

Essay

The Question of Space: A Review Essay

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Abstract: This article is a review essay which discusses the inter-disciplinary collection of essays edited by Marijn Nieuwenhuis and David Crouch, titled *The Question of Space: Interrogating the Spatial Turn between Disciplines* (London: Rowman & Littlefield 2017). The book was published as part of the Place, Memory, Affect series, edited by Neil Campbell and Christine Berberich. As well as providing a detailed critical overview of *The Question of Space*, the article responds to some of the broader questions that the book poses in terms of the radical inter-disciplinary of space and spatiality, relating these firstly to ideas drawn from Henri Lefebvre's discussion of 'blind fields'. The review essay then goes on to question what we might understand by the so-called 'spatial turn' and whether this itself requires some rethinking in order to better take stock of the developments in and around the inter-disciplinary scholarship on space and spatiality. Following this, the essay engages more directly with the individual chapter contributions in *The Question of Space*, before drawing together some concluding remarks that speak to the concept of 'atmosphere' as an affective and phenomenological quality of space as experiential and embodied 'spacing'.

Keywords: spatial turn; affect; phenomenology; interdisciplinary; non-representational; autoethnography; performance; deep mapping; experience

1. The Question of Blind Fields

To pose space as a *question*—as the title of Marijn Nieuwenhuis and David Crouch's edited collection proclaims—is already to cast the *problem* of space and spatiality, and the inter-disciplinary confabulations that such a problem creates, to the foreground of consideration. As a problem (or set of problems) that demands the pursuit of a question (or set of questions), the question of space is at its most productive when those doing the asking resist the urge to provide a definitive answer. Those who are in the business of looking for an off-the-shelf answer would do well to steer clear of Nieuwenhuis and Crouch's illuminating collection of essays and instead hunker down in the comfort of more routine orientations towards 'space' as an object of study. That *The Question of Space* sets out to unsettle and cast a quizzical light on these more localised or well-trodden disciplinary precincts, makes it a timely and welcome intervention. The book's subtitle—*Interrogating the Spatial Turn between Disciplines*—clearly states its intent to confront the fugitive nature of space and spatiality as a discourse that, by definition, cannot be readily hemmed in without doing a fundamental disservice to an unfolding conversation that has rippled and inveigled its way across an increasingly diffuse field of practice. Space is as open and expansive, or as finite and restrictive, as the structures that are brought to bear on its study. A sense of this openness and exploratory impulse is threaded across the ten chapters of *The Question of Space* (twelve including the book's prelude and postlude), with each throwing its gaze partly back on the preceding chapter, inasmuch as any one elucidation of 'space' casts the other in a slightly different light, the colours and textures merging like those in the artwork adorning the book's cover (from a painting by Crouch).

In his introduction to the English translation of Henri Lefebvre's *The Urban Revolution*, the late geographer Neil Smith remarks that, "Whereas space came alive in early-twentieth-century art, physics and mathematics, in social theory and philosophy . . . [space] was more often synonymous with rigidity, immobility, stasis; *space itself had become a blind field*" (Smith 2003, p. xiii, emphasis added). The reference here to 'blind fields' is triggered, in part, by Lefebvre's adumbration of the concept, where, among other things, it is used to describe an urban condition, whose shape, along with "the vectors and tensions inherent in this field, [and] its logic and dialectical movement" (Lefebvre 2003, p. 40), we cannot see. What we do see of the urban is an assortment of things, objects, and operations, which make it what 'it' is in purely functional terms. "The urban is veiled", Lefebvre writes, "it flees thought, which blinds itself, and becomes fixated only on a clarity that is in retreat from the actual" (ibid., p. 41). By extension, blind fields also speak to the penumbral zones that negatively define the spaces of 'intellectual clarity' that are aligned with (or corralled by) singularly disciplinary ways of seeing. 'Space' is no less of a concern for the artist, pedestrian, *flâneur*, psychogeographer, sex worker, rough sleeper, tourist, refugee, busker, tenant, motorist, commuter, student, urban explorer, labourer, street market trader, retail worker, or allotment gardener than it is for the architect, surveyor, planner, cartographer, or 'design creative'. Accordingly, 'space' is no less the stock-in-trade for the spatial anthropologist, cultural geographer, or urban cultural studies scholar than it is for those whose rationalizing gaze is trained on the urban landscape as an abstract space or a 'concept city' (De Certeau 1984, p. 95); representations of space that are designed to flush out the fleshy, the sensorial, or the affective residue that *people* bring to the everyday spaces they inhabit and intuitively produce. Smith's contention that "space itself had become a blind field" is thus a recognition of the discursively disaggregated nature of space and spatiality, of which 'blindness' is as much a symptom as it is a cause. Ironically the propensity for space (or the discourse thereon) to create blind fields is not on account of any lack of visual or scopic knowledge. If anything, it is a surfeit of luminous vision that is the problem. It is a case of being not so much blind as *blinded*: "The blinding is the luminous source . . . the blinded is our dazed stare, as well as the region left in shadow" (Lefebvre 2003, p. 31). As a concerted attempt to go against the grain of a critical spatial discourse that blinds the more it strives to illuminate, *The Question of Space* represents both a push towards, as Nieuwenhuis and Crouch put it, an interrogation of space that has its locus *between* not *within* disciplinary boundaries, and also a fuller embrace of the body and affect as non-representational counterpoints to the primacy of the gaze and an expressly visual, or at least *representational*, spatial discourse.

