feeling, form or flux (Jackson 1989, 2; original emphasis).

This methodology, which Jackson names radical empiricism, stresses the role of participation, and the interplay between observer and observed. Further, Jackson argues the separation of subject and object within traditional empiricism “is in large measure a function of the sensory mode and metaphor it privileges: vision” (6). To stand back and look at life from an ideal vantage point involves a literal spatialisation away from the subject, but such observational distance merely masquerades as some kind of imagined impartiality. Rather, we need to, as Husserl famously put it, get back to the “things themselves,” in all their sensory complexity.

Approaches to studying lived experience that prioritise the non-visual—or, more accurately, reinstate the nexus of tactile, olfactory, aural, gustatory and proprioceptive ways of knowing amongst the visual—acknowledge bodily being as an “I can,” as an interrelated setting between body, space and action, as the intermediary through which we are in the world (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 160). Perception is not a cognitive function, but rather, as Merleau-Ponty expressed it, “I cannot understand the function of the living body except by enacting it myself, and except in so far as I am a body which rises towards the world” (87).

The combination of such a phenomenological understanding of perception and the ethnographic study of lived experience is explored in depth in Michael Jackson’s extensive work, and is an approach I follow here. The phenomenological tradition provides one way of thinking through embodiment as “lived body” (leib), as “the lived fact of experiencing the world from and in and with just this body, my body” (Casey 1996, 23). This approach, as Jackson has said, slightly tongue-in-cheek, calls into question “the longstanding division in Western discourse
between the knowledge of philosophers or scientists and the opinions of ordinary mortals” (1996, 7). Reducing the lived body to an object or product of discourse, as Edward Casey argues has happened in poststructuralist thought, reduces it to “a paper-thin textual entity” (1996, 37). My own reading of embodiment is indebted to Casey’s work in bringing together Merleau-Ponty and the concept of habitus, first used by Marcel Mauss in his lecture “Techniques of the Body” in 1934 to describe “physio-psycho-sociological assemblages of series of actions” (1973, 85) and later taken up and insightfully developed by Pierre Bourdieu. Casey’s argument for an understanding of embodiment as a conjoining or “complication” of natural and cultural bodies suggests that the cultural “arises around the natural, the social around the somatic instead of upon or over it […]” (1996, 36; original emphasis). Habitus is also the “mediatrix” Casey asserts, between self and place (2001, 718).

Bourdieu’s project, however, was also a critique of the subjectivism of phenomenology—his guiding principle was a critical analysis of both the subjectivist and objectivist traditions in philosophy and the social sciences. He argued that Husserlian methods of reduction or bracketing of previously held assumptions about the world in order to return to “the things themselves” overlooks the extent to which experience is constrained by internalised social structures and fails to account for the non-intentional somatic dispositions explained by his concept of habitus (Throop and Murphy 2002, 190). Indeed, notions of bracketing and getting back to primary perception within phenomenology are difficult to reconcile with a project engaged in cultural work. But Jackson argues that habitus is directly comparable to the phenomenological notion of lifeworld (1996, 20), that domain of “everyday, immediate social existence and practical activity, with all its habituality, its crises, its vernacular and idiomatic character, its biographical particularities, its decisive events and indecisive strategies” (7–8). As Jackson notes following Adorno’s critique of the essentialising nature of Husserl and Heidegger’s work, there can be no such thing as “pure” intuition, because our actions are always informed by the social and cultural claims upon us, made by our particular lifeworld (18). Rather, humans experience themselves as both subjects and objects, “making us feel sometimes that we are world-makers, sometimes that we are merely made by the world” (21).

As Sarah Pink argues in Doing Sensory Ethnography (2009), the primacy of cultural systems of sensing versus phenomenologically derived employments of understanding perception is one of the ongoing debates
within the field. This opposition, she argues, is typified by the viewpoints of David Howes and Tim Ingold. Ingold, influenced by Western philosophers of perception (i.e. Merleau-Ponty) and psychologists (e.g. Gibson), argues that sensation should be understood as “organs of the body as a whole”; while Howes argues such an approach ignores “the senses in social context,” that is, borrowing a term from Steven Feld, how the senses are “culturally attuned” (Ingold and Howes in Pink 2009, n.p.). As Pink goes on to argue, and Bourdieu also reminds us, bodily action is not just the reproduction of a cultural template; although we carry this, we also venture forth in the world to meet each circumstance with the creativity and possibility that our body affords us. Bourdieu’s notion of habitus itself allows for a way of thinking about the body as simultaneously social and physical; it is a mediating link between several seemingly dichotomous dualisms (structure and agency, social and individual, objective and subjective).

