



Tarja Väyrynen, Eeva Puumala, Samu Pehkonen, Anitta Kynsilehto and Tiina Vaittinen,
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I read *Choreographies of Resistance* as an “experiment” within the ongoing, interdisciplinary rethinking of migration and mobilities. In its close attention to the roles of bodies and events, the project is commendable for both scope and originality, and for the lines of novel scholarship that it opens. Bridging Rancière and new materialism with mobilities and migration studies, *Choreographies of Resistance* sits alongside works that include retheorizations of migration as an autonomous force (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013), excavations of the historical production of the liberal subject through/by/in its mobilities (Kotef 2015), and reimaginings of the continual assembly and disassembly of migration spaces as attempts to capture migrants’ movements (Garelli and Tazzioli 2017; King 2016).

Three case-study chapters treat different registers of choreography. Chapter 3, “Postcolonial Space and Entangled Corporeal Choreographies”, argues that a drive towards global whiteness operates as a spatial ordering device for Filipino nurses in Finland. This drive conditions the structural and interpersonal relations of nurses to both their patients and other migrants. Chapter 4, “Liminal Space of Relationality and Disturbance”, explores the choreographies of everyday life in migrant encampments. Here migrants’ uncontrolled presence, and their sexual desires and sex acts, may serve as undirected or non-directed irruptions that upset state-prescribed, bodily orders. Chapter 5, “Urban Space of Mundane Interaction”, is the strongest of the empirical chapters. It employs a corpus of racist YouTube videos of a Finnish man harassing Roma beggars to show how improvisational aspects of embodied interaction entail opportunities to subvert the purpose of the “show”.

The major project of *Choreographies of Resistance* thus develops choreographies as both epistemic operations—how we know and understand the relational movements of bodies—but also “affordances” (p.103) because people always inhabit and perform them. Choreography serves as

both [i] an organizing metaphor for embodied social relations and [ii] “an analytical and methodological tool that oscillates between ethnographic inquiry and analyses of social interaction” (p.12). Human mobility presents an opportunity to refine choreographies because it presents “a point of intersection where different forces ... converge, where bodies relate to each other in unexpected ways and where they are, simultaneously, normalized, racialized and categorized” (p.93).

In addition to the proposal of choreographies, the book offers a nuanced treatment of resistance. Indeed, a major contribution lies in its accounting for how and where resistance is available. Movements, with their minute gradations, allow for structurally disempowered subjects to act in surprising, transgressive, and/or disabling ways (from the perspective of power). Because choreographies are performed, to introduce “out-of-genre” movements is to introduce disruption, or at least its potential. So too the refusal of movement—the performative context would always seem to carry the possibility of breaking down a dominant “scripting” of steps.

A second and potentially dual contribution arrives in Chapter 5. The use of videos permits analysis of the embodied interactions in everyday racist encounters “as well as the interactional, verbal, and bodily methods of resisting” (p.77). At one level, as Väyrynen et al. note, the videos allow for “seeing” racist encounters that are infrequent. Their rigorous readings of the videos are a welcome addition to geographic scholarship. At another level, the videos are treated as if they are basically faithful to the choreographies they depict. But because videos are curated from raw recordings, their semiotic content affords a “view” of the world through avowedly racist eyes. As texts focalized for an audience’s (presumed) world view, the videos directly display the “organizing and standardizing practices” by which racist “categorical vision” operates and self-legitimizes (p.77). The very tight and considered reading also invites a broader analysis of the textual consolidation of sensory phenomena into racist vision.

Choreographies of Resistances repeatedly invokes the idea that choreography is “not generalizable” (e.g. p. 95), which I read as an indication that choreography is less a nascent theory than an approach to descriptive analysis. Yet the text never quite specifies choreography’s

positive definition or its constitutive limits, much less both. Chapter 1, “Choreography, Mobility and Politics”, defines—and the Conclusion, “Unfolding into the Future”, reprises—choreography as “a situationally enacted interaction framework that provides both sequential and governing structure for bodily events” (p.10). From this and the surrounding text, one might speculate that choreography attends to how bodies’ movements implicate them in both political productions as well as, at times, enlisting them in power. Choreography would on this account be the term for the embodied interactions that bodies use to self-organize, with an emphasis on human relationality.

But by Chapter 4, the lens has shifted subtly to something more macroscopic, contextualized by state spatialities:

... migrants’ bodies and their movement, referred to as choreography, challenge the body politic of the state and the policies of supranational units such as the EU, and thus give new meanings to political agency and enact the event of resistance in multiple ways. Some of these enactments are connected to intentional acts of protest while others are extremely intimate practices. We will contextualize this claim through empirical examples where bodily choreographies intertwine with national, regional and supranational units. (p.55)

The subsequent spatial referents denote bounded “units”: countries, the EU, migrants’ camps. If migrants’ bodies and bodily movement juxtapose to bounded space, then we might prefer “choreography” as referring to aggregations of bodies and movement in their relational orientations to such spaces, such that the ordering structure of (mass) movements enables resistance. Choreography becomes a scene within a context that enables a form of resistance, where earlier resistance was ontologically possible through the formations in which the “movements” of a choreography were formed. Both definitions may be read together, of course; there can be both gestures and scenes of resistance. But they are non-identical.

Both approaches would implicate a broadly emergentist ontology of the state, which opens a second curiosity of the text. Although a strict Rancièrian approach might refuse to specify the state as part of its refusal of ontology, *Choreographies of Resistance* directly includes questions of state governance of migration regimes, necessitating some ground for talking about the state. And given the importance of state governance in migration politics, it is curious that the text holds no sustained engagement with any of the varied theoretical trajectories that suture a materially non-existent “state” to the movements, gestures, and utterances of individuals, from Foucault (e.g. 2009), to the anthropology of the state (e.g. Mitchell 2006), to anarchist approaches to the everyday (e.g. King 2016; Maeckelbergh 2011; Springer 2014), to site ontology (e.g. Woodward et al. 2010, 2012). If social life is to be modeled choreographically, the doings of “the state”—as desire and knowledge-context that allows and then facilitates any sort of communicative activity—must be foundational to the project.

Choreography remains conceptually interesting. A relational focus on how everyday movements invest bodies with political existence provides insight into discursive and affective belonging, and Chapter 3 is notably alert to the intersection of movements and racialization. Operationalizing choreographies invites a descriptive analysis both of what has happened in a given case, and of the “frameworks” that its participants employ in order to interact. How do these frameworks operate, what features or characteristics do they have, and how do those features and characteristics facilitate power *per se*? Väyrynen et al. remind us of the need to generate ways to think through the complexities of human movement that do not naturalize the current order of things. In offering one starting point for a discussion of how bodies resist, *Choreographies of Resistance* offers a valuable contribution to critical scholarship.

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