2. Questioning the Spatial Turn

The book proceeds, therefore, from the understanding that space, as Lefebvre maintained, "is radically open" (Smith 2003, p. xiii), even if it is not always perceived as such by those who have fashioned into an object of analysis. Moreover, the book sets out its stall on terms that are driven by an inter-disciplinary impulse to map beyond an idea or practice of space that is rigid, immobile, or static in its dispositional reach. Space is more than just a space; it is, as Nieuwenhuis and Crouch argue in their prelude, "an activity, a process, a practice and an action" (p. xi); it is space as *spacing* (Crouch 2016), as present participle rather than a noun (Roberts 2018, in press). However, before looking more closely at *The Question of Space* and the inter-disciplinary conversations that unfold therein, what of the idea, spelt out in the book's subtitle, of a 'spatial turn'? The editors' reference to "the *so-called* spatial turn" (p. x, emphasis added) suggests, perhaps, that they share my general sense of ambivalence regarding the usefulness of the term. Beyond the passing observation that it was coined in the mid-1990s to bookmark a theoretical shift towards a more avowedly critical spatial perspective (as a corrective response to the perceived privileging of time and historicity), the 'spatial turn' itself is afforded scant attention in the book, raising the question as to why it has found its way into the subtitle at all. However, that said, it does nonetheless convey a sense that, by interrogating a discourse of space that has left its mark across the humanities and social sciences, it is a timely moment to reflect on where this 'turn' has led us and where it might conceivably take us from here (and, indeed,

who this 'us' might in fact be). For me, one of the problems with accepting this broad-brushed idea of a spatial *turn*, is that to do so would be to tacitly accept the proposition that this shift in orientation, towards some vague inter-disciplinary understanding of the 'spatial', is experienced uniformly, as if the expression of a surging tide of intellectual mobilisation that, en masse, is steering a course towards new pastures. As an academic whose career so far has spanned the duration of this purported spatial turn (and whose intellectual interests have been firmly enmeshed within it), the inter-disciplinary context that has underpinned how and why ideas and practices of space have come together, to me has always felt more like a process of cross-pollination rather than a steady stream of traffic heading towards, or re-routed in response to, the spatial. Perhaps I have been too caught up in the tide to reflexively notice my place within it, but my experience has been one in which a much-touted spatial turn has rarely made a great deal of sense. It has felt much more like a spatial *melee*. Space has become a bustling marketplace of ideas, boasting an array of currencies that are each trying to play their own hand. Or we could look at it as a busy intersection rather than a unidirectional slip road. What it isn't is a wholesale embrace of all things spatial, if by this it is meant that it is (a) generic enough to speak to every understanding and practice of space, regardless of disciplinary habitus; and (b) a process of critical spatial engagement that discounts all that had previously informed humanities and social science scholarship with specific regard to matters spatial.