My emphasis on kinaesthetic experience necessitates particular theoretical foundations of sensory perception and concepts of embodiment outlined thus far; but as I stated at the beginning of this chapter, I also argue for the potential of choreography to be a useful concept for thinking through the structures of subjectivity, social order or identity, and political mobilisation. Dance scholar André Lepecki claims that “rethinking the subject in terms of the body is precisely the task of choreography” (2006, 5). Andrew Hewitt’s “social choreography” is aimed directly at thinking about the relationship of aesthetics to politics in a way that poses dance or choreography as a structuring and affecting of the social order. In so doing Hewitt critiques undialectical assumptions of “the body” as materiality—a text to be read—asking, “can I still experience something? Can I produce an artifact? In other words, are we to think of the ‘work’ of art as noun or verb, as artifact or activity?” (2005, 25). Susan Leigh Foster (2011) argues that choreography can be theorised as a conceptualisation of corporeal, individual, and social identity, able to “contest the reception of dance as the presentation of a kind of spectacle without a history or methodology for engaging with the physical” (4). Foster’s book Choreographing Empathy undertakes a comprehensive genealogy of the term (along with kinaesthesia and empathy), and such a project points to the wide deployment but also critical possibility the term choreography holds to recognise “the specific and intensive physical commitment that any body must invest in order to ground itself in the world” (72).
The development within dance studies towards critically assessing movement and moving bodies is characterised by approaches such as Randy Martin’s shift in emphasis to “dance as bodily mobilisation, rather than as any determinant movement form” (1998, 183). His notion of mobilisation refers to how “bodies gather and are assembled and the materialisation of identity that is accomplished in the process” (208). Participation, an internal perspective of the event, is key to Martin’s formulation as is a focus on practice as located in the movement between dance and dancing (206). For Martin too, the reawakening of dance’s potential within critical theory is therefore a methodological shift; but it is also, as André Lepecki claims, a critical rethinking of dance’s political ontology (2006, 16). Lepecki’s ontological project is in part a response to the stilled and even anti-movement choreographies of Western experimental dance at the turn of the twenty-first century, which he argues sever dance’s alignment to flow and unceasing, smooth movement.

The “thin” way in which globalised movement is often thought of as “global flows” assumes a certain allegiance with modernity’s preoccupation with unfettered, unstopping being-in-movement (Sloterdijk 2006). Not all dancing, however, aims towards flow. What kind of moving (or stillness) is happening is of concern to the dancer and dance watcher. Anna Pakes describes watching a dancer improvise:

She begins in silence and stillness, but gradually, in response to murmurings on the sound-score starts to move in a slow, controlled way. She initiates movement in the extremities of the fingers and feet, a series of impulses that pass through the limbs and joints to the body’s core. As her centre engages, she moves more quickly and travels more expansively, her gestures becoming more complex and ambitious—until a moment when she feels herself falling into a familiar pattern in which she merely reiterates a sequence that seems to come automatically. The dancer makes the decision to fracture this sequence, break its apparently organic flow by unexpectedly leading movement from the elbow in a new direction. Realising also that her dynamic has become monotonous in a series of flurries of movement of about the same duration, she makes the effort to sustain certain phrases for longer and, ultimately, calm everything down to return to the virtual stillness from which she began. (2006, 91)

Pakes, herself an ex-dancer, notices all sorts of kinaesthetic decision-making and micro-movements involved in the process of dancing. Dancing, Jaana Parviainen’s argues, “means becoming bodily sensitive in
the respect of the kinaesthetic sense of one’s own motility” (2002, 20; original emphasis). Even in types of dancing other than improvisation, bodily knowledge is not about “mastering” a particular movement skill, but about negotiating, through that bodily sensitivity, all the many possible variations that might achieve such a movement.

Such bodily negotiation is at work in everyday movement as well, but through the habituation or ordinariness of the everyday, this “work” most often falls below the level of active consciousness. However, our aeromobile moves operate somewhere between everyday and out-of-the-ordinary practice, and between habitual and non-habitual moves. Airports are, for passengers if not for those who daily work in them, “everyday-plus” performance spaces: they utilise everyday corporeal techniques (such as sitting, walking and queuing) but within a context of marked, special events a little outside or apart from the banality of everyday life. It is the combination of macro- and micro-moves, our different human encounters with movement on global and pedestrian scales, which stands out as the performance of aeromobility.

My use of “special events” above is akin to that of anthropologist John Lowell Lewis, to indicate events that are “basically intensifications of certain kinds or aspects of ordinary events” (2013, 69). Lewis denotes special events as the innovative aspects of normative daily life that highlight the creative possibility contained in the everyday (ibid.). The distinction between events and everyday life is one approach to understanding all sorts of activities that come from a broadly construed socio-cultural world as “performance,” a foundation of the discipline of performance studies, in which performance is a productive heuristic for the study of events from within and across the boundaries of theatre. Lewis is very much in dialogue with the seminal work of Victor Turner here, whose development and application of ritual theory towards theatre opened a door for theatre practitioners to likewise venture through towards broader studies of all sorts of socio-cultural events under the rubric of performance. The knowledges that come from performance give this study of airports a particular inflexion; but this book also contributes to a growing body of research which studies modes of transport through the lens of performance (see Wilkie 2014; Hall 2015).