What makes an *interrogation* of the spatial turn a productive and timely endeavour, is that it invites us to look askance, to question the durability of an orientational metaphor that, if it ever had traction, has surely now run its course. A turn that remains a turn is at some point destined to become a circle, or a circumambulation (a rhetorical shibboleth around which the faithful dutifully trudge). What is then called for, by way of intervention, is a *consolidation*: an inter-disciplinary stock-taking of how space is variously being theorized and worked-through, and how its many performativities are shaping new ideas and critical agendas. In this respect, *The Question of Space* provides an important contribution to understandings of the inter-disciplinary cross-currents that have steered developments in spatial thinking and practice beyond the passage of a so-called 'spatial turn'. Moreover, putting aside the question of whether a spatial turn automatically encompasses considerations of place, landscape, location, environment, or any other concept which it presumes to lend itself to, what an interrogation of the spatial turn also brings into sharper focus is the extent to which space itself might be being turned away *from* as a theoretical frame through which to understand and put into practice the fleshy worldliness of the world. This rejection of space centres largely around an adherence to a rather limiting distinction between 'place' and 'space', in which the latter is cast as a fixed and affectless abstraction, and 'place'—replete with meaning, sociality, vitality, memory, and culture—is the locus of dwelling, affect, and practice. Writing "against space", Tim Ingold argues that, throughout history, "people have drawn a living from the *land*, not from space . . . Travellers make their way through the *country*, not through space . . . Painters set up their easels in the *landscape*, not in space . . . Casting our eyes upwards, we see the *sky*, not space", and so on (Ingold 2011, p. 145, emphasis in original). Responding to this argument, Crouch (p. 2) writes that "While the engagement of the world to which he [Ingold] refers is welcome, the rejection of space within our living creates questions of the human and space". Correspondingly, the questions of space that the book explores are put to work in ways that seek to challenge the rejection of space as something that can only ever be encountered as an abstract and characterless 'form' or object. These and other questions were also the starting point for my own foray into the humanistic properties of space, as explored in the book *Spatial Anthropology: Excursions in Liminal Space* (Roberts 2018), which is published as part of the same Place, Memory, Affect series as *The Question of Space*. Sharing Nieuwenhuis and Crouch's view of space as "multiple, differential, personal, experiential and playful" (p. xix), and writing against Ingold's dismissal of space as "the most abstract, the most empty, the most detached from the realities of life and experience" (Ingold 2011, p. 145), the idea of spatial anthropology is very much predicated on the openness and vitality of space as a living, breathing facet of everyday life and human experience.

3. The Question of Space

There are a number of key thematic concerns running across the different chapters of *The Question of Space*: a focus on lived experience; a phenomenological attunement to atmosphere; landscape as a site of (or *as*) performance; dwelling and belonging; space as a locus of becoming; and an intuitive openness to the significance of affect in understandings of place and space, coupled with a sensitivity to how it works its way into the folds and grain and textures of spaces (and, indeed, how it contributes to the *production* of space). Given the book's inter-disciplinary remit it is not surprising to note that the spaces that are variously explored in the different contributions are similarly open and multifarious. Ranging from the virtual spaces of Google Maps and the darknet (Belibou), to literary and cinematic geographies (Ghraawi, Conway), allotment gardens (Crouch), acoustic and vocalic space (Revill), or to the linearity of territorial spaces (Nieuwenhuis); from the social and embodied spaces of performance (Moyo), the affective entanglements of home and memory (Zivkovic), landscape and abstract painting (Crouch), spaces of pure experience and *basho* or place (Watanabe), or to the 'geoanthropocenic' totality of the Earth (Gren), *The Question of Space* does not limit its purview to any one understanding or ontology of space. 'The question' is thus, in part, an interrogation of how there cannot even be 'a' question of space, if by this we mean an approach that assumes an epistemological vantage point whereby 'space' is rendered uniformly intelligible as an object of knowledge. The question is such that it pushes us towards the *doingness* of space, towards spacing. In the process, the question dissolves into the temporal and experiential flux of space-as-practice, of what is found, felt, expressed, and *lived*. This performative inflection should not be dismissed as mere tinkering around the edges, a methodological flourish that is otherwise unthreatening to the business of 'doing' space in the technocratic, rationalist, and architecturally instrumental sense, rather, it is—or should be—anything but. When glimpsed through the prism of radical inter-disciplinarity, space becomes a concept that struggles to hold on to its semantic and epistemological boundaries. Space becomes a proposition that invites a response that is particular to the circumstance of its invocation. Taking up such an invitation is the act of stepping into, or immersing oneself within, a field of spatial practice. For my money, this is what makes space intrinsically anthropological, and what makes *The Question of Space* a work that falls within the broader category of spatial anthropology.

This is well illustrated in the chapter by Awelani Moyo. Observing that discussions on space and the spatial turn often assume a noticeably Western bias, Moyo focuses in on the example of a homeless woman dancing and singing in a public square in the centre of Cape Town in South Africa. Moyo is among a large crowd who are watching a performance taking place as part of a city-wide festival. The performance, called *Limbo*, aims to encourage the public to experience the everyday landscape of the city differently, transforming the square into a riot of music, colour, dance, and song and making the presence of marginalized groups in the city, such as migrants, more tangible and visible. While the festival has the effect of making the space qualitatively different, by dramaturgically and symbolically invoking a landscape and sense of place in and through the performance, the example also shows how landscape can be constructed *as* performance: as an embodied space-time that is fashioned through rhythm and the lived experience, where "bodies are not only acted on but act on space" (p. 38). In this regard, Moyo's autoethnographic reading of the performance space quickly centres on the homeless woman, an anecdotal but extraordinarily effective means to render the performativity of the space both tangible and expressive. For Moyo, the homeless woman "seemed to strike at the very core of what the themed performance was all about. To some people she was disruptive and distracting, to others she was amusing and to still others she was unimportant, dismissed as a drunk or a lunatic, and therefore invisible. Whatever the case, it seemed that in the middle of a designated public space . . . [she] had somehow crossed an invisible line . . . that demarcated the role and place of the 'public' as outside the imaginary bounds of the performance space" (p. 24). Following on from the theoretically insightful first chapter by David Crouch, Moyo's contribution helps get the book off to a strong start. Bringing an autoethnographic sensitivity to the fieldwork setting—a festival and performance staged in a public square in Cape Town—Moyo persuasively shows the way in which the happenstance of events that are

sparked in response to or alongside a sanctioned space of spectacle can transform the otherwise passive nature of a performance space into something altogether more vital and electrifying; the rhythm and sway of bodies in space, the affective maelstrom that buffets and gives substance to the experiential spaces—the *lived* spaces of performance—informs a different and more phenomenologically charged understanding of everyday urban space:

What my experience of *Limbo* therefore inadvertently highlighted are contradictions and tensions between the everyday and the spectacular, the liminal rite and the carnival, the real and the imaginary, active and passive performance, centre and periphery, self and other, and how these are all implicated in spatial terms (p. 36).