While inheritances from anthropology and phenomenology are both writ large within the literature from the discipline of performance studies, it is important to note that there are distinct conceptual approaches from within dance studies that augment the ideas of embodiment,
emplacement, identity and subjectivity developed so far—below I identify three key approaches that I think warrant attention: practice, place and presence.

**Practice**

For those that regularly engage in the rehearsal process that underlies performing, the nexus between performing and practising is self-evident. We train awareness, tonic strength and control, approaches to breathing, alertness to others, our relationship to gravity, and proprioceptive recognition to name a few, under a system or collection of systems inscribed with values about what a body is and how it does what it does. This is what the theatre director Eugenio Barba called the actor’s “extra-daily” pre-expressive technique (see Zarrilli 2004; Watson 1995).

In dance specifically, the cultivation of a particular body schema through somatic training has been one of the key approaches to developing choreographic style (Louppe 2010; Brannigan 2012; Foster 2011). The ongoing disruption of habitual movement is arguably a characteristic of contemporary dance practice in general, where new forms of expression are sought through experimentation with corporeal technique: “In order to reinvent bodies, contemporary dance began by rethinking and redistributing its anatomy and anatomical functions. This leads us straight away, even historically, to the essential idea of a body which is not given but discovered” (Louppe 2010, 40). The notion of practice which in Bourdieuian terms refers to the second-nature reproduction of culturally attuned ways of moving, “embodied history, internalized as second nature and so forgotten as history” (1990, 56), in contemporary dance more often refers to the system of training a dancer or choreographer employs in order to make *new movement*—the commodity of contemporary dance.

Australian dancer Rosalind Crisp says that dancing for her is decision making; but she stresses that this decision making is bodily and motile: “I think about dance whilst dancing, *by* dancing” (2009, 103; original emphasis).

As soon as I notice that I am about to make an habitual movement, I redirect my attention to another part of my body or employ a different speed, effort or direction,

constantly changing the speed, the level, the effort, the duration, the direction, the size, or the part of the body that is initiating the movements,
delaying or enlarging the beginnings of movement, changing irregularly between over “cooked” and under “cooked” movements, alternating unpredictably between “going” and “not going” … or between “leave that” and “stay with that.” (103–104)

What Crisp describes is a trained, corporeal technique of intentional non-habitual moving—a habitual non-habitual moving—is utilised in an improvisation-based performance practice which employs her body’s trained sensitivity to her own movement. The understanding of embodiment that I outlined above helps to focus analysis on dance’s engagement with corporeal technique as experiential, not just aesthetic or formal. “The experiential aspect of dance, which we might call its perception, is an embodied corporeal act, one which is embedded in the conditions of its articulation” (Rothfield 2005, 47). This perceptual and experiential notion of embodiment is derived from (if not perfectly aligned to) a phenomenological approach.

In terms of the everyday performance of self, the process of training is largely covert: it is “spontaneity without consciousness or will” (Bourdieu 1990, 56). These bodily practices tend to recede from awareness, and on one end of the spectrum are seen as the regulatory limits conditioning socialised subjects within a certain field. Perhaps the most common example is that of classical ballet training. Dancers work to elongate arm and leg extensions and necks, institute preferences for “lightness” in relation to gravity and ground, certain ideas of “beauty,” and expectations of binary gender. This training, unlike the training we acquire in everyday life, might be entered into knowingly and voluntarily, but the reproduction of that bodily practice at a certain point ceases to become an act of will. In fact, the ballet schema is one that is famously hard to “take off” even when the dancer returns to everyday life. Changed approaches to practice within contemporary dance since the twentieth century, on the other hand, speak to the trained bodily awareness that allows for innovative kinaesthetic authorship. These two radically different ideas of practice—one, the covert ways in which we come to embody history, and socio-cultural rules and expectations, and the other, overt training to sharpen consciousness in order to find new movement; one, a practice that aligns us to a distinct collective, and the other, a practice in order to assert uniqueness—are both at work within the choreographic endeavour. As such, this twin notion of practice offers a way to rethink and ameliorate the cultural-phenomenological debate on embodiment, and to ground such a rethinking in the sensing,
moving body—or more accurately, not a generic “the body” but particular bodies undergoing and producing particular actions.