Moyo's chapter provides us with a text-book example of what Crouch calls "space as *spacing*". Another stand-out chapter that does the same occupies itself with an entirely different spatial environment. Arguing that the Internet "needs to be taken into account from a spatial point of view, as something that can offer new ways of thinking about space and new ways of experiencing place" (p. 136), Andrei Belibou sets his sights on two very different Internet spatialities. In the first, Belibou zooms in on Google Maps and Google Street View in order to explore how these examples of 'Internet mapping' trade on a direct correspondence between the imaging of space and its reality. "The quasi-universal coverage of Google Maps", he argues, "and its possibility for virtually endless scrolling through space serve to hide its own limits, to present it not just as image but as existence itself, as reality" (p. 140). As an abstraction of space, Google Maps offers a seamless transition between a cartographic space of representation (a map) and aerial satellite imagery (a picture): "landscape is made accessible and visible (only) as positions on the grid" (p. 138). What it does not do is bring the map user (the virtual and disembodied *flâneur*) into the fleshy world of materiality and experience. As such, the technology helps generate a fundamental disconnect between the world perceived as a universal 'picture' and the partial, localised experience of space that reflects peoples' day-to-day reality, where 'spatial knowledge' is embedded in and culled from everyday practices. By contrast, the murky, 'unmappable' world of the darknet offers a very different understanding of Internet mapping, insofar as the spaces being 'mapped' can only ever be 'known' (in the sense of being cartographically representational) to the extent that they are traversed and produced as digital spatial practices. Only those travelling and producing such spaces know the geography of the networked world in which they are immersed in, to the extent that these same travellers have a phenomenological awareness of the spatial experience that is temporally unfolding as they go about their business of moving through the network. In this instance, it is accurate to say that the 'map' *is* the territory, however, it is a territory that, by definition, cannot be mapped. The darknet is a network where Internet protocol (IP) addresses are hidden from view (The Onion Router or 'Tor' browser being the most popular means of accessing the network), making it a space that exists only as "a process, a continuous becoming which escapes tracing or mapping" (p. 136). A pathway through the network is established "by its use and for its use; it is outside knowledge and outside gaze . . . [it is] brought into existence through practice only to disappear when it is consummated" (p. 144). As with Moyo's chapter, this discussion provides a usefully illustrative example of space as spacing (an approach that is echoed, albeit in a different context, in George Revill's chapter on sonic and vocalic space, which makes the point that sounds "are only recognizable as such in the moment of their making, unfolding elaboration, the sensing and the memory of that moment" (p. 44), and as such similarly defy processes of 'mapping'. Revill's embrace of a "conception of space made by sound rather than simply space containing sound" (p. 58) is also in tune with the overarching idea of space as spacing).

Belibou, then, offers a productive framework with which to critically untangle the different spatialities of the Internet; to think about how space is being put into practice and how it is experienced online in ways that pay heed to both the processes of digital spatial abstraction (as exemplified by Google Maps and Google Earth) and the practices (or what De Certeau would call 'tactics') that are developing as a counterpoint to the rationalizing gaze of an all-embracing digital technocracy. What the discussion also demonstrates is how De Certeau's distinction between 'geometric space' (the city

viewed ‘from above’) and ‘anthropological space’ (the embodied and embedded domain of ‘street-level’ spatial stories) can be applied, just as readily, to digital space as it can to urban architectural space and the built environment. Indeed, what *The Question of Space* most directly speaks to is a sense of anthropological space that, regardless of disciplinary orientation, provides fertile ground from which most of the book’s contributors have in some way drawn. Ghayde Ghraoui’s chapter examines issues relating to the contested politics of Israel and Palestine—and of ‘post-traumatic urbanism’—through a reading of the short story ‘*Ā'id ila Hayfa (Returning to Haifa)*, by the Palestinian writer and activist Ghassan Kanafani. Ghraoui makes good use of Lefebvre’s late writings on rhythmanalysis to describe the disruption of rhythms that are felt bodily as traumatic-somatic encounters with urban landscapes that are scarred by the impacts of violence and conflict. Reading post-traumatic urbanism from the perspective of rhythms provides a dialectical frame through which to consider the way *eurhythmia*, which is characterized by harmony, well-being, and a sense of equilibrium, is disrupted by *arrhythmia*, rhythms that are discordant and chaotic, denoting a shift from eurhythmic well-being to a pathological state of disorder, illness, or trauma. That rhythms are felt experientially and somatically suggests an understanding of urban space—in this instance, as filtered through the writings of Kanafani—in which imagination, affect, and the embodied traces of streets and neighbourhoods tell of the spatial stories and convulsive histories that have made a city (Haifa in Israel) what it is as a lived space of memory.

Establishing a firm grounding in the layered complexities and dynamism of anthropological space, *The Question of Space* secures its main theoretical bearings from, as we have seen, phenomenological perspectives and orientations that have sprung from immersion in and engagement with lived experience. In addition, contributions speak to various ideas that are conversant with approaches in sensory ethnography, non-representational geography, radical empiricism, and those that embrace a Deleuzian ontology of becoming, and which are the product of what Nieuwenhuis and Crouch call a “continually becoming-discipline world” (p. 187). Thus, we see in Atsuko Watanabe’s discussion of the work of the Japanese philosopher Nishida Kitaro, a theory of place (*basho*) that finds fruitful points of connection with the pure experience and radical empiricism espoused by William James, the phenomenology of Edward Casey and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, with Tim Ingold’s conception of places as “knots where the threads from which they are tied are lines of wayfaring” (Ingold 2011, p. 149), or place understood “as a site of becoming rather than one of being” (Watanabe, pp. 109–10). Similarly, an attentiveness to the sensory contours of place and memory is demonstrated in Yvonne Zivkovich’s discussion of bell hook’s work, where, for example, the materiality of tobacco situates hooks as a black woman growing up in rural Kentucky, aware of a wider African American history and heritage of which she is a part. In addition, it takes her back to the memory of her grandfather’s room, and a lingering smell of tobacco that conveys a particularly vivid sense of place and familial belonging. What is also striking in this chapter is the importance that is placed by hooks on the household porch and the liminality of the space, as experienced from the perspective of women who would otherwise be subject to spaces dominated by the patriarchal interests of men. “The porches of my upbringing”, hooks recalls, “were [a] place of fellowship—outside space women occupied while men were away, working or on street corners” (in Zivkovich, p. 76). Zivkovich suggests that the porch can be considered a heterotopia, both in terms of what the space represents by way of a challenge to male power, and also by providing a stage or platform (literally and metaphorically) that confronts racial inequalities and tensions (hooks recalls experiences of what she terms ‘porch civility’, where, with her two sisters, she would wave and greet passers-by in what was a predominantly white neighbourhood). For Zivkovich, “hook’s anti-racist and anti-sexist practice of porch civility is spatial praxis at its best” (p. 77).

4. The Question of Atmosphere

Not all of the chapters in *The Question of Space* quite hit the mark, appearing, as a couple do, to sit a little on the margins of the rich inter-disciplinary field that the other contributions help give shape to—and which lend the book a more cohesive sense of purpose. Martin Gren’s *Mayday—A*

Letter from the Earth, while a nice idea (the Earth in epistolary correspondence with the discipline of geography—those in the business of ‘writing the earth’), hasn’t translated all that well onto the page. This isn’t helped by the use of clunky and obscurantist jargon (for example, ‘pure grammatorology’, ‘territorialization’, ‘territory’, and ‘terrafying’). Similarly clunky, in my view, is its treatment of culture and geography’s ‘cultural turn’ (yes, another ‘turn’ that has gathered a lot of pace in recent years). According to the Earth (as voiced by Wren), following the cultural turn, “All excursions were now to take (a meaningful) place indoors in front of the mirror, with the aim of mapping cultural identities but without ever accepting Culture as explanatory. What a great and clever disciplinary move to overcome my geographical friction!” (p. 173). Reading this, it is clear that the Earth has some issues it needs to work out with Culture, although it doesn’t fully explain what it thinks Culture is and what it extends to. All we can glean is that a shift towards matters of signification and representational politics is what ‘culture’ has brought to the party and that this has been at the cost of (disciplinary) geography ‘proper’. “It goes without saying”, the Earth continues, “that for me the cultural turn turned out to be merely a continuation of the belittlement and humiliation I had experienced under the purgatory shadow of social theorizing. And how could you geographers allow Culture, that thing that originates of me, to mutate into something totally divorced from me?” (p. 173). Getting further into its stride—its Cultural axe being ground ever sharper—the Earth wonders whether it should have “joined the charade and deconstruct[ed] the gender identity of myself that them humans have culturally constructed? Played with my sexual identity, or maybe dressed up as a queer planet?” (p. 174). It is, of course, not at all surprising to learn that the Earth has some serious concerns with how those who have been tasked with its stewardship have gone about their business thus far. Equally it is understandable that the Earth should feel more than a little aggrieved with the status quo, and that a tone of hostility towards geographers might therefore seem entirely appropriate (although its ire would be far better served if targeted towards other, more directly complicit social actors, the agents of rapaciously global consumer capitalism, for example). What is puzzling, however, is why it has such a problem with Culture. Is it advocating a different relationship or concordance between the Earth and Culture (and their disciplinary counterparts), and, if so, wouldn’t it be a better expenditure of its energies to explore how this might be put into better practice, rather than engaging in banter with straw men?