**PLACE (NON- OR OTHERWISE) VS. SPACE**

The global airport’s negotiation between enactments of nationalism and cosmopolitanism is aligned to binary conceptions of space and place. Reflected through the “new mobilities paradigm” identified by Mimi Sheller and John Urry (2006) this binary becomes a polarity between stasis and movement. Place has mostly been associated with dwelling and “home,” in turn given what Doreen Massey calls “totemic resonance” (2005, 5) against the threat of homogenising flows brought by globalisation. Thus place-space, stasis-movement, become associated with fears for cultural preservation in the face of cultural absorption into the global. Connected to the broader spatial turn in the social sciences and humanities, Sheller and Urry’s designation of the new mobilities paradigm was both a descriptive response to a world “on the move,” and also part of a larger theoretical project to upset a “sedentarist” social science (2006, 208). These authors point out that, “issues of movement, of too little movement or too much, or of the wrong sort or at the wrong time, are central to many lives and many organisations” (ibid.). In other words, the new mobilities paradigm is inherently critical of a discourse that “treats as normal stability, meaning, and place, and treats as abnormal distance, change, and placelessness” (ibid.). The call for greater attention to the study of movement in everyday life is indeed a logical response to the proliferation of mobility in the twenty-first century as described in the beginning of this chapter, however, it also entrenches a particular polarity. That is, a romantic ideal of groundedness, dwelling, and continuous attachment inherited from classical anthropology on one side, and an equal romanticisation of networks, contingencies and flows on the other.10

In her article “Choreographies of Tourism in Yosemite Valley” Sally Ann Ness uses her own experiences of hiking in Yosemite National Park to challenge the rubric of place and its influence on the ways cultural meaning is constructed. Concerned that cultural identity is understood too narrowly as always place-oriented—“perhaps in a plural, multi-sited sense, but still place/site-defined” (2007, 79)—she instead poses that tourism, like any practice based in mobility rather than dwelling, needs to account for contexts of movement.
Ness’s background as a dancer and dance scholar interestingly informs her re-evaluation of the place/dwelling discourse; prioritising movement, she argues, allows new insight into cultural practice and performance. “Human beings are just as capable of developing a sense of tradition and collective belonging while they are practicing/performing movement as when they are not—when they are motile as opposed to when they are being ‘in-place’” (80). To this end, she insists that both macro and micro approaches to recording movement are necessary, allowing for the more common profiling of migratory patterns within a complex network of routes (what she calls “macro-migratory charting” (81)) as well as recording of the small-scale motion that happens within nodes in the network, at the level of individual experience (a “cultural ‘kinesphere’” after Rudolf Laban). It is this micro-level analysis that shows how motile practices and experiences, not just places, have meaning-making capability (84). As Ness reminds us, Augé’s non-places, as opposed to anthropological place, are characterised by four mobilising phenomena: transport, transit, commerce and leisure. Ness argues, “human movement, in [Augé’s] theory of anthropological knowledge production, becomes associated with the lack of that which is foundational to culture, and is thereby emptied of any positive inherent meaning or motility” (81).

The system of movement analysis developed by Rudolf Laban has had enduring utility to dance researchers, to dancers themselves, and others wanting to describe and interpret human movement. The original system is highly complex, or “rich” as Laban’s followers would refer to it. Laban defined four categories of effort, in order to encompass the large variation in dynamic a similar configuration of movement could have: space, weight, time and flow. Each movement employs effort factors according to eight different elements configured as spectrums between two polarities: direct or indirect, strong or light, sudden or sustained, bound or free. He also developed a system for body shape: in terms of direction or facing, how shapes change, in relation to static shapes, and in relation to the way a movement might, for example, rise or extend or retreat. Irmgard Bartenieff, one of Laban’s students, contributed work on structural and physical characteristics of the moving body referred to as the Bartenieff Fundamentals. This system is concerned with observing the initiation, relation and organisation of movement between parts of the body and between bodies, and involves specific exercises designed to train the use of breath, hip flexion, pelvic shifts, bilateral and contralateral segmentation and coordination, among others.
I prefer Laurence Louppe’s discussion of Laban’s system for its focus on connections between parts of his theory. Coming from outside the dominant Anglo-American field of dance studies, Louppe’s key contribution, the text *The Poetics of Contemporary Dance* (2010), outlines a break in the development of Western dance aligned with the spirit of modernist invention born at the end of the nineteenth century, whose task was to, “reveal the quasi-immediate force of transposition within a project where the whole matter/material of being becomes a language” (32). Working from Laban’s system, in conversation with the work of Émile Jacques-Dalcroze, Mary Wigman, François Delsartes, Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham, Doris Humphries, Trisha Brown and many other key choreographers from the twentieth century, Louppe points out that a few decades into the project of contemporary dance, similar thinking about the body (as not a thing given in advance) began to be done in anthropology. Mauss’s ideas, translated into English finally in 1973, were, Louppe argues, greeted with surprise by US dancers and dance theorists who were struck by the similarities between his “techniques” and the thinking that Laban’s followers were engaged in (50).

An architecture student before becoming and dancer and choreographer, Laban’s theory and practice of space, or “choreutics,” is the final category in Laban Movement Analysis (LMA), and involves work he did on human movement in relation to the surrounding environment, the immediate space of the body, spatial pathways and lines of tension and intention. Importantly, Louppe reminds us that for Laban, space, and indeed the effort factors and other parts of his theory, is conceived of as relational—none of these exist in themselves, but in relation to other aspects. Space, in particular, is “co-substantial” with the moving body, “nothing more than our relation to space” (Louppe 2010, 126 and 132). As Laban himself put it, “Alongside the movement of bodies in space, there is the movement of space in bodies” (in Louppe 2010, 127). The many detailed parts of Laban’s spatial theory and propositions for exercises to increase spatial awareness (including his choreutic scales) are far too extensive for me to outline here, but among the most graspable is his concept of the “kinesphere,” to which Ness refers, that personal space immediately surrounding the body, which moves with our reach, near and far, in all directions. Other work on levels, orientation, planes and distance, for example, make up the full choreutic theory.

I am struck by the convergences between Laban’s thinking about space as a *production* of our awareness of being in the world (Louppe 2010,
128), and both Henri Lefebvre’s *lived space* (1991) and Michel de Certeau’s distinction between place (*lieu*, a configuration of points) and space (*espace*) as something that arises out of practice, “when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables” (1984, 117). Though these concepts of space are not identical, they all espouse a radically different idea of the place/space binary than the roughly respective anthropological place/non-place distinction that Augé presents to us. The distinction here is of an order of movement:

> With his theory of the Four Factors, Laban had already understood that space is not simply a parameter of movement in general and even less a frame for its propagation. It is a constitutive force. The dancer lives from space and from what space constructs within her/him. This is why the “spatial intent” of the choreographer and dancers must be the object of a particularly attentive approach and perception. Spatial choices carry the essential marks of a dance’s philosophy. (Louppe 2010, 126)

As long as movement, moving, motion, mobility and similar words are taken as givens, philosophers of space and place are stuck in opposition as to whether meaning is made in movement or through dwelling. Choreographically speaking, however, it is well understood that pattern, intention, direction, dynamic, quality, gravity of movement between the moving body and space materialises meaning; “action is the consciousness of a subject in the world” (23).\(^{11}\)

Ness uses the term “motility” against the more neutral, empirically orientated “mobility” in order to specify movement contexts or understandings in which the experience of moving is regarded as life-affirming.\(^{12}\) As Ness points out, a non-motile (i.e. mobile) orientation towards motion has been over-generalised (2007, 80). This distinction is less clear within my study—experiences of both mobility and motility are obviously pertinent to travel in the airport, in a space where various movements are endured and enjoyed in equal (or perhaps unequal) measure, and where the more abstract notion of global flows are met by intimate acts of bodily motion. Additionally, I would argue that non-life-affirming experiences may also be constitutive of our sense of a place and ourselves—in fact they may be culturally foundational. But the general notion Ness highlights, that movement makes meaning to us through its proprioceptive and affective charge—positive or negative or any other—is what the dancer intimately knows. “Dancing consists, then, in making readable the sensory network
that movement at each instant brings forth and works on” (Louppe 2010, 50). The intricate imbrication between feeling as both an emotional and sensory experience—and, for that matter, sensing as both a feeling and thinking one—points to the limitations of the language we have to label such experiences, but not the kinaesthetic experiences themselves.13

**Presence**

The term choreography, which began its life in Thoinot Arbeau’s 1589 text *Orchésographie*, a study of French Renaissance social dance that included instructions for the steps of the dance as well as other guidelines of proper etiquette and behaviour, inaugurated a comingled idea to the word choreography: it is both the capture of a dance (a “writing down,” as in the root, *graphy*, of a dance, *choreo* or *orchesis*) together with the instructions one may utilise to make it reappear, to give it “life” again. Raoul Auger Feuillet’s *Choréographie* (1700) took this idea of choreography as documentation of dances one step further by developing a relationship to mapping in geography. The notation system Feuillet developed shows ordered, ornamented traces of the lines made in dances, a system of documentation preserving dances for future generations and making their geographical dissemination possible. For Susan Leigh Foster, “choreography thus began its life as the act of reconciling movement, place, and printed symbol” (2011, 17). These representations on the page are anything but the culturally variegated “places” that are given what Massey calls “totemic resonance.” They are, like maps of many kinds, abstractions rendered in the uniform space of the white page. I am not a reader of Feuillet notation; but more than this, I lack the correct “corporeal technique,” to quote Mauss (either muscularly, in terms of balance and posture, or in terms of social etiquette), that would allow me to embody it and make it appear. Here, we come to understand the ontological thrust of choreography as a technology of socialisation: Arbeau’s text, André Lepecki argues, shows choreography to be a “specific mode for accessing absent presences,” that is, that of the no-longer-there teacher/choreographer, “a spectral-technological promise” (2006, 26). In assessing the “still-acts” or “non-dance” dominating experimental dance in the 1990s, Lepecki uses Arbeau’s text to argue that the ontology of choreography is not disappearance (as Peggy Phelan famously argued of performance more generally), nor modernity’s “obsessive march forwards” (Cresswell 2012, 42), but a mode of presence/presencing.
In fact, these two key ideas of choreography (dance = movement; dance = presence) are not at odds with one another: if choreography is the apparatus through which the subject is made present, how that subject appears—how she signifies/gestures to others, but also how she somatically experiences that presencing and how that might kinaesthetically call to others—evidences what kind of apparatus is at work. Presence and movement are actually implicated within one another through the sociopolitical: ideology is “written” upon the body (or within the its cells and tissues) and manifests outwards towards the world through the body’s movements, whether intentionally crafted through choreographic style in the case of art dance, or as second-nature techniques of bodily practice in the case of everyday movement. The deeply investigated kinaesthetic labour of the professional choreographer, however, can help us to understand the material labour that often masquerades as second nature within everyday social practice. It is this material manifestation that leads Laurence Louppe to argue for an appraisal of the materiality of the body itself as dance’s inescapable proposition. Louppe refers to dance as the “double-presence” of dancer and spectator, “an experience/experiment of perceiving in space and time, an undergoing of this experience—on both sides” (2010, 5). As the study of factors eliciting affective response, her poetic approach seeks “to observe not only the finished product but the production at work in the work” (6). This work is a co-commitment to bringing some potential, some presence or subjectivity, into being.