The other chapter that I felt did not sit all that comfortably alongside the other contributions that have been cited above is that by Philip Conway, *Space is No One Thing: Luring Thought through Film and Philosophy*. By the author’s own admission, the chapter “designs no pathways but rather undertakes a textual exploration, finding sense and surface in assembled ideas and images that fray rather than knit . . . It features an introduction but no conclusion . . . [it is] a textual space only on the brink of existence” (p. 151). While this makes sense rhetorically, and, in the context of a spatial imaginary which is itself purposely impressionistic and fragmentary rather than defined, fits with the general theoretical orientation being advanced, it undermines the effectiveness of the chapter as a piece of writing. The structure is too fragmented and lacks a clearly delineated rationale that works to thread its constituent parts together. The discussion of the 1972 science fiction film *Silent Running* provides some degree of continuity, peppered through several of the sections and resurfacing again towards the end (although not in terms of a conclusion). Along the way, the chapter engages with other examples of science fiction films that are set in outer space (*Gravity*, *Interstellar*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*), alongside a smattering of other films that have no obvious connection to the genre (e.g., the decidedly earth-bound thriller *Room* or the work of documentary filmmaker Joshua Oppenheimer), all of which are interspersed with reflections drawn from the philosopher Alfred Whitehead, the Gaia theoretician James Lovelock, and others. Some interesting observations on space (both outer and in its broader sense), affect, and Earth in the anthropocene, alongside some philosophical ruminations on a number of (not always connected) themes, give some sense of where the discussion, in a more fully fleshed out form, could have gone. But as it stands, the chapter cannot be said to exceed the sum of its parts, and, insofar as it does seem to be little more than a succession of parts, therein lies its limitations.

By way of an opportunistic segue into some closing remarks, what these contributions perhaps do not tap into as successfully as some of the others, is the sense of an *atmosphere* that swirls around and informs how space and place is being thought about and put into practice. This necessarily vague and immaterial of substances permeates the question of space in ways that theory and practice are forever trying to keep up with and ‘capture’, so as to put it into a neat (or not so neat, even scrappy is fine too) representational container. ‘Affect’ itself, if overly fetishized (which it often is), can sometimes seem like an empty box, struggling to pull sufficient detail into its orbit so as to convey something of its power and vitality; how it energizes (or de-energizes); how it forces us to think about space outside of, or beyond the frame of representation; how it pulls the *body* out of the margins and makes it squat squarely in the performative centre of socio-spatial practice; how it reinvigorates a sense of earthy and non-human *materiality* that draws us intellectually as well as empirically into its grip; how it spurs and ignites our creativity. Affect speaks to all of this, but it is in the fine-grain of phenomenological and (auto)ethnographic detail that it is ‘made flesh’. Affect, like atmosphere, is nothing without acknowledging the part played by those who are there to breathe it in.

Nieuwenhuis and Crouch, but especially Crouch, make much of the idea of atmosphere in relation to space and what anthropologist Kathleen Stewart (2007) calls ‘ordinary affects’. *Atmos* (breath or vapour) and *sphaire* (sphere or globe): something that is vapourous and breath-like and that clings to the earth, and thus to the spaces we inhabit and seek to produce; something that is alive, or which gives life; a presence that we have awareness of but cannot contain. Atmosphere “makes explicit that there is something ‘in the air’ . . . Atmospheres compel immersion . . . Just like air, atmospheres are all-pervasive” (Nieuwenhuis and Crouch 2017, p. 184); atmosphere is “multiple and full of volume . . . And so is space” (Crouch, p. 7). *The Question of Space* provides a rich and frequently compelling insight into how space and spatiality is put to work across disciplinary boundaries. The book offers a persuasive rationale for rethinking space and its diverse practices as fundamentally open, ungraspable, and shot-through with the affective entanglements of lives, bodies, atmospheres, energies, and the abundant materialities and immaterialities that may be found there and which make ‘there’ (or ‘here’) what it is.

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