READY FOR TAKE-OFF

The spectacle of cosmopolitanism can be observed everywhere in the airport; but the spectre of cosmopolitanism—that is, an idea of the cosmopolitan as a zone in which discrete representations of culture interact, and one which we apprehend through our visual consumption of it—needs to be challenged. Instead I am developing analysis that exploits a trialectic of space, mobility, and embodied practice in order to discover a cosmopolitanism not based in how it looks or is sited, but a cosmopolitan space that arises out of practice, is produced by and produces cosmopolitan subjects.

The research focus is above all on transiting experiences, the processes and spaces of international travel, on and within bodies. The theoretical and methodological quandary that mobile subjects and observers presents to anthropology is an important reason to turn to performance studies.
with its founding convictions in interdisciplinarity and use of performance as a lens through which a range of objects can be studied. Asking not how the airport is like performance (i.e. theatrical performance), I rather use performance as a means to look at the world in new and useful ways. My project is not designed as a comparative study aimed at general conclusions about airport architecture or behaviour; rather, my focus is towards bodily experiences of in-betweenness through constructions of social space, of which airports but are one such location. In discussing the airport’s flow, Peter Adey questions how scholars could better understand how such environments are experienced, suggesting that methods of ethnography and participant observation “might mean performing the practice of the airport journey” (2009, 203), and this is very much the project I have adopted. “In this way,” Adey goes on to say, “stepping into the flow for the researcher can mean stepping into the shoes of those he/she walks with”; a deeply intersubjective project.

While there have been some high-profile cases of people becoming stateless in the midst of travel and having to set up camp in the airport, a very particular kind of in-betweenness, my emphasis has been on my transiting experience in its more prosaic everyday occasions, even as they occur in the heightened “everyday plus” environment of the airport. I am focussing on how the airport might be conditioning spaces, bodies, or subjectivities, not through rupture with the everyday (the migrant narrative, an in-between discourse which situates the refugee at the very crisis spot mid-migration), but through the embodied practice of everyday moves. In the spirit of particularised cosmopolitanism with which I began this chapter, however, it is important to note that my experience cannot speak for all bodies everywhere. But rather, within this field, I ask, is it possible to yet develop more nuanced understandings of how cosmopolitanism is experienced and performed?

How performances of aeromobility are constructed by and through the social spaces of the airport connects this work to wider discourses on cultural embodiment and subjectivity. A focus on cultural performativity is part of rethinking globalised or cosmopolitan subjectivities, those for whom experiences of mobility might be more remarkable and expressive of lived reality than those of fixity. Without emptying the discussion of a politics of intercultural practice, the following chapters attempt to arrive somewhere different by beginning from the perspective of embodied experiences of movement. While the focus on practical cosmopolitanism as a process of movement might seem to propose a radically alternate
model of cosmopolitanism, at the same time, I see it as a simple extension of the argument against static and fixed notions of culture that has been developing in the humanities and social sciences going on a quarter century.

Across all the remaining chapters, bodies confront their habitual movements and potential for something else, something new. They negotiate multiple embodiments and perform in unexpected ways. They orient themselves in relation to others as well as themselves, and get lost and occasionally misplaced.

Chapter 2 elaborates on my opening discussion of the airport as third-space, an in-between space performing transnational culture. This is instantly recognisable across large international airports: it is the shopping mall/food court/glass and steel concourse/gate lounge/internet hub/baggage carousel/passport control queue and so forth. However, within (not against) these features, the airport also exerts particularities of nation, region and locale, and the ways in which nation and cosmos, local and global, particular and general interact are often odd or even paradoxical. Developing further a critique of place and non-place, this chapter posits that these spaces are characterised by an excess of arrivals and departures, and an elongated sense of in-betweenness.

Moving from architectural spaces to somatic ones, Chap. 3 examines experiences of bodies in transit, moving between the study of mass people movements and the changing groups of affiliation played out in the airport, towards analyses of the micro somatic practices we develop, enjoy and endure in the air and in transit. Experiences such as jet lag and turbulence are explored through their relation to embodiment and emplacement—specifically out-of-bodyness and out-of-placeness, what I pose as core aeromobile choreographies. In Chap. 4, my kinaesthetic analysis is turned towards border crossings specifically, where awareness of a doubled self—a self and “othered-self”—is discussed as a phenomenon of in-between subjectivity that is at its core a mode of theatrical presencing.

These three chapters pose the practices of spatio-corporeal displacement in airports and aeroplanes as important, if seemingly banal, functions of lived experience. As such, they go some way towards understanding how it is possible to feel at home in non-place, to discovering how non-places themselves might be performing in-betweenness, and to drawing out an embodied subjectivity built more on experiences of movement than entrenched groundedness.
In Chap. 5, I reflect on the changing practices of security culture in the twenty-first century, returning to the opposing celebratory and dystopic discourses of contemporary globalisation. Air travel has undergone a major shift in its short history, from the glamour of the 1930s to today’s crowded terminals, mandatory searches and uncomfortable long-haul flights. Increased security screening procedures have proliferated in airports across the Western world, particularly in the USA and the UK, in response to twenty-first century terrorist strategies. Additionally, global pandemics such as, most recently, the Zika virus, the 2009 outbreak of N1H1 influenza virus (“swine flu”), H5N1 (“avian flu”) in 2004, and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003 have seen airports install temperature scanning devices, treating every traveller as a potential carrier of biological “weaponry” in the form of contagious disease.

The gross unevenness in access to security, freedom of movement, and standards of welfare for people across the globe is simply amplified at the airport and through global travel. The relative ways in which different bodies are subjected to these new pressures is, I argue, underpinned by culturally divergent (and indeterminate) ideas of the body and sociality. In the end, our bodies are the register for these battles of power and ideology, where we are most vulnerably exposed to but also have the capacity to deeply come to know the socio-political forces at work in the world.

As much as this project argues for greater accounting of moving bodies in its methodology, its analytical format is, after all, a book, a written text. Here I return to critical ethnography as process of interpretive writing, a form of story-telling that presents what can only be partial truths: “fictions in the sense of ‘something made or fashioned’” (Clifford and Marcus 1986, 6). In the following chapters selected field notes developed from fieldwork experiences sit amongst analytical reflection, in an attempt to capture the particularity of micro-gestures and feelings, while maintaining a gap between the “being there” of experience and the interpretation of that experience. Michael Jackson argues, “narrative redescription is a crucial and constitutive part of the ongoing activity of the lifeworld” (1996, 39). It is a link between practice and discourse, the journey between what ethnographer Edward Bruner (2005, 19) called the trip as lived or experienced and the trip as told.

This project is about understanding a kinaesthetics of cultural practice (in which the political, and the social, will always be implicated). I began this book with my story of childhood motion sickness because it was a story that spoke to the major themes I have outlined here. In motion
sickness, the almost imperceptible rearrangements of my body in relation to itself and the world were part of what constituted my being in the world. Edward Bruner suggests there are two ethnographies of travel, “one of performances in the destination culture, and a second of the traveling unit, which may be conceptualized as its own site of cultural production, a performance in itself” (2005, 17). In this dual configuration, it is this second performance I am mostly interested in: performances in travel and of in-betweenness. I argue, after all, for dwelling in and studying the in-between itself, not just as a second-order passageway between first order things, but as the lived spaces of embodied in-betweenness that exist in cultural practice.

Following the provocation to consider the airport’s choreography, provided so many years ago by that small New York Times article, this book focuses on ways in which spatial organisation and experience—movements performed through the minutiae of everyday travel with all its potential excitement and banality—might be choreographing our being in the world. By choreography I mean the patterns and directions of people moving through terminal spaces, but I also mean what experiences, affective and embodied, these movements imbue, and what subjectivities they presence. Is it possible that by encountering our own capacity for difference, for the new, for dwelling in indeterminacy, for undergoing visceral rearrangements, for being with others and for being other, we might awaken to a more empathetic response to difference in general? Both nationalism and internationalism have, in turn, been promoted as roads to Utopia, and yet the world we find ourselves in struggles on with gross inequity and suffering. The enduring questions of how to live on this globe, with others on the globe, in tolerance of the difference that proliferates are still difficult and pressing ones. The body cannot be sovereign. It is always at sea in the wash of sociality; we are made by being in the world that we bring into being, with others. Yet knowing being as such, as fundamentally performative, what power do we have to challenge or construct differently the rules we have inherited?

Notes

1. Jacobs uses the ballet metaphor in an extended passage on the use of sidewalks: “this order is all composed of movement and change, and although it is life, not art, we may fancifully call it the art form of the city and liken it to the dance” (Jacobs 1992, 50).
2. See, for example, *Airtraffic Worldwide*, which condenses a twenty-four-hour period into little more than a minute. A number of similar flight traffic simulations can be found on YouTube. The particular animation I refer to, available from [http://radar.zhaw.ch/](http://radar.zhaw.ch/), was produced by a team at the Institute of Applied Information Technology in IT, Zurich University of Applied Sciences, Winterthur in collaboration with Technorama Swiss Science Center. While the sheer density of a day’s flight traffic is well demonstrated in this video, it is important to note it also shows that distribution of traffic across the world is far from even.

3. See Phillips and Spinks: “the majority of onshore asylum seekers actually arrive in Australia by air with a valid visa and then apply for onshore protection through Australia’s humanitarian programme at some stage after their arrival” (2010, 3–4).

4. See, for example, Lo and Gilbert (2002) for an overview taxonomy of prefixed culturalisms: inter-, multi-, cross-, trans-, extra-, ultra-, intra-, pre-, post-, meta- and so on. These categories attempt to differentiate the multiple contexts and conditions for the interaction of different cultural practices. I subscribe to Lo and Gilbert’s distinction between the *intercultural* as descriptive of the hybrid, in-between, and contested formations brought by cultural negotiation; versus the *multicultural* as a top-down homogenising and authoritarian force; versus the *transcultural* as a form of universalising sameness. My use of *cosmopolitan* is a more general descriptor for the spaces and subjectivities of cultural encounter brought by globalisation and could encompass any of these meanings; hence my qualifications of “thin” or “critical” cosmopolitanism.

5. A term originally coined by American sociologist Ruth Hill Useem in the 1960s, “third culture kid” has become more widely adopted in popular culture today: for example, online network tckid.com posts a qualifying quiz titled “You know you’re a TCK when…” that although highly US-centric, includes items that suggest a general relationship to aeromobility amongst its members such as, “You go into culture shock upon returning to your ‘home’ country,” “You speak with authority on the subject of airline travel,” and “You know how to pack” (Third Culture Kids Community 2010).

6. Urry notes together the travel and tourism industries constitute the largest industry in the world at US$6.6 trillion. They account for 8.7% of world employment and 10.3% of world GDP (Urry 2009, 30).

7. This is the argument Throop and Murphy put forward as Bourdieu’s critique of Husserl, which they in turn critique as a misreading. It is worth noting that in a response Bourdieu rebuts this claim, remarking he has
often “declared my indebtedness to phenomenology, which I practiced for some time in my youth” (Bourdieu 2002, 209).

8. As the process by which social structure and individual agency can be reconciled, habitus is, as Bourdieu famously called it, “the feel for the game” (1990, 66). Along with field and capital, habitus is a key term for Bourdieu in defining his philosophy of practice. Practice is a result of an unconscious relationship between habitus, capital and field whereby habitus is that set of durable dispositions that determine or generate practice in relation to current circumstances and one’s position within those circumstances (the social game). This relationship is what Bourdieu emphasises in calling habitus a “structured and structuring structure” (1994, 170). It is the structure by which we carry history and also bring that history into the present in an ongoing, generative process. The second-nature quality of habitus is an intrinsic part of its structure; it is what points to, as Bourdieu has stressed, the underlying principles governing behaviours, tastes and beliefs. That bodies are socially constructed is a message iterated in performativity discourse. Habitus then, is a way of conceiving of social constructivism as “durably inscribed belief” (1990, 57) physicalised within the body, and of thinking of bodily practice as a process of bringing the past to bear on the future in the present.

9. See Ness (2008) for her study of how the “bones, ligaments, and other tissues of [Balinese, ballet, and Bharatanatyam] dancers are the host material” for an inwardly migrating inscription of cultural symbolism (15). See also Foster (1997), Card (2006).

10. As Urry and Sheller point out, this celebratory rhetoric is perhaps typified by the nomadic theory of Rosi Braidotti (see critique in Chap. 5). This is also the critique of “blind faith” in cosmopolitanism I discussed earlier via Bharucha and Cheah.

11. An important exception to such a generic approach to the moving body within the mobilities literature is the work of Tim Cresswell, who notes “Real bodies moving have never been at the top of the agenda in transport studies.[…] Physical movement is, if you like, the raw material for the production of mobility” (2010, 19).

12. Ness writes, “The quality of noetic acts (acts of knowing, or processes of understanding or thinking) occurring in relation to motile experience are, therefore, positive—acts of enjoying mobility, of desiring it, finding it pleasurable, wellness-inspiring, confidence-building, etc.” (2007, 79).

13. See Foster (2011) for her explanation of the intrinsic connection between kinaesthetic and emotional experience.

14. See for example, Karimi Nasseri, aka Sir Alfred Mehran’s, autobiography with Andrew Donkin, *The Terminal Man* (2004).